

**Follow-up to IUCN 2003 World Parks Congress  
Survey Results and Discussion**

## **PARKS: FOR LIFE'S SAKE**



**DURBAN +5: REVIEW OF THE IUCN 2003 WORLD PARKS  
CONGRESS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS  
FOR PROTECTED AREAS**

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**Follow up to the IUCN World Parks Congress 2003:  
Survey Results and Discussion**

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## Introduction

On February 19th 2008 the following message was sent by e-mail to members of the World Commission on Protected Areas by the Commission Chair.

“The IUCN World Parks Congress, the premier international meeting dealing with protected areas, was held in Durban South Africa in September 2003. The Congress marked a paradigm shift towards ensuring that parks and protected area provide benefits “beyond boundaries”, while also ensuring that such areas continue to serve as the best means globally to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In Durban, four legacy products were generated, namely:

- **The Durban Accord**, its overall message was the need to increase the effectiveness of protection of the core values of protected areas, and at the same time relate protected areas to the wider ecological and environmental challenges, and to local and other human communities.

- **The Durban Action Plan**, Nine specific outcomes, actions and targets were identified.

- **Thirty two recommendations** that resulted from discussions at the Congress, for application by countries, members of IUCN, Commissions and other organisations, and a list of emerging issues.

- **A Message to the Convention on Biological Diversity** that identified what actions were particularly relevant in developing of a programme of work on protected areas for adoption under the Convention.

Five years have elapsed since the Congress, and the WCPA Steering Committee has agreed on the need for a review of not only what has been achieved since Durban but also to capture your views on what has emerged since the 2003 Congress. This questionnaire provides an opportunity to express your opinion on progress in terms of the key outcomes, actions and targets in the Durban Action Plan, Accord and the recommendations adopted at the Congress. We also want your views on emerging issues and global trends.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your participation will contribute to understanding how the legacy of the Durban Congress is being implemented and the emerging trends that will need to be addressed in the future.

The survey is available at the following link

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hpT5Cd4pO08L9KnOK6gxtQ\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hpT5Cd4pO08L9KnOK6gxtQ_3d_3d) ”

The survey was also made available on the IUCN and WCPA websites and members were encouraged to distribute it to their networks.

The survey was designed collaboratively by IUCN staff, members of the steering committee and Parks Canada and respondents were given one month to respond. Five topical areas were covered by the survey:

- Affiliation and attendance at the WPC

- Views on progress of recommendations and examples

- Views on Durban pledge

- Views on regional networks

- Topics for the World Parks Congress in 2013.

Two hundred and forty four people responded. The following is a summary and interpretation of the results.

#### **Respondent Profile.**

Fifty three percent attended the 2003 Parks Congress and 82% were aware of the recommendations. Most respondents (31%) were affiliated with a parks organisation, followed by individual WCPA members (30%), academia (24%), NGOs (22%) and consultants (17%). As respondents could check more than one box this totals to more than 100%. Many respondents checked both an affiliation and also "individual WCPA member". However some who were members just indicated their affiliation making it difficult to establish with precision the proportion of respondents who were WCPA members. IUCN headquarters estimates that about 65% of respondents were probably WCPA members. The affiliations of respondents varies from WCPA membership where 31% are NGO/IGO, 25% Government and 21% academic.

#### **Results**

##### **Agreement with WPC Recommendations**

This question presented 18 statements derived from recommendations from the WPC and asked how much progress had been made (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know). One hundred and sixty four people answered the question. Of the 18 topics, the ones with highest support (50% or higher) were:

- Increasing awareness of protected areas (88% agree)
- Progress in terrestrial protected area systems (82% agree)
- Addressing social issues (74% agree).

The items with the highest "strongly agree" rating were with awareness raising with regard to value of Protected Areas and benefits they provide to society, and that social issues were being better addressed in protected area establishment.

The ones with the lowest support (50% or less) were:

- Filling in gaps at seascape level (21% agree)
- Progress in long term stable funding (37 % agree)
- Ensuring equitable sharing of benefits (46% agree)

The items with the highest "strongly disagree" responses were that progress had been made on long term stable funding for PAs and progress had been made in seascape connectivity. Budgetary concerns were also the highest rated barrier to effective PA management in the survey undertaken at the 2003 Congress (Hockings et al 2005) and were also seen as the greatest challenge to PAs in the global PA governance assessment undertaken for the WPC (Dearden et al 2005).

There were some interesting differences amongst groups. For example, attendees of the

2003 Congress tended to indicate significantly more progress in four areas than non-attendees:

- Equity issues addressed at institution or in my area of work

- Addressing the impacts of climate change

- Freshwater protected areas

- Equitable sharing of benefits.

Stratification of the respondents in terms of affiliation was only possible with the larger numbers associated with pooled groups. For this analysis respondents who had indicated "individual WCPA member" in addition to another category were taken as members of the other category. The main groups were those associated with a park agency in a senior management or staff role whereas the non-park group included academics, non-government organisations and consultants. In general, those in the park group had a higher level of agreement that progress was being made than the non-park group. Three areas resulted in statistically significant differences between the groups: PA management plans completed, progress in MPAs and sharing of benefits in park establishment and management.

### **Examples of Achievements**

Respondents were asked to give examples of achievements presumably since the WPC, in five different areas. One hundred and four respondents answered this question overall. The first topical area was in awareness raising and 74% of those answering the question provided a response. Some gave examples of specific programmes, campaigns and products. Examples of programmes that were mentioned include the "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" programme in Victoria, Australia and the "Micronesia Challenge" a programme that was mentioned several places throughout the survey. Specific products included various brochures, videos and TV programmes, such as the Environmental Education Tool Box for implementing agencies within the Maloti Drakensberg TransFrontier Conservation Area. Others related to more generic awareness mechanisms such as the Programme of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity and others commented on the additional resources that were now available for awareness raising, such as staff increases. Increased resources were not confined to PA agencies with several respondents commenting on the growth in NGO strength and impact.

A second area of enquiry related to examples of increased financial, political and technical support, for which 57% of respondents answering this question provided examples. Many responses involved direct mention of budget increases or statements where it can be inferred that budget increases were necessary to develop new programmes, such as "increased staffing and scientific research" and significant additions to PA systems that occurred in several countries. The sources of funding is presumed to be mainly from government but several respondents mentioned innovative partnerships with other agencies, NGOs and the private sector. Several respondents also mentioned improved political support and provided examples, such as politicians appointing better-qualified people in top Protected Area agency roles. A particularly interesting comment was that all political parties now had PA positions discussed during election times. There were few responses mentioning increased technical support and no specific examples provided.

A third area related to policies and laws and this was answered by 61% of respondents and garnered a wide range of answers ranging from the very specific (“banning vehicles on beaches”) to the signing of international treaties, such as Australia signing the Kyoto protocol. Most however dealt with improvements in national and sub national (state, provincial) PA legislation and policy.

The fourth area asked respondents about PA systems and was answered by 74% of respondents that answered this question. Most respondents mentioned the establishment of new parks, but there was also mention of park establishment processes such as gap analysis and landscape-scale initiatives to develop linked conservation lands. Most comments were terrestrial but marine development was also noted. There was little explicit mention (1 response) of freshwater protection, despite it being explicitly mentioned in the question and the fact that it is an acknowledged gap for many protected area systems.

The fifth area of enquiry related to the sharing of benefits and social and equity dimensions of PAs and only 50% (52 respondents) provided examples. Greater consultation and co-management arrangements with local and indigenous people were mentioned frequently, with some alluding to formal agreements, such as Access and Benefit Agreement with First Nations in Canada. Innovative amendments to legislation in South Australia in 2004 enabled co-management of parks with Aboriginal people and subsequent establishment of co-managed parks (over both Government and Aboriginal owned lands). There was also some pushback noted in this area with one respondent commenting that “the sharing may be too strong now. The park agencies are often starved so that other groups can be given money.”

The achievements noted above are laudable, however respondents were not asked whether they were an outcome from the WPC or would have occurred anyway. Response rates were also low with, in the last area, only about 20% of the survey respondents providing an answer. This is also true for the next section, which asked whether negative trends had been felt in the same areas.

### **Examples of negative trends and events**

One overall positive result is that, in general, the number of responses for examples of negative trends was not as numerous as those for achievements. Eighty-seven respondents, in total, provided examples compared with the 104 for the positive trends.

Examples of negative trends in awareness raising was one of the least answered questions with 41% of respondents who answered this question suggesting an example. Some of these were country specific (e.g. termination of a PA TV programme) and others were quite generic. Some, for example, thought that the PA agenda was getting swamped by the attention now being given to climate change. Several mentioned that the word “protected” has a negative connotation in their country and that the role of PAs was not fully understood. Others mentioned competition amongst conservation agencies and NGOs as being negative and others mentioned the challenges created by increasingly urban populations with little connection to the land.

The dominant concern in terms of declining support was budgetary. Some respondents mentioned that even though budgets *per se* had not declined, new PA establishment meant that there was less money available for each park. Others felt that conservation

funding was being diverted to other sources such as private lands and local communities. Concerns were voiced about increasing reliance on user fees as a main source of revenue and the implications that declining visitation might have on park budgets. Related to the reported budget declines was declining political support mentioned by some respondents.

Some also drew attention to the lack of support for training.

Examples of negative trends in laws and policies were given by 53% of respondents who answered this question and covered a wide range of topics. For example, several respondents felt that national laws and policies were being weakened and allowing greater exploitation of PA resources. Some felt this had been facilitated by the last WPC and also mentioned a "downgrading" of PA categories as being partially responsible. In particular there was mention of greater access to PA lands by local communities and also threats felt from decentralisation. Others felt that national laws and policies had not kept pace with current conditions and were too dated. One comment from South Africa that was also mentioned by others was that the existing laws and policies are adequate but implementation is often weak.

Examples of negative trends in terms of PA systems elicited most comment on the lack of progress on the marine front, almost one quarter of the examples mentioned this, which is remarkable given the number of countries that may have no access to the coast. Some mentioned that even though PA systems had expanded, there was no concomitant improvement in the status of several key endangered species, such as the tiger. The difficulties under which some PA staff work under was exemplified in one comment that mentioned the difficulties in actually accessing the protected areas system due to the activities of violent militias.

The final area asking for examples of negative trends related to benefit sharing and equity and was answered by just over 40% of the respondents that answered this question. Indigenous concerns were mentioned by several respondents and these varied from a lack of adequate attention through to concerns that rights were being allocated without associated responsibilities. There were also comments that the hopes of local communities for benefits from parks had perhaps been raised too high and others worried that monitoring programmes were not in place to assess the impacts of equity programmes.

### **Agreement on Social Engagement and Participation Arising from the Durban Accord**

Respondents were asked for their degree of agreement with three statements related to social engagement:

- "A climate of humility, credibility and trust is being fostered globally;

- Open dialogue and collaboration is occurring globally; and

- All constituencies are being engaged and embraced."

They were subsequently asked to explain their response. The statement of agreement was answered by 174 of the 244 respondents. The explanation garnered a lower response rate with more skipping the question (139) than answering it (105). Furthermore since the explanation dealt with all three statements it was not always clear which one it specifically applied to. Nonetheless some interesting observations were forthcoming and

virtually all the explanatory comments related to negative observations.

Regarding the first statement outlined above, the majority response disagreed with this statement (46%), with 42.5% agreeing and a 20% "don't know" response. With a survey of this nature the relative positions of the agree and disagree positions are not really important, the main point is that there is significant disagreement on the issue. The second statement had the highest level of agreement of any of the statements (59.6%) with 33.5% disagreement. The third statement showed the highest level of disagreement (62.1%) with 31.8% in agreement.

Explanations tended to be lengthy and perhaps best summed up by one respondent "I don't even know where to start. The underlying reasons will be the same as the ones responsible for the conflicts, crises and the widespread poverty that still persists in so many parts of the world." This sentiment was expressed often, that dealing with PAs was no different from many other global issues, and that PAs were not the main driver to solve these issues. Others expressed frustration at the imbedded nature of PA problems in this matrix noting that "the biodiversity crisis is not fully understood but it is rather seen just as sum of minor problems, so who cares?" Others felt that perhaps trust in these statements was misguided "humility, credibility and trust or open dialogue and collaboration and engagement is [*sic*] obviously important elements of this pledge but not enough to safeguard protected areas." Whereas others felt they may actually be detrimental to PAs "We may actually be neglecting the strongest supporters of PAs - the nature conservation community by marginalising biodiversity protection in the pursuit of making everyone else happy."

Specific challenges were raised such as the role of indigenous people. Some felt that inadequate efforts were being made to incorporate their views, others felt that too much effort was being made. Some pointed out that dialogue was a means to an end, improved action on the ground, and if this was not happening then the improved dialogue was in vain "Everyone agrees about the importance and need for open dialogue and collaboration, yet putting these into practice is another story. A lot of improvement is needed in this area."

However many respondents felt this to be a challenging question to answer at the global level. Processes might be improving dramatically in some parts of the world and yet not in others, so much depends upon the context. Some suggested that a national rather than a global frame of reference for the question might have been more meaningful. Finally some felt that even the Accord was meaningless "I fear the Durban Accord pledge is a typical example of a mega-conference, motherhood-and-apple pie, pious aspirational statement that, however commendable, too often has minimal practical impact beyond the conference delegates or the time of the event, and hence - alas - discredits the process."

### **Greatest Barriers to Implementation of Durban Accord, Action Plan and Recommendations.**

This question was answered by 141 respondents. A few were critical of the Accord ("the complexity of the Accord puts it out of reach of the layperson") but most mentioned global forces such as lack of political support, lack of awareness of the Accord, lack of financial transfer mechanisms, competition for resources, increasing poverty and pro-development ideologies. Other factors mentioned included inadequate technical expertise and the failure to appreciate the value of ecosystem services provided by PAs. Some were



directly critical of WCPA 'Inability of WCPA to mobilise regional networks and support systems.' In contrast to the previous question which generated long paragraphs of response this question tended to be answered in very few words.

### **Role of Regional Networks**

Respondents were asked whether they felt that regional networks and meetings of practitioners could help advance effective establishment and management of PAs and were given four choices (very little, little, moderately, and a lot). Encouragingly over 60% of this well-answered question said "a lot" with another 30% saying "moderately." There is obviously keen interest in greater regional networking of practitioners, and this also came through in other questions, such as on ideas for the next WPC.

When asked whether they or their organisation could help over 50% said "a lot" and almost 40% said "moderately." Again this is a very positive show of support for this activity. A follow-up question asked in what capacity respondents could help facilitate such networking. A wide range of responses resulted ranging from just "attending" through to organising and hosting such regional networking. There was some commitment of resources mentioned from agencies, international donors (GEF) and research institutions through to specific offers such as satellite imagery. Many offered their technical expertise in areas such as community development, MPAs, park planning, creating virtual networks and doing interpretation.

### **Trends Important in the Future that should be a Focus of the Next WPC**

There were 155 responses to the question that asked respondents to identify 3 important trends in the future. However since the question did not explicitly ask respondents to prioritise these trends they were all pooled to assess which were mentioned most frequently. Illustrating the challenges involved with open-ended questions in a single pool we ended up with many different categories. However a few stood out as having significantly more mentions than others. The prime one was global climate change that was mentioned 84 times. Related aspects were also mentioned frequently and in particular the potential for carbon trading to provide a potential funding mechanism for PAs, the challenges of oil exploration in PAs, the potential conflicts with biofuels and also increasing oil costs reducing tourism revenues in the future. Interestingly in the survey of delegates to the 2003 WPC, climate change ranked 8<sup>th</sup> amongst the influence of current global change factors on PAs and 4<sup>th</sup> in the future (Hocking et al 2005). It now seems to have risen to the top rank in an unanticipated short time frame.

The next largest single cluster concerned the need for increased protection of marine waters, with particular attention being drawn to the High Seas. Freshwater conservation was also mentioned by several respondents but considerably less than the marine.

A third category related to competition for resources. Respondents noted growth in both population and consumption levels as drivers and also detailed some of the impacts such as increased pressure for agricultural lands, increased deforestation, increased pressures from urban development and a resulting loss in biodiversity. The challenges in expanding park systems under these conditions were noted by many respondents.

There was also some feeling that too much emphasis was given to system expansion and not enough to management and measuring the effectiveness of established PAs. A trend to decreasing government support was identified by some respondents and the need to ensure that existing PAs received adequate resources. Several respondents raised the

question of park categorisation and the increasing trends toward multiple use PAs and whether certification might be needed in the future to assess whether PA objectives were being met.

Habitat fragmentation was seen as an increasing problem and the need to link PAs through corridors and bioregional planning. Private PAs were mentioned by some respondents as an increasing trend in the future and the need to get the business community more involved with PAs. The problem of increasing numbers of invasive species was mentioned by several respondents.

There were a large number of diffuse comments related to governance. These ranged from encouraging local participation through to the establishment of more transboundary PAs. Conflicting trends were noted such as concern over the increasing influence of international NGOs by some, whereas others approved of greater power going to NGOs. There were some concerns raised about PA agency governance with comments indicating that greater emphasis was being put on appearance rather than substance.

Generating increased support for PAs was also addressed by many respondents. Some saw this as a technical question with a need to develop more effective means of evaluating ecosystem services and other values produced by PAs and communicating these to the right audiences. Others saw a lack of political will to establish more PAs in the future and advocated awareness programmes targeted specifically at politicians. There were a surprisingly high number of responses noting the growing alienation of urbanites from the natural world and the resulting difficulties in gaining support from these populations to protect wild biodiversity. To counteract this "public apathy" several respondents noted the need to pay more attention to education and outreach, especially to urban populations and promote appropriate visitation to PAs.

### **What should be done at next WPC to make it as effective as possible in advancing protected areas globally**

This was one of the better answered questions on the survey with 144 responses, and, challengingly 144 different answers. The answers ranged from the very specific ("hold it in Madagascar", "include representation from China") to the very general ("a holistic, integrated "Whole World" approach to Protected Areas", "more communication"), but also served to illustrate the difficulties with holding a global event such as the WPC because of the wide divergence of views. A content analysis of main themes was undertaken and the following discussion is based on this.

The major split was between those who advocated for a smaller and more focused congress and those who opted for a broader more diffuse event. Advocates for small felt that the WPC should be a "Summit, not another Convention" and many suggested a preparatory process that would see regional workshops (and even implementation plans) engaging larger numbers of members that would lead up to the WPC. This would also serve to re-invigorate regional networking and there was strong support for this irrespective of view on WPC size.

On the other hand many respondents, while not actually calling for a larger Congress articulated a need to engage an even broader constituency than Durban. Mention was made of inviting "non-environmentalists" and a "multi-sectoral audience". The latter respondent went on to suggest that thought should be given to structuring the congress

such as to restrict participant's choices for what sessions they should attend, with the idea that participants gravitate to the familiar whereas the Congress should be trying to broaden their perspective. Although not going quite so far, others did suggest that there be special sessions mainly for "non-PA" specialists that would differ in message and intent than the more focused sessions that were favoured by many.

One theme related to broadening that received wide support was for the inclusion of top decision-makers at the political level and the need for them to be engaged in the PA agenda if it is to move forward. Some were pessimistic on this front "Recognise that we are losing the battle" and one even suggested a theme for the Congress "Biodiversity and Humanity on the Edge: the Role of Protected Areas" In this regard there were suggestions for more open accountability in terms of management effectiveness with, for example, peer reviewed national statements on progress since 2003 as inputs leading to statements of national commitments as outputs from the Congress. This emphasises a theme that was commonly mentioned on "action not talk"

Another seeming dichotomy from the responses is between those who would like to see the Congress grounded and related more to practitioners with, for example, more sessions on training and articulation of best practices in PA management, compared to those who would like to see PAs set within the broader context of global issues such as climate change, poverty, equity and financial restructuring. A similar split characterised those who called for a stronger emphasis on biodiversity and conservation ("there should be room for ecology as well as sociology") and those who favoured a broader, more social agenda.

Other themes that were mentioned by several participants were the need to better engage business interests, develop better education and outreach programmes, address global financial deficiencies for PAs, relate more to international treaties, establishing clear targets as outputs, building partnerships, linking PAs more to human well being and more emphasis on MPAs. There was surprisingly low mention of aboriginal and local communities and none of tourism and visitor use.

Overall the picture that arises is of two different kinds of events. One vision is from those who see the World Parks Congress as a smaller, focused summit catering mainly to practitioners and selected globally influential figures, perhaps more on the Bali model but with greater attention to accountability and binding outputs for national targets. The other vision is for the large Durban type Congress with a much broader approach where a significant number of people at the Congress may have devoted little thought previously to PAs. The main goal of the latter is outreach and partnerships to new constituencies whereas the main goal of the former is consolidation and support for existing programmes. These two need not be seen as mutually exclusive, but the feedback from this survey does reveal a considerable divergence amongst respondents about what can be done at the next WPC to make it as effective as possible in advancing the protected area agenda. Finally, one respondent suggested that to be truly responsible WCPA should consider having a virtual conference to minimise carbon emissions.

The "Survey Monkey" methodology used for this questionnaire is easy to use and cost effective and consideration should be given to administering another survey closer to the date of the next World Parks Congress to obtain the views of WCPA members to provide information for more detailed Congress planning purposes.

## Conclusions

Obviously there are some limitations involved with trying to generalise from a survey with 244 respondents and 170 completed questionnaires that is sampling a total population of over 1500. In many cases individual questions garnered significantly lower number of responses than the 170 quoted above. However, the survey does provide useful additional insights into the response to the 2003 WPC and ideas for the future. Many of the findings, such as the challenge of obtaining adequate funding, echo the findings of other global surveys on PAs.

The main question to be decided regarding the next WPC is to ask what are the most important outcomes desired from the Congress. Another key question is to determine the main audience. Interestingly only one third of the respondents for the delegate survey for the 2003 WPC were members of the WCPA. Is a similar figure the target for the next WPC?

Overall, the current survey found strong support for a more focused affair, but perhaps this is only to be expected from a survey consisting mainly of WCPA members. If the WPC is mainly for members then serious thought should be given to this suggestion. Furthermore, there was strong support for increasing engagement of regional networks, with considerable indications of support for doing this from many respondents. This approach would see the WPC more as a part of an ongoing process of critical self examination, capacity building, partnerships, outreach, strategic planning and overall enhancement of the role of PAs in society rather than a "one-off" event that to many committed members of the PA community may seem a little redundant.

## References

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