

The Commissions have played a key role in IUCN throughout its history. Despite changes to their mandates at different times, the original six Commissions continue today:

Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)
Commission on Education and Communication (CEC)
Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP)
Commission on Environmental Law (CEL)
Species Survival Commission (SSC)
World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)

This continuity in the long term hides considerable turmoil and discontinuity over shorter periods in their history. Thus as we look at the Commissions now, two of them are in the early stages of rebuilding their

services were interviewed. Thus a total of 250 interviews were conducted and 761 responses to two surveys were received as input to the Review findings.

The Review is an assessment and is not an in-depth evaluation of any Commission. It takes as its starting point the view that organizational performance is dependent on the *capacity* of the organization (its leadership, management, human and financial resources and its structure), its *motivation and incentives* and its *external environment*, which can facilitate or inhibit performance.

Part VIII of the IUCN Statutes lays out the nature, composition and function of the Commissions:

73. The Commissions shall be networks of expert volunteers entrusted to develop and advance the institutional knowledge and experience and objectives of IUCN.

75. The functions of the Commission shall be to fulfill their missions as defined in their mandates, including:

- (a) to analyse issues and prepare assessments, reports, action plans, criteria and methodology and undertake research and other scientific and technical work;*
- (b) to undertake tasks assigned to them within the integrated programme of IUCN;*
- (c) to provide advice on any matter within their fields of competence;*
- (d) to broaden knowledge and competence on matters relating to their mandates;*
- (e) to work with members and the Secretariat to develop activities within the various Regions, and to support members and components of IUCN with necessary expertise; and*
- (f) to undertake such other responsibilities as may be assigned to them by the World Congress and the Council.*

Commissions are not organizations in the normal sense. They are expert networks that fall into the category of *formal knowledge networks*. As such they are volunteer networks that are task and purpose driven which add value rather than just exchange information and produce outputs, and are built on expertise as well as common interest. The lifeblood of knowledge networks is effective communications between members of the working components of the network in order for them to aggregate knowledge, produce outputs and engage with external bodies.

The criteria first enunciated for Commissions by the General Assembly of IUCN in 1990 parallel the operating principles for good expert knowledge networks:

1. It must be able to meet a clearly defined need;
2. There must be a widespread demand for the products of its work which must be central to the mission of the Union;
3. A Commission should not be a minor player in its field; it should be the main source of the knowledge it provides;
4. It should be possible to give its work a clear and limited focus so that Commission members clearly understand what is expected of them;
5. There is a strong and active network supported by a community of interest among the members;
6. A critical mass of members exists with some homogeneity of interest and commitment to common objectives;
7. It should balance diversity of expertise with a significant community of professional interest.

The mandates for the Commissions derive from Regulation 69 of the IUCN Statutes which states that the mandate should include the Commission name, mission and terms of reference. Since 1994 this has been generally limited to the setting out of longer term goals for the Commissions rather than also defining objectives for the Intersessional Period. The mandates are more in the nature of organizational charters than

giving clear direction for the work of the Commissions. Without more focused and term-limited objectives and expected results, together with reporting back to Council by objectives and results, it does not seem possible for Council to fulfill its own statutory duty to review the work of the Commissions.

The Review recommends that the mandates for the Intersessional Period 2005–2008 be restructured to include programme objectives and expected results for the four year period, and that these should be linked to targets and indicators in the Commissions' Strategic Plans for the Intersessional Period.

With the integration of the Commissions' work more formally into the IUCN Programme, it may now be an appropriate time for the Commissions to become part of the IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation system. This would provide for a systemic monitoring process and regular cycle of evaluations of both activities and outputs as well as the technical support of the Monitoring and Evaluation unit to help the Commissions learn from experience and identify successes.

The Commissions generally have not been very responsive to the IUCN Gender Policy although the implementation of gender perspectives is important to the work that the Commissions do, especially as they mainstream sustainable development and poverty reduction in their programmes. It is recommended that they take a more pro-active stance on developing tools and guidelines as well as developing their capacity

Going further, we see the need for a _____ between IUCN and the Commissions that builds on the Son Loup Accords (1995, 1998) and the Bossey Agreement (2003). For increased accountability

5. Commissions examine the effectiveness and limitations of their current systems and technology for communications within and between Commissions, including their websites, in order to develop a new strategy and identify with the Secretariat the technology needed to strengthen their role as knowledge providers for IUCN, to increase the participation of individual members, and to further innovation, interdisciplinary work and cross-Commission collaboration.
6. Following an initial scoping exercise, a mechanism should be put in place within the Secretariat to support fundraising efforts by Commissions, to share and collate information, and to provide an annual overview of donor funds for all Commission activities, including all Specialist Groups. This mechanism might include a staff person to serve

