

Using the Aichi Biodiversity targets to reconcile development challenges

Draft Message from WG6 on Biodiversity and Protected Areas

The Asian Region continues to experience a sustained period of economic growth which is forecast to continue into the foreseeable future. The Asian Development Bank concluded in 2012 that *“Asia is in the middle of a historic transformation. If it continues to follow its recent trajectories, by 2050 its per capita income could rise six-fold in purchasing power parity terms to reach Europe’s levels today. It would make nearly 3 billion additional Asians affluent by current standards”*¹

It is in Asia that 3.8 billion people live, some 60% of the world’s population, and some 70% of the world’s poorest people. Asia has some of the world’s richest countries and some of the world’s poorest and it is here that a disproportionate concentration of the world’s biodiversity resides. The cocktail of large populations, rapid economic development and high levels of biodiversity is at the heart of reconciling the challenges of development and conservation.

As one of the proposed Streams at the upcoming 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress notes *“Governments are focused on maintaining food and water security, ensuring jobs and sustainable livelihoods, maintaining the productivity of fisheries, forestry and agricultural sectors, and making trade-offs with sectors such as mining, energy and infrastructure development all in the face of rapid climate change”* It is the *“intersection between protected areas and these many development goals and challenges facing national governments”*² that presents some of the greatest challenges to protected area policy makers, planners, managers and researchers. Nowhere is this more so the case than in Asia.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) remains at the forefront of international efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity. The CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 adopted by the 10th Conference of Parties in Nagoya 2010 represents the global community’s aspirations and commitment to action with respect to biodiversity conservation. The Plan includes a shared vision, mission, strategic goals and some 20 targets to drive action. Protected areas have a significant role to play across all of the Aichi Targets, as they are known. Target 11, however, specifically deals with protected areas:

*“By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascapes”*³.

Protected areas have proven to be an effective tool in the fight to save biodiversity. Whilst CBD Target 11 sets the strategic direction for protected areas detailed actions are articulated in the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). Asia’s impressive drive to establish protected areas has been a central feature of national strategies to combat the loss of biodiversity. Asia currently has 7,043 protected areas covering an average of 15.97% of land area⁴. Target 11 *“addresses multiple facets of protected areas including increased coverage, connectivity, management, governance and equity”*⁵ The Target is then an aspirational and all-inclusive statement which elegantly captures quantitative and qualitative aspects of an effective protected system operating in a complex biophysical and

socio-economic landscape. It is clear that moving toward Target 11 warrants a holistic and integrated approach by governments and their partners together with all rightsholders and stakeholders.

Balancing the needs of protected areas with those of development one can identify several aspects that benefit from best practice guidance. These include:

- how to articulate the overall national vision for protected areas and a strategy for achieving this;
- how to practice effective landuse planning based on best available science and resource assessment thus ensuring that decisions to establish protected areas are sound;
- how to identify and design robust, representative protected area systems that encompass all of the aspects inherent in Target 11. In other words how to unpack what it takes to achieve Target 11;
- how to safeguard the established protected area system against on-going development pressure; and
- how to recover damaged ecosystems to strengthen conservation and bolster protected area systems against change.

In light of this, PARTICIPANTS in the Working Group on Biodiversity and Protected Areas at the 1st Asia Parks Congress, in Sendai, Japan (14- 17 November, 2013) commend to those international organizations, governments, NGOs, CBOs, academic institutions, businesses and donors who influence directly and indirectly the future of protected areas the following set of best practice protected area policy and management principles:

1. Develop national protected area master plans that articulate the why, what, where, when and how of national protected area systems. In particular the master plans should spell out:
 - a) the context for national protected area systems with particular reference to the CBD PoWPA and Aichi Target 11
 - b) a shared vision, goals, objectives and benefits for the national protected area system;
 - c) plans to strengthen the system including how a comprehensive, adequate and representative system will be achieved and maintained, how management will be strengthened, how supporting laws, policies and governance frameworks will support the system; how the system will be funded, and how research, monitoring and adaptive management will be promoted; and
 - d) implementation details.
See Appendix 1 Elements of a protected area master plan⁶
2. Establish comprehensive, adequate and representative national protected area systems that:
 - a) are based upon sound scientific analysis to ensure ecological representativeness rather than being based on political or economic rationales;

- b) use terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecoregions as the strongest basis for determining representativeness and to guide decisions about protected areas. *“Biological diversity however measured is best associated with an ecoregion classification, rather than biomes or realms...which...are classification systems that reflect large scale patterns of climate and geography but do not reflect species level diversity”*,⁵
 - c) identify and incorporate other metrics to assess areas of high conservation value including for geodiversity and genetic values, ecosystem services, cultural values and the like. Here other area-based conservation measures should only be included in national system planning if they meet the intent of the IUCN definition of a protected area. For example some Indigenous Peoples’ and Community Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCAs) and some private protected areas may meet the intent of this definition.⁵
 - d) incorporate a diverse range of IUCN protected area categories and recognized protected area governance types as this contributes to a more equitable, flexible system that is more likely to enjoy long-term support;⁷
 - e) recognise that the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem integrity requires land and seascape scale conservation and so work to incorporate connectivity between protected areas at appropriate scales including transnational; and
 - f) recognize that CBD targets are negotiated and interim and therefore not based on peer-reviewed science. National targets for protection should meet the internationally agreed targets but may need to go beyond these where warranted to ensure adequate protection of all ecosystems.
3. Ensure that established protected area systems are not eroded through reductions in size, weakening of protection status, trade-offs to accommodate other resource use and/or extraction, or de-gazettal as protected areas.
 4. Build capacity and new skills on connectivity conservation to engage new stakeholders and rightsholders in appropriate governance structures, work across multiple tenures, explore innovative conservation mechanisms and ensure just and equitable distribution of benefits.⁵ Comprehensive guidance on establishing and managing connectivity conservation is available through IUCN and the CBD.^{8, 9, 10}
 5. Complete protected area management effectiveness evaluations using the internationally accepted IUCN framework¹¹ and range of assessment tools on offer. Evaluations should cover both the conservation and social outcomes of protected area management at system and site level. Policies and procedures for the good governance of protected areas should also be adopted at both national and site level.⁴ Progressively benchmark management performance against recognised standards such as those being developed through IUCN’s Green List of Well Managed Protected Areas.¹²
 6. Ensure that the conservation objectives of protected areas are respected and that incompatible development is not permitted within or adjacent to protected areas. Mechanisms such as buffer zones or eco-sensitive zones (ESAs) should be used to promote sympathetic development in areas adjacent to protected areas. Ensure that any developments are subject to rigorous environmental impact assessment (EIA) to assess both positive and negative impacts on park values and on surrounding local communities.

7. Adopt Strategic Environmental Assessments to assess cumulative impacts at larger scales than individual development EIAs. SEAs have the advantage of forecasting progressive development pressure at a land or seascape scale and evaluating the potential impacts of this on protected area systems or sites. Advice on EIA and SEA best practice is available from the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA).¹³
8. Build constructive relationships and improved understanding between protected area institutions and jurisdictions responsible for development at local, provincial and national levels. It is critical that protected areas are factored into development planning strategies at an early stage, at all scales and that conservation as a land or sea-use is afforded equal status to other forms of use and thus respected.
9. Ensure that protected area management plans are prepared taking into account surrounding land and seascape contexts, wider legal, institutional and planning frameworks such that protected area plans are harmonized with the hierarchy of planning at scale. Too often protected area management plans whilst perfectly sound sit in isolation from surrounding landscape plans which may have conflicting objectives;
10. Adopt ecological restoration strategies where needed to recover ecological function, restore habitat and/or species. Restoration may assist in filling gaps in protected area systems, enhancing connectivity and building more resilient protected area systems against climate change. Restoration strategies may include allowing natural recovery to take place; actively restoring ecological processes through interventions; actively recovering species; and/or undertaking alien invasive species control programmes.⁵ Principles and best practice guidelines for ecological restoration for protected areas has been produced by IUCN.¹⁴

Appendix 1

Elements of a Protected Area Master Plan



¹ ADB. (2012). *Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century*. Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines.

² IUCN. (2013) *IUCN World Parks Congress, Sydney, 2014. Stream Reconciling Development Challenges*: http://www.worldparkscongress.org/stream_reconciling_development_challenges.html. Accessed October 2013.

³ CBD. (2013). *Aichi Targets*: www.cbd.int/sp/targets/. Accessed October 2013.

⁴ UNEP-WCMC. (2013). *World Database on Protected Areas*. Data extracted October, 2013.

⁵ Woodley, S., Bertzky, B., Crawhall, N. et al. (2012) *Meeting Aichi Target 11: What does success look like for protected area systems?* PARKS Vol 18.1, September 2012. IUCN, Gland Switzerland.

⁶ Dudley, N, and Courrau, J. (2008) *Filling the gaps in protected area networks: a quick guide for protected area practitioners*. Quick Guide Series ed. J. Ervin. The Nature Conservancy, Virginia USA

⁷ Dudley, N. (ed.) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying IUCN Protected Area Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

⁸ Bennett, G. (2004). *Integrating Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use. Lessons Learned from Ecological Networks*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

⁹ Worboys, G., Francis, W. and Lockwood, M. (2010). *Connectivity Conservation Management: a global guide*. Earthscan, London UK

¹⁰ Ervin, J. et al. (2010) *Making Protected Areas Relevant: A guide to integrating protected areas into wider landscapes, seascapes and sectoral plans and strategies*. CBD Technical Series No. 44. Montreal, Canada.

¹¹ Hockings, M., Stolton, S., Leverington, F. et al. (2006) *Evaluating Effectiveness: a framework for assessing management effectiveness of protected areas*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

¹² IUCN (2013). *IUCN Green List of Well-Managed Protected Areas*:

http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/gpap_quality/gpap_greenlist/. Accessed October 2013.

¹³ IAIA (2013) International Association For Impact Assessment: <http://www.iaia.org>. Accessed October 2013.

¹⁴ Keenleyside, K., Dudley, N., Cairns, S. et al. (2012). *Ecological Restoration for Protected Areas: principles, guidelines and best practices*. IUCN Gland, Switzerland.

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