
IUCN – The World Conservation Union

Review of IUCN Commissions

**Commission on Ecosystem Management
Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
Commission on Environmental Law
Species Survival Commission**

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Preface

The purpose of this review is to promote and deepen IUCN's thinking about its Commissions, which are one

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Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEC	Commission on Education and Communication
CEESP	Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
CEL	Commission on Environmental Law
CEM	Commission on Ecosystem Management
COE	Commission on Ecology
COF	Commission Operating Fund
DG	Director General
ELC	Environmental Law Centre
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
KRA	Key Result Area
MAGE	

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Gabor Bruszt had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Steering Committee of CEL in Bonn in April. This provided useful information and insights for our review.

Because of our limited time and resources, and because a number of generic issues arise from these reviews that are of broader importance for IUCN, we have agreed with the Bureau of Council that we will submit a single report that covers the two end-term reviews and the two 'in depth' reviews.

Given the constraints under which we were working, we adopted the following principal methods for this review:

- review of documentation supplied to us by the Commissions and the Secretariat (see Annex 3);
- face-to-face and telephonic interviews with key Secretariat staff, with the Chairs and some support staff of the four Commissions; with a limited number of Commission members (particularly members of Steering Committees) and with some other key informants (see Annex 3);
- a questionnaire (Annex 2) that was sent to members of Commission Steering Committees or Executive Committees and, in some cases, to Chairs of Specialist Groups. Only a limited response was received.

As provided for by the Buenos Aires resolution, Chairs of the four Commissions were asked to nominate individuals to work with us. CEM nominated Dr T. Larsen, with whom it was possible to hold one meeting in Oslo. CEESP nominated Dr S. Huq. We were able to work with him for two days in London, and to ask him to supply us with information and analysis on several issues pertinent to the review.

We made it clear to the Bureau and the Secretariat that we would only be able to submit a preliminary draft, indicating our main findings and recommendations, in advance of the 27-28 May Bureau meeting. That draft was also sent to the Chairs and Steering Committees of Commissions, and to staff of the Secretariat. In preparing this final report, we have taken into account the comments that we received on the draft from various quarters.

1.4. Previous and future reviews

An overall review of the IUCN Commissions was made by Gabor Bruszt and David Munro in 1993 (Munro and Bruszt, 1993). Comparison of the 1993 report with this one will indicate that many issues identified then remain important seven years later, and that a number of the 1993 recommendations, which are still valid, have yet to be acted upon.

Our participation in the 1999 External Review of IUCN (IUCN, 1999) has helped to guide and inform us in this review of the Commissions. The External Review focused mainly on programmatic issues, although it included a short chapter on the Commissions. That chapter made a number of recommendations that we believe remain valid.

We hope that this review lays a useful foundation for future, more systematic monitoring of the Commissions, and that it will help in the further specification of 'performance areas' to guide the monitoring process. While the generic questions set out in our terms of reference (Annex 1) are a useful guide, we suggest that further work be done on them to enhance their structure, content and flow. We have tried as far as possible to adapt and respond to these questions with regard to each Commission reviewed, although it has not been possible to provide a comprehensive set of answers in each case.

It is important that Commissions join with the rest of the Union in developing a more evaluative culture. The Commission review process leading up to the 2000 WCC has been rushed because only CEC and WCPA launched their own reviews in a timely manner. We hope that, in the coming quadrennium and in accordance with decisions of the Congress and Council about which Commissions should undergo mid-term, end-term or in-depth reviews, the Commissions will take more positive ownership of the review process. In the

coming quadrennium they should institute, manage and fund the reviews themselves as part of the Union's regular cycle of reviews. Similar initiatives should be expected of all other programmatic units of IUCN.

1.5. This report

This report falls into two main parts. First, we present a number of general observations and recommendations about Commissions. Amongst other things, this analysis leads us to some comments about the broader governance of the Union – a subject to which we believe IUCN will have to devote focused attention during the coming quadrennium.

Secondly, we present our observations and recommendations on each of the four Commissions that we have been asked to review.

2. General issues

2.1. The intended role and status of Commissions within the Union

The Commissions form one of the three pillars of IUCN, along with the membership and the Secretariat. They are meant to provide the knowledge and authority on which the Union's policies and activities are based. As the structures within which qualified individuals can express their commitment to IUCN's vision, Commissions are also instruments of the Union's Programme.

IUCN depends on three kinds of commitment. Members, which are institutions, express their commitment by working in support of the Union's vision and mission and, specifically, by contributing to the Union's budget. Individuals express their commitment by working for members and strengthening members' inputs to the Programme. If they are capable specialists, they can contribute by joining IUCN Commissions, whose members are expected to work on a voluntary basis.

As a core part of the Union, the Commissions are accorded an important role in its governance. Their Chairs are elected by the WCC and are answerable to it. They sit alongside representatives of the membership on the IUCN Council. In turn, the Union gives Commissions their mandates by resolutions of the World Conservation Congress. These mandates should allocate a clearly defined part of the Union's total need for knowledge to each Commission.

The Statutes and Regulations of the Union set out a standard format for the structure and procedures of Commissions and their relations with the rest of IUCN.

As approaches to conservation evolved over IUCN's early decades, and as the Union's commitment to sustainable and equitable development grew, the number and scope of the Commissions expanded. During its second quarter century, IUCN has applied the Commission concept to develop knowledge and analysis in broader, more paradigmatic fields such as ecosystems and social and economic policy. Meanwhile, although the actual number of Commissions has remained at six since the 1970s (despite various proposals to close some or to create new ones), the number of Commission members has increased substantially.

2.2. The actual role and status of Commissions within the Union

In practice, the six current Commissions deviate in various ways from the standard concept outlined above.

Some of the older Commissions – CEL, SSC and WCPA - operate much as originally envisaged, developing knowledge and analysis in clearly defined niches. But even these relatively conventional Commissions deviate from the original model in operating separate programmes. In recent years, these Commission programmes have not always been closely linked to the overall Programme of the Union – partly because the Union's own programme was not clearly defined.

WCPA focuses on operational knowledge in the management of protected nature conservation areas. It functions as an important and effective union in its own right, linking protected area managers around the world.

The other three Commissions – CEC, CEESP and CEM – have undergone several transformations over recent decades as they and the Union tried to identify clear niches and mandates in the broader areas of ecosystems, communication, education and socio-economic policy (see sections 3 and 4 and Romijn, 1999). Like the others, they have not been closely linked to the overall Programme of the Union (which has itself been difficult to define during the 1990s). Typically, they have found it harder to structure and organise their broad fields of knowledge and action –

...the need for Commissions to have a clear focus; to relate to a distinct constituency of users of their products, and to have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve. The mission and objectives of each Commission must be supported wholeheartedly by the entire community that comprises its members...

Extract from Resolution 18.4 of the 18th General Assembly of IUCN, Perth, 1990

- 1. The most important criterion for the existence of a Commission is that it must be able to meet a clearly defined need. There must be a widespread demand for the products of its work which must be central to the mission of the Union.*
- 2. ...a Commission should be the main and preferably the only source of that which it produces. A Commission should not be a minor player in its field; if it is not a major player now, the likelihood and the cost of its becoming one should be very carefully considered.*
- 3. ...it should be possible to give its work a clear and limited focus...*
- 4. The fourth criterion is the existence of a critical mass of members with some homogeneity of interest and commitment to common objectives.*

Munro and Bruszt, 1993, 10.

and institutional environment in which they operate, and on the depth of historical experience from which they can draw.

2.3. More different than similar

The Commissions are thus more different than similar. In addition to the wide variation in their size, they differ significantly in their degree of focus, their internal structure, the character and scale of their programmatic operations, their degree of regionalisation and their relationships with the Secretariat.

This makes it difficult to review them against some standard model of what a Commission is meant to be. More fundamentally, it raises questions about whether the 'Commission' is an appropriate general instrument for marshalling knowledge and commitment among the world's experts on conservation and related issues. Furthermore, the assumption that the Commissions should all be treated the same in managerial and governance terms threatens to become dysfunctional for the Union.

At the same time, despite their deep differences, Commissions should all be expected to meet uniform standards and performance criteria with regard to relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

We shall argue that mechanisms other than Commissions are gradually becoming more appropriate in achieving the vision and mission of the Union.

2.4. The Commissions and the Union's need for knowledge

As recently restated in the Union's draft quadrennial Programme, 'IUCN's core business is generating, integrating, managing and disseminating knowledge for conservation' (IUCN, 2000, 11). Traditionally, the Commissions have been expected to provide most of this knowledge. A number of trends now challenge this expectation:

- as it increasingly acknowledges the complex interactions within ecosystems and societies that frame its conservation challenge, IUCN has a growing need for interdisciplinary knowledge services. Overall, Commissions have not proved very successful in providing interdisciplinary knowledge to the Union. They have certainly recognised the need for interdisciplinary work, and have made various efforts to develop this mode of operation. SSC's Sustainable Use Specialist Group has strengthened the Commission and the Union by providing regional information on the sustainable use of resources. WGP have been and 2000 Commission provided

are regional or national. Some bring in expertise from more than one Commission, as well as from other sources;

- the development of IUCN's new Programme increases the demand for timely, coordinated knowledge management efforts, and creates potential and need for more interdisciplinary, joint

2.5. The Commissions and the Union's Programme

In some cases, this may require adjustment of staff tasks and resource allocations. Additional posts may have to be created; or the job descriptions for existing posts may have to be amended to specify work to be done

Secretariat support if they are to play this role successfully. Again, much of the Commission work supported by these infrastructural resources can contribute directly to the IUCN Programme. But, typically, it is of a broader, more informative or supportive nature. Timely delivery of specific outputs is not critical;

- in the third scenario, specific deliverables are required by specific dates in performance of precise tasks identified by the Secretariat as required for effective delivery of the IUCN Programme. (These tasks may be identified by the Commissions themselves when they have undertaken direct responsibility for execution of parts of the Programme.) This is the sort of work that many organisations contract to consultants. Too often, IUCN does the same. Instead, it should make more use of the expertise that Commission members can provide. It should contract them according to the same performance and timing criteria as commercial consultants. But it should pay them according to a globally uniform rate that is lower than that typically charged by consultants. This lower rate should recognise both the commitment that Commission members have to the vision and mission of the Union, and also the economic need that they have to maintain an adequate standard of living. SSC already has a standard policy of paying its members a sub-commercial rate when it needs to contract for consultancy services. Each Commission should also establish a development fund, to be held at headquarters. Members who wish to waive the consulting fees offered to them by IUCN can deposit them in this fund. In consultation with each other and the Secretariat, all Commissions should take steps to develop such a standard system. The Secretariat – at headquarters and at RCOs - should commit itself to giving priority to Commission members in contracting consultancy work, without compromising the quality or punctuality of the services received.

We recommend that systems be adopted for compensating Commission members for specific, targeted inputs to the Programme, according to clear global criteria and a single global standard. At the same time, the voluntary principle and the ongoing commitment of thousands of Commission volunteers should be nurtured and cherished as one of the Union’s strongest assets.

2.8. Regionalisation and globalism

identify joint activities in such areas in pursuit of the Union's Programme – addressing local environmental challenges from their various disciplinary perspectives.

We recommend that, as they perform these inter-Commission, interdisciplinary activities, IUCN experts should actively engage other competent professionals – recognising that Commissions are not the only way for IUCN to work with today's committed specialists.

2.9. Governance issues

2.9.1. Five links

A number of weaknesses in the governance of Commissions and the Union are likely to become more urgent problems for IUCN as it tries to streamline and focus its operations in delivering an effective Programme. Before we spell out these key governance issues, it is worth looking at the kinds of link that currently tie Commissions into the Union.

2.9.1.1. The Commission mandate

Each WCC receives a proposed mandate for each Commission. These mandates are couched in rather general terms. In practice, they allow the Commissions rather free choice of strategy, focus and mode of operation. Not surprisingly, we have found that Commission Chairs and members do not consider their activities to be determined – or sometimes even guided – by the wording of their mandates. Some senior Commission members are not even sure what their mandates say.

2.9.1.2. The Commission Chair

The WCC appoints the Chair of a Commission. The IUCN Council appoints the Steering Committee of the Commission. The Chair plays an important – in some cases a dominant – role in the direction and operations of a Commission. How influential the Chair is depends upon the strength of the Commission's institutional roots and structure. Although the character and style of the Chair are still important for deep rooted Commissions like SSC, Commissions such as CEC, CEM and CEESP depend much more heavily upon the capacity and ideas of their Chairs. The selection and appointment of the Chair do not necessarily relate to the mandate of the Commission, which may have been drafted by a Chair who leaves the Commission at the WCC that adopts the mandate (section 4.2). The process of selecting Chairs remains rather ad hoc, as IUCN has not adopted the recommendations made in this regard by its 1993 review of the Commissions (Munro and Bruszt, 1993, 14-15).

2.9.1.3. The Commission Operating Fund

The current value of this annual subvention to Commissions ranges from CHF 150,000 to CHF 250,000. Its significance in the financial affairs of Commissions ranges much more widely. It is a fraction of the total budgets of some Commissions, which are able to use the COF for its intended purpose of administrative, general networking and logistical costs while using funds raised elsewhere to execute their programmes. For others, the COF represents almost all the resources at their disposal – not counting the substantial monetary value of their members' voluntary work inputs. These Commissions' activities are correspondingly constrained.

2.9.1.4. Commission reports to Council

Each Commission Chair submits an annual report to the IUCN Council. These are not detailed documents. Even so, Council usually fails to give them careful attention. They are not effective instruments in the governance, monitoring or oversight of the Commissions or in communication between the Commissions and the rest of the Union.

2.9.1.5. Reviews of the Commissions

Having adopted the recommendations of the 1993 review of Commissions in this regard, the WCC now requires a cycle of end-term and more detailed reviews of the Commissions, to which the current exercise is

contributing (section 1.1). Sometimes these reviews are voluminous and detailed, which is likely to limit their interest to those in the Secretariat and the Commissions who are most intimately associated with their work. In most cases, such reviews are retrospective in nature and may only be used by the WCC in reviewing the proposed Commission mandates for the following period.

In launching the current review exercise, IUCN has taken its first steps towards developing a more systematic and thorough evaluative culture for the Commissions and the rest of the Union. As is indicated in our terms of reference (Annex 1), it hopes to adopt a more systematic and comparative approach over time and across Commissions and all operating units of the Union, through the use of a generic set of evaluation points that facilitate such comparison.

We recommend that, for this to happen:

- **the performance areas be further refined. As can be seen in Annex 1, they are not yet ideally structured or worded, although they represent a much needed beginning;**
- **as we have argued above, more effective governance arrangements be made for reviews of Commissions to feed into decision making about their structure, plans and operations. Unless these changes are made, even the most professional of monitoring and evaluation systems for the Commissions will not make much**

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Programme? Is she responsible for the finances and auditing of the Commissions? Is she supposed to coordinate the Commissions' work?

Commission Chairs clearly answer these questions in the negative. From the Secretariat perspective, a DG is unlikely to wish to extend an already full work load to include supervision of the Commissions. But, in the interests of good governance, it is important that the relationships and the question of Commissions' accountability be clarified.

According to the Statutes, the only organ of the Union that can exercise any practical control over the many functions of the Commissions is the Council. But the Council lacks the structure and the capacity to exercise this sort of governance role. Moreover, the special status of Commission Chairs as members of Council sets up obvious potential for conflicts of interest. This cannot be regarded as good governance, as the 1993 review of the Commissions pointed out when it recommended that Chairs' voting rights in Council be restricted with regard to decisions about Commissions (Munro and Bruszt, 1993, 14). That recommendation has not been adopted.

We recommend that the status and governance of Commissions within the Union should be carefully examined, as part of a broader effort to review and modernise the governance of IUCN and redress the growing number of inadequacies in the current arrangements.

Although the 1999 IUCN External Review's recommendation that the interval between WCCs be extended was made for good reasons, that period is too long to leave Commissions to their own devices. Even a triennium would be too long a gap between the only governance events in the lives of the Commissions. If serious problems arise in a Commission, the rest of the Union cannot leave them unsolved for two or three years until the next WCC.

A notable weakness at present is the apparent inability of the Union's leadership structures to address problems of poor communications or working relationships between Commissions and the Secretariat. If a Chair and the corresponding Secretariat staff fail to operate a successful working relationship, there seems to be little that anyone can or will do about it. Years of dysfunctional relations can result. There is an urgent need for the Director General and the Council to find ways of identifying and redressing such problems.

We recommend that the authority of the Council over the Commissions should be reinforced. Council should be empowered to take decisions about Commissions that are at present the prerogative of the WCC. The role of the DG in this regard, as the executive agent of the Council, should be assessed.

We recommend in this review that IUCN give more thorough, high level, professional attention to the growing number of global socio-political issues that affect its vision and mission (section 4.3). We urge that the necessary review and action be coordinated by the Policy Committee of Council. This means that the governance of the Union must link more actively into the monitoring and direction of its conservation and development work. Most immediately, it means that the Policy Committee should be reinforced and committed to playing this crucial role in maintaining the international credibility of the Union.

The 1999 External Review of IUCN gave strongest emphasis to the problems then surrounding the Union's programme. Good progress has been made since then in addressing those problems. However, in the light of the changing operating structure of the Union, that review also pointed out several important issues regarding the governance of IUCN.

Although the current review is restricted to four of the Commissions, our work on this

2.10. Financial issues

The voluntary commitment and efforts of Commission members remain an enormous asset to IUCN. But, as we point out in section 2.7, they cannot be properly used if resources are not provided for the infrastructure that the Commissions need in working with their members. We also envisage that knowledge delivery by the Commissions to the Programme should take place through specifically designed delivery mechanisms that will often include monetary compensation to Commission members according to a uniform system. These arrangements for infrastructure and sub-economic remuneration will have a major leverage effect in the context of Commission voluntarism. Fuelling such clearly defined and targeted Commission involvement in the delivery of the Programme will be a highly profitable investment for IUCN.

The Commissions basically have two sources of finance: the Commission Operating Fund (COF), and the resources that they raise themselves from elsewhere. It is unrealistic to expect any early increase in the COF. The only available strategy is for Commissions to intensify their own fund raising efforts. This approach was strongly endorsed by the recent reviews of CEC and WCPA. The potential for Commissions to raise money for activities that are specifically targeted to support the Union's programme is high, provided that the Secretariat provides the necessary technical support.

However, our discussions with Commission Chairs and members suggest that, instead of supporting such Commission fund raising initiatives, the Secretariat has viewed them as competing with its own ambitions. Proposals for joint fund raising have been rejected or ignored.

This must change. We recommend that Commissions and the Secretariat develop a joint fund raising strategy that recognises their respective needs and contributions.

Commissions' contribution to the delivery of the IUCN Programme should also benefit from the resources that are allocated within the Programme itself. At both Headquarters and RCO levels, knowledge support to Programme activities should be planned in active consultation between the Secretariat and the relevant Commissions, including the latter's regional representatives. In a growing number of cases, of course, the Programme's knowledge support requirements will exceed available Commission capacity, and more extensive, interdisciplinary delivery mechanisms will be more appropriate (section 2.4).

However, we recommend that the Secretariat make it standard practice to assess the availability and suitability of Commission members for the provision of the required services, and give priority to their engagement over the contracting of commercial consultants.

In widely varying degrees, all the Commissions have managed to raise funds or other resources in direct support of their activities. Sometimes these funds have been contracted and channelled through institutions associated with the Commission – typically, the institution where the Chair is based – and have been administered directly by the Commission. Such arrangements are practical and preferable for funding agencies, which like to keep their audit lines short.

However, we recommend that Commissions always communicate such funding arrangements to the Secretariat. Transparency in this regard will be a vital component of joint funding strategies.

In a world where voluntary contributions are harder and harder to mobilise and where competition for scarce resources is intensifying, the financing of operating infrastructure for Commissions and of compensation for some services by Commission members is a major challenge for IUCN. Coordination and harmonisation of fund raising and financial administration by the Secretariat and the Commissions are therefore essential.

3. The Commission on Ecosystem Management

3.1. Background

The Commission on Ecology was established in 1954 and was responsible for many IUCN achievements in the following two decades. But even in the 1950s, there were concerns about the breadth of its efforts and about overlap with the work of the predecessors of the SSC and WCPA. In later years the Commission lost its way. Many of the thematic groups that worked in the Union on specific ecosystems loosened their ties with it. '[The] very breadth of COE may help to explain why it went into decline when its most conservation-oriented spearheads became attached to the lances of other voluntary networks as IUCN evolved' (Holdgate, 1999, 68).

By the time of their 1993 review of the Commissions, Bruszt and Munro found that 'during recent years the Commission on Ecology has had difficulty in defining a role and specific tasks for itself that are appropriate to the circumstances of the times and in establishing productive relationships with other Commissions' (Munro and Bruszt, 1993, 20). They recommended its abolition. But the 1994 General Assembly at Buenos Aires rejected such a radical move. Delegates argued 'that ecology was so fundamental to the Union that a Commission *must* be retained' (Holdgate, 1999, 221). Instead, the General Assembly established a new Commission on Ecosystem Management, whose mandate was to be defined within one year. Council later stated that CEM should 'provide expert guidance on integrated approaches to the management of natural and modified ecosystems, to further the IUCN mission' (IUCN, 1996).

The objectives and strategic plan of the CEM were elaborated during 1994-95 and resulted in a 1996 WCC mandate for the 1997-99 triennium that focused on support to the ecosystem management components of the Union's Programme. A number of global themes were quoted in the mandate as having priority for the Commission's work. They included the development of participatory methods of ecosystem management; ecological economics; and dryland degradation. In practice, the Commission has focused on the elaboration and promotion of the 'ecosystem approach' as a framework within which these other themes could be tackled.

The history of IUCN's use of Commissions to address the concept of ecosystems and the practice of ecology is thus tied closely to the issue of niche definition that we outlined in section 2.2 above. It highlights a specific aspect of this issue. Can focus on a concept or paradigm constitute a workable niche for an IUCN Commission?

3.2. Performance

CEM has been effective in achieving its objectives and in fulfilling the core of its mandate. It has made useful progress in elaborating and promoting the ecosystem approach, for example through the agreement and publication of the 1996 Sibthorp and 1998 Malawi definitions and principles of the approach (Maltby *et al.*, 1999). This has helped governments and environmental agencies to sharpen their understanding and their practice of ecosystem management, as indicated by the May 2000 submission of a CEM-inspired statement on the ecosystem approach to the Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This is likely to have beneficial long-term consequences for achievement of the Convention's objectives. But, as we shall argue in section 3.3 below, these achievements may bring the continuing need for the Commission into question.

CEM has been able to collaborate with the Secretariat on certain specific initiatives, such as the tenth and 13th Global Biodiversity Forums and the recent preparation of policy recommendations on the ecosystem approach for the CBD. Overall, however, it has had major difficulties in working productively with the Secretariat. As explained in section 2.6, Secretariat staff tried to develop a systematic working relationship with the Commission. These efforts were unsuccessful. With the approval of the CEM Steering Committee, the Chair then arranged to use a substantial part of the Commission Operating Fund to pay the salaries of two

support staff. These staff were posted within the Chair's institution, which pays the overheads for their positions.

CEM has operated within budget, but has had only modest success in raising additional funds for its operations. Some money has recently been raised from a number of sources to fund three regional 'pathfinder workshops' on the ecosystem approach during 2000.

Overall, the interface between CEM, the Secretariat and the IUCN Programme over the last triennium has been limited and inefficient. The CEM web site, accessed through a link from the IUCN site, consists mainly of material dated 1998. Partly b

that are identified within the quadrennial Programme. This, broadly, is what CEM has itself proposed to the forthcoming WCC as its mandate for the next four years.

We also recommend that IUCN intensify its use of other ecosystem-related knowledge networks, such as advisory groups and task forces, for the more detailed, interdisciplinary knowledge delivery that the new Programme will require. This more focused ecosystem work should complement the paradigmatic contribution made by CEM.

We argue elsewhere in this review that the period between Congresses is too long for IUCN to leave Commissions to their own devices; and that the governance arrangements need to be revised to permit a closer and more frequent integration of the Commissions' affairs with those of the rest of the Union. This is particularly true in a case like CEM, where the value of the current mandate may not extend for another four years. Recognising that the WCC may introduce various changes to the current draft CEM mandate, we endorse the ideas that it contain4r4

4. The Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy

4.1. Background

Over the years, IUCN has had a range of Commissions in the social science field. These have focused

4.4. Commissions and social science

In many ways, CEESP and its predecessors have been expected to serve as IUCN's Commission for the social sciences. That is analogous to having an IUCN Commission for the natural sciences. While cross-cutting, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work are essential for the Union's progress, the experience in the social sciences suggests that Commissions are not the best way to achieve this. For the variety of reasons to which we have alluded above, IUCN has never had sustainable success with a social science Commission. Nothing is likely to change this structural mismatch between what the Union needs and what a Commission can offer.

At both the levels of social science support identified above, contributions need to come from institutional sources as well as from individuals. Conventional Commissions, of course, only offer scope for contributions by individuals. CEESP has experimented with an institutional networking format. It set up collaboration with the RING (Regional and International Networking Group), a global alliance of research and policy organisations committed to sustainable development. (Most of these organisations are IUCN members.) There was useful collaboration and resource sharing between CEESP and the RING in publication of the CEESP newsletter *Policy Matters*, and a number of other joint initiatives were undertaken. But these activities have been limited by a lack of funds, and they have had little impact on the rest of IUCN. Although this has been a useful initiative, the CEESP-RING collaboration does not suggest that Commissions are a feasible vehicle for developing joint ventures and networks with institutional partners.

4.5. Enhancing the provision of social science expertise and guidance to the Union

4.5.1. Provision

We recommend that a senior applied social scientist of international standing and

the ELC respectively. Their partnership played a critical role in the successful integration of the voluntary network of the Commission and the resources of the Secretariat. Their successors have continued to build effectively on these foundations.

When it started, CEL represented a unique association of young specialists in the emerging field of environmental law. It succeeded in attracting the most capable professionals in the field, and established a reputation for excellence that it has been able to maintain. At least as important has been its ability to sustain a focus on a niche whose continuing relevance has been repeatedly proven by the Commission's role in developing international agreements on conservation and sustainable development. Although many other environmental law agencies have been established over the years, CEL has maintained its leading position – while actively promoting networking and further development among this growing family of institutions.

CEL presents itself now as 'a network of environmental law and policy experts from all regions of the world who volunteer their knowledge and services to IUCN activities, especially to those of the IUCN Law Programme. CEL functions as an integral part of the IUCN Environmental Law Programme, which consists of the Commission and the Environmental Law Centre.'

5.2. Rationale

We argue in this review that the principal rationale for Commissions' existence within IUCN must be their ability to focus on a niche within which they can deliver relevant knowledge in support of the Union's Programme. CEL has been able to maintain a rationale of this nature and to perform accordingly. Its 1996 mandate provides for maximum integration between the work of the Commission and the IUCN Programme. Through joint planning, complementarity between the work plans of CEL and the ELC is assured. CEL members participate in many Programme activities, notably by advising governments and the secretariats of international agreements on legal aspects of conservation and sustainable development. Unlike some other parts of the IUCN Secretariat, the ELC draws on Commission members for all aspects of its work. A data base that codifies the different skills and expertise of members facilitates their deployment to relevant parts of the Programme.

5.3. Performance

CEL has been largely effective in achieving its objectives and fulfilling its mandate. One significant achievement has been the development and maintenance of unique environmental law databases: the Environmental Law Information System and EC

(Environment Programme, has become an invaluable asset for the IUCN Secretariat)

Excellence for environmental law in IUCN's West Asia Region. A similar initiative is under way with Lawyers for a Green Planet in Brazil.

CEL and the ELC have focused their activities in South America and South and South East Asia. In particular, they have focused on capacity development in Brazil and China. The Commission has also worked with IUCN RCOs and country offices to support the development of environmental law capacity. Through the RCOs, CEL contributes to various activities of the IUCN Environmental Law Programme, such as national environmental law reviews and environmental law training in such countries as Bangladesh, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Sudan, Yemen and Panama. Similar support is provided at a regional level to the Southern African Development Community.

Overall, therefore, CEL's work permits a positive response in many of the performance areas in our terms of reference. Its operations are efficient and well managed, representing the state of the art in international environmental law. In the case of environmental law and the CEL, the concept and format of a Commission remain valid for the achievement of IUCN's vision and mission.

5.4. Financial issues

Although CEL has been administratively efficient in its budgetary management, it has not had many successes in raising money for its operations and has had to rely heavily on the Commission Operating Fund subvention from the Union. It has fared somewhat better in its fund raising with partner agencies for joint ventures such as the Centres of Excellence in Hong Kong and Moscow (section 5.3). Despite CEL's reputation and record, continuing achievement is not assured if the Commission and the Secretariat do not successfully implement an intensified joint fund raising strategy.

5.5. Leadership, management, structure and style

The current leadership of CEL has continued in the effective tradition established by the founders of the Commission and the ELC. But the scope of the Commission's internal and external relations is expanding; key actors in the Commission and the ELC have changed, and issues of communication and collaboration therefore need more careful attention.

We recommend (section 2.6) that communication and collaboration between the Commission and the ELC be improved. Furthermore, the interface between CEL and the overall IUCN Programme needs to be strengthened.

The ELC participated actively in the formulation of the Programme for the coming quadrennium, and, as we have noted, CEL has fully endorsed it. At a recent meeting the Commission agreed to work further to specify the contributions it can make to the many areas of the Programme that will require environmental law inputs. But the amount of practical support it can provide will depend heavily on the amount of resources that can be made available for this sort of collaboration between the Commission and the Programme (section 5.4).

We emphasise in this review that IUCN must depend more and more on interdisciplinary knowledge delivery to its Programme – which is likely to decrease the role that Commissions can play in the Union's overall knowledge management. However, CEL has anticipated this trend by pioneering inter-Commission collaboration. In particular, it has worked with WCPA in preparing for the 2002 World Parks Congress.

support they receive, and some form of compensation to the institutions that employ them, the output of these CEL officers will have to be curtailed.

Perhaps even more than some other Commissions, CEL stands to benefit from the new communications potential offered by computers and the internet. Although many CEL members already participate in the building and use of the knowledge network through this technology, significant numbers are still unable to access it – particularly in developing countries. The Commission will have to devise and fund innovative ways of addressing this constraint.

6. The Species Survival Commission

6.1. Background

Founded one year after IUCN, SSC has just celebrated its 50th anniversary. It has long been regarded as the model of what an IUCN Commission should be, and as being in many ways the backbone of the Union's operations. In fact, as we argued in section 2.3 above, the Commissions are so different from each other that it makes little sense to consider any one of them as a template for the others. Nevertheless, SSC continues to be the flagship of much of the Union's work in the natural sciences – and to an increasing extent, works in the social sciences too.

SSC's membership of some 7,000 outnumbers the members of all the other Commissions combined. Most work as members of Specialist Groups (SGs) that are dedicated to particular species or groups of species. But a growing number belong to the Sustainable Use Specialist Group, which is regionally structured and has combined a socio-economic with a natural science agenda.

Our comments on the SSC in this report are drawn from the separate review of the Commission that has just been undertaken (Turner, 2000). As far as possible, they respond to the questions on each Commission that are set out in our terms of reference.

6.2. Rationale

The rationale for the SSC's mandate and goals is sound. Its commitment to the conservation of species threatened with extinction and of those important for human welfare is centrally important for the future of this planet's biosphere and of human life within it. Through a major strategic planning effort during 1999 and 2000, SSC has developed an enhanced and streamlined statement of vision, goal, objectives and targets that enhances its prospects of fulfilling its mandate and of maintaining its relevance.

SSC and the Union need to give careful attention to the **relationship between SSC's goals and objectives and those of IUCN as a whole**. Both have recently been restated for the 2001-2004 triennium, in SSC's draft Strategic Plan and IUCN's draft Programme. There is little doubt that SSC is expected to be a major contributor to the implementation of the Union's new Programme. In general terms, the SSC's Strategic Plan is relevant to the IUCN's Programme. Its successful implementation will help the Union achieve its goals for the triennium. In detail, however, much needs to be done to reconcile the two sets of targets and intended results. Senior Commission members and Secretariat staff are currently making good progress with this task.

6.3. Performance

To date, it has not been easy to gauge the **effectiveness of SSC**. Although its Strategic Plan for the 1997-1999 triennium had started to take on programmatic form, the Commission did not have the **monitoring and evaluation** capacity or process to provide this review with data on which to base an assessment of its performance. As a more focused Programme is prepared for the coming 2001-2004 triennium, this M&E challenge becomes more urgent. It is not yet clear how SSC will meet it. Upgrading SSC M&E is a clear opportunity for collaboration with the rest of IUCN.

Overall, expert opinion is that **SSC's wide ranging scientific work on the conservation status of species continues to have significant positive effects**. However, the effect of the Commission's scientific work remains limited by its necessarily partial coverage of the world's biodiversity. Furthermore, despite the quality and importance of its data on species survival, SSC acknowledges that **the information it generates is not as effective as it should be because it is not adequately structured, accessible and disseminated**. It has taken various steps to remedy this situation, most notably by developing a **Species Information System** that promises to be a major new global resource.

We recommend that adequate funding be provided to exploit the full potential of the SIS.

SSC is active in a number of global biodiversity **policy** fora, and deploys its expertise there to significant positive effect. Through its Sustainable Use Specialist Group and the IUCN Sustainable Use Initiative, SSC has achieved a useful impact on local and international action to promote the **sustainable use** of natural resources. SSC's **Wildlife Trade** Programme remains highly effective as a key provider of scientific advice to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, and some of the Specialist Groups play a leading and positive – because perceived as impartial - role in CITES debates and decisions. **Action Plans** on many endangered species have been a key SSC output over recent years.

However, we recommend that the effectiveness and the continuing value of this sort of product be assessed.

Beyond the significant challenges of corporate responsibility for SSC within IUCN, there are pressing issues of **SSC relevance** to the broader population of conservation stakeholders around the world. While most of these people still support the work of the Commission, SSC certainly has no room for complacency in this regard. With its now 50 year old roots in a very different world of collegial relations between post-war scientists, SSC clearly has an ongoing obligation to prove its relevance and competence for 21st century conservation endeavour.

There are a growing number of sectors and initiatives in which the Commission should accept a constructive but minor role. Indeed, key advice from a leading southern African member of SSC is that IUCN (and, by extension, SSC) generally does best in a supportive, rather than a proprietary, role.

6.4. Financial issues

At the time of this review, the Gland Secretariat **budget** for Species Programme operations was in a healthier position than usual. But some of the Commission's key projects – notably the Red List Programme and the SIS – still had substantial funding shortfalls. There is wide variation among the SGs with regard to current finances. Because of the recent emphasis on fund raising for large grants to key SSC projects, operational grants to the smaller and poorer SGs have dwindled. This threatens the character and viability of parts of the network.

While SSC appears to manage its resources responsibly and enjoys a measure of support from a range of funding agencies, its **financial sustainability** is not assured. Its challenge over the next quadrennium, as it works on a more focused strategic plan within a revitalised IUCN Programme, will be to demonstrate the continuing quality and effectiveness of its work and thereby to persuade donors that they should increase their allocations to it.

6.5. Leadership, management, structure and style

While not everyone in SSC endorses the more centralised, structured and programme-driven **management** style of its current leadership, many have appreciated the way it enables the Commission to fulfil more of the roles that they feel the Union as a whole should be playing.

In its current transitional circumstances, while SSC still lacks most of the features and resources of a conventional programme-focused organisation, it is being managed at least as effectively as might be

expected. Considering how little time and money they have for the task, SSC's leadership are making commendable progress in focusing the Commission's efforts on a specified set of objectives through the new Strategic Plan. This focusing of effort represents a substantive upgrade on the planning and management of the Strategic Plan for the previous triennium.

SSC is notable among the Commissions for the central role played by its **Specialist Groups**. These groups, some of them large organisations with their own projects and staff, are solidly rooted in their (mostly) taxonomic focus areas, and form the backbone of the Commission.

SSC **Specialist Group Chairs** are in the forefront of IUCN's delicate task of combining scientific

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Background:

In accordance with Resolution 19.2 of the 19th General Assembly, Buenos Aires, 1994, the IUCN Commissions are required to undertake triennial end of term reviews, and in-depth reviews every 6 years. (for specific wording see attached Council note).

The consultants are required to undertake end of term reviews for the Commissions on Environmental Law (CEL) and the Species Survival (SSC) and in-depth reviews for the Commissions on Environmental Economics and Social Policy, and the Commission on Ecosystem Management.

Specific scope of work:

1. Assist in finalizing the key areas performance questions / categories provided by the Director General based on feedback from the Commissions. (due March 15, 2000) This is to be done with the DG, the Coordinator of the M&E Initiative and the senior evaluation advisor to IUCN in Delhi at the Asia Regional Conservation Forum, March 27, 2000.
2. Assist in setting up the interview schedule for the Reviews by communicating with the Chairs. (Chairs and focal points responsibility to assist in setting up interviews.) (From March 15 onwards)
3. Adapt the key questions to the needs and specific circumstances of each Commission.
- 3.

- How has the Commission planned, implemented and managed the human resources, finances and inter/intra institutional linkages available to it impacted the Commission's performance?
- Does the volunteer membership of the Commission represent the state of the art in global expertise in the field of the Commission?
- Is there an appropriate level of staff and financial resources available to the commission in order for it to carry out the mandate given to it by Congress?
- Are the Commission's monitoring and evaluation processes adequate to improve its performance?

8. Commission's voluntary spirit (How does the voluntary spirit of the commission affect its membership and IUCN?)

- To what extent does the Commission have a clear mission/mandate and history that motivates the voluntary spirit of its members to share their time and knowledge?
- Does the work of the Commission drive / motivate IUCN to perform better.
- Does the Commission attract volunteers how are the leading figures in the area of work?

9. Impact

- What impact has the Commission had on the broader IUCN membership?
- What impact has the Commission had on the policies and practices of IUCN Secretariat?
- How has the Commission impacted its field of endeavor?
- What has been the impact of donors on the Commission and the Commissions presence on the donors response to IUCN?

Reporting:

The Review Team reports directly to Bureau of Council.

3. What should be the overall function of a Commission within IUCN?	
4. What are the general strengths and weaknesses of your Commission relative to the function you have just outlined?	
5. Commissions are often described as networks. How important is the network of your Commission for its performance of the function you outlined in (3) above?	1 (low) ----- 5 (high)
What should be done (if necessary) to improve the networking of your Commission? Please elaborate:	
6. Commissions are sometimes expected to deliver products and contribute to the Union's programme.	
How important are the delivery of products and the execution of programmes for your Commission's performance of the function you outlined in (3) above?	1 (low) ----- 5 (high)
What should be done (if necessary) to improve the delivery of programmes and products by your Commission?	

7. Your commission has a mandate given by the Congress of the Union.		
How relevant is the mandate of your Commission to the vision and mission of IUCN?	1 (low) ----- 5 (high)	
8. How effective is your Commission in performing the tasks set out in its mandate?	1 (low) ----- 5 (high)	
9. Does8. How effecti-98.25 r2ohieve other positive results that are outside IUCN?	Yes	No its
If yes,		
10. How far is your Commission guided by its mandate in its strategy and operations?	1 (low)5 (high)	
11. What attracts people to be members of your Commission and offer their voluntary work for the Union?		
12. How are members of your Commission recruited or selected?		
Does the membership in your Commission reflect the “crème de la crème” of your profession?	Yes	No

If yes, can you suggest how?		
14. Should voluntarism remain as the driving force for work by Commission members?	Yes	No
15. How effectively do members of your Commission network and communicate with each other?	1 (low) ----- 5 (high)	
Do you have any ideas on how to improve communication?		
16 How does your Commission decide what to do?		

17. How focused efficient and effective are its work programmes?
(please answer for each)

a) Focused

b) Efficient

19 Productive networks need some kind of supporting “infrastructure”.		

Do you feel that your Commission has a supporting infrastructure?	Yes	No
<p>What are the main components of the support?</p> <p>If you feel that such infrastructure is not adequate, what would you suggest to improve/introduce in order to boost the performance of the Commission members for the mission of the Union?</p>		
20. Are the activities of your Commission adequately monitored and evaluated?	Yes	No
21. Does your Commission have a productive working relationship with the IUCN Secretariat in Gland/ELC in Bonn?	Yes	No
<p>Are there ways in which this relationship should be improved? Please elaborate:</p>		
22. Does your Commission have productive working relationships with the Regional Conservation Offices of IUCN?	Yes	No
<p>Are there ways in which these relationships should be improved? Please elaborate:</p>		
23. Does your Commission have productive working relationships with IUCN members?	Yes	No

Are there ways in which these relationships should be improved?
Please elaborate.

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

Annex 3. Data and contacts requested from Commissions

The following is the list of data and proposed interviewees that was requested from Chairs of the Commissions included in this review.

1. STANDARD BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION:

The following reports should be standard documentation for Commissions obtainable from your files or from your focal point offices:

1. Mandate, vision and strategic plan:

- Mandate approved at the Montreal Congress. (I have your recent mandates as approved for submission to the Amman Congress.)
- Vision statement
- Strategic plan.

2. Membership and constituency of the Commission:

- Membership profile of the Commission - number of members, by region, globally. More profile info if known.
- Stakeholder analysis or documentation of constituency profile - the users and recipients of service of the Commission.
- Donor involvement
- Key partner organizations

3. Workplans and budgets:

- Triennial and annual workplans since 2007
- 2007-2009 T

II: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES:

Chairs are invited to provide a list of approximately 10 key informants whom the Review Team should interview by telephone or in person if possible. Key informants should cover three areas:

- a) internal - people who have played a role in the work of the Commission - such as Steering Committee members.
- b) external - people who know the 'state of the art' in the area of the work of the Commission - and who know of the Commission.
- c) users /stakeholders - people who should benefit from the existence of the Commission (users from national govts, institutions, NGOs, communities).

The Secretariat was requested to suggest additional key informants.

References

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CEM, 2000. *Statement on quadrennial programme to Council from CEM Steering Committee*. Egham: CEM.