

Strategic Review of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation

Response from IUCN-Med to the Director, Global Programme

4 May, 2005

Introduction

IUCN –Med wishes to express its thanks to all those who have constructed this helpful review at a critical stage of the Centre’s development. The feedback received from membership, from donors and partners, and from global thematic programmes has been especially helpful. The review has also helped to build confidence with our core donors who have renewed, in February 2005, their financial support to the Centre for a further five years (2005-2009).

The review was very ambitious in its scope, attempting to address all the issues related to the Centres structure, finance, staffing and technical programmes. This allows a holistic view of the key issues, sufficient to justify a differentiated approach to addressing the concerns raised. In terms of management response, those cross-cutting and general issues that emerge from the questionnaires and interviews with many members and donors are considered to carry weight and require adequate response

On receipt of the review, a series of discussions were held with staff of IUCN-Med, and their comments were requested, on how to respond to the review’s proposals. At the thematic programme level, initial actions have been included in either the performance review targets for 2005 or work plans or new working approaches agreed. For HR issues a series of meetings has clarified where the main issues seem to lie, many issues have already been resolved and others will be addressed, as appropriate, in the local conditions of service and employment benefits package. The response is therefore at two levels – this management response to Global programmes and secondly through an internal process of action and review in consultation with IUCN-Med staff.

The review has proposed the following seven recommendations as critical to the future development and success of the Mediterranean Programme and each is followed by a response from management concerning how this will be achieved.

1. That IUCN-Med develop a strategy for the next five years to address appropriate ways to scale up the delivery and reach of the Mediterranean Programme, including a corresponding business model.

We broadly agree to the analysis and challenges raised by the review under this item and on the thrust of the recommendation. The main challenge is to ensure that the Mediterranean programme continues to respond to members’ needs, to the expectations of regional processes, and to proposals and projects emanating from other component programmes, as well as having its own “IUCN-driven” programme. In short we must match ambitious vision with field reality using the following, or similar criteria, to guide programme ideas. Activities that form part of the programme will need to :

- be of relevance or interest to the membership, preferably involving them directly
- be acceptable to our core donors (or eligible for project sponsorship from other donors)
- meet the objectives of the inter-sessional plan or Congress resolutions
- provide a link to global programmes and global processes
- inform policy change (*i.e.* they have a target audience/forum/policy arena)
- mobilize the best available scientific knowledge or best practice experience

The prioritisation process provides a balance between the need to be responsive to, but not solely driven by, external forces. In our view, the components that already have a clear strategic view of where they are heading – marine, species, water – do not require a further process of strategic

definition. Those that do not –for example protected areas, forests, and cross-cutting themes such as economic and social issues – require further work. It is suggested initially that these thematic areas review their strategies as a matter of urgency.

Consideration will also be given to the many suggestions provided during the Review for increased collaboration, partnerships and alliances in each thematic area to enable the Programme to have greater reach and influence in the Mediterranean eco-region.

The Mediterranean strategy will be progressively ironed out for delivery in 2007 and will lay the foundation for the planning exercise for the 2008-2011 programme. Experience in project development and extending the donor base during 2005 will also be used to develop a revised business plan and model at the same time as reviewing the structure of the office (see below).

2. That IUCN-Med work with senior human resources specialists to improve human resources management and organisational administration.

Human resources management has been identified as a Secretariat-wide issue, for example through feedback at the senior management retreat in September 2004. Small offices such as IUCN-Med cannot afford to employ a full time Human Resources specialist, yet recent IUCN policy has been to delegate HR responsibility virtually 100% within the human resources management policy, which gives only general guidance on issues that require consideration of detail. One of the key issues leading to dissatisfaction is the real or perceived unequal treatment of IUCN staff across the Secretariat. While this is gradually being addressed at global level the pace of change is excruciatingly slow. We await the final agreement of the HRMP (and expatriate policy) to finalise the local conditions of service and contractual package.

A structural review of HR issues at IUCN-Med would be welcome. IUCN-Med would welcome more detail from the review team on the specific areas of staff concern, and more clear analysis on which specific issues should be addressed would be helpful. This process could also form part of a regional (IUCN European offices) approach to human resources management.

Infrastructure: discussions are underway to locate additional new office space and a budget has been set aside to rent and equip an office in 2005. Abandoning the current PTA building to rent office space elsewhere in the Parque would mean losing the free benefits from our agreement with PTA. The current strategy is to locate and occupy a new space, seeking to maintain the advantages of the current PTA agreement, while hoping to avoid the team being split in two locations. This strategy is only financially viable if major projects come on line and the staff grows to justify the expansion – there is a potential risk of taking on rental charges for new space with no concomitant cash flow, however office overhead charges are currently at the low end of the scale compared to turnover.

IUCN-Med is currently at an awkward size (12 staff) that is at the viability limit for its flat structure – further expansion of the programme will mean that the structure will inevitably prove inefficient in management. Input from Global Programmes would be helpful in designing the ideal staffing structure for the next phase of the office based on experience elsewhere in the Secretariat. As the office is restructured it is expected that new and perhaps more formal management processes and structures will also be required.

3. As a preventive measure, IUCN-Med should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation, with specific attention to safeguarding the quality of its products and services.

The office will move steadily towards outcome based performance evaluation, while the more standard M&E procedures will be put in place with support from GPT and the M&E team in general. Next steps will include – 1) Establishing regular self assessment processes (annual or semi annual) for programme and administrative staff units where staff are encouraged to reflect on their progress, any issues, problems encountered – following a standard approach . 2) Developing a regular evaluation plan where formal reviews are requested for external feedback on some issues of concern or interest.

For the time being, quality control has been put in place for all major publications and products – they are peer-reviewed by Secretariat or Commission staff prior to release, but more broadly IUCN-Med will progressively move towards the M&E standards adopted by other programmes for planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation. This will require training and capacity building of IUCN-Med personnel.

4. That appropriate options and roles for involvement of IUCN Members and Commissions in the implementation of the Mediterranean Programme be clarified and implemented where appropriate in the next Inter-sessional period.

From the Naples members meeting in June 2004 it appears that current levels of consultation are felt to be broadly satisfactory, while there is always a need for more communication. This will be addressed in the revised communication strategy (see below). Annual meetings of chairpersons of National Committees will be maintained as the principal consultation mechanism on programme-related issues and as a means to improve membership engagement.

More clarity is also needed on the overall role that members are expected to play in the governance of IUCN at sub-global levels. IUCN-Med looks forward to guidance from the Review of Regional and National Committees that the Council will undertake in 2005, and to the results of the R&D Review for further guidance on this issue.

In the immediate future, links will continue to be strengthened with the Commissions through the work programme.

5. That IUCN-Med develop enhanced approaches to communications with Members, partners and Commissions.

In discussing these recommendations we have developed the following detailed proposals :

- 1) Creating a new section on the website to post information regarding Mediterranean member's activities and/or events.
- 2) Encouraging members participation on the elaboration of monothematic articles on Mediterranean topics which are related to their field of work and that can be circulated to the rest of the membership through the electronic bulletin
- 3) Launching a revamped website in three languages, including provision for an electronic bulletin list-serve that people can sign up to and leave automatically
- 4) Extending our mailing lists to include Mediterranean members of the Commissions

We will also work closely with the much strengthened Communications Unit in Gland to ensure bridges between the IUCN-Med strategy and the more global strengthening of the IUCN communications programme, possibly including acting as a pilot region within the context of the more global effort on branding and positioning.

The knowledge management policy is a key tool that can help guide this process with support from HQ. More broadly on knowledge management IUCN-Med can contribute expertise to ensure that critical information for capacity building of members is used.

IUCN-Med electronic communications work relies heavily on the quality of data in the Knowledge Network and it is essential to ensure that the contact data therein are accurate, and the KN interface is much better adapted to user's needs. It is also important to acknowledge the ongoing help of IMG in building a Mediterranean interface to the KN to allow emailing of the bi-monthly electronic bulletin.

6. That the IUCN Director General and Director Global Programme take immediate steps to address current tensions between WESCANA, Europe, and the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation.

Issues of geographic scope are being addressed through discussions with RofE and WesCANA. In the Balkans, consensus has been reached that the IUCN Belgrade office will lead on terrestrial issues and IUCN-Med will input on coastal and marine themes (linked to Barcelona Convention concerns). For RofE issues generally, we will continue to build on constructive past discussions of roles and responsibilities for creating synergies between RofE and IUCN-Med. For WesCANA countries, IUCN-Med has participated in a two-day meeting in Jordan to define WesCANA/IUCN-Med roles, facilitated by the Director of Global programmes. In consequence IUCN-Med will assume roles for project development, implementation and membership arrangements in North Africa, while WesCANA will lead in Lebanon Syria and Palestine. IUCN Med will further provide funds for project development in the latter countries as well as support WesCANA communications through a shared webmaster based in Malaga. IUCN-Med will also continue to promote cooperation-related projects between the Mediterranean countries.

7. That the IUCN Director General and the Director, Global Programme, carefully review the lessons learned from the implementation of the current IUCN-Med model before decisions are made to engage in similar arrangements in other regions.

Upon request, IUCN-Med will be happy to share its experiences to facilitate positioning and programme development for example in the development of an IUCN programme in the Caribbean and/or for the Indian Ocean or in any other similar context.