REVIEW OF IUCN'S INFLUENCE ON POLICY

Phase I:

Describing the Policy Work of IUCN

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IUCN
The World Conservation Union

Summary Report

Overview

Influencing policy frameworks is one of the most powerful methods through which change can be effected in the world. It is therefore no surprise that a very large portion of IUCN's work during the past decades has been dedicated to influencing policy, initially mainly at global level and more recently also at regional, national and sub-national levels. Its unique comparative advantage has given it the capacity to be a leader in the conservation policy arena. It has fulfilled this role admirably over decades since its inception, leading conceptual thinking on conservation through seminal initiatives such as the *World Conservation Strategy* and *Caring for the Earth*; steering the evolution of conservation to include dimensions such as sustainable development and the sustainable use of biodiversity; guiding the development of many international agreements; and assisting with translating international policies into strategies at regional and national levels.

IUCN today remains very active in the policy arena, using its convening power, offering ideas and advice, facilitating debate and developing instruments and methods for policy implementation. The 2003 External Review of IUCN notes that "rapid growth, substantial achievements and a series of change processes have helped the Union to adjust to new challenges and an evolving world scene". It continues to make strong contributions to sustainable development and environmental governance.

But this Review has found that over the past decade the Union's profile as a leading influence in the conservation arena has been diminishing in a complex world driven by many competing forces, demands and priorities. It faces the threat of becoming marginalised in important areas at a time when its guidance is needed more than ever, unless it can reposition itself using its core expertise in biodiversity to work effectively in new domains impacting upon conservation, and can reach new audiences who are powerful forces in shaping the future of conservation in the world.

Stakeholders acknowledge the excellent work done by the Policy, Biodiversity and International Agreements (PBIA) unit in mobilising and coordinating IUCN's policy expertise to inform and support international policy initiatives, as well as the significant efforts by PBIA and the Policy and Global Change Group (PGCG) under guidance of the Director Global Programme to streamline frameworks and procedures for policy work. Yet in spite of this we have found many similarities between the current status of IUCN's policy work and the programming crisis of 1999. These similarities include fragmentation in planning and implementation, inadequately formulated desired results and theories of change, a lack of coherence across the system and insufficient focus on strategic leadership to shape and guide the policy work.

We believe that this situation is not the result of a lack of capacity or interest in IUCN, but rather the result of the very strenuous effort that was required to establish and implement the impressive IUCN Programme during the past four years, coupled to the effects of IUCN's regionalisation and decentralisation as well as the increased complexities in the policy arena in which IUCN has to operate. Yet if IUCN is to fulfil its mission, it will need to focus very strongly during the 2005-2008 Intersessional period on managing the internal change needed to address the challenges within as well as those posed by the external policy environment. IUCN will have to work purposefully to ensure its position as undisputed leader towards

IUCN has many dimensions and the reach and scope of its work never ceases to surprise. In fewer than 100 key policy initiatives, the Secretariat and Commissions are working to influence more than 60 specific policy targets as well as a large number of unspecified audiences. Two key factors in the increasing scope of IUCN's policy work are the proliferation of global agreements and the pr

in which IUCN has to work; improved institutional systems; and stronger partnerships, alliances and relationships[2].

Factors that have facilitated the policy work of the Secretariat and Commissions also confirm some of the Review findings as well as the significance of IUCN's comparative advantage. Most useful assets were its capacity to produce and apply appropriate and timely technical knowledge; its credibility; its partnerships and alliances; and the commitment of its staff and volunteer networks. Factors such as effective planning and collaboration (in some cases); its agility and capacity to grasp opportunities, the availability of financial resources; and the freedom to experiment also aided policy work.

Issue / purpose-driven versus event-driven approaches

Another issue requiring attention is the role that events play in policy influence efforts. A very considerable portion of IUCN's time and resources goes into the convening of events that stimulate networking and serve as platforms to bring diverse groups together towards a common goal. This convening function is central to IUCN's operation and has been remarkably successful in building its visibility and credibility among diverse constituencies. IUCN also participates in many events organised by others, such as COPs and other meetings which serve as forums for policy planning and influence at global, regional and national levels.

While the importance of events in the work of IUCN cannot be disputed, there is a distinct risk that the organisation can be driven by events rather than by purpose or issue, and that it can convene, facilitate and participate in events without necessarily providing leadership. It tends to neglect systematic follow-up activities that can form part of strategic directions for policy work. Thus while policy related events have increased substantially over the past decade, it is not clear whether IUCN has a *longer-term, strategic, issue-driven* approach that

urgent attention be given to this aspect. Similarly, systems facilitating the mobilisation of Members' policy expertise and political power in the policy arena require further study and attention. The Review notes that the recently adopted IUCN Membership Strategy also highlights this need.

Vertical integration

This Review has confirmed that disconnects still exist between those groups responsible for policy coordination at global level and the Regional Programmes. With the exception of a few thematic areas, regional and global programmes usually do not plan together, monitor and ensure action to influence a specific set of policy targets towards common outcomes over an extended period.

More importantly perhaps, as IUCN seeks to find its most effective footprint in relevant regions and countries, the real strength and expertise of the Union as a global organisation has not yet been brought to bear on its positioning at regional and national levels. Regional programmes have been shown to be somewhat more responsive than proactive in their approach to policy influence. A rigid approach which does not allow programmes to take advantage of opening policy windows would be counter-productive. On the other hand more systematic work with governments is needed, especially at national level where IUCN can do much more to make use of its unique comparative advantage as global organisation with local presence across the world. Its extensive expertise at regional and global levels can be brought to bear much more thoughtfully and effectively at national level where more concerted impact is needed. Its national *and*

exclusively in Key Result Area 4 relates directly or indirectly to policy influence. In essence the IUCN Programme is a framework for IUCN's policy work, and any effort to establish new policy goals and streamline theories of change has to recognise this. On the other hand,

players that may include non-conservation government bodies, the private sector, multilateral institutions and non-conservation networks.

2. That IUCN in this process focuses on deploying its "heartland" expertise strategically to influence these new policy domains, building the necessary internal capacities as well as partnerships and alliances for long-term engagement in critical areas.

3. That IUCN increases its impact by focusing its policy work, and considers to what extent it can do this through (i) development of a purposeful organisational and programme theories of change based on systematic intelligence and situation analysis; (ii) identification of key "policy levers" (powerful frameworks, processes, forums, audiences or champions essential to the changes IUCN wants to bring about towards its mission) and (iii) concerted teamwork, including joint planning *from the beginning* between programmes, IUCN components and other partners in order to influence a particular "policy lever" or set of policy levers over time; monitoring; and ensuring progress towards common goals.

4. That IUCN re-considers its emphasis on the CBD as part of a more critical approach

11. That a review of the institutional systems underpinning IUCN's policy work be conducted to ensure that they support effective governance, management and operation of IUCN's policy work, and that its comparative advantage is fully used in the process.

12. That IUCN considers the implications of the shifts in conceptualisation of its policy work for its change management strategies, in particular its human resources strategy, its engagement of Members and its mobilisation of Commission members and structures.

Resourcing – funding

13. That IUCN considers adjusting its funding model in line with the 2003 External Review recommendations to mobilise funding for more concerted and strategic policy work.

Moving towards integration and synthesis

14. That IUCN explores the possibility of expanding its Secretariat capacity to play an integrating and synthesising role using Members' fieldwork, rather than moving even further towards becoming an organisation implementing projects at field level in competition with its Members. This means that its (limited) footprint in the field should be directly aligned with and inform its policy work.

Strengthening IUCN's policy capacity

15. That IUCN adopts a strategy to strengthen its capacity across the Secretariat and Commissions' programmes in at least five areas: (i) understanding of general concepts, models and mechanisms for policy influence; (ii) understanding and streamlining of its own approaches to policy work; (iii) nurturing of policy entrepreneurship, advocacy and synthesis; (iv) policy planning, monitoring and evaluation; and (v) developing appropriate policy expertise to work in interface with new domains.

    Specific attention can be paid to the following:
    - š Exposing IUCN Secretariat and Commissions to general theories, models and experiences related to policy influence, illustrated by case studies from IUCN's long history of policy involvement and by connecting to exter0D0.0041 Tl�008388 040041

viii.   Work on a specific policy target by different IUCN components over a significant period (not necessarily in collaborative mode) to determine how they have supported (or detracted from) one another.

We also recommend that case studies be selected *mainly* where policy influence efforts are perceived to have succeeded, but in some cases also where they might have failed. Important lessons can be learnt from both types of experience.