

**Speech by IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre at the Central European
University's "Effectiveness of Protected Areas" Conference
"Putting Protected Areas to Work to Address Global Challenges"
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What is the first thing that comes into your mind when you think of nature?

Is it an Amazonian rainforest teeming with wildlife?

Maybe an Alpine lake surrounded by mountain peaks and glaciers?

Or perhaps it's the African savannah with its famous "Big Five": lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino?

Whichever it is, chances are it is what we in IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, call a "protected area".

Protected areas have been a cornerstone of IUCN's work since its foundation in 1948, and that of our World Commission on Protected Areas – the world's premier body of protected areas experts and professionals.

In fact, the idea of creating IUCN belongs to the same Swiss medical doctor, Paul Sarasin, who led the establishment of Switzerland's first National Park in 1914.

Of course, the idea of protected areas is not a new one.

For millennia, communities all over the world, including indigenous people, have been conserving nature for cultural and spiritual reasons, while pursuing economic activities in these landscapes and seascapes.

Protected forests have been in existence for well over 2000 years, in places as diverse as China, India or Ghana.

In the Pacific, the imposition of *tapu* (taboo) had the effect of creating sacred protected areas.

European royalty and aristocrats set aside private hunting grounds, which gave us the French expression "*chasse gardée*".

However, the modern concept of protected areas was triggered by the establishment of the first legally defined national parks in North America (and I am sure you all think of the Yellowstone), South Africa, Australia and New Zealand in late 19th century.

From a handful of national parks at the turn of the 20th century, today we have over 160,000 protected areas, covering 12.7% of the world's land surface.

So what *is* a modern protected area?

IUCN defines it as a:

“Clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”.

Today’s protected areas come in many shapes and sizes – terrestrial and marine, local and transboundary, community conserved and privately owned, strictly protected reserves and sustainably managed landscapes, Ramsar wetlands of international importance and UNESCO World Heritage sites...

Many different terms are used at the national level to describe protected areas: hundreds of names in all, with – for example – about 50 in Australia.

A first attempt to categorise protected areas was made by IUCN in 1978. In 1994, IUCN adopted a revised system of six management categories, which are shown on this slide.

This system is now being widely used and has been endorsed by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as in national legislation of a number of countries.

Protected areas are at the heart of dealing with many of the biggest challenges facing our planet today – including climate change, food and water security, and ultimately the challenge of achieving sustainable development.

It is a truly remarkable global estate that remains a fundamental strategy to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, with multiple benefits to people.

In fact, the global growth of protected areas was almost the only good news story in what was otherwise a rather bleak report on the international community’s efforts to halt biodiversity loss by the year 2010.

Today, the world’s protected areas:

- provide drinking water to one-third of the world’s 100 largest cities;
- store the same amount of carbon as tropical forests;
- help prevent disasters like floods and avalanches, saving billions of dollars or Euros;
- enhance food security by boosting fisheries and preserving crop wild relatives;
- improve people’s health by providing sources of medicines and clean air;
- welcome millions of visitors every year, thus contributing to the fastest-growing global ecotourism market; and
- contribute to building peace and promoting cooperation among nations.

In Europe, the Natura 2000 network has been developed to secure the long-term survival of Europe’s most valuable and threatened species and habitats, which now covers about 18% of the total area of Europe’s 27 member states.

Europe’s protected areas play a key role in protecting biodiversity. But they are also a critical component of the continent’s economy, contributing over EUR 15 billion a year in jobs, food, and other services for the people of Europe.

But as I’m sure you have already guessed, we cannot rest on our laurels. Because:

- only half of key nature sites (Important Bird Areas and Alliance for Zero Extinction sites) are today formally protected;
- every 10th natural World Heritage Site (18 out of a total number of 188) is listed as being “In Danger”;

- only one quarter of the world's protected areas are adequately managed;
- only 1.6% of the global oceans enjoy any form of protection.

In 2010, governments at the 10th meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Japan adopted 20 landmark Aichi Targets, including Target 11 which calls for at least 17% of the world's terrestrial areas and 10% of marine areas to be conserved by 2020.

These ambitious targets will require dramatic efforts by all countries. This will mean adding an area of at least 6 million square kilometres on land, roughly twice the size of India, and 8 million square kilometres on sea – an area greater than the size of Australia!

But even if we are to achieve these numerical targets, this only scratches the surface of what really needs to be done to achieve a truly representative and connected global system of protected areas.

More importantly, we need to address the issue of quality and not just quantity, in other words, whether these areas are actually effectively managed and governed fairly and equitably.

IUCN and its World Commission on Protected Areas, together with UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre, keeps track of the global protected areas estate.

This is known as the World Database on Protected Areas, and its public face ProtectedPlanet.org, which has been produced since 1962 under the mandate from the United Nations.

You can see on the left the first edition of the UN List of National Parks and Protected Areas published in 1962, which contained just 1,000 records.

This year, IUCN and UNEP-WCMC have launched the first-ever Protected Planet Report, and will now be reporting every two years on how we are doing in achieving the goals set by our governments, both in terms of quantity and quality.

This puts us in a unique position to be able to guide every country in the world on what is needed, where and how it should be managed, and in which way these areas should be governed to meet these challenging targets.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have the goal, the road map, and the benchmarks for success.

The question is, how can we put protected areas to work to address today's and tomorrow's global challenges? How can we bridge the huge gap between where we are now and where we need to be in just eight years' time?

To this end, IUCN will convene its sixth World Parks Congress in November 2014 in Sydney, Australia. The ten-yearly World Parks Congresses is where the world gets together to chart the future for protected areas -- but also way beyond their boundaries!

The theme of the 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress is *"Inspiring Solutions"*:

- solutions that are inspired responses to the challenges that the world faces; and
- inspiring people to take action, change behaviour and influence others.

What we hope to achieve in 2014 is to place solutions on the table that will compel action in the decade that follows.

I would like to mention the five key issues that we will tackle at our next World Parks Congress:

- **Protected areas....conserving nature**

Simply put, large healthy protected ecosystems are the best tool we have to conserve biodiversity, especially against the backdrop of climate change.

We are in the middle of a global extinction crisis, with rates of biodiversity loss up to 1,000 times above pre-human levels. This depletes our natural capital and undermines sustainability at a planetary, as well as local, scale.

Well managed protected areas are the most robust proven solution to turn the tide of extinction.

Protected areas are justly credited with preventing the extinction of tigers, rhinos and many other charismatic and lesser known animals.

Many critically endangered species today, for example mountain gorillas and giant pandas, survive only in protected areas.

Going forward, we must significantly step up protection of vulnerable ecosystems and key biodiversity areas, especially our oceans where we are witnessing change on an unprecedented scale.

We do have some positive signs: for example, marine protected area coverage more than doubled in the last ten years, but much more needs to be done to protect the blue heart of our planet.

In addition to its well-known Red List of Threatened Species, IUCN is now developing the new Red List of Ecosystems – which will be able to tell us whether an ecosystem is facing an imminent risk of collapse, and we are also working on mapping Key Biodiversity Areas.

These key knowledge products will help us identify where we need future protected areas most, in order to save the most critical species and ecosystems.

- **Protected areas....respecting people**

I have referred to the long history of human involvement in the stewardship of natural resources that is the basis for the modern concept of the national park or protected area. But that history has not always been a progressive or harmonious one.

In many cases, territorial conquest, colonisation and authoritarian regimes have displaced or undermined indigenous peoples and local communities, and there is a need to redress these wrongs of the past and place the governance of protected areas globally on a just and equitable footing.

To this end, IUCN and partners are developing a new methodology for governance assessment and evaluation. In Eastern Europe, a study is underway in several countries, to document case studies and to do national assessments of protected area governance.

For example, here in Hungary, enthusiastic park rangers, farmers and pastoralists are restoring traditional wood pasture management in Cserépfalu, part of the Bükk National Park, and reaching a new understanding and revival of traditional Hungarian approaches to conservation and sustainable use which have all but disappeared over the past century.

- **Protected areas....developing capacity**

The establishment of protected areas does not guarantee that their objectives are achieved. All too often, protected areas are nothing more than “paper parks”-- with no management or enforcement measures in place, and with no budget or personnel. To fulfil their purpose, protected areas must be managed effectively, by competent and empowered professionals.

Since its inception, IUCN has produced a large volume of highly regarded protected area standards and guidelines, such as the IUCN Protected Area Categories and Governance Types, and many supporting capacity development resource materials and training programmes.

With support from the European Commission, IUCN is now implementing a major new project on capacity development, known as BIOPAMA (Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management), that will work mainly in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific but with great importance and relevance for capacity development worldwide.

- **Protected areas....achieving quality**

Many governments and agencies are asking IUCN to provide the basis for an independent measure of whether protected areas are achieving quality standards that can be used for rewarding effective management or for stimulating further investment in addressing the weaknesses that have been identified.

This the focus of a new IUCN priority, to facilitate the development of a new international standard for the minimum level of achievement that all protected areas should attain in order to meet their objectives. This standard is known as the IUCN Green List of Well-Managed Protected Areas.

Together with partners in Australia, Colombia, Korea, Kenya and China, we are now piloting the application of the IUCN Green List, with a view to being able to launch it at the 2014 World Parks Congress.

- **Protected areas....offering solutions**

Last but not least, protected areas are at the very core of nature-based solutions – a concept coined by IUCN in the context of climate change, and more increasingly as our overarching response to addressing some of the most serious problems that humanity faces today.

Imagine a new drug that could keep you more active and fit.

A new drug that reduces the risk of cancer, heart disease and diabetes...

A drug that also improves learning and mental wellbeing...

And — delivers clean water and fresh air.

This new discovery would surely win a Nobel Prize, but it's not a drug at all — it's simply nature! — a park, a forest, a beach...

Protected areas are the nature-based solution for our health, food and water security, disaster risk reduction, poverty alleviation and climate change.

Most importantly, protected areas are a means to an end to achieve the IUCN vision of “a just world that values and conserves nature”, not an end in themselves.

Fortunately, in the case of protected areas, this investment by society over thousands of years will increasingly show its value.

And it doesn't have to cost the earth.

A representative global protected area system, as envisaged by the Aichi Target 11, could be established and effectively managed at a fraction of the cost of what governments currently spend on environmentally harmful subsidies.

I believe that this would be one of the best investments we can make as a global community, to honour our ancestors and inspire future generations, and to provide hope for our one and only, beautiful and fragile, protected planet.

Thank you. I will be pleased to take your questions now.