
IUCN – The World Conservation Union

**The External Review of
the IUCN Programme**

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Preface

The terms of reference for this review say that it should be used as a way for IUCN to learn about itself. To this end, we have tried to make the review as participatory and interactive as we could. We are happy to say that the staff of the Secretariat, and those member organisations and Commission members whom we were able to meet, have also approached the review in that spirit.

We are grateful for the enthusiasm and the professionalism with which the IUCN family has engaged with us in the difficult work of this review. As we hope the report makes clear, we are impressed by the high scientific quality and the personal dedication that shine through the Union's work.

We are also grateful for the warm hospitality that we have received in many parts of the world in the course of the review. We have made many friends.

We hope now that the ideas we present in this report will be helpful as the Union tackles the urgent strategic and structural decisions that it needs to make in order to carry its quality and commitment through its second 50 years.

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Abbreviations

ARD	Asia Regional Directorate
BCIS	Biodiversity Conservation Information System
BPCD	Biodiversity Policy Co-ordination Division
BPP	Biodiversity Policy Programme
BRAO	Bureau Régional pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
EARO	Eastern Africa Regional Office
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EOP	Equal Opportunity Policy
EPCC	Extended Programme Committee of Council
ESU	Economic Services Unit
EU	European Union
FCP	Forest Conservation Programme
GBF	Global Biodiversity Forum
GBP	Global Biodiversity Project
GTP	Global Targeted Programme
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
IUCN-P	IUCN Pakistan
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NEDA	Netherlands Development Agency
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Development
ORMA	Oficina Regional para Meso América
PEBLDS	Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
PPTT	Planning and Programming Task Team
RAC	Regional Advisory Committee
RCF	Regional Conservation Forum
RCO	Regional Conservation Office
ROSA	Regional Office for Southern Africa
RP	Regional Programme
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
SSC	Species Survival Commission
SSEA	South and South East Asia
SUI	Sustainable Use Initiative
SUR	Oficina Regional para América del Sur
TOR	terms of reference
TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Fauna and Flora in International Commerce
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCC	World Conservation Congress
WCD	World Commission on Dams

Summary

IUCN is a unique and respected international organisation. It gains its strength from its membership - a world wide constituency of governments and NGOs that share the common mission of the Union. It has its technical base in thousands of conservation scientists who contribute voluntarily in global Commissions. It has a competent and dedicated Secretariat, serving, driving and delivering at global, regional and local levels.

IUCN is a good and important member of the world conservation community. Its work is essential. It maintains high professional quality, and its messages are balanced.

The complexity of the Union is its most precious asset but also its major liability. The richness of ideas, views, people, cultures and political systems in IUCN's everyday world must be balanced into a working organisation.

The review team has taken this as its primary challenge. How can the Union achieve tangible results in relation to its mission? How can the Union integrate and exploit the richness of its components? How can the Union retain its diversity and at the same time be manageable?

These questions have been asked many times and in many contexts by staff and management, members and Commissions. There are many good ideas, proposals and attempted answers. What has been lacking is leadership for reaching conclusions and for taking the requisite action. This has generated serious confusion, frustration and disorientation among management and staff at all levels. Thus, the high quality and intellectual capacity of the staff of the Union have not been used to their real potential.

The general impression of the review is that the Union is performing a great amount of good work. However, much of this work is done without using the many potential links in the Union; is scattered in many sometimes unrelated fields; and depends almost totally on the drive and commitment of the individuals involved. Good performance is usually achieved despite, rather than because of, the organisational structure of IUCN. The Union's 'programme' has tended to be a synthetic, *post hoc* rationalisation of ongoing activities. It has not provided a mechanism to link and synchronise priority activities with corresponding budgetary commitments.

We believe that the primary indicator of the usefulness of this review will be that it generates action. Therefore, besides reporting reflections on what we have seen and experienced through our journey in space and time, we make a number of straightforward proposals.

We believe that the answers to the problems outlined above lie in two major dimensions. The first dimension is the **framework**, from the mission to the individual activities, in which the directions, priorities and targets of the Union's programme evolve. The second dimension is the **interface and interaction** between the components of the Union - the members, Commissions and Secretariat - at local, regional and global level. The proposals made in this report aim mainly to develop and strengthen these dimensions of the Union.

We recommend a **framework** for the design and management of the Union's programme. The main elements of this framework are:

- the **distinctive core competencies** and comparative strengths of the Union in the conservation area, based on the scientific competence represented by the Commissions and the institutional competence represented by the membership;
- not more than six **knowledge management areas**, for developing and maintaining the distinctive competencies, for synthesising and dispersing good practice and excellence, for

assessing and providing professional capacity to programmes and projects and for servicing selected international institutions and conventions;

- not more than three **targeted global programmes**: concerted, Union wide, time limited undertakings, focusing on tangible mission related achievements;
- the **regional programmes**: undivided entities in their own right, reflecting the regions' contributions to the targeted global programmes as well as the regional priorities and demands;
- the **programme management** structure and process, with defined roles for the constituencies in the programme formulation and approval process.

We believe that IUCN should be structured into a strictly limited number of organisational and budgetary units, reflecting the framework outlined above.

Further, we recommend a number of measures for strengthening the **interaction** in the Union. The main proposals are:

- reinforcement of the **role of the regions** in programme development and programme implementation;
- intensified efforts for creating **partnership between Secretariat and members** for implementation of programmes and projects, including planned capacity building, targeting new members and quality assurance measures;
- institutionalising **regional governance** forums for dialogue and for approval of regional programmes;
- extension of the interval between **World Conservation Congresses** from three to five years, to leave space and time for action and implementation;
- **linking donor funding** of programme, planning and capacity building work directly with the regions;
- better **use of the competence and capacity of the Commission** members by educating staff, members and donors about the Commissions, and creating compensation arrangements for Commission members for work with Union programmes and projects;
- establishment of a **Commission for Business and Environment** to address the increased importance of the corporate sector in conservation.

We comment on a number of other central issues for IUCN, such as the strengthening of the **learning system, including monitoring and evaluation**; the **integration of socio-economic science and gender knowledge** into changing conservation science and practice; and the concept of multi-centre structure, for better use of the world wide resources of the Union.

Most of the proposals of the review, about clarity in objectives, concentration, prioritisation, and strong links between programming and budgeting, are related to good management of the Union's resources. However, limited funding remains a constraint on many attempts for improving impact and making full use of IUCN's potential. Dependence on supportive and flexible donor assistance will be of paramount importance for the next decade and particularly during the next programme period. We hope that our comments, proposals and suggested directions for the further development of the Union will help to justify continued donor commitment.

1. Introduction

1.1 Terms of reference

Following the external reviews of 1993 and 1996, IUCN and four core funding agencies (NEDA, NORAD, SIDA and SDC) decided to commission a further external review of the IUCN programme in 1999. The terms of reference for the study are wide ranging (see Annex 1). They require the review team to comment on overall programme focus, performance and impact, but to give particular attention to questions of programme development and management and to the processes of decentralisation and regionalisation that the Secretariat has undergone in recent years. The team was asked to base its observations on study of selected regional programmes, field projects and global programmes.

1.2 Approach

After substantial delays, a team of six people¹ was ultimately constituted to carry out the review. The team was only finalised after the review process had started. This imposed a considerable extra burden on team members, especially those who had to join the process after it had begun.

Our approach to the TOR has been to identify the key issues and challenges that we see facing the Union today and to assess these in a discussion that is structured to survey the broad range of IUCN's governance, components and activities. At the same time, we have given particular attention to two issues that the TOR rightly emphasises: programme development and management, and decentralisation and regionalisation.

However, we make no claim to have covered the immense variety and detail of IUCN's work in a comprehensive manner. This is not an exhaustive catalogue of the Union's strengths and weaknesses or a point-by-point evaluation of all its performance. It is an attempt to highlight what we consider to be the main issues that require attention now and in the coming years, illustrated by our observations on the few regions, themes and programmes that we have been able to investigate.

Nor do we offer to tell IUCN how to do its work. In many cases we can identify key issues or areas where change is required, but it is beyond our remit to spell out how that change should be accomplished. We submit this report in the hope that it will be one tool in the managed change process that the Union needs to undergo.

1.3 Activities

Four team members had been identified by the end of February 1999, and the team leader had undertaken several preliminary discussions with IUCN and the funding agencies. In early March, one team member attended a meeting on programme planning and monitoring and evaluation held at Gland. Later in the month, the four reviewers visited Gland for one week, for a first round of discussions with key Secretariat staff (including the new Director General) and with each other. It was decided that, due to delays in appointing the other two team members, field visits would have to be deferred by one month.

¹ Gabor Bruszt (Swedish institutional development and management specialist, ÅF International, South Africa), team leader; Naila Kabeer (Bangladeshi social scientist, Institute of Development Studies, U.K.); Bart Romijn (Dutch policy and institutional development specialist, AIDEnvironment, The Netherlands); Odd Terje Sandlund (Norwegian freshwater biologist, Norwegian Institute for Nature Research); Adelaida Semesi (Tanzanian coastal ecologist, Centre for Environment and Development Studies, Norwegian Agricultural University); Stephen Turner (British social scientist, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, seconded to University of the Western Cape, South Africa).

The main field work of the team was undertaken in May. Two members of the team made short visits to the Botswana country programme and the southern Africa regional programme. All six reviewers visited the South/South East Asia programme for two weeks in May. They visited the Asia Regional Directorate in Thailand, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. At various dates from March to May, two reviewers held discussions about the Europe programme in various parts of that continent.

The team worked at headquarters, and produced this report, between 1 and 11 June.

1.4 Our guiding principle: the distinctive character and quality of IUCN

Throughout this review we have been guided by our basic appreciation and interpretation of the distinctive character and quality of IUCN. It is easy for the uninitiated to think of the Union's Secretariat and the work that it does as being 'IUCN'. The truth is more complex, and richer in its depth and potential. Most fundamentally, of course, IUCN is a global Union of members (all institutions and organisations, governmental and non governmental). Supporting the Union with scientific expertise are the six Commissions, comprising thousands of individual volunteers. The Secretariat of staff employed by the Union was originally intended to be a service agency for the members, with the latter fulfilling the implementation role of pursuing the Union's objectives. Over the last 20 years or so, the Secretariat has taken over much of this implementation role – or has at least created that impression, by executing hundreds of local, regional and global projects and programmes.

The fundamental principle, however, is that IUCN comprises this interdependent trio of elements. They are sometimes described as a helix. The three strands of the helix should retain their mutual connection and dependence. Otherwise, the whole will not be more than the sum of the parts. IUCN must be more than an assemblage of apparently disparate elements. It must be a union of synergetic forces that add value by the special nature of their relationship to each other.

One of the key aspects of this special way of adding value is IUCN's ability to link local voices and global forums in the fields of nature conservation and sustainable development. Through its international membership it has an unparalleled depth of institutional capacity and social legitimacy as a global body. Another key aspect is the depth and range of scientific expertise provided by its Commissions, giving authority to its policy positions and potentially assuring technical quality in its programme execution.

It would be more straightforward to do an external review of the IUCN Secretariat. Instead, our review is guided by the composite triple character of the Union as a whole. One of our key concerns is that the Union retain this character and its unique potential to add value in conservation and development. As we shall show, this challenge requires more attention than it has received from IUCN in recent years.

1.5 How to act on this report

Both the Terms of Reference for this review and its principals - the IUCN Council and the donors - have requested forward orientation of its conclusions and recommendations. The review process has been designed to serve this purpose.

In our view, the most important indication of the usefulness of the review will be that it leads to action.

In the course of the review process, we have shared our findings, ideas and tentative recommendations with the management and staff of the Secretariat and with representatives of the donors. We hope that these discussions have given impetus to further reflections and action.

More specifically, the team leader will present the review to a meeting of the main donors on 16 June, and is invited as a resource person to the extended meeting of the Program Committee of Council in July.

We assume that the Director General will initiate an internal process for reflections and action on this report's conclusions and recommendations. This process would preferably take place in the context of the new Task Teams of the Secretariat.

We recommend that, based on these deliberations, a consolidated action plan should be developed and submitted, together with the Review Report, to the members of the Council.

We believe that, in most of the areas covered by our recommendations, the Director General has the clear mandate to initiate and implement action. The Committees of the Council (except the Programme Committee) would be able to deliberate in December on the review report and on the action taken by the Director General. Based on that, the Council would be able to submit its own report on the review to the World Conservation Congress.

Members of the review team, if so requested, would make themselves available for discussions with the Task Teams concerned. A follow up meeting with the assembled Task Teams in November could be a suitable time to review consolidated action.

We recommend to the donors that, after consideration of this report, they organise a one day meeting to discuss it and, in particular, to exchange views on those proposals that specifically concern their relations with the Union.

2. IUCN performance and impact

2.1 Programme implementation

2.1.1 The 1997-1999 Triennial Programme

Quite often, when we asked questions about the 1997-1999 Triennial Programme, IUCN staff answered that 'that isn't really a programme', or 'there is no Programme'. This is disturbing. Staff generally appear to feel that the Triennial Programme is not formulated in a way that makes it possible to use it as a guide for activities over the period. This may indicate poor structure and content in the programme document, or it may mean that the programming process did not involve staff enough to make them feel ownership of the result.

We find mixed quality in the Triennial Programme document. The introductory section contains a very clear and competent outline of key issues and IUCN's approach to them. It defines four primary goals, concerning:

- the functioning, conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and species (natural science aspects);
- the impact of human societies on ecosystems and species (social science aspects);
- the effect of policies, legislation, organisation, international agreements etc. on human impact on nature, and the development of tools to conserve biodiversity;

- encouraging, assisting and influencing societies to conserve biodiversity.

The introduction ends with three groups of priorities for the Union: programmatic; products and services; and institutional.

Priorities of the Triennial Programme, 1997-1999

Programmatic priorities

1. Management and use of natural resources in ways that favour ecological sustainability.
2. Promoting social, economic, political and institutional factors for conservation.
3. Reinforcing IUCN's advocacy role, particularly by strengthening the voice of its membership.
4. Giving a high profile to biodiversity issues.

Priorities for products and services

1. Analysis of data and trends on the state of species and ecosystems.
2. Global conservation policy development and advocacy.
3. Capacity building support in technical and institutional areas for the implementation of conservation policy and management options.
4. Access to networks, information, funding and policy forums.

Institutional priorities

1. Investment of more resources in the membership by promoting alliances and consultation between members and the Secretariat.
2. Investment of resources in Commissions and other networks, and integration of their activities into the Union's programme.
3. Development of capacities and structures.
4. Regionalisation and decentralisation.

In setting out the Global Programmes, however, the bulk of the document presents a very long list of objectives and activities with no linkage to personnel or budget. It contains the following 11 elements:

- global policy work, targeted mainly on global issues affecting prospects for conservation and sustainable development, such as global trade and debt conversion;
- environmental law, aiming at further development of national and international legal instruments;
- biodiversity policy: this includes 'new initiatives' such as increased Secretariat capacity in regional and country offices to help governments with biodiversity planning, as well as 'continuing support to the Union' in influencing global biodiversity processes;
- ecosystem management: strengthening IUCN members' and partners' capacities in the field of integrated ecosystem management;
- species survival work, supporting the objectives of the Species Survival Commission: assessment of status and threats, and development and execution of species conservation policies and initiatives;
- protected areas and natural heritage activities;
- the Sustainable Use Initiative (not to be confused with the subsequent round of Global Initiatives), whose objectives concern ecologically and socially beneficial uses of renewable resources, understanding sustainability and promoting it as a conservation strategy;
- 'strategies for sustainability', aimed at reviewing, developing and promoting these at local, national and regional levels;

- social policy work, aiming to promote policies and conditions that foster full social participation in conservation, and to strengthen the capacity of IUCN Secretariat and members to build equity and social concerns into their work;
- environmental education and communication;
- the work of TRAFFIC International, monitoring the trade in wild animals and plants, supporting CITES and associated legislation, and other measures to deter unsustainable trade in wildlife.

These elements are at different levels in a conceptual hierarchy and often overlap. They seem to be organised mainly to fit with the organisational and thematic structure of IUCN's Secretariat and Commissions, rather than to match the major challenges to which the Union's distinctive competencies could be addressed.

2.1.2 Implementation of the 1997-1999 Triennial Programme

Implementation of the triennial programme is summarised in semi-annual and annual reports (so far, up to the end of 1998) that have adopted a structure based on eight goals. To an extent these goals can be related to the four primary goals outlined for the triennial programme. Disentangling the progress of implementation of the Triennial Programme's various Global Programmes in terms of these eight goals is a puzzle.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that real, substantial, high quality progress has been made on many fronts in implementation of the current Triennial Programme. Supporting implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), for example, IUCN has provided advice on various aspects of national compliance to at least 25 countries in all regions. It has worked in many other pertinent areas, such as the development of environmental legislation, promoting south-south collaboration, the management of protected areas, and the development of environmental impact assessment capacity.

The eight goals defined in the Progress and Assessment Reports, 1997 and 1998

1. Develop national and local capacity to conserve and manage natural resources sustainably.
2. Develop end guide policies for sustainable development.
3. Influence societies.
4. Support the development of IUCN members' institutional capacity.
5. Synthesise, understand and disseminate information on ecosystems and species.
6. Identify and analyse how human behaviour affects the functioning and sustainable use of natural resources.
7. Develop IUCN's internal capacity to pursue its Mission.
8. Establish an effective system of monitoring and evaluation.

IUCN makes a major contribution to the development of international environmental agreements. After the achievements of earlier years, less effort has been put into new agreements during the current triennium, although this was identified as one of the major activities for the 'Global Policy' global programme. Some work has been done with regard to the World Trade Organisation, however. There are growing challenges to be faced in developing the trade aspects of environmental conventions and in integrating environmental issues in the regulation of international trade.

IUCN continues to produce high quality publications on the science and management of biodiversity, mainly reaching a professional readership. However, success in influencing societies depends largely on reaching out to the general public and the corporate sector. Efforts in this regard have increased during this triennium, which included the publicity surrounding the Union's 50th anniversary. A Communication Co-ordinators' Network of regional and headquarters Secretariat staff is helping IUCN offices around the world actively to develop the Union's public profile.

At local, regional and global levels, IUCN members are becoming more involved in the Union's work. Direct capacity building efforts for members and partners are promoting this trend.

IUCN's programme activities, and the work of the Commissions, continue to produce essential information and understanding on ecosystems and species. The Biodiversity Conservation Information System is an important element in the dissemination of this information. IUCN is also participating actively in the Global Invasive Species Programme and other initiatives to tackle invasive species.

The impacts of human societies on the functioning and sustainable use of natural resources are being addressed in many ways. The Sustainable Use Initiative is important in this respect, with publication of the SUI Technical Series as one channel for dissemination of information. Local community management of natural resources in general, and protected areas in particular, is addressed by the Social Policy Group, by the Forest Programme and by the World Commission on Protected Areas, in collaboration with both local and international members.

These are a few examples of the large volume of highly relevant and typically effective work undertaken by IUCN.

2.2 The impact of IUCN

Our evaluation of IUCN's impact is mainly based on the information and experience that we were able to gain during short visits to headquarters and a few regional and country offices. We have looked in particular at two of the global programmes: the Biodiversity Policy Programme (BPP) and the Forest Conservation Programme (FCP).

2.2.1 Local and regional impact

Although we present them separately here, IUCN's local/regional impact and its global impact are bound to be linked. Activities and processes at the local level usually feed into the global level and constitute an important part of the basis for IUCN's global role in the environmental field. There are varying time lags before a local action can influence the global processes, but it is being appreciated more and more that local actions can have a large global impact (the butterfly effect).

The many regional and local impacts of IUCN activities can be put into four broad categories:

- awareness raised and knowledge increased in the field of natural resources conservation and the environment in general;
- action stimulated for safeguarding the environment through IUCN members and the public;
- support to governments to prepare National Conservation Strategies, Biodiversity Action Plans, State of the Environment reports, management plans for forest reserves and marine parks, formulation of environmental policies, regional EIA programmes etc., leaving both tangible products and increased capacity;
- capacity building of members through training, workshops, project development and planning, and joint implementation of projects.

Some concrete examples of these activities and impacts during recent years are as follows:

- in order to support members and partners, IUCN ROSA negotiated numerous small contracts to fund workshops and networking. Members in Southern Africa can now access information easily through the established electronic newsletter. 24% of project money was channelled to members and partners;
- IUCN Pakistan (IUCN-P) has led the preparation of the state of the forest policy and institutional framework, and of Provincial and District Conservation Strategies. It has made major efforts towards the protection of markhor, snow leopard and ibex and has contributed

(with the assistance of the Species Survival Commission) to the CITES decision on trophy hunting in Pakistan;

- IUCN-P is now recognised as one of the strongest environmental institutions in the country. It has good technical strength in both local and international staff. It is well connected: internationally and locally, it can deliver. Most donors view IUCN-P as a partner in development;
- due to their good track record, most IUCN country offices have memoranda of understanding with Ministries or Departments of Environment or Natural Resources setting out the types of support they can provide on technical issues;
- IUCN Sri Lanka was central in formulating the project on ex-situ and in-situ conservation of plants important in traditional medicine. The project is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine and involves ten villages, universities, botanical gardens and NGOs as well as the IUCN secretariat;
- in Vietnam, IUCN has assisted in capacity building in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (the state member), and has contributed to the development of the National Environmental Agency of that Ministry;
- IUCN Vietnam also collaborates closely with local NGOs that participate in the village level implementation of IUCN projects, thereby developing competence;
- regular contact meetings are arranged for the international members with project activity in Vietnam, promoting collaboration and co-ordination;
- IUCN Vietnam has led a recent review of aid in the environmental sector in that country. This gives the country office a good position to co-ordinate and work strategically, if resources are made available;
- in regional and country offices, expatriate staff on relatively short contracts have traditionally been a problem in relation to the sustainability and building of local competence and capacity. When the expatriate leaves, the experience leaves too. At the same time, the different experience, network and approaches provided by expatriates are invaluable parts of IUCN's assets. In the Vietnam office, all expatriate staff (except the country director) work with local counterparts. This is a very important part of local capacity building.

At the regional level, IUCN is in a unique position to address environmental problems that can only be solved through collaboration across national borders. Transboundary catchment area management, such as the wetlands management initiative in the lower Mekong (South East Asia), or the Zambezi wetlands project (Southern Africa), are examples where IUCN's status as an international Union that has the confidence of all parties has been well exploited. Management and sustainable use of transboundary freshwater resources, e.g. freshwater fisheries, is another example. IUCN has in recent years had an important role in environmental and resources management in Lake Victoria, which is shared among three countries in Eastern Africa. Planning and management of transboundary protected areas was pointed out several times by our informants in Southern Africa and South/South East Asia as one important area where the Union could have great impact. The further regionalisation of IUCN, and the development of regional programmes, should provide good opportunities for impact in transboundary conservation and biodiversity management issues.

2.2.2 Global impact

IUCN has a unique structure, with over 900 member institutions and organisations all over the world, several thousand professionally leading Commission members, and a Secretariat staff that includes some of the world's strongest conservation expertise. This gives the Union a tremendous potential for

influence and impact on conservation and sustainable use of natural resources at the global, regional, national and local levels.

This potential is realised in various ways:

- IUCN brings people and organisations together to resolve critical issues. Among recent examples are the World Commission on Dams (WCD), which was established in 1998 as a result of collaboration with the World Bank; the African Elephant Dialogue, to support CITES discussions; advice to the World Bank on its forestry policy; and organising the Global Biodiversity Forum;
- IUCN deploys scientific knowledge to support conservation and sustainable use. Examples are the development and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the Ramsar and CITES Conventions; and the system for assessment of threatened species;
- IUCN forges links between the policy and practice of conservation. Examples are continuous contributions to the workings of international conventions; assistance to countries in the development of national conservation strategies and national biodiversity action plans; and working with local communities and member organisations to test solutions to challenges at the local level;
- IUCN strengthens the capacities of countries and NGOs to manage resources in a sustainable manner. Developing the capacity of local NGOs is an important contribution to the development of civil society;
- IUCN builds environmental awareness, through its high quality publications and capacity building activities with members and partners;
- IUCN advocates the importance of the environment at local, national, regional and global levels, and in many fora and sectors of society where this is new on the agenda;
- IUCN analyses and disseminates information on conservation and development, e.g., through establishing the Biodiversity Conservation Information System (BCIS) together with Commissions and members; and the Environmental Law Information Service, together with UNEP.

Over the last ten years, IUCN's global impact has been particularly related to the development, adoption and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). During the 1997-99 period, assistance to countries in the implementation of the CBD has been a major activity. This has been related to capacity building, assistance in developing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and assistance to countries in their preparation for Conference of the Parties (COP) and Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) meetings. Although many of these activities are performed at a national or regional level, they have a significant impact at the global level, as improved capacity at the national level enables countries to take a more active part in the development of policies, guidelines and protocols under the CBD, and generally in the international implementation of the Convention. This is particularly important for developing countries which otherwise may play a passive role in the discussions. The Global Biodiversity Forum is also a very important element in this respect (section 2.2.3).

It is quite clear, however, that the focus of IUCN has moved increasingly from the global to the regional or national levels. It is necessary to maintain the balance between a global perspective and local policies and action, and to provide mechanisms to ensure that local experiences are brought into regional and global discussions.

The global programmes are intended to carry local, national and regional experiences into global policies, as well as to help the local and national level to implement global conventions and policies. In this regard, we will comment on the Biodiversity Policy and Forest Conservation Programmes.

2.2.3 The Biodiversity Policy Programme

The Biodiversity Policy Programme (BPP) constitutes the major activity of the IUCN Biodiversity Policy Co-ordination Division (BPCD). The BPCD is the focal point for IUCN biodiversity policy, and is funded approximately 50/50 by programme/project support from SDC and the Union's general programme support (core funding). The annual budget for 1998 was approximately Sfr 700,000. The IUCN-SDC Global Biodiversity Project Phase II, 1996-99, (the GBP) is a part of the IUCN-SDC framework agreement.

The BPCD partners in this programme are five Regional Conservation Offices (RCOs): South America (SUR), West Africa (BRAO), Southern Africa (ROSA), East Africa (EARO), and South and South East Asia (SSEA), together with the Economic Services Unit (ESU) at headquarters. The SDC support contributes to five staff positions at headquarters and significant staff time from the RCO partners and ESU. 'The Economics of Biological Diversity' used to be part of the BPCD, but has been converted into the Economic Services Unit (ESU). In close collaboration with BPCD, the ESU is responsible for the Economics of Biological Diversity project, Phase II, which is funded by the SDC as another element of the IUCN-SDC framework agreement.

The BPP presently has three major activities to achieve the goal 'to encourage governments, NGOs and other stakeholders to take practical steps to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and to ensure that: (1) biodiversity is protected throughout the world; (2) biological resources are used sustainably; and (3) the benefits of using these resources are shared equitably.' These activities are:

1. to influence the process under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by developing and promoting IUCN policies;
2. to maintain the secretariat for the Global Biodiversity Forum (GBF);
3. to support regional implementation of the CBD.

The process under the CBD includes, for example, prioritising themes to be discussed at COP and SBSTTA meetings; developing protocols and guidelines on various aspects of the wide framework convention; and developing interactions with other international conventions. The GBF and IUCN's activities to support implementation constitute important elements that feed into the CBD process. One component of this process is the development of background papers and briefs on the upcoming issues. The Commissions are also involved in this process. Which Commission, and the extent of the involvement, depend on the subject of the upcoming issues.

An internal BPCD assessment of IUCN's policy development and advocacy process for the COP-4 (Bratislava, 1998) of CBD notes that IUCN recommendations were successfully incorporated in six decisions of the COP-4, for example on alien species, inland waters, a clearing house mechanism, and impact assessment. Mixed success was noted regarding five decisions (e.g., on forests and protected areas). IUCN's recommendations were not adopted in two decisions (financial resources, and identification and monitoring). The results might have been improved if more IUCN staff had been present to provide better capacity not only during GBF and the first days of the COP meeting, but also during the final negotiations of the COP-4. The internal assessment points out that there is an imbalance between efforts on policy formulation and those on delivery, with too little effort being placed on the latter.

The GBF has become a very important and popular event for NGOs and other IUCN members and partners to discuss issues of relevance to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. In recent years, the GBF has been arranged in connection with the COPs and SBSTTAs of the CBD, and with the COPs of the Desertification Convention, the Ramsar and CITES Conventions, and the Climate Change Convention. The GBF serves many purposes, e.g., involving members and partners in discussions and policy formulation on relevant issues as they develop, improving interactions between IUCN secretariat and members, and building capacity among members. In some regions, regional Biodiversity Forums have been arranged.

The activities and priorities of the BPP are to a large extent based on inputs from the RCOs. The final work plan and budget are developed in collaboration with them. There are budget lines for BPCD, RCO and ESU staff and operational expenses. For many of the activities, additional counterpart funding is sought locally in the regions. **This close collaboration with regions develops one of IUCN's major strengths, which is the potential to translate local and regional experiences into global policy.** It is also an adequate response to recommendations in this regard that were made by the 1996 external review.

The BPCD activity is to a very large extent driven by demand from RCOs, members and other partners. In addition, the recommendations from the CBD COPs to a large extent determine the priorities expressed by countries as well as NGOs. However, the interactive mode of work between headquarters, RCOs and members enables IUCN to influence the priorities of the CBD.

The BPP has found a good balance between global policy work and practical implementation of the CBD. The experiences and priorities of the regions are fed into policy development, and the activities at global level, in particular the GBF, involve members and secretariat staff at all levels, helping to develop capacity and competence.

2.2.4 The Forest Conservation Programme

The Forest Conservation Programme (FCP) works according to a strategic plan developed in 1997-98 by the IUCN Forest Advisory Group. This group comprises individuals external to IUCN, along with IUCN staff. The goal of the programme is: 'Maintenance and, where necessary, restoration of forest ecosystems to promote conservation and sustainable management of forests, and equitable distribution of a wide range of forest goods and services.'

Five objectives are defined in the strategic plan:

1. encourage the establishment and effective management of ecologically representative forest protected area systems that take account of connectivity and robustness with respect to climate change and other stresses, equitable distribution of benefits and costs and participation of key stakeholders;
2. encourage the development and implementation of socially beneficial and economically viable forest management outside protected areas as an integral part of an ecosystem based approach to landscape management;
3. encourage the development of environmentally sound, economically viable and equitable reforestation and forest restoration programmes;
4. identify cross-sectoral impacts (particularly those associated with over-consumption, pollution, climate change and perverse economic incentives) and harness opportunities for enhancing forest conservation and sustainable use;
5. implement an effective system for managing and evaluating the Forest Conservation Programme.

The programme has been very drastically decentralised, so that at present only three out of approximately 20 secretariat staff involved in programme work are at headquarters. Most are in regional offices (ORMA, SUR, SSEA, EARO, BRAO). There is a boreal and temperate forest co-ordinator in Montreal, and two programme staff in Russia working on boreal forest issues. This puts great expectations on the headquarters staff to build and maintain the FCP network, and to encourage and develop interregional networking. The professional and technical backstopping from headquarters staff must necessarily be given less priority. FCP appears to be succeeding in this task.

As there is no specific international convention on forests, the situation for FCP's global activities is different from that of the Biodiversity Policy Programme. There is a whole range of international processes going on relating to forest conservation and wise use, of which the Intergovernmental

Forum on Forests (IFF) may be the most important. A prominent question in this process is whether an international convention on forests should be developed, or the CBD and other conventions provide the necessary international agreements in this respect. One might expect IUCN to take a clear stand on this question. However, as major state members of IUCN have directly opposing views on the matter (e.g. Canada and the U.S.), the FCP has chosen to work on providing state of the art technical advice based on the widest possible experience into the international processes. FCP engagement in international political and professional meetings is prioritised on the basis of themes rather than events.

The FCP works with several of the IUCN Commissions, with variable success. Their contact with the World Commission on Protected Areas has been very good. The recent collaboration with the Centre (and Commission) on Environmental Law has resulted in good publications on international legal matters related to forest conservation. These publications are a very important input to, for example, the IFF process. At the other end of the scale, we were told that the Commission on Ecosystem Management has not shown interest in forestry matters.

The FCP is an example of a very decentralised programme, still co-ordinated from headquarters. Its mode of work in promoting the concept of 'healthy forests and healthy societies' places different demands on the staff co-ordinating the FCP at headquarters from those faced by the co-ordinating unit of the Biodiversity Policy Programme. Considering the different nature of these two programmes' goals and objectives, and the differences in the relative weight given to global and regional or local activities, the differences in organisation and mode of operation are appropriate.

2.3 Response to previous reviews

The 1996 external review looked back at the recommendations made by its predecessor in 1993 and reported 'some' to 'impressive' progress on six of eight key areas. Two problematic issues were the continuing 'Northern' bias and gender imbalance in headquarters staffing; and a failure to improve 'the major weaknesses in IUCN's financial situation'.

The 1996 review made eight major recommendations. We summarise here our observations on the extent to which IUCN has succeeded in implementing them.

IUCN programmes must sharpen its focus on activities at the country, regional and global levels where the entire IUCN (membership, commissions and secretariat) can exercise excellence within the... core programme focus. The 1996 review recommended that this focus address activities in which IUCN has an established reputation of first class professionalism: national parks and protected areas and species conservation, wetlands, forest conservation, marine and coastal areas, and with some flexibility for addressing additional ecosystems approaches where IUCN may have a clear comparative advantage from a scientific and technical perspective.

In this review, we shall be making a stronger version of the same recommendation. Little progress has been made in affirming IUCN's core competencies and focusing the Union's work on them. Nor has IUCN accomplished the 1996 recommendation of focus on work where interaction between the three 'pillars' can be maximised.

The second 1996 recommendation called for more bottom up programming... more of a seamless interaction between regional programmes and the headquarters technical programmes. They should be merged into a more integrated programming exercise... In order to carry out these functions effectively, IUCN must retain a strong senior-level corps of technical and policy expertise at headquarters.

In 1999, we shall argue that, although some countries and regions do have sound programming arrangements in place, the 'seamless interaction' that was called for in 1996 is still lacking. The

process of decentralisation and regionalisation created substantial turbulence in the staffing pattern at headquarters during 1997-98. Decentralisation has not always been targeted to ensure that the most useful range of senior expertise was retained. The Regional Offices are resolute in their demand for a small but professionally strong headquarters that deploys high level technical and policy expertise. Deliberate efforts to achieve that sort of headquarters have not been made during the period between the external reviews.

Thirdly, the 1996 review called for IUCN to become more of a learning institution... IUCN has to excel as a knowledge-based institution... IUCN should make more effective the process of preparing annual programme assessments... An IUCN-specific monitoring and evaluation system should be designed and incorporated into programme and project designs on a regular basis...Regular Union-wide reviews on ongoing and completed activities should be institutionalised and regional thematic review workshops should be encouraged.

The verbal commitment to a 'learning institution' remains strong in IUCN and a start has been made at headquarters on building a 'knowledge system' on the inter- and intranets. But the tangible progress made has been modest, partly because the funding allocated to the 'knowledge system' initiative is extremely limited. The production of six-monthly progress and assessment reports is a step in the right direction, however. Good progress has been made on developing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) procedures and skills, although that progress is conspicuously lacking at global level - partly because very little money has been allocated to global level M&E. Each year a wide range of project, programme and thematic reviews are undertaken at various places and levels within IUCN – often at the instigation of funding agencies. But they generally address the activities of only one 'pillar' of the Union: usually the Secretariat, sometimes a Commission. Explicitly Union-wide reviews, as called for in 1996, have not been institutionalised. Furthermore, no systematic efforts are made to extract and distribute the lessons learned from the numerous review documents. It has been difficult for us to get easy access to such documents, indicating that their active use is limited. Nor have we been able to find any assessment of the progress made in responding to the recommendations of the previous external review.

The fourth recommendation proposes that IUCN, on the basis of the more seasoned experiences of its Wetlands and the Forest Conservation Programmes, explore how some of the elements of the Sustainable Use Initiative may be included in order to form the basis for more explicit operational guidance to the field offices and to the National Committees, as well as to the headquarters, on programme and project design.

We have not seen any specific indication that this has happened. The Sustainable Use Initiative (SUI) appears to have developed into a programme of its own, although the network of experts that it has developed and maintained gives it something of the character of a Commission. In the most recent IUCN budget report the SUI is grouped together with the Species Survival Commission, indicating that it is perceived as the programme associated with the SSC. It could be argued that sustainable use is an inherent part of ecosystem management. This raises the question of how cross-cutting concepts are best internalised in the various activities of the Union.

The 1996 external review's fifth recommendation concerned IUCN's operationally linked policy work, which the review supported with the proposal that IUCN's comparative advantage in conducting policy work remain within those areas where it builds on its own operational experiences, the work of the commissions, and where it can build on close interaction with its global membership.

This recommendation is rather similar to the first. As we shall argue in this report, not enough focus has been achieved in this regard. Performance in integrating the contributions of the Commissions and the membership in IUCN policy work has been uneven.

Next, the 1996 review recommended that *a separate study be initiated on the commission structure that can best harness the potential of the large voluntary network of experts associated with IUCN – and how the activities of the commissions may be able to enhance more directly the activities to be undertaken under IUCN Programmes.*

This study has not been done, although a number of individual Commission reviews and strategic plans have been undertaken. Overall, IUCN's Commission structure and its approach to the role of the Commissions have not evolved over the past three years.

The seventh 1996 recommendation concerned *IUCN's cost structure. It is of utmost importance for IUCN's future that it can exercise tight cost control on its global administrative system.* The reviewers called for special attention to three sets of cost relationships: *between unrestricted income and the overall cost of governance... [secondly,] between the sum of unrestricted income and general programme support, and, overall headquarters costs, including specific management costs.* They pointed out that the headquarters budget needed to be made as lean as possible while *safeguarding the core substantive functions needed to be performed at headquarters... The third cost category to be monitored specifically relates to those headquarters costs which are mutually accepted to be directly attributable to serving specific needs of projects being handled through regional and country offices.*

The Secretariat is now undertaking a major re-engineering of its financial systems. The new systems will make it easier to monitor cost relations and cost efficiency. Also, service from headquarters to regional programmes and projects is increasingly taking place on an internal consultancy basis, with headquarters charging standard rates for its services. This system is somewhat cumbersome, but will increase cost efficiency in the use of headquarters experts.

Lastly, the 1996 review argued that *it is very important that IUCN can articulate a coherent overall funding strategy for the Union... New innovative funding mechanisms should be tried and tested...*

Three years later, we do not find evidence of a coherent overall funding strategy for the Union. Nor do many new, innovative funding mechanisms seem to have been tried and tested. (What experiments there have been have had little success.) Some regions, such as Southern Africa, and some sectors, such as forests, report no problem in securing funding. Overall, however, the 'major weaknesses in IUCN's financial situation' to which the 1993 review referred persist in 1999. As we shall show later, the donor base has not been further diversified, the dependence on projects and overheads generated out of projects remains and no significant effort has been made to extend non-donor related financial sources. However, the issue is on the agenda of the management team and recruitment of a business development specialist is ongoing.

3. Programme development and management

3.1 Progress made

Whether IUCN can contribute to the achievement of its vision depends most fundamentally on the quality and effectiveness of its programme development and management. This is therefore a central concern for the external review. To address it, we begin by describing the progress made in programme development over recent years.

Concern about the structure and coherence of programming has been building in the Union for some time. We noted the issues raised in this regard by the previous external review in 1996 (section 2.3). The Programme Committee of Council took note of these concerns and has referred to the issue many

times in its meetings over the last three years. The first tangible step forward was the Committee's identification of eight overarching programme goals, in December 1997 (section 2.1.2). These goals were used in organising presentation and reporting of the Union programme for 1998 and 1999. But this has been widely recognised as a synthetic process: essentially, a *post hoc* rationalisation of what IUCN was doing anyway, marshalling all the various activities, programmes and initiatives under one or other of the eight goals.

More systematic attempts to introduce coherent practice have been made with regard to monitoring and evaluation since 1996. This work has inevitably confronted the need for a systematic rationale, framework and procedures in programme development and management, and has been able to contribute to enhancement of these areas at the regional level. Impact at the global level has been more limited, as we explain in section 3.8. But a March 1999 M&E meeting in Gland was partly diverted from its original purposes to address global and regional programming issues as well. This was a useful, if painful, step towards the necessary integration of programming and M&E functions. The recent combination of these functions in a single management 'task team' (one of six such teams introduced by the new Director General in May 1999) is a further useful step in the right direction.

Due to the decision to hold the next World Conservation Congress in 2000 rather than 1999, there will be a gap of one year between the 1997-1999 triennial programme and its successor. The Amman Congress is now getting closer, however, and various agencies within the Union have begun to look at programming questions more urgently. There have been repeated references in many quarters to the lack of explicitly reasoned linkages between IUCN's mission and its programme content. Missing programme elements, according to the summary of the March 1999 M&E meeting, are *Strategic Objectives/Results (What do we want to achieve)* and their related *performance criteria*; as well as *Strategic objectives of regions, programmes and Commissions* and their *performance criteria*. There is *no agreed to and rational priority setting process – how do we decide what is critical?* There are *no higher level strategic goals and objectives*; [the eight] *current goals are not goals but lower level activities or means to achieve something higher*. These weaknesses lead many IUCN staff to argue that, in the substantive sense, there is still no IUCN Programme. There is no coherent structure or satisfactory rationale for what the Union does.

At a Council retreat in April 1999, an IUCN vision statement was developed and a series of 'strategic results areas' identified. 'The strategic roles of IUCN' were also debated, leading to consensus on many of the principles we advance in sections 3.2 and 3.3. The next step will be a meeting in July 1999 that will attempt a more systematic bridging of the current gap between IUCN's mission and its activities. An abbreviated version of the situation analysis techniques will be applied in order to rationalise a series of strategic goals and objectives into which a filtered and prioritised version of the current portfolio of activities can be fitted. This will form the basis for the process of consultation and preparation with IUCN structures and constituencies that must precede the Amman Congress.

3.2 Programming elements

Our terms of reference ask us to recommend how to improve IUCN's programming framework. Against the background of the recent experience that we describe above, the programming principles that we now propose are unlikely to come as a great surprise to IUCN.

We recommend that IUCN programme development should be based on the three fundamental elements set out in section 3.2, and that it should comprise the three basic components set out in section 3.3.

3.2.1 Vision and mission

IUCN has a broad mission, and its Council recently developed a challenging vision statement. They have three dimensions: nature conservation, sustainable use of natural resources (commonly interpreted in IUCN as sustainable development),

IUCN's vision

A just world that values and conserves nature.

and social equity. The Union has correctly realised that no one aspect of its mission – and certainly not nature conservation – can be accomplished if the others are not successfully addressed.

3.2.2 Distinctive core competencies

While recognising the interdependence of the three dimensions of its vision and mission, IUCN must also realise that it will not add value or achieve any part of its mission if it spreads itself too thin. It must define its distinctive, core competencies, and stick to them for a convincing period. We call these IUCN's *distinctive* core competencies because they must be linked to the distinctive character and quality of the Union (section 1.4). They must be **rooted** in the scientific and institutional capacity of the Commissions and the membership: not in the staff of the Secretariat.

IUCN's mission

The objectives of IUCN shall be to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

Definition of these core competencies must include specification of those potentially relevant areas of work that are excluded. This is not to say that IUCN should freeze its skills and paradigms within fixed confines indefinitely. Conservation and development concerns are dynamic, and the Union's core competencies will evolve. But that evolution should be a measured, reasoned process rather than a perpetual state of motion. If IUCN determines that it needs to work in a new area, it should do so after careful review of the capacities of others to do the work, and a decision that those capacities are inadequate. It should then engage in a carefully structured process to build a new distinctive core competency. This will mean devoting substantial and sustained resources to the required capacity building, in membership and Commissions as well as the Secretariat.

Despite the massively expanded execution role that the Secretariat has taken on over the last 20 years, its core function remains service and facilitation for the distinctive competencies of the Commissions and the membership in jointly addressing a limited number of core concerns. The design and delivery of the Union's programme should reflect this. So should the structure and purpose of funding agencies' support to IUCN.

3.2.3 Knowledge management areas

The fundamental component and purpose of IUCN's programme should be to manage and deploy the Union's distinctive competencies – scientific knowledge and institutional capacity – in the service of societies' efforts to achieve the sort of world IUCN sees in its vision. These competencies should be organised in a limited number of thematic knowledge management areas. The purpose of the knowledge management areas, as the heart of the Union's ability, is to synthesise and disseminate best practice; to assess and provide professional capacity to programmes and projects; and to service selected international institutions and processes.

The 'knowledge' to be managed in these groupings is not just scientific data. It includes all the fields of technical, socio-economic and institutional knowledge and ability that the Union has at its disposal, as well as the learning capacity that it should have in these fields. We do not presume to advise IUCN on how to constitute these groups. What we do plainly urge is that there be a limited number of them.

3.3 Programme components

Building on the three fundamental elements outlined above, the IUCN programme should have the following three basic components.

3.3.1 Targeted global programmes

Drawing upon its distinctive core competencies, the Union should be committed to two or three clear and challenging targeted global programmes, whose achievement would bring the world significantly closer to IUCN's vision. Programmes towards these targets should be time bound. For example, each

World Conservation Congress (section 5.2) could endorse a maximum of three global targets with the intention that they be achieved by the next Congress. Such targets should of course be clearly specified, and progress towards them should be measurable.

What might a targeted global programme be? The simplest example would be work towards some prominent international resolution – the signature of a new global convention on a key conservation issue, or a major regulatory or programmatic decision by an existing global forum or authority. Much IUCN work is already done within such existing global frameworks. But it may be possible to specify important new decisions to be taken within those frameworks, and endorsed by their highest authorities, that would push achievement of IUCN's mission prominently forward. It is quite likely that such a target could be identified in the Union's ambitions for achievement under the Convention on Biological Diversity, for example. Major policy and regulatory decisions by the World Trade Organisation are another possibility.

3.3.2 Business plans for the knowledge management areas

The Secretariat should prepare a three year business plan for each of the maximum six knowledge management areas in the IUCN programme. The key elements of these business plans would be:

- arrangements for the maintenance and development of the relevant distinctive core competencies of the Union, in collaboration with Commissions and members;
- plans for the synthesis and dissemination of the best practice developed by the Union in the knowledge management area through the implementation of IUCN's projects and programmes;
- deployment of professional expertise from the Secretariat, from Commissions and from members to the Union's projects and programmes;
- service from the knowledge management area to global or regional institutions and procedures to which the Union is committed, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

3.3.3 Regional programmes

We endorse the process of regionalisation to which IUCN has committed itself. Much has been achieved in that process. Although much remains to be done (section 4.1), there is no turning back from its key, and appropriate, result: that the regional programmes are now the backbone of the Union's work and should be the primary determinant of the direction taken by the Union's global effort. This is not to detract from the critical importance of global action on a small planet. Rather, it emphasises the central need for vertical coherence in IUCN's programming.

Where the requisite capacity exists in the Secretariat, regional programmes should be fully fledged, self-standing components of the overall IUCN programme. Regional programmes should include:

- regional contributions to the targeted global programmes: a specification of the contribution that IUCN's distinctive core competencies in the region can make to the targeted efforts that have been identified at the global level;
- targeted regional programmes, having the same function at regional level that the targeted global programmes have for the Union as a whole;
- other regional activities within the Union's defined areas of distinctive core competence, responding to locally specific priorities and demands.

At the regional and country levels, IUCN is closer to the societies it seeks to serve. We have noted, and we endorse, the way in which the Union often feels itself part of local societies, and obliged to try to address their local needs. It is impractical and wrong for the Union to adhere rigidly to its own

internally determined priorities and programmes at these levels. A further key quality of IUCN's regional programming must therefore be space for strategic reaction to regionally or locally expressed needs – within, and only within, the areas of distinctive core competency that IUCN has defined for itself.

In future Global Programme documents, IUCN should present each fully fledged regional programme as it stands, rather than mixing them all together into an integrated 'programme', as in the 1999 Programme document.

The next Global Programme should identify an additional group of regional programmes that will be built to full capacity over the programme period, and commit resources for that purpose. As we point out in section 4.2, most of the regional programmes are still gravely lacking in structure, content and management. Building a feasible number of these programmes to their full potential is an important priority for the Union.

3.4 Programming issues

3.4.1 Priorities and budgets

If IUCN is to survive as a respected, funded contributor to its vision of the future, its programme must be clear, focused and manageable. It must be possible to make budgetary allocations on the basis of thematic priority rather than structural imperatives. A fragmented organisational and budgetary structure is bound to mean that the allocation of resources is mainly determined by the need to get at least some money into each of those many places. The structure and its internal politics dominate the budget, rather than the organisation's choices about the kinds of work that it most needs to do.

We therefore recommend that, at global and regional levels, IUCN be structured into a strictly limited number of organisational and budgetary units, reflecting the distinctive core competency areas of the Union and its two or three targeted programmes.

If that is done, it will be possible for resources to be allocated on the basis of issues and their priority – and the organisation as a whole will be coherent, manageable and convincing to those who provide the resources. If it is not done, the Union will drift and is likely to disintegrate: organisationally, thematically and financially.

We are aware that the current fragmented organisational and budgetary structure of the IUCN programme may offer a certain kind of funding 'advantage'. Approaches can be made to donors for many separate packages of funding for the many separate projects and programmes, thereby raising the total amount of donor support that is secured. If this incoherent structure is rationalised into fewer programming and budgetary units, the fear may arise that this sort of funding opportunism could be curtailed. It would. We believe that funding agencies will support the kind of rationalisation that we propose – not because they want to spend less on IUCN's mission, but because they will agree that it makes for more coherent, measurable and effective programme performance.

We recommend that, for their part, these funding agencies should try to reassure IUCN that any reduction in the number of budget lines or programme areas will not mean a reduction in their total levels of support. If possible, the donors should reward IUCN for this enhanced programming by increasing the resources they provide.

3.4.2 Space for new ideas

All the programming principles that we propose revolve around focus and clarity. This does not mean structural or conceptual immobility. Part of IUCN's critical keenness must be its ability to think innovatively into new issues and areas, and across existing sectoral or thematic boundaries. IUCN

must have the resources and the structural mechanisms to give space to new ideas. But without restricting creativity, these mechanisms must provide for clear and sequenced choices about what to do with new issues and ideas: stop and absorb the lessons learned; acknowledge that the concept or issue is marginal to distinctive core competencies and best addressed by others; decide to build current core competencies in the direction of the new issue; or, most rarely, decide on major scientific and institutional innovation within the Union – which would normally imply abandoning other distinctive core competencies.

In all scenarios, the basic principle must be flexible support to a limited number of new ventures at any time, linked to the ability to stop soon and decide – not to let new ideas drift on and become programmes by default. The knowledge management areas should provide the framework, the flexibility and the discipline for the creative thinking and thematic exploration that IUCN will always need. Their budgets should make allowance for this sort of innovative work.

The current series of Global Initiatives were meant to break down thematic barriers within the Secretariat and to promote cross-thematic, interdisciplinary work. They have not been very successful in this regard. Although some interesting and valuable work has been done in some of them, the Global Initiatives were too quickly institutionalised into an extra bureaucratic and budgetary layer. They were often confusing in their apparent overlaps with and duplication of the work of existing global and regional programmes.

We therefore recommend that the Global Initiatives be terminated by mid 2000 (or the end of 1999 where feasible). In closing the Global Initiatives, IUCN should specify what it has learned and achieved in each. It should explain whether and how it intends to build the work further by transferring it into one of the knowledge management areas that we propose as the inter-thematic platform for applying and growing the Union's distinctive core competencies.

3.5 Roles in programme management

It is not our remit to try and specify the details of how IUCN should put our recommended programming principles and structures into the practice. By way of illustration, however, we include this table of possible steps and responsibilities for developing the IUCN programme:

Management or governance body	Task
Planning and Programming Task Team (PPTT)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop ideas, prepare outlines for Global Targeted Programmes (GTP) to be prioritised and selected by EPCC. 2. For GTP selected by EPCC (above), develop complete Programme descriptions (including budgets etc.) for discussion and adoption by EPCC. 3. Co-ordinate with and inform RCOs.
Regional Conservation Offices (RCOs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop ideas, prepare outlines for Regional Programmes (RPs) to be discussed and selected by RAC. 2. For RP selected by RAC (above), develop complete Programme descriptions (including budgets, etc.) for adoption by RAC. 3. Co-ordinate with and inform PPTT and other RCOs.
Regional Advisory Committee (RAC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select RP outlines as submitted by RCO. 2. Adopt RPs based on complete descriptions, to be submitted to RCF.
Regional Conservation Forum (RCF)	Discuss and adopt RPs, to be submitted to EPCC.
Extended Programme Committee of Council (EPCC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define IUCN's distinctive competencies. 2. Discuss and adopt GTPs submitted by PPTT, to be submitted to Council. 3. Discuss and adopt RPs submitted by RCFs, to be submitted to Council.
Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss and adopt GTPs and RCOs, to be submitted to WCC. 2. Endorse the definition of IUCN's distinctive competencies.

World Conservation Congress (WCC)	Discuss and adopt GTPs and RPs.
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3.6 Preparations for the Amman World Conservation Congress

A lot of programmatic consultation and strategic planning has already been done as IUCN prepares the next multi-annual programme for submission to the World Congress in Amman. The hasty process of the coming few months will be far from perfect. But we commend the efforts IUCN is now making to rationalise and specify its programme, and we share the hope that they will lay the foundation for more thorough and logical programming iterations in the years to come. We would stress that, given the growing discomfort with current programming and budgetary arrangements in many parts of the Union, the changes that we suggest are not revolutionary. We believe that they give expression to widespread views about the way IUCN should evolve. At the same time, further delay could be gravely damaging to the future of the Union. In 2000 the Amman Congress, and the wider world, need to see clear evidence of change.

3.7 Building social, economic and gender concerns into the IUCN programme

IUCN has adopted a mission that requires devotion of a major part of the Union's total effort to social, economic and gender concerns in the fields of sustainable natural resource use and equity. It was right to do so. Failure to tackle these concerns would guarantee failure for nature conservation too. The Union's recognition of this broader purpose is 20 years old, dating back at least to the 1980 World Conservation Strategy. It has been repeated and reinforced at many Congresses and forums since. It is reflected in the Convention on Biological Diversity. In the current triennial programme (1997-1999), 'promoting social, economic, political and institutional factors for conservation' is one of the four stated priorities.

Despite all this commitment, IUCN remains uncertain as to how to proceed. The 1993 and 1996 external reviews pointed to weak performance in the socio economic sphere and were particularly pointed with regard to gender issues. Once again, one of the objectives of the current triennial programme is to strengthen capacity to incorporate social concerns and equity in the conservation work of IUCN members and staff. (We address gender and equity issues within the Secretariat in section 9.3.)

One obvious aspect of the problem is at the level of paradigms: integrating a social science perspective on conservation into an organisation that has evolved on the basis of a natural science perspective. Very real conceptual difficulties are likely to be further compounded by natural resistance to the changes in vision, expertise goals, activities, personnel and modus operandi that such an integration entails. This is where social science expertise has a role: in minimising the transition costs of moving from a more purely conservation based organisation to one which links up to sustainable development concerns.

However, the programmatic structure of IUCN complicates the integration of social science approaches and skills. Activities and specialisms are too compartmentalised for integrating processes to work smoothly – especially when the strategic leadership to break down the barriers and promote conceptual communication has been lacking. Nor was there an existing, strong Commission in which to root this needed new area of competence. What has emerged are two areas of social science work within the Secretariat, themselves somewhat boxed in and isolated from the many other boxes of professional competence:

- on the economics front, the expertise brought in to advise the Biodiversity programme has been turned into a separate Economic Services Unit. This unit remains weakly networked within the Union. Its main thrust has been to link up with the major multilaterals dealing with global regulatory frameworks in the environment sector;

- the broader front of social and gender related issues has been tackled in various ways over the last two decades. The ad hoc and fragmented way in which integration of this perspective has been managed at headquarters is evident in the bewildering nomenclature associated with this effort: Women and Natural Resource Management; Social Sciences Division; Social Policy Service; and then, more recently, the Social Policy Programme, linking a team of regional specialists with a facilitating group at headquarters. Vertical linkages between regions and headquarters have been the key emphasis of the current Programme, which remains only weakly linked to the natural science programmes.

Both these areas of activity have suffered from their lack of a clear definition of roles, responsibility or integrating purpose. This vague mandate has restricted resource allocations to them, despite donor emphasis on socio economic and gender concerns. They have not been given enough resources to carry out their supportive work within the organisation. At the same time, there is no incentive for the other programmes at central or regional levels to perceive the need for social expertise and to resource it out of their own budgets. Programmatic coherence has not been helped by the setting up of a number of Global Initiatives, with cross-cutting thematic coverage, which partly replicate what the social and economic groups are trying to do. Meanwhile, the performance of the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy in supporting the integration of social, economic and gender concerns in the Union's programmes remains unconvincing.

Integration appears to be less of a problem in the regions than at headquarters. The distinction between conservation and development is harder to maintain the closer one gets to the daily realities of people and nature. Despite the recommendations of previous external reviews that the organisation as a whole learn from this good practice in the field, such learning cannot occur if the systems and resources are not there to facilitate it. At the regional level, too, the progress has been distinctly uneven. Some regions and countries, such as Meso America and Pakistan, have paid more explicit attention to gender issues in their programmes.

Although IUCN should make some clear choices about areas of work to exclude from its programme, we do not believe that the socio economic and gender areas can be among them. In order to integrate these scientific perspectives into the Union's work, it is necessary to promote collaboration and shared activities between specialists of different backgrounds. The knowledge management area framework that we propose can provide the structure and incentives for this interaction.

We recommend that IUCN's knowledge management areas be able to source and apply the necessary social and natural science skills in an integrated manner wherever they are needed in the Union's work. Programme and project budgets must provide the resources for the necessary integration of social science inputs. In the social as well as the natural sciences, IUCN must also apply clear and stringent quality control procedures to its work, wherever and by whichever part of the Union it is done.

IUCN should also be clear about what kind of competence it actually needs. 'Social policy' is the wrong name for what the Union is trying to do. What is needed is competence in social *science*. IUCN needs knowledge management areas that give it convincing technical and institutional capacity in the social sciences and environmental economics.

Even if the above recommendations are implemented, the integration of gender awareness and action will always encounter more resistance than other social and economic issues. As a more political issue, gender will need powerful champions at all levels within IUCN. The conclusions and recommendations of the 1993 external review remain valid: *Gender issues should be explicitly treated in both economic and social analysis. The DG should lay down precise guidelines to ensure that these are taken into account and ensure that they are followed within all programme components. Sensitising staff and bringing them into contact with organisations and individuals able to support IUCN on gender analysis should be given priority. The DG needs to make a special effort to ensure*

that gender is given key place in project formulation. It will not receive sufficient consideration without such special attention.

3.8 Monitoring and evaluation

Early action to establish an M&E system within IUCN was one of the recommendations of the 1993 External Review. The 1996 External Review found some progress in identifying and developing project proposals, but little progress in setting up a coherent M&E system for IUCN's own activities. More systematic attention to developing and institutionalising M&E capacity throughout the Secretariat began with a formal proposal ('A Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for IUCN') in May, 1996.

Later, a two phased M&E Initiative was then launched. The aim of Phase 1 (1997-1998) was to develop an agreed approach to M&E in six regions in order to contribute to a common understanding of an overall approach to M&E; to identify, test and modify a set of tools and methods that would be appropriate for IUCN programmes and projects; and to begin establishing an evaluative culture within the organisation. The aim of Phase 2 (1999-2000) would be to extend field activities to other regional and country offices and to institutionalise field-policy reflection and learning through improved mechanisms and reporting systems.

As part of the facilitated approach to 'learning by doing', a global M&E facilitator was appointed at headquarters and a pilot Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative set up in Eastern and Southern Africa, Central and South America. In 1998, the process was extended to South and South East Asia. Limited M&E work began in West Africa in late 1998.

Overall, the M&E Initiative has made good (though inevitably uneven) progress at the regional level. A framework and a systematic methodology have been established, and filtering procedures to aid decisions on programme priorities have been developed. By adopting a facilitated approach and bringing the regional programmes into the centre of M&E development, the M&E Initiative has helped improve the vertical and horizontal coherence of IUCN programming. The incorporation of strategic scanning and scoping exercises, if carried out in consultation with the relevant Commissions, members and partners, will help promote the integration of equity and economic concerns into the Union's activities.

The first phase of the M&E Initiative culminated in the March 1999 meeting to which we referred earlier (section 3.1). That meeting helped to focus minds on the need for programming systems to develop at least as fast as those for M&E – or, preferably, for the two systems to be integrated. The fact that this had not happened had become a major constraint on further progress with M&E, particularly at the global level. Another major constraint on M&E progress at the global level has been budgetary. Cuts in the 1999 programme deleted the resources intended for the global level M&E work. Remedial action did eventually source some funds for global M&E efforts this year, but it is clear that M&E has not been a high priority for central management.

The most fundamental constraint on effective M&E in IUCN, however, is the lack of an 'evaluative culture' (to borrow from the title of a 1996 M&E paper) at the governance levels of the Union. To some extent, the Congress and the Council may be said to plan (or at least endorse) IUCN activities. But having approved the plans, they rarely assess performance. It would not be easy for these governance organs to do this, given the time and resources at their disposal. But until they at least take a more critical stance in reviewing what has been done under their authority, the pressure to check on performance will come either from funding agencies or from the internal conscience of the Secretariat.

All this is part of making IUCN a 'learning organisation' (section 8). This is a goal the Union has set itself for some time, without yet attaining it. The difficulty the review team had in securing sets of programme and project reviews at headquarters is symptomatic of this continuing weakness. (At some regional and country offices, the material was easier to get.) We commend the steps now being taken through the emerging IUCN knowledge system to give priority to collating such review documents

and making them easy to find. The M&E Initiative is about to appoint a consultant who will collate and analyse all the internal and external reviews and evaluations undertaken in IUCN since 1994.

Overall, IUCN's M&E theory is turning into practice at the regional level. This has not yet happened at the global level, despite the sterling efforts of the M&E Initiative and the growing commitment to integrating this work with programme development.

We recommend that the Union commit adequate and sustained resources to developing and maintaining M&E capacity at both global and regional levels.

4. Decentralisation and regionalisation

4.1 Progress made

Decentralisation and regionalisation have been major themes in the life of IUCN for most of this decade. The 1993 external review noted the emerging trend towards developing regional offices and programmes of the Secretariat, and called for a more systematic approach to regionalisation. This recommendation was endorsed by the 1994 Buenos Aires General Assembly, which called for decentralisation of the activities of the Union and of the Secretariat to regional or national level, while warning against fragmentation. An important part of the Buenos Aires rationale for decentralisation and regionalisation was to strengthen the role of members in the Union's affairs.

In approximately the first half of his term, i.e. the mid 1990s, the previous Director General pursued regionalisation and decentralisation vigorously. The 1996 World Congress gave further endorsement to the process, while renewing the call for it to achieve stronger member participation and noting that the regionalised Union still needed a strong centre.

Over the last four years, there have been significant staff cuts in Gland. These reductions have not been accompanied by a reshaping of headquarters structure or functions in ways that would make the centre more effective in supporting a regionalised Union. Commendable progress was made with the painful process of reducing numbers in Gland. But the second part of the job – rebuilding what was left – has not really been tackled. This was pointed out by the Compass Partnership report on *Making regionalisation work effectively* (October 1998). Despite this and other accurate observations on the state of the process, the Compass report does not seem to have led to much further action. During our review visits to several regions, we repeatedly heard two linked sets of comments:

- at the centre, the Secretariat is now fragmented. A boxed, compartmentalised mode is seen to pervade the various programmes that are based in Gland and the staff that have lived through the sometimes poorly co-ordinated purges of the last few years. These assorted components are not adequately linked to each other or to the rest of the Secretariat (despite the integrating efforts of the current Global Initiatives);
- despite the growing strength of IUCN's regional operations, a weak centre is in nobody's interest. The regions want a strong and effective headquarters (which does not have to mean a large one). What is needed is a headquarters that reflects and serves the regionalised character of the Union.

We endorse these views. In some ways and in some sectoral and geographical areas, the regionalised Union is an operational, effective reality. The new Director General's May 1999 establishment of Task Teams that comprise Secretariat staff from regional, country and headquarters offices reflects this reality. But, while much more remains to be done to strengthen regional and country programmes in various parts of the world, the task of decentralisation and regionalisation remains most clearly incomplete at the centre:

- one feature of the incoherence of the global programming process is its poor articulation of the links between the global programme and regional programmes (section 3.1);
- the relationship between the thematic global programmes and operations at regional level, and the ways in which the former should service the latter, are not always clearly specified. What sort of action is needed at the global level on this small planet, and how should it be articulated with regional and local action to the same ends?
- IUCN needs to find ways in which the headquarters can recognise, strengthen and serve successful regional or country operations to which it makes only a marginal financial contribution;
- power relations have not been renegotiated or specified. Does the headquarters control the regions? Do the regions control the headquarters? Does one serve the other? The answer should obviously be that authority and service flow in both directions: but few people seem satisfied with the present compromise or the clarity of its expression;
- not enough attention has been given to the potential for decentralisation of headquarters functions currently located in Gland. A number of global programme co-ordination functions or headquarters secretariat services could be located elsewhere in the world (section 9.2).

4.2 Regional operations

Not surprisingly, IUCN's performance in regionalisation has been uneven. Some regional offices and programmes are vibrant, well funded and well respected for their ongoing achievements. We have been impressed by what we saw in the South/South East Asia and Southern Africa regions, whose experience is instructive for this review as a whole. Other regions have faced serious operational, structural or funding problems. Current performance in some of these regions is cause for serious concern. Very few regional programmes have strong management. In some parts of the world, the regions are essentially statutory in nature and there are no significant regionally based activities. In one case, there is a notable ambiguity in the regional geography of IUCN that ought to be resolved.

The regions are now the central platform for the planning, programming and operation of IUCN's activities. The regionalisation process of the Union is far from complete. If the uneven situation persists, the performance of the Union as a global entity will suffer. It is one of the most important tasks of the Director General to lead and manage the process of regionalisation onwards, in order to achieve an balanced overall structure for the Union. Present management arrangements do not adequately recognise the importance of co-ordinating and supporting the Union's regional programmes around the world. Nor do they provide for the mentoring and development of management capacity in the majority of IUCN regions where that capacity is lacking.

IUCN's strongest regional operations are in South/South East Asia and Southern Africa. Solid work is done (and has in some cases been done for many years) in more difficult circumstances in East Africa, Europe, Meso America and South America. The West Africa programme is very new, despite the antiquity of some IUCN projects in that region. The Central Africa programme has faced severe operational difficulties.

There are significant differences in the constitution of the regions, particularly with regard to the role and the relations between the regional level and the country level. Three main factors have contributed to these differences:

- strong and determined leadership by the key actors(s) of the Secretariat, as in the case of ARD and ROSA;

- historical successes and failures in the establishment of country offices, as in the case of Pakistan and the country offices of Meso America;
- specific factors in the region, such as ecological differences, geopolitical and demographic conditions, and funding opportunities.

Thus, the South and South East Asia Region is built on a concept of strong country representation and offices with complementary regional level programmes and a co-ordinating role for the regional office. The Southern African Region is built on strong regional identity and programmes and the integrating role of the regional office. The Meso American Region is built around the regional office; programmes and projects are managed without country offices. Even if recent difficulties in member relations and Secretariat capacity are overcome in South America, the Secretariat will always have a much lower profile there than it does in, say, Southern Africa. The most fundamental difference will always be between the character of IUCN's work in 'developing' countries and that of its work elsewhere.

We conclude that a high degree of variation between the set up and functioning of the regions should be accepted as a reality in the future development of regional structures and operations. Regional diversity is a necessary strength of the Union.

We recommend, however, that, despite the diversity of IUCN's regions, the Union should strive for a uniformly high standard of management in them all.

4.2.1 Southern Africa

In many ways it is easiest to point to Southern Africa when identifying a model of successful IUCN regional operations. As we have stressed, this does not mean that all IUCN regions should look like Southern Africa. But to date this has probably been where the largest number of the conditions for successful IUCN regional operations have been met. The result is a well funded, well respected, confident and effective area of the Union's work. Planning, management, M&E and financial structures and procedures are well articulated and executed, although more still needs to be done to prioritise and filter projects before IUCN takes them on. Sincere efforts are made to involve members in all the projects that the Secretariat undertakes. Every member in the region reportedly attended the September 1998 members' meeting in Pretoria.

At the same time, Southern Africa exemplifies many of the problems of growth and of the incomplete regionalisation and decentralisation processes that we mention elsewhere. In many ways, and despite hosting two IUCN Global Initiatives, the Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) is too isolated from the rest of the Union. (Gland provides 8% of ROSA's budget.) It is tempting for ROSA to go on with its regionally relevant programmes, losing touch with a global Union that, it may feel, has not been trying hard enough to keep contact with it. ROSA must be helped to resist that temptation, and is in fact expanding its collaboration with some other regional offices. It gets very little money for the membership services that it tries to provide, and even less for liaison with Commissions. So, like the rest of the Secretariat, it is in a dilemma. It should probably be doing less project work and more 'Secretariat' work (although ROSA makes a strong case for doing field projects in order to maintain expertise and relevance). But it must do projects in order to survive. Because of the scarcity and the convoluted nature of the Union's finances, ROSA is sometimes suspected by its development partners of budgetary sleight of hand in the way it moves money from project to project and office to office within the region – despite its exemplary accounting and financial probity. Despite its commitment to building members' capacity and involving them in regional projects, IUCN does sometimes compete with members for projects in southern Africa. It should strive further to ensure that this does not happen.

Within Southern Africa, IUCN faces some of the core tensions between 'north' and 'south', and between conservation and development, that challenge the Union world wide. Its South African membership is a repository of conventional scientific excellence in nature conservation and of political

conservatism with regard to the socio-economic interpretation of IUCN's mission. Values and priorities often diverge. These concerns are more immediate for the Southern African Secretariat and membership than they usually appear to be in Gland.

4.2.2 South and South East Asia

Whereas the regional office has been seminal in IUCN's success in Southern Africa, the country programmes have taken the lead in South/South East Asia (SSEA). The development of the Asia Regional Directorate (ARD) is comparatively recent and has still not been fully funded. Most notably, there is no central funding for a regional Director. The Pakistan country director, while retaining those duties, has also worked as regional director (and previously chair of the Asia Working Group) for the last four years. The Pakistan programme funds these inputs. Despite these constraints, a fully functional regional office and programme have come into being – although they are never likely to play the sort of central role in regional IUCN activities that ROSA plays in Southern Africa. ARD has pioneered a structural concept that we recommend IUCN consider more broadly: locating co-ordination functions in more than one place. The regional biodiversity programme is based in the Sri Lanka country office, not the ARD office in Bangkok. Colombo also hosts a regional coastal and marine focal point.

The most immediate problem for ARD is core funding. Despite its competence and autonomy (being authorised by headquarters to handle almost all its own contracting, budgetary and personnel management), the SSEA programme is starved of core operating funds.

As a first priority, we recommend that the Union provide ARD with full funding for the position of Regional Director.

As we recommend elsewhere, donor framework funding to IUCN needs to be regionalised. ARD would be a prime candidate for receipt of such funding.

The other key issue in South/South East Asia concerns IUCN's regional geography. Pakistan is a South Asian country. Despite political tensions, it has many links with its neighbours in that region. Within IUCN, the Pakistan country programme works closely with those of other South Asian countries and with ARD, to which it provides critical funding support. Yet Pakistan is officially part of IUCN's West Asia region, where there are no country offices or programmes and very little other IUCN activity.

We recommend that Pakistan be officially transferred to the SSEA region and that the prospects for the Union's work in West Asia be reappraised with members and other partners.

The SSEA region is vast and diverse. There are several key countries there that have no IUCN country offices, such as Indonesia, China and India. One of our team was able to visit India in the course of this review. That country has long had important links with IUCN, even though there has been no formal Secretariat presence there. IUCN's profile continues to strengthen in India. The Indian Government has invited IUCN to hold its next Regional Conservation Forum there in 2000. Discussions with members, potential members and Government indicate a growing interest in increased activities by the Union and the possibility of setting up a low profile, member orientated country office there.

We therefore recommend that the Union begin to prepare itself for a division of the SSEA region into separate South Asian and South East Asian regions in about three years' time.

The South Asian region would comprise Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (and, statutorily, Bhutan). Unless separate arrangements are made for China (on which it is premature

to comment), the South East Asian region would comprise all the other countries now in the SSEA region.

4.2.3 Europe

Although IUCN's comparative advantage or niche in regional work lies mainly in the 'developing' countries, it faces major challenges and opportunities in Europe.

As a major consumer of global natural resources, and as a major provider of global development funding, the European Union should be a strong part of IUCN's regional operations. IUCN's membership is strong there. Meanwhile, the 'centre' of Europe is moving east, as is European Union membership. Ten or more eastern European countries are expected to join the EU. This will have major repercussions for conservation throughout the continent. A range of institutional, socio-economic, infrastructural and land use changes will have significant impacts on biodiversity. In the predominantly market-led adjustments to government and economy that are currently taking place in central and eastern Europe, biodiversity is unlikely to get the attention it needs without the support of IUCN and related agencies. Some promising initiatives in this direction have begun, for example in the context of the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), in which IUCN plays an active role.

IUCN needs to maintain its leading role in the PEBLDS. It should also intensify its support for upgrading the capacity of member organisations and other agencies in central and eastern Europe to prepare their countries for access and membership of the EU in a way that protects biodiversity. Throughout the present and the future EU, it is important that IUCN use its constituency to influence policy in favour of biodiversity, including the maintenance of marine resources.

Russia is strengthening its ties with the rest of Europe. This vast country presents very grave challenges to sustainable development and global biodiversity. Although IUCN has a small office in Moscow, it should develop a much stronger presence and greatly expanded programmes in Russia. Government and society there would welcome this.

IUCN's activities from its regional office at Tilburg and its representation office at Brussels have had mixed fortunes. The Brussels office has had very little impact on EU policy and programmes, and has not been able to access major EU funding for IUCN. It is also very expensive to run. The Tilburg office, generously supported by the government of The Netherlands, has undertaken a number of useful activities and initiatives, and has helped develop the IUCN profile in various parts of Europe. But, as Europe's centre of gravity moves east, the Tilburg office is not best located in relation to the biggest challenges facing the Union on that continent.

At present, the IUCN Statutes split Europe across two Regions: West Europe, and East Europe, North and Central Asia.

We recommend that:

- **the Union should amend its Statutes to create a single Europe region, including Russia;**
- **a regional office for Europe should be established in Warsaw, building on IUCN's existing presence in Poland. We have been informed that the Polish government would be strongly supportive of such a move;**
- **IUCN's Brussels office should be closed. The important function of IUCN representation in the European Union should be transferred to the Tilburg office, where costs are significantly lower. Tilburg-based staff can easily travel to and from Brussels within a single day;**

- **IUCN should develop a strong Russia country programme and office in Moscow. In global biodiversity terms this is one of the most urgent challenges facing the Union.**

4.3 The funding of regional operations

4.3.1 Funding for the Europe programme

The pan European programme that we propose will need substantial core funding to build up its activities and create a sound balance between programme and project activities on the continent.

Whereas most of IUCN's external resources are provided by development funding agencies, it is fortunate to have substantial support for its Europe programme from the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. However, this is the only major donor supporting the Union's activities in Europe. To provide the necessary funding for a pan European IUCN programme, innovative funding approaches will be required.

IUCN should make early efforts to secure a broader funding base for its Europe programme. As it expands to central and eastern Europe, and especially Russia, it is tackling biodiversity problems of global urgency. This is a strong rationale for a major increase in external funding to this IUCN region. Several initiatives could be explored:

- in addition to seeking funding from the usual bilateral development funding agencies, IUCN should seek support from other European Ministries of Agriculture, Environment or Nature Conservation besides that of The Netherlands;
- European governments could also give financial support to IUCN National Committees in their respective countries to support these members' direct programme and project co-operation with National Committee in Central and Eastern Europe (or other areas of IUCN work, as already done in The Netherlands);
- long term funding for the IUCN Europe Programme from the European Union should be explored through a joint effort by IUCN and the European bilateral donors;
- creation of a Pan European Trust Fund for Biodiversity Conservation could be a parallel option to which governments and private foundations might jointly contribute.

We recommend that IUCN and its existing funding partners actively develop funding strategies for a pan European programme of the Union. These strategies should be developed simultaneously with the planning and programming efforts undertaken by the Secretariat, members and Commissions in Europe.

4.3.2 Strengthening links between donors and the IUCN regions

Financial and funding arrangements for IUCN need to be adjusted to match the regionalisation of the Union. At present, the financial core of the regional programmes is the overhead charges they levy on donor funded projects. Depending primarily on donor policy, these charges range between 3.5 and 15% of project budgets. Dependence on such project overheads drives the regions to increase their project volume, which destabilises medium to long term planning and diverts capacity from what may actually be the highest conservation and development priorities in their areas. If they are primarily project implementation agencies, IUCN's regional programmes cannot function as the core of the Union's global work, which is what they are now, appropriately, supposed to be.

In addition to project overhead charges, the IUCN regions receive block funding for member services from the unrestricted funds of the Union (derived primarily from membership dues), as well as allocations for general programme purposes out of the general programme funds provided by some

donors. The latter allocations represent 7% of the total core (unrestricted, general programme and programme restricted) funds of the Union. In some cases, project agreements may include capacity building components that can to a certain extent be regarded as core funding. Funding arrangements at headquarters level often seem opaque to regional offices, which are not always well informed about the availability of parts of these budgets for their own use.

There is a grave imbalance between this core funding and the tasks and potential of the regions. Much more core support is needed for the important work of targeting new membership, servicing members, building member capacity, supporting and using the Commissions and building regional programmes in pursuit of the IUCN mission.

As part of their own evolving strategies, many bilateral and multilateral donors are strengthening their regional and country level interfaces with recipient governments and other institutions. Given this increasing regionalisation by both donors and IUCN, it is in the interest of both to establish more direct links and more targeted funding arrangements that transfer resources directly from the donor to the IUCN regional programme.

We therefore recommend that donor institutions consider the possibility of entering into core programme funding agreements at the country and regional level with the respective IUCN offices. These agreements can be general or programme specific and could include programmes and projects for institution building purposes.

In order to reduce the uncertainty and instability generated by single project agreements, we recommend that donor institutions, either individually or in consortium, consider establishing 'project trust funds' with IUCN offices at country or regional level.

Such trust funds would be used for initiating or responding to projects in pursuit of the IUCN mission and according to criteria jointly formulated by IUCN and the funding agencies.

5. Governance of the Union

5.1 Regional governance

Emphasis on the regions as the programmatic and administrative core of IUCN will require further strengthening of the governance function of the Union at the regional level. The IUCN Statutes make provision for members to associate at regional level in Regional Committees, Advisory Committees and Boards, and Regional Forums. The Secretariat at the regional level supports and uses these various members' forums for the elaboration of regional programmes, for membership campaigns and in preparations for the World Conservation Congress.

We recommend that further steps be taken to formalise the statutory role of regional governance bodies. This could be done by establishing two regional bodies: the Regional Conservation Forum, and the Regional Committee.

The Regional Forum should be held twice between World Conservation Congresses (section 5.2). It should be mandated and made responsible for approving the Regional Programme. It should recommend Regional Councillors for appointment by the WCC, and appoint the Regional Committee. This Committee would oversee the implementation of the programme and the work of the Secretariat. While most of these changes could be made in terms of the current Statutes (Part VII) and Regulations (Part VI), some amendments would be required. The changes could be implemented as 'provisional arrangements' under the Statutes until such time as they are formally adopted by the WCC.

These statutory regional bodies should gradually be introduced throughout the Union. Some regions are ready to establish and use them immediately, or already operate versions of what we recommend. Other regions must develop further before their introduction would be appropriate. The IUCN Council should draw up a plan for the implementation of these regional bodies and for the development work that this will require.

5.2 Global governance

The World Conservation Congress is a major manifestation of the global presence of the Union, and a valued venue for interaction between members. But its role in penetrating the details of IUCN programming is limited, and the practical feasibility of its doing so is even narrower. With the increasing emphasis on the regional programmes as the backbone of Union activities, the programmatic role of the WCC diminishes further. The Congress should retain its roles of deliberating and adopting targeted global programmes, and of approving programming objectives and principles for the regional level. But its role for substantive determination and approval of regional programmes should be transferred to statutory regional bodies (section 5.1).

In this perspective, the traditional three year interval between World Congresses is too short. The WCC is a very costly event that puts a heavy stress on Union finances for several years. Furthermore, the extended periods needed to prepare for each Congress and to interpret its proceedings afterwards do not leave much space for action by the members, the Commissions and the Secretariat. A combination of less frequent World Congresses and meetings of statutory Regional Conservation Forums would be a more purposeful mechanism for the governance of the regionalised Union.

We therefore recommend that Council consider and propose to the next WCC that the interval between World Conservation Congresses be changed from three years to five.

6. The IUCN Commissions

6.1 Safeguarding the global character of the Commissions

Together with the members and the Secretariat, the IUCN Commissions are one of the three pillars of the Union. They give IUCN its distinctive character as a science based institutional force for conservation and development. They are recognised as the solid scientific basis for the vision, mission, policies, strategies and activities of the Union. We are convinced that the future of IUCN depends on its ability to continue the development and effective use of these unique voluntary networks.

In view of the ongoing regionalisation of all parts of the Union, including the Commissions, it is of paramount importance to emphasise the global character of the Commissions. They represent the current state of global knowledge in the most relevant sectors of IUCN concern. Their value and contributions as global bodies should be recognised and maintained. As the Union is regionalised, the global structure of Commissions should be strengthened. IUCN should be alert to tendencies of regional fragmentation or compartmentalisation in the Commissions, and combat them.

For the Commissions, regionalisation should mean broadening and deepening their global networks, particularly in the South: by encouraging new relevant scientists to join, and by improving use of the global knowledge base by active links to these networks through members in the regions. While the global character of the Commissions must be safeguarded, regional Commission membership structures, administration and communications should be promoted so that other parts of IUCN can enhance their interaction with this pillar of the Union.

6.2 Ignorance about the Commissions

Given the importance of the Commissions in the work of IUCN, more emphasis should be put on strengthening the interface between them and the members and Secretariat of the Union. We find that, especially at regional and country level, members and Secretariat staff know very little about what the Commissions actually are, how they work, what they produce and do not produce, or what they can or can not be expected to do. This ignorance about the Commissions is a major obstacle to the effective use of these major Union assets. As a starting point for improved interaction and use, Commissions and the Secretariat should develop plans for an active programme to inform members and staff (particularly the latter) about the Commissions and the way they work.

6.3 Voluntarism – a myth?

Historically, the Commissions have operated and been recognised as voluntary associations of scientific peers. It remains true that the voluntary contributions by Commissions to the work of the Union are worth many times the funding directly or indirectly allocated to them by IUCN. However, over time the concept of pure voluntarism has been modified by social and economic change. The majority of Commission members have been able to merge their work for the Commissions into their salaried positions at academic and other institutions. But this possibility is usually more open to members in the North than it is to those in the South (and is diminishing world wide). As more scientists in the South join the Commissions, the disparities between members' economic settings and opportunities are becoming a more serious issue for the Commissions as a whole. In some Commissions, consultancy fees are paid as compensation for the work that Commission members do. In this way, the concept of voluntarism becomes blurred. In addition, the suitability of voluntarism as a means of providing major scientific input to IUCN projects and programmes is called into doubt.

The driving force behind the work and contributions of Commission volunteers is their personal and professional interest in their subjects. In exchange for very limited operating resources from the Union, the collective results of all these voluntary inputs are an invaluable asset for IUCN. However, voluntarism has its limitations. It cannot routinely supersede personal interest. When the programmes and projects of the Union require defined, systematic and timely inputs of scientific knowledge and skill, the voluntary system of the Commissions may fail to cope. This deficiency of the voluntary system is an obstacle to the full use of the Commissions' competence and capacity in the Union's work, especially at regional and country levels.

We therefore recommend that the Union establish a compensation system for Commission members.

This compensation should apply when a Commission member performs a specified task in support of a programme or project administered by the Secretariat. Standard compensation rates should apply to all members of the Commission, irrespective of nationality, place of work or profession.

6.4 Interdisciplinary delivery

The delivery of Commissions' knowledge to IUCN programmes and projects should be organised on an interdisciplinary basis. Members of relevant commissions should work together on such service assignments, ensuring an appropriate combined input on the different aspects of the technical issues and broadening their own insights and capacities through the joint learning experience. Members taking part in such interdisciplinary service to the Union should also feed back experience and information on the work to their respective Commissions.

6.5 Donors' selection of expertise

We have observed that in some cases, donors contract consultants for expert inputs to IUCN programmes or projects that they finance, without considering the possibility that Commission members could provide such services.

We recommend that, in order to support the Commission system of the Union, Commission members be identified and appointed to perform such tasks.

This means, of course, that donors have to be given full information about the Commissions, their members and the members' expertise. When donors have to contract other specialists, because there is no suitable Commission member available, Commissions should be informed so that they can consider offering membership to these other experts.

6.6 A Commission on Business and Environment

The concept of conservation, and the key actors within this sector, are constantly changing over time. With the globalisation of production, distribution and consumption and the growing role assigned to the business world in economic development, the importance of the corporate sector in the use and abuse of natural resources has been dramatically increased. The interface between IUCN and the corporate sector has long been on the agenda of the governing bodies and Secretariat of the Union. Over the years, IUCN's attitude to this sector has evolved: from using it as a source of additional funding towards considering the potential for partnership and association. We recognise the historical difficulties and uncertainties surrounding the idea of closer relations with the corporate sector, as well as the recent proposal of a Business Advisory Committee.

We regard the interface between the Union and the business sector as a critical strategic issue. It is essential that this relationship be developed on terms that are acceptable to both sides and that conform to the traditions and constitution of IUCN. In our view, the most suitable, sustainable and constitutional format for the relationship is a Commission.

We recommend the establishment of a new IUCN Commission – the Commission on Business and Environment. This Commission would be constituted on the same statutory principles as all the other Commissions of the Union.

A new Commission on Business and Environment would create an appropriate platform for interaction between the Union and the business sector. It would recognise the importance and status of this sector, and it would allow corporate specialists to participate in the governance and work of the Union. This Commission would provide the Union with the best advice and a broad network of contacts into the power centres of the world economy.

6.7 Revision of the Commission structure of the Union

The above proposal is only one example of the dynamism IUCN needs to maintain in its Commission structure as it adjusts to constantly evolving realities in the conservation sector.

We strongly recommend, as did the 1996 external review, that the number, structure and mandates of the Commissions be subjected to a detailed assessment.

The potential for merger or for adjusted emphasis on existing or new subject areas should be seriously considered. Provisional adjustments and new Commissions could be instituted in the coming two years, with formal changes being proposed to the World Congress following that of Amman in 2000.

7. The financial viability of IUCN

After an earlier period of financial turbulence, IUCN has implemented several measures for improved financial control during the mid 1990s. The standard of IUCN's financial reporting and accounting is regarded by several partners and donors as very good. This has been very important in the process of decentralisation and regionalisation. Losses have been kept under control during a difficult period of staff and institutional growth. In general, the classifications of the different types of income remain cumbersome. However, this is more a result of the agreements between IUCN and its donors than of shortcomings in the financial system.

The main problems of the financial system are related to cost analysis and links between the programme and the budget. Partly with this in view, IUCN has initiated a comprehensive re-engineering of its financial system. This work has now been slowed down awaiting directions for organisational arrangements and responsibilities.

Between 1992 and 1996, the financial situation of IUCN was fairly stable. Financial reserves were slowly accumulating, the proportion of core to project funding was balanced, and the total growth was modest. After 1996 the situation changed. Many of the changes can be attributed to the regionalisation process. What give cause for concern is not the absolute amounts involved, but the trends they display. Below we illustrate these issues with some selected data.

Table 1. IUCN total income – core funding and projects

(SFr '000)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total Income	36235	45868	55191	54108	54435	59408	65027	75067	83960	92300

1987-1991 was a period of fast growth for IUCN income. Table 1 shows the expansion of the Union's total income from 1990 to date. The rapid growth at the start of the decade was followed by stabilisation and consolidation in 1992-1994, and a new expansion period starting in 1995.

Table 2. Unrestricted funds (mainly member dues)

(SFr '000)

Fund	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Unrestricted	7433	8146	10318	11226	10229	10404	11492	11287	12111	11735

Table 2 shows unsatisfactory growth in the unrestricted funding in relation to the growth of total IUCN operations. Two important factors influence this: the modest growth of the membership; and the proportion of NGOs from the developing countries among new members.

Table 3. Core funding of IUCN (the sum of unrestricted, general programme and programme restricted funds)

(SFr '000)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Core funding	10330	19660	24819	25760	27762	28624	28694	31588	32319	33916

Taken with Table 1, Table 3 shows the decline in core funding from 48% of the total in 1995 to 36% in 1999.

Table 4. Funding by major donors, 1998 (general programme funds, programme restricted fund plus project funding)

(SFr '000)

Donor	GP+PR funding	Project funding	Total
Danish Government	3600	2376	5976
Dutch Government	3546	10500	14046
German Government		2403	2403
Norwegian Government	1080	3076	4156
Swedish Government	5100	2397	7497
Swiss Government	800	4772	5572
US Government	2100	5319	7419
European Union		2720	2720
Total for main donors	16226	33563	49789

Table 4 shows that the above donors provide more than 50% of the total income, 50% of the core income (inclusive membership fees) and 75% of the general programme and restricted programme income of the Union.

Table 5. IUCN total reserves (sum of operating reserve, Kenya Trust fund, World Conservation Trust Fund and Headquarters Facility)

(SFr '000)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total reserves	3897	5114	4908	6370	9076	10122	11653	10104	8328

Table 5 shows, that after a long period of growth, the reserves of the Union were depleted over the last two years (particularly the operating reserve). The main reason for this was payments made in connection with redundancies at headquarters in 1996-1998.

The financial viability of the Union is worsening but not critical. As we indicate at several places in this report, the financing of the Union has a major impact on the role the Union plays in the field of conservation. Less core funding or projects directly supporting planning, policy and programme work, and more dependence on overheads from projects, drives IUCN towards a role close to that of an international consultancy company.

Many of the proposals and recommendations we make in this review are related to improvement in the management of the Union. We expect effects not only in the direction and impact on the programme, but also in improved efficiency and effectiveness of resource utilisation. However, such results will not be immediately visible. The first visible effect would be increases in certain costs. Thus we expect that:

- general management costs will increase both in the regions and at headquarters;
- costs for the integration of socio-economic science will increase;
- programming, planning and communication costs will increase, particularly at regional level;
- costs for capacity building, in order to enable members to participate as partners in implementation of programmes and projects, will increase;
- costs for member services will increase.

Financial strengthening, particularly of funds for non project implementation related activities, will be essential - particularly in coming years. The Union has long been trying to increase such funding, as well as to broaden its funding base. Like previous external reviews, we endorse this effort. We believe that the Union should mainly intensify its efforts to widen the financial base by:

- building long term relations with multilateral development agencies;
- emphasising partnership in conservation with the corporate sector;
- creating links between Northern and Southern members for capacity and institutional development;
- negotiating field projects with implicit capacity building components;
- gaining support from Ministries of Environment, Physical Planning, Nature Conservation, Forestry etc. in addition to the bilateral development agencies.

We would caution the Secretariat against the establishment of profit oriented consultancy operations as a solution for financial shortcomings. Such operations may not only blur the image of the Union; they are also seldom profitable. In the few cases when such an operation has emerged from a large "mother" organisation and proved profitable, there has been no return flow of funds from the subsidiary to the parent.

Our overall judgement is that IUCN will continue to depend on its donors and their ability to provide long term and flexible funding for both headquarters and regional activities.

8. IUCN as a learning organisation

8.1 Managing knowledge

IUCN is principally a knowledge organisation. Knowledge is its most valuable capital. This knowledge is diverse and dispersed. It resides in its member organisations, in the Commissions, in the Secretariat and in the networks of individuals that can be mobilised by members of each of these bodies. IUCN carries out a range of different activities that bear on its knowledge base. These include publications, monitoring and evaluation, on-the-job learning; the mobilisation of inputs from its Commissions, members and outside experts and the recent installation of internet and intranet information systems. Nevertheless, we encountered many situations that suggested that these activities

are being pursued on an ad hoc basis and do not contribute to the building of systematic knowledge management capacity within the organisation.

There is, as yet, no overall knowledge management strategy in IUCN. If the Union is serious about nurturing its core asset, then it needs to establish a solid knowledge management system: maintaining rosters of relevant expertise, storing information in technical systems, operating formal and informal systems to build up knowledge, and nurturing a framework of values to provide for direction for all of this.

It is important to distinguish knowledge and information. Knowledge comprises information and understanding of subjects, contexts and methods. Knowledge management is directed at the absorption, diffusion, generation and use of knowledge in an organisation.

We distinguish two types of knowledge within the organisation: *documented* and *person-based*. The first refers to factual information and harmonised knowledge that can be stored on, distributed by and retrieved from the intranet/internet systems of IUCN. Person-based knowledge is experiential and contextual. It is closely tied to the person who developed it, and for the most part, can only be transferred on a person-to-person basis.

IUCN faces a strategic choice between these different kinds of knowledge systems. To some extent, it has already made that choice by 'outsourcing' certain data base and information activities. For instance, the Biodiversity Conservation Information Service can be seen as a joint venture between several large conservation organisations, including IUCN.

We therefore believe that IUCN should give priority to the management of knowledge based on personal expertise rather than formal documentation. The challenge is how best this pool of person-based knowledge can best be managed in an organisation that houses several thousand knowledgeable people? The knowledge management areas that we propose in this review provide a framework for this purpose. The existing programmes should be translated into distinct fields of knowledge management, in the broadest sense of the word. The principal role of programme leaders would be to act as knowledge managers on specific themes, be they technical, thematic or cross cutting.

8.2 Building knowledge

IUCN should introduce a system of traineeship. The Vietnam office offers one model of how this might work. There, two-person teams work together and learn from each other. This approach need not be restricted to an expatriate-local combination. Mentorship can occur through any kind of learning partnership, as long as sufficient time and other necessary resources are devoted to the learning process as part of a purposive capacity building programme.

Performance monitoring, evaluation and feed back systems are other essential components of capacity building, since they help to identify training needs for new and existing staff and stimulate the growth of a learning culture.

8.3 Storing and accessing knowledge

Documentation needs to be stored in an easily accessible way and clearly classified with priority themes and synthesising lessons clearly flagged. As has been noted, important review documents and strategy papers do not at present appear to be properly filed and easily accessed. A step in the right direction has just been taken with the commissioning by the M&E Initiative of an inventory and classification of all reviews and evaluations, internal and external. However, without a learning system in place to internalise their observations and recommendations and ensure that they influence how IUCN does its business, such activities will not contribute what they should.

IUCN faces a real challenge in improving the knowledge available in Commissions and members and mobilising it effectively and efficiently. Documentation plays an important role here. The knowledge

domains of people and organisations should be mapped and stored in such a way that the information can be easily retrieved through IUCN's intranet. The role of the Commission on Education and Communication in achieving these goals should be assessed.

Finally, the success of the knowledge management system is closely bound up with the extent to which the Union is able to achieve focus in its activities. An IUCN programme with a limited number of clear goals, strategies and priorities will channel energy and effort to developing knowledge in the most fruitful directions.

9. The management of IUCN operations

9.1 Managing IUCN's operations

9.1.1 What sort of role?

Much of IUCN's current reputation is built on its performance during the 1980s and early 1990s in developing policy, strategies and international instruments for conservation and sustainable development. IUCN's contribution to the formulation of National Conservation Strategies lies at the root of much of its growth over this period. CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity are other global achievements in which IUCN played a prominent role.

What next? Sometimes, there is much more work to be done in preparing subordinate policies and strategies for specific sectors, provinces or districts. But sooner or later, the answer has been to move from formulation to implementation. Building on its established relationships with governments and international bodies, the IUCN secretariat has moved into a range of programmes that start to implement or apply the policies, strategies or instruments that it helped to create – or that build the capacity and awareness that are needed for implementation to happen.

A common notion in IUCN is that project implementation, and performance of consultancy functions, aids the Union's financial viability. We seriously doubt this. Apart from the financial risks that field projects, in particular, pose to an organisation, IUCN is not well equipped to deliver products of this nature as cost efficiently as many consulting firms can. IUCN projects often only make a certain 'profit' because many inputs are not capitalised in the project accounts. Provision of consultancy services also jeopardises IUCN's relations with its members, and possibly the chances of long term financial relationships with donors.

One answer is that IUCN should stop after a 'first generation' of pilot implementation of conservation and sustainable development projects, during which its emphasis should be on capacity building for its social partners so that they can do all the project execution from then on. In some country settings, it would be strategic suicide for IUCN to refuse to take the first implementation steps forward with these partners after it has helped them formulate their strategies.

Overall, however, we recommend that IUCN appraise its policy implementation activities much more critically than has recently been the case. Careful review may show that a pilot implementation role is appropriate. More often, the conclusion should be that IUCN limits itself to facilitation, communication and capacity building in support of the implementation roles of others – most notably the members of the Union. In all cases, IUCN programmes should be restricted to the agreed distinctive core competencies of the Union at regional or global level (section 3.2.2). There may often be scope for North-South collaboration between IUCN members in the execution of IUCN projects and programmes within these core competencies.

9.1.2 How to handle growth?

The Secretariat of IUCN has experienced rapid growth in recent years. The staff totalled 120 world wide in 1989 and 907 in 1998. Some of these are core staff; others are employed to work on specific projects and programmes. One of the country offices we visited, in Sri Lanka, has approximately

doubled in size in the last 12 months. IUCN's second largest country office, in Nepal, has a vision of expanding from 50 to 100 staff.

The growth of IUCN membership numbers in recent years has been more modest: from 788 in 1994 to 953 in April 1999.

From a management perspective, these rates of Secretariat growth are alarming. How can they be sustained? What sort of business planning, market forecasts or budget projections have been done to assess the wisdom or sustainability of such expansion? We suspect that far too little of this assessment has been done. Instead, IUCN seems in many places to be rushing headlong to meet the growing demand for conservation and sustainable development services. The result is that planning priorities start to be dominated by the need to sustain a swelling organisation, rather than by a clearer assessment of need in IUCN's target sectors, or of alternative means of meeting the need. Despite uneven efforts by the Secretariat to address the issue, the danger of competition with IUCN members for project work remains real.

We advise that caution and consolidation should be the Secretariat's primary instincts, rather than growth. Secretariat offices should make a decision on their optimum size, based on assessment of the minimum critical mass required to deliver quality services in the fields of agreed distinctive core competencies and to service members.

We strongly recommend that the role of members be considered the key to handling IUCN's growth.

We reiterate that the Union's broad and diverse membership is one of its major distinguishing characteristics in the global conservation world. Although much of the Secretariat's work does already include member capacity building and efforts to involve members in IUCN projects, a stronger focus and greater rigour are needed in this regard. Regional and country offices of IUCN should intensify their combined efforts with members to identify key areas for co-operation. Approval of projects for execution by the Secretariat should require evidence that other parts of the Union, or other agencies in society, are inappropriate or unavailable. Programme planning should explicitly address the development of member capacity.

Our recommendation that future growth of the Union be handled not primarily by increase in the numbers of staff and resources of the Secretariat, but rather by partnership with members, will have consequences in principle and in practice. We do recognise that the membership of the Union is diverse: ranging from highly professional and resourceful institutions to small local NGOs built by a few dedicated environmentalists, from institutions fully concentrated on conservation to development to organisation in whose mission conservation is only a limited activity. We have no illusions that building partnerships for implementation will be a simple and fast process. It needs careful planning and supporting instruments.

9.1.2.1 Business plans

Regional and country operations are focused on and mainly occupied by programming and project implementation work. Only limited time and resources are allocated to the forward planning of the resources, staff, organisation and finance. We recommend that the operating units of the Union develop three year rolling business plans. In line with the above discussion on management of growth, the business plan should have two major components:

- **A plan for the expected major activities of the Secretariat:**
 - areas and magnitude of services and products;
 - professional and support staff;
 - other resources such as office facilities, transport and infrastructure;

- organisation and management responsibilities;
- financial income and allocations.
- **A plan for building the capacity of members and Commissions:**
 - targets and responsibilities for capacity building work;
 - targeting new members and proposing Commission members;
 - professional and administrative development of selected members for partnership;
 - resource allocation in terms of staff and funds for capacity building.

These business plans should enable the management of the units to set their priorities, control resource development and plan capacity building for partnership.

9.1.2.2 Quality assurance

The IUCN Secretariat needs to ensure that its operations, services and products meet defined quality standards. This is not only an internal prerequisite for economic, effective, efficient and equitable operations. Increasingly, it is expected and required by donors and other partners. We recommend that IUCN establish a set of quality standards with which it is committed to comply. These standards should include adherence to the defined framework of distinctive core competencies of the Union, as well as performance towards the goals of the targeted global and regional programmes. They should include principles of accountability and transparency, together with scientific and operational standards. The quality assurance system should also provide for continual improvement of quality, for which purpose the Union's M&E and feedback mechanisms play a crucial role.

When the role of the Secretariat changes from implementing programmes and projects to facilitating implementation by members, quality assurance gains a whole new dimension. In relation to donors and to recipients (governments, communities, etc.), the IUCN Secretariat will still remain accountable for quality in project administration and delivery. Quality assurance should therefore include the principles and standards to which any member organisation that is implementing activities facilitated, brokered or in any other way related to the Union must adhere. Such standards should state clear management responsibilities, the professional level of personnel, financial transparency and accountability, timely delivery conditions, and principles for auditing and evaluation. Only then can third parties be assured of the high quality which should characterise all IUCN undertakings – by Secretariat, members and Commissions. A popular word for this kind of relation between parties in the business world is the **franchise**. The term is often used in IUCN, but with very different meanings. We believe that a franchise system for quality assurance in IUCN is a good way to handle diversity and autonomy for the different parts of the Union, and at the same time to guarantee the necessary cohesiveness and collective responsibility for quality in all undertakings.

9.1.2.3 Membership services

Few would contest our argument that IUCN's membership structure is a key part of its distinctive character and quality (section 1.4). Yet, for the outside observer (and the external reviewer!) the profile of the membership in the Union's activities is not convincing at present. Partly, this profile can be strengthened by the policy, strategic and programming initiatives that we recommend in this report. Partly it is a matter of money. The Secretariat's membership services are typically starved of operating resources. The international funding agencies are among those who strongly endorse the special qualities that the membership brings to IUCN. We recommend that the Union review the structure and funding of its membership services, and develop funding proposals for enhancing these services that it can submit to the funding agencies. If they want to build the contributions that IUCN can make to conservation and sustainable development through its membership, they are likely to receive such proposals sympathetically.

9.2 The multi-centre concept

At both headquarters and regional levels, rapidly improving communications facilities have prompted the IUCN Secretariat to co-ordinate its programmes from more than one centre. In South/South East Asia, for example, not all the regional functions and programmes are located in Bangkok. Some are in Colombo and Karachi. At the global level, the Global Initiatives are housed in various offices around the world. For example, two are co-ordinated from the Regional Office for Southern Africa.

We endorse this approach in principle. Its application affirms the global character of IUCN. It helps the Union to optimise its use of the diverse scientific and institutional qualities to which it has access in different parts of the world. It offers good prospects of reduced operating costs. But it requires good management.

For the multi-centre concept to succeed, communications must be good and co-ordination clear. Not only must the telecommunications be efficient (and they certainly are not in all parts of IUCN's world). Everyone must know which offices are responsible for what, and all involved must optimise their internal communications to ensure that the multi-centre concept enhances participation and relevance rather than exacerbating confusion.

We recommend that, subject to the conditions and criteria specified above, IUCN apply the multi-centre concept to its global and regional operations.

While it is important to retain a critical mass at the headquarters in Switzerland, operating from Gland imposes heavy costs on the Union – despite the significant fiscal and other concessions it enjoys from the Swiss government. It is therefore important to give particular attention to the potential for further repositioning of some functions from Gland to lower cost locations.

9.3 A more equitable organisation?

To what extent does IUCN provide the kind of work environment conducive to realising the best potential of its employees and the optimal delivery of its products? This question touches on questions of equal opportunity, cultural and professional balance within IUCN staff, decision-making, conflict resolution and attention to career development. It was raised as a problem in the 1991-93 External Review, which referred to IUCN's 'image problem'.

An Equal Opportunity Policy (EOP) was submitted and approved by Council in 1995. The policy essentially committed IUCN to ensuring that no employee was discriminated against on the grounds of colour, national or ethnic origin, sex, marital and parental status, sexual orientation, disability, class, age, political and religious beliefs. It also called for the Union to play a more pro-active role in the career development of its staff.

A staff liaison committee was set up at headquarters to deal with the interests of the staff as a whole and to liaise between staff and management. Staff elect its members for a year at a time. An ombudsman was also appointed to deal with staff grievances, particularly those relating to violations of the EOP, which could not easily be dealt with through other channels. Aside from these actions, the process by which the EOP was to be implemented and monitored was not explicitly planned for and very little progress appears to have been made subsequently.

The 1996 external review noted that some progress had been made on the diversity front. However, the overall north-south ratio of staff at headquarters had only improved marginally. There had been virtually no progress in bringing women into middle and higher level positions at headquarters.

The Triennial programme 1997-1999 commits itself, inter alia, to improving the balance of representation at headquarters of different nationalities and regions, of nationalities from the region within regional offices, and of country nationals at the national office. It commits itself to improving gender balance at all levels at headquarters and non-headquarters stations. It also commits itself to

promoting a motivating and supportive work environment and to the promotion of principles and practices of equal opportunity. These intended goals are essentially reiterations of past review recommendations and of the EOP. However, once again, no plan of implementation is included.

In 1999, some prominent progress is being made with regard to the gender balance in high level headquarters positions. There have been some improvements with regard to the work environment and equal opportunity. The Staff Liaison Committee also appears to have played an active role in raising matters of concern to staff. But an ombudsman is needed in each region, as well as at headquarters.

There has also been some progress in the standardisation of headquarters employment contracts. The rapid growth in IUCN's activities and the drive to regionalisation had resulted in a plethora of different contracts with very different terms and benefits. A legal review was undertaken in 1998 and a policy of standardised staff and consultancy contracts has now been adopted. However, questions still remain about equal pay standards within grades both at headquarters and in the regions. There is evidence that at least one region that does not observe the principle of equal pay for equal work is failing to recruit, or retain, capable female staff who could expect more equitable treatment in other organisations. On the other hand, of the offices visited, Pakistan stood out as one that had taken a very proactive stand on some of these questions in a political and social context which is particularly inhospitable to gender equity. In Vietnam, there was evidence of a very participatory mode of management.

To sum up, progress has been slow in bringing IUCN up to the standard of the more progressive international organisations. By opting to conform to Swiss law on many of its employment conditions, IUCN has modelled itself on one of the less rather than more progressive legal systems. Consequently, while numerical equity may have improved, much more could be done to embed a culture of equal opportunity at headquarters and more evenly across the regions. For instance, the glass ceiling still exists for many of the women in the organisation.

We recommend:

- **a basic standard code of conduct to apply uniformly across the regions to ensure fairness of treatment for all employees. Explicit reference to this code, and IUCN's adherence to it, should be included in all framework funding agreements and IUCN recruitment publicity;**
- **a unified reporting system across regions to make monitoring of standards possible;**
- **the removal of perverse incentives which act against the further diversification of IUCN staff;**
- **the setting up of mechanisms to deal with grievances and conflict resolution across the Union. An ombudsman nominated by staff, and a staff liaison group, are possible models;**
- **that Council take a more proactive approach to the enforcement of equity standards. An annual report on human resources performance and progress should be required;**
- **that performance monitoring be made an active management and learning tool to identify training needs and other aspects of career development.**

9.4 How to handle success?

Not only does IUCN have to build better ways of dealing with growth. It also needs more convincing ways of dealing with success. Much of the growth in the Secretariat, while worrying from a management perspective, is also evidence of successful performance and a strong reputation for the delivery of high quality services. But the disturbing result is that successful offices and programmes risk a kind of isolation from the global Union and its headquarters in Gland. Offices with strong budgets see their subventions from Gland steadily reduced. In the process, ties and influence are likely to be weakened at both sides. At the same time, offices and programmes that generate deficits are seen to be 'rewarded' with substantial subsidies from headquarters. The stronger offices are expected to pay off historical and sometimes artificial deficits that may arise from the arcane accounting procedures in which the Union has often indulged, while headquarters swallows the deficits of those who apparently have no hope of paying them.

Conversely, it has to be recognised that budgetary failures can result from difficult operating conditions, awkward government or donor attitudes or lack of recognition of issues that IUCN has chosen to target. Headquarters is often right to transfer funds to meet these deficits, which are not all caused by fiscal irresponsibility or bad performance.

Our overall impression, however, is that IUCN does not capitalise properly on its successes. Strong performance in a particular country or programme should not automatically be rewarded with more money. But, when the financial ties between successful parts of the Union and the headquarters become almost negligible, greater care is needed to build ties of a different kind. In this context, we recommend that greater recognition be given to success through global M&E, internal benchmarking, feed back systems and other learning processes (section 8) that seek to spread and apply the lessons it offers. Success should also be recognised by the transfer of greater responsibility and broader roles to those parts of the Secretariat where it has been achieved – in which case stronger budgetary support from the centre may be appropriate.

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

On the basis of the agreements between Sida and IUCN external reviews, commissioned by the Director General, were undertaken of the IUCN Programmes for 1990-1993 and 1994-1996 in October 1993 and April/May 1996 respectively. The reviews were undertaken by two international teams with members provided by the Development Cooperation Agencies of Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States of America (1993) and Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Denmark (1996). The reports of the reviews were presented to the General Assembly in Buenos Aires in January 1995 and the World Conservation Congress in Montreal in October 1996 and have been taken into consideration in the further development of the Union's Programme.

At meetings of IUCN's principal donors in June and December 1998, it was agreed that an external review of the Programme should be undertaken in 1999 in order to contribute to the development of the IUCN Programme for the next triennium 2001-2003. The present Terms of Reference set out the requirements for this review.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND MATERIAL TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY THE REVIEW TEAM

The first World Conservation Congress (WCCI) of IUCN approved, in October 1996, the Triennial Programme for the period 1997-1999. This decision included the recommendations made by the Congress Programme Committee which, in turn, endorsed the recommendations of the 1996 external review. These discussions, documented in the proceedings of WCCI, therefore provide the formal context for the review of the Programme.

In the period between WCCI and the review a number of meetings have been held as part of a process designed to strengthen IUCN's Programme. In addition, a number of review processes have been undertaken. The reports of these meetings and reviews will be made available to the review team as relevant background material.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The objectives of the External Review are to assess the following:

Programme Focus and Impact

1. The extent to which IUCN has implemented the 1997-1999 Programme as approved by WCCI and to evaluate the quality of the work done, specifically in terms of its relevance at global and regional level on the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable and equitable development (as stated in the Mission).
2. The extent to which IUCN has succeeded in implementing the recommendations of previous reviews together with the implications that emerge from this for the future development and management of IUCN's Programme.
3. The extent to which the Programme responds to the needs and requirements of IUCN's key stakeholders (members, partners, donors) through discussions with them in the context of the field visits.

4. The extent to which IUCN's policy work has had an impact at global and regional level, including the extent to which IUCN has effectively applied programme lessons and experience in key areas of policy.

THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

In pursuit of these objectives the review team will examine a set of issues and elaborate a set of conclusions and recommendations. These tasks will include to:

Programme Development and Decentralisation

Programme Development and Management

- Analyse and comment on the adequacy of the present vision, strategic planning and programme development process in IUCN.
- Analyse and comment on the adequacy of programme management practices (decision-making, committees, conflict resolution, participation of staff, gender and cultural balance, and communication processes).
- Analyse and provide comments on the approach and delivery system now being pursued in its programming and programme implementation process.
- Analyse and comment on the present programme structure in view of an emerging holistic programme development process.
- Review current changes being introduced in the development and management of IUCN's Programme and comment on their value in addressing the weaknesses identified.
- Examine the extent to which IUCN has been able to use general programme support and programme-specific support to improve the implementation of its programme and provide guidance as to how future programme support might be more productively applied within the organisation and the Programme with the aim of supporting IUCN's Mission more effectively.
- Analyse and provide comments and recommendations on IUCN's budgeting procedures and in particular, planning, utilisation, monitoring and reporting on general programme and programme restricted funds provided by donors.
- Analyse and provide comments and recommendations on IUCN's report on the results of its activities as it is done through the annual Progress and Assessment reports and the semi-annual reports submitted to donors and Council.

Decentralisation

- Examine and comment upon the decentralisation process and in particular its strengths and weaknesses in achieving the Union's Mission. Comment on how these strengths can be enhanced and weaknesses addressed, including the adequacy of effectiveness of IUCN's regional operations and scope.
- In particular, comment on the extent to which the decentralisation and regionalization process has strengthened IUCN's capacity to:
 - Develop and implement a programme designed to achieve the Mission.

- Carry out its programming process with the active involvement of the membership and the Commissions, so as to take better advantage of its unique institutional character and respond to the recommendations of the 1996 WCCI.
- Ensure financial viability and stability of the Union.

General Management

- The extent to which IUCN is becoming a more equitable organisation - E & P, decision-making, transparency, communications, staff engagement and staff mobility.
- The extent to which IUCN has improved its financial viability since the last review.

SPECIFIC TASKS TO BE UNDERTAKEN

Visit up to three regional programmes and analyse both their regional impact, including in particular their role in building capacity of southern partner institutions, and their impact on IUCN's global programme and policy.

Visit up to three field projects in order to explore what impacts they may have on the conservation and sustainable resource management regimes and how they are related to the larger policy issues that the Union seeks to address. Special attention will be paid to the efficiency of the monitoring and evaluation systems in use.

Analyse the work of up to three global programmes in order in particular to assess the extent to which these draw upon the current experience of the Union's work and their impact on the policies and practices of IUCN's members and partners.

THE EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS

Composition, credibility and qualification of the Review Team

- The team should be interdisciplinary with at least one member having a strong background in the broad field of biodiversity with particular emphasis on the field/policy links, at least one with a background in social, economic and gender issues, at least one with a strong background in the field of evaluation, and at least one with broad institutional management skills and experience.
- The team leader should have extensive experience of institutional reviews and be familiar with IUCN. S/He will be responsible for managing the Review Team, including assigning specific tasks as required, as well as for editing the final report and submitting this to IUCN.
- The team needs to take account of gender balance and regional diversity. At least two members should have substantial knowledge of IUCN and how it works. At least one member should be from "the South".
- The team should total no more than six people.
- As indicated in the 1996 External Review report, the team needs to have (a) adequate planning time; (b) all relevant documentation, and (c) joint working and writing time.

Transparency and Credibility

- **The ToR** for the Review have been discussed by Management Board, and made available to all who wish to comment on them, including in particular the Programme Committee of Council and the Chairs of the Business, Policy and Membership Committees.
- **Methodology and work plan:** The Team should develop and discuss their methodology and work plan with the DG and key senior Secretariat staff, with the Chair of Council's Programme Committee, and with IUCN's principal donors.
- The methodology and work plan should outline clear objectives, analytical process and information needs of the review. The work plan should clearly link to the methodology (consultations for what purpose, travel to where, why, what data is required).
- A key aspect of transparency is clarity of **the links between data and conclusions**. As much as possible the reviewers should be encouraged to show the link between the data they have gathered and the conclusions they reach.
- **Communication:** The work plan and other explanatory notes should be used to inform key informants about the review before it takes place, and to allow key informants and other stakeholders to prepare for and maximise their input into the review process.

Timing

The review will be undertaken during the months of March-June 1999, with a first preparatory meeting with the team leader being held in IUCN Headquarters in February 1999. The whole process will take approximately 7-8 weeks.

Learning Organisation

To the greatest extent possible, the External Review needs to be utilised as one of the processes IUCN engages in to learn about itself. In order for the Review to be such an effective learning process, it needs to be treated as such by the IUCN staff and promoted as such by IUCN Management and by the Review Team.

The review should be considered as an opportunity to learn about collaboration between IUCN and its donors. In consequence, a debriefing(s) should be organised after the review in order to help facilitate this learning.