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**IUCN – The World Conservation Union**

**Review of the Species Survival Commission**

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**26 June, 2000.**

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## Preface

This is the report of a triennial end-term review of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, undertaken in accordance with Resolution 19.2 of the General Assembly of the Union, held in Buenos Aires in 1994. This review forms part of an exercise in which four of the Union's six Commissions are being reviewed prior to the 2000 World Conservation Congress. The relationship between this report and the forthcoming general report on the four reviews is explained in section 1.1.

As arrangements for the review were only finalised in March 2000, and as the time available for performing it was by then very limited, it has not been possible to go into all aspects of the terms of reference (Annex 1) in depth. Nevertheless, I hope that readers will ultimately find this small contribution to be accurate and useful. A draft report was submitted on 24 April. I am grateful for the comments that I received. I have tried to take them into account in this final version.

One of those comments was that recommendations should be made more clearly. In the draft, I had been diffident about making recommendations on the basis of so brief an acquaintance. In this final version, I have indicated a number of recommendations *in bold italics*.

I am grateful to the chair of the SSC, David Brackett, for inviting me to attend and observe the strategic planning meeting and the Executive Committee meeting that he convened at White Oak, Florida, between 20 and 24 March. I appreciated the welcome and assistance I received that week from him and all those Commission members and Secretariat staff who attended the meetings. It was an ideal opportunity to learn about the work of the Commission, and it left me impressed by the dedication and commitment of its leaders.

In eight working days (including two days' travel) it is certainly not possible to do justice to the wealth of quality effort that SSC's work represents. I greatly appreciate David Brackett's suggestion that some additional days might be made available to help me make this a slightly less inadequate effort, and I very much regret that earlier commitments have made it impossible for me to take him up on the idea.

In the IUCN Secretariat, Simon Stuart was particularly helpful in setting up this assignment and providing me with information. I am grateful for all his patient assistance.

S.D. Turner

26 June, 2000.

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## **Abbreviations**

CEESP	Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
CEM	Commission on Ecosystem Management
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
SG	Specialist Group
SIS	Species Information System
SSC	Species Survival Commission
SUI	Sustainable Use Initiative
SUSG	Sustainable Use Specialist Group
TOR	terms of reference

## Summary

This brief triennial end-term review of the Species Survival Commission is part of an exercise in which four of IUCN's Commissions are being reviewed prior to the 2000 World Conservation Congress. An abbreviated version of this report will be included in the overall report on the four reviews that will be the primary product of the exercise. Generic issues that affect other Commissions as well as SSC receive further treatment in that report.

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.

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. SSC should plan to meet it as soon as possible. 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 to be seen through its 6515 SSC

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.

As the Commission evolves towards a more centralised, programmatically managed mode of operations, there is a real risk that the rank and file of SSC members feel left out and lose enthusiasm. Already, SSC management faces a major challenge in achieving Specialist Group buy in to the strategic planning process. SSC will have to work hard over the coming triennium to maintain and marshal the commitment of its membership while achieving reasonable levels of programmatic performance.

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 triennium, 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.

While not everyone in SSC endorses the more centralised, structured and programme-driven **management** style of the 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.

**Specialist Group Chairs** are in the forefront of IUCN's delicate task of combining scientific impartiality with environmental and social commitment. At the same time they must contribute both upwards and downwards in the governance of the Commission, linking up to the Steering and Executive Committees and down to the membership of their respective SGs. At present, SSC lacks the resources to support and guide them in these tasks. It needs particularly to find a more thorough way to orientate new Chairs after they are appointed.

Despite its importance to IUCN and its strong working links with its Secretariat staff in Gland, **SSC does not have adequate ties with the rest of the Union**. It has yet fully to reconcile its programme with the more recently drafted Programme of the Union as a whole (although good progress has recently been made), and there are very few links between SSC programmes and those of other Commissions. Meanwhile, as it expands its social science capacity and takes on project management and programme execution, there is a risk that SSC takes on too many roles that other parts of the Union can or should perform. Both the Secretariat and the SSC leadership need to consult more closely on **how to build synergy and avoid duplication**.

**Voluntarism** remains a vexed issue for SSC. So far, however, the scientific and environmental attractions of volunteering to work as an SSC member outweigh the costs in the perception of thousands of leading scholars around the world. A more immediate problem with voluntarism concerns the Chairs of its Specialist Groups. Volunteers with other, full time jobs are unlikely to cope much longer with the management of increasingly complex SGs with their multiple programmes and staff. This review endorses SSC's intention to investigate voluntarism in the Commission through a small task force, which should report to the SSC Steering Committee at the October 2000 World Conservation Congress.

A key challenge now is for SSC to respond positively to the major **changes in the IUCN context** that are embodied in the Union's change of leadership and the newly focused character of its forthcoming Programme. The response can be supportive or questioning, but it should at all times be proactive and committed.

In response to the changing institutional context within which it works, and its growing realisation of the enormity of its scientific task, **SSC should strengthen its collaborative stance as one partner among many**. SSC is not going to play the leading role as repository of data or leader of conservation action for all species. While there are signs that this realisation is spreading among the Commission's leadership, SSC needs to give higher priority to the challenge of forming new working alliances over the coming triennium.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Reviews of IUCN Commissions, 2000**

This report forms part of a broader process of reviewing four IUCN Commissions between March and May, 2000. At its 51<sup>st</sup> meeting on 7-9 February 2000, the IUCN Council decided that, in accordance with Resolution 19.2 of the 1994 Buenos Aires General Assembly, triennial end-term reviews should be carried out of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) and of the Commission on Environmental Law (CEL). More



## 2. Effectiveness

### 2.1. Measuring the effectiveness of the SSC

It is not easy to gauge the effectiveness of the SSC during a quick review like this one. The previous SSC Strategic Plan did not include measurable targets, which has made it difficult to assess the Commission's progress in meeting the objectives it had set for itself (IUCN, 2000a, 6). Over recent months, as it has prepared its Strategic Plan for the 2001-2004 triennium, SSC has tried hard to come up with a shorter set of 'SMART' (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely) objectives and outputs against which progress can be more feasibly measured in the years to come.

This recent planning exercise has reminded SSC of a deeper problem in the management and assessment of its activities. Although, at some levels, it is taking on more and more of the character of a structured, targeted programme, SSC actually remains a network of Specialist Groups (SGs), which are themselves networks with varying degrees of focus and programmatic structure. There is debate about the degree to which it is appropriate or feasible for SSC to confine its work within a coordinated programme and to monitor its performance on this basis. Most people agree that such an approach can enhance the measurable effectiveness of the Commission with regard to a limited number of specified objectives. But they also acknowledge that the richness and depth of the combined knowledge and effort of all SSC's members and SGs should not be compromised in the process. As was pointed out during the March 2000 planning meeting, there are probably many positive local SSC impacts of which Commission management never

**SSC mandate, 1997-1999**

**Mission**

*To conserve biological diversity by developing and executing programmes to study, save, restore and manage wisely species and their habitats.*

**Purpose**

*SSC serves as the principal source of advice to the Union and its members on the technical aspects of species conservation. It seeks to mobilise action by the world conservation community on behalf of species, in particular those threatened with extinction and those of importance for human welfare. It achieves this by providing leadership with the following six goals:*

- (a) *to assess the conservation status of and threats to species worldwide, so as to generate recommendations and*

**SSC Triennial Programme, 1997-1999**

The **mission** and **goals** set out in the triennial programme are the same as the mission and purpose statements in the Commission's mandate.

**Strategic objectives**

1. *To utilise SSC's expertise to address biodiversity conservation needs more effectively at the regional, national and sub-national levels.*
2. *To assess as rapidly as possible the status of all groups of species determined to be a priority.*
3. *To strengthen the ability of SSC to evaluate the ecological impact of uses of wild species and promote improved wildlife management.*
4. *To develop an effective and responsive global information system for the conservation of species.*
5. *To position SSC as a major adviser for key intergovernmental mechanisms relevant to the conservation of biodiversity.*
6. *To improve SSC's capacity to communicate priority recommendations and policies to promote the implementation of actions needed for the survival of species.*
7. *To strengthen the existing SSC network to gather information, set priorities, stimulate action, develop policies, and provide advice for the conservation of biodiversity.*
8. *To monitor and evaluate the activities of SSC to maximise its effectiveness.*
9. *To increase the management capacity of SSC.*
10. *To develop the human resources of the network to deal more effectively with conservation challenges and issues throughout the world.*
11. *To strengthen SSC's ability to generate support for its programmes and to diversify its funding base.*

**Draft logical framework of SSC Strategic Plan, 2000**

**Vision**

*A world that values and conserves present levels of biodiversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.*

**Goal**

*The extinction crisis and massive loss of species*

development of a Species Information System, which is currently at an advanced pilot stage. The SIS is to be launched at the October 2000 World Conservation Congress in Amman. If adequately resourced (and the recent provision of support by the Government of Italy is an important step in this regard) the SIS can do much to enhance SSC's effectiveness in deploying its scientific data base to promote species survival. However, the role of SSC and its SIS as the world's central species information provider is not assured. The SIS is not the only such information service available, although the Commission believes that it will offer significantly more detail and higher quality than its competitors. Two major donors declined to support the SIS, although one has invited SSC to resubmit its proposal. Overall, although SSC has worked hard to enhance the effectiveness of its knowledge base, some years of further effort will be needed before its contribution and impact in this regard are assured.

SSC is active in a number of global biodiversity policy fora, and deploys its expertise there to significant positive effect. It makes a range of contributions to the ongoing work of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In a number of more specific policy sectors, SSC has had a clearly positive impact. These include its work on Guidelines for Re-Introductions, Guidelines for the Placement of Confiscated Animals and its work with the Global Invasive Species Programme.

Through its Sustainable Use Specialist Group (SUSG) and the IUCN Sustainable Use Initiative (SUI), SSC has achieved a useful impact on local and international action to promote the sustainable use of natural resources. (Whether the focus should be on 'wild' plants and animals or on all natural resources remains a matter of debate.) 'Sustainable use' is a controversial concept both within and beyond the SSC and IUCN. While the relationship between the large SUSG, the SUI and the rest of the Commission and Union has confused many people, there is little doubt that the regionalisation and decentralisation of the SUSG over recent years has enhanced its capacity to influence local action on sustainable use issues. Some would argue that social scientists and/or proponents of sustainable use have no place in a natural science/conservation orientated Commission like SSC. But the balance of opinion (and the view of the SUSG Chair) is that the current integration makes the SSC more effective in dealing with the interface between conservation and livelihood imperatives. In many developing countries, the continued legitimacy of the SSC and its species survival commitment rests heavily on the SSC's and IUCN's perceived commitment to sustainable use.

Many of the Commission's efforts to promote action for species survival are linked to its commitment to sustainable use. SSC's Wildlife Trade Programme remains highly effective as a key provider of scientific advice to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and some of the SGs play a leading and positive – because perceived as impartial - role in CITES debates and decisions. This was most recently evidenced in the April 2000 CITES debates in Nairobi on trade in ivory

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because SSC has been slow to recognise that it is not, and cannot be, the leader in every field of study and action with regard to species survival. It cannot afford to assume a guiding or dominant role in each such

generators and purveyors of knowledge; and about how best to divide the world of knowledge among a group of Commissions so that the Union can fulfil its mission (Bruszt and Turner, 2000). In particular, there is debate about how to link the social and natural sciences within and between Commissions. For example, should SSC develop so much social science capacity (primarily within the SUSG), when there are other Commissions with a more specifically social science mandate?

There are no firm answers in these debates. Given its character, such discussions are likely to be a permanent feature of the Union. There will therefore probably always be questions about the rationale of the SSC. The ongoing question of social science in the Commission has already been mentioned. Another is the growing uncertainty about the purpose and character of SGs based on taxa, and whether they can hope to cover all the biodiversity that the Commission needs to address. A third concerns the relationship between species and ecosystems, and whether the allocation of these two aspects to two separate Commissions makes best sense. It may not be helpful to expand the debate here, as no rationale or configuration for the SSC and the rest of the Union will ever be perfect. In the broader report on the Commission reviews being undertaken this year (section 1.1), we address some of these questions of rationale in more general terms.

### **3.2. Relevance to IUCN**

A more pressing question is the relationship between SSC's goals and objectives and those of the 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. For the Commission's strategic planning exercise, a table of all the IUCN Programme's result areas and activities was produced showing how many times SSC (and the SUI) are mentioned as key role players.

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. During the March 2000 SSC strategic planning session, participants assumed early on that this reconciliation would be a simple task. Towards the end of the session, they realised that it would be more complex and time consuming than they had thought. Ultimately, the session hardly addressed the issue at all, and handed it back to the lead consultant for further work. He pointed out that the exercise may necessitate the adjustment of some of SSC's objective and/or target statements, and the identification of IUCN result areas towards which the Commission will be unable to contribute. While both bodies' new plans are major advances on what has gone before, future synergy between the Union and its largest scientific resource base will require thorough work on the interface between the two. Since the March 2000 meeting, good progress has been made on the reconciliation of the SSC plan and the IUCN Programme, in a number of working sessions between the lead consultant and Secretariat staff.

Within IUCN, there is little doubt that the SSC is regarded as one of the Union's strongest components and one of the leading guarantors of its international credibility. As always in the Union, there are a range of complaints about poor communications between the Commission, the Secretariat and the membership, and a sense that SSC, as the largest and best-resourced Commission, may either take other parts of IUCN for granted or ignore them completely. These are long-standing structural and management issues within the Union as a whole, and not primarily a problem of SSC's making. Overall, SSC is so relevant to IUCN that IUCN could hardly survive with5 TD y1168 -1mer, muc7D -0.1335 1875 Tw ( ) Tj -139.5 -12c7D -012.75 335 /F1 TD

science as being at the cutting edge. As already indicated, 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 generally does best in a supportive, rather than a proprietary, role.

## **4. Efficiency**

### **4.1. Operational efficiency**

There are two ways to address the questions of SSC 'efficiency' that are posed by the terms of reference for this review (Annex 1). The first, addressed in this section, concerns the structural or operational efficiency as a means of achieving specified objectives. The second, addressed in section

many informants suggest that the Commission has already sunk below the lowest feasible resource level and is currently 'running on empty'. The time for which the quality, reputation and effectiveness of SSC operations can be maintained on this basis is strictly limited. ***Rather than being content or complacent about the current cost-effectiveness of SSC, IUCN and its supporters should instead give urgent attention to the financial viability of the Commission and the provision of at least that minimum adequate resource base for its expanding operations.***

## **5. Financial viability**

### **5.1. Current financial status**

There are several aspects to SSC funding. First, there is the funding allocated to the Species Programme at IUCN headquarters in Gland and at the SSC Cambridge office, covering the costs of the Secretariat support to the Commission. Secondly, there are general funds allocated by IUCN to Commission operations. Thirdly, funds are obtained from various donors for specific SSC projects, such as the Red List Programme and the Wildlife Trade Programme. In addition, many of the SGs have their own budgets – partly for central operations, partly for projects. Some of these groups, like the Conservation Breeding SG, dispose of substantial resources.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the current financial status of SSC is mixed. At the time of this review, the Gland Secretariat budget was in a healthier position than usual (although still in deficit). But some of the Commission's key projects – notably the Red List Programme and the SIS – still had substantial funding shortfalls, leading a key participant in the former project to describe the SSC as 'a beached whale'. 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 (section 5.3), operational grants to the smaller and poorer SGs have dwindled. This threatens the character and viability of parts of the network. As IUCN core funding decreases and SSC dependence on project funding increases, the Commission has less and less time and money to invest in SG network support.

### **5.2. Funding sources**

As has been shown, the central budgets of IUCN, as administered by the Secretariat, provide only a fraction of SSC's total operating resources. While most of the funding for the IUCN programme now comes from international development agencies like SIDA and NORAD, these are not the lead supporters of SSC (apart from the SUI and SUSG, whose character is more in line with the purpose of this type of agency). The largest donors to SSC operations are the United Kingdom and United States Governments, the Taiwan Council of Agriculture, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Conservation International and the Centre for Marine Conservation.

Fund raising is a major task for IUCN Species Programme staff who support SSC from the Secretariat. Even though the process has been narrowed to a somewhat smaller number of larger grants than previously, a great many cost centres, projects and potential sources must still be manipulated. This led one of the Secretariat staff to write, in briefing papers for the March 2000 meeting of the SSC Executive Committee, that:

*A larger question lies behind the budget situation. With considerable effort on the part of the staff, the deficits for 2000 can probably be covered. However, it is highly questionable that this is actually a good use of staff time. Discussions have been held with the Director General emphasising that the priority for the staff is to move the SSC programme ahead in line with the new strategic plan, not to devote all their time raising funds to allow the programme to stand still. It is undoubtedly a higher priority to secure funding for the SIS Central Service Unit than to seek funds to cover the deficit in the programme.*



The Commission is considering the employment of professional fund raising capacity, which it has used in the past. But it was pointed out at the same meeting of the Executive Committee that such consultants are not necessarily the most effective fund raisers in fields like that of the SSC. ***The experienced, specialist staff and office bearers of the Commission should play the lead role in fund raising, with consultant staff doing background documentation and other support work.*** Unfortunately, an inevitable consequence of this investment of key people's time is a further reduction in the time they have available for network support.

### **5.3. Financial sustainability**

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 triennium, 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.

Some of SSC's lead projects, and many of its smaller SG operations, are far from financial sustainability at present. But erratic and uncertain funding scenarios are a natural part of life for organisations like IUCN and SSC. While the challenges just outlined will remain pressing, there are some more immediate budgetary considerations that the Commission will need to address. ***In particular, it will be necessary for SSC budgets and financial management to be restructured in line with the objectives and targets of the Strategic Plan rather than the different parts of the SSC structure, as has been done to date.*** How this will be achieved is not yet clear. ***In addition, the Commission will have to adopt a longer budget planning horizon than the one year that has been used so far. Meanwhile, as it addresses the new funding and budgetary challenges presented by the Strategic Plan, the Commission will have to give equal attention to the financial viability of its roots in the SGs – particularly those that do not have major projects or institutional homes in well resourced organisations.***

## **6. Strategy and leadership**

### **6.1. Leadership**

The evolution in SSC's leadership has partly reflected and partly driven the broader trends in the Commission's development. By all accounts the leadership of the former Chair was charismatic and committed, but relatively distant from the day to day detail and activities of the SSC. This sort of leadership was probably not inappropriate in the days of the looser network that the Commission then was. By contrast, the current Chair has (with the cooperation of his employers) immersed himself more in the detailed strategic management of SSC and has built a more centralised, programmatic direction for a network that has much more specific goals than it used to have. He has reinforced this approach by working with an Executive Committee that can meet more often and act more decisively than the statutory Steering Committee (section 7.1). This evolution in SSC leadership partly reflects the current Chair's own inclinations and abilities. Partly, as already suggested, it reflects the expanding trend in the Commission's view of its role as it addresses the perceived needs of species conservation. Partly, it reflects the Commission's view of the broader Union. Many would argue that IUCN was not strategically led and lacked programmatic direction during the second half of the last decade. Not surprisingly, many IUCN stakeholders outside the Secretariat felt a need to fill at least some of this strategic gap. While not everyone in SSC endorses the more centralised, structured and programme-driven management style of the 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.







**Comments on voluntarism by the IUCN external review, 1999**

The driving force behind the work and contributions of Commission volunteers is their personal and professional interest in their subjects. In exchange for very limited operating resources from the Union, the collective results of all these voluntary inputs are an invaluable asset for IUCN. However, voluntarism has its limitations. It cannot routinely supersede personal interest. When the programmes and projects of the Union require defined, systematic and timely inputs of scientific knowledge and skill, the voluntary system of the Commissions may fail to cope. This deficiency of the voluntary system is an obstacle to the full use of the Commissions' competence and capacity in the Union's work, especially at regional and country levels.

**We therefore recommend that the Union establish a compensation system for Commission members.**

This compensation should apply when a Commission member performs a specified task in support of a programme or project administered by the Secretariat. Standard compensation rates should apply to all members of the Commission, irrespective of nationality, place of work or profession.

*IUCN, 1999, 31.*

So far, however, the scientific and environmental attractions of volunteering to work as an SSC member outweigh the costs in the perception of thousands of leading scholars around the world. As one person put it during the current review, the 1999 external review's comments on voluntarism referred more to a problem some Commissions may have in getting people to volunteer. SSC, on the other hand, gets so much voluntary work done by its members that it has reached a stage where additional supporting resources are essential if the momentum of the Commission's work is to be maintained.

## **8.2. Volunteer Chairs**

Where SSC certainly does have a problem with voluntarism is with the Chairs of its Specialist Groups. Many of these volunteers now find themselves managing extensive programmes and projects, with their own salaried staff. Some now feel that the burden of this sort of voluntarism has become impossibly heavy, and that something has to change. SSC has addressed this issue from time to time in the past without resolving to change anything. There is still a gut feeling among many of the Commission's leaders that making the post of SG Chair a paid position would alter the character of the Commission – and especially its reputation for scientific impartiality in emotive conservation issues – for the worse. Being the unpaid Chair of an SG when helping to resolve conflicts between civil servants and NGO staff over African elephants, for example, offers a useful sort of moral advantage.

This issue links to that of the character and role of SGs themselves. Should they remain networks of volunteers? Or should they metamorphose into NGOs with paid staff? Some respected NGOs in SSC's field were originally volunteer SSC SGs. A first step that may be appropriate for some current SGs (and was taken some time ago by the Captive Breeding SG) is to become a legal entity, so that the group can handle its own funds directly and later cross the bridge to paying staff or a Chair more easily.

In a sense, these are problems of success – or, at least, of ambition. Voluntarism would be less of a problem for SG Chairs if SSC was content with just being a network of scientists that provides information and advice. Now that it seeks to influence, guide and deliver in the conservation field, it must think afresh about the suitability of voluntarism at its various levels. The March 2000 meeting of the SSC Executive Committee agreed that the voluntarism issue should be explored by a small task force, supported by an expert adviser. This is a sensible way forward. *As the Committee suggested, the task force should submit its report to the meeting of the SSC Steering Committee to be held at Amman in October 2000.*

The issues that arise from the voluntarism of SG Chairs arise also with regard to the position of SSC Chair. Here too it is obvious that the post could be more than a full time job for a salaried individual. The current Chair was fortunate (as was the SSC) in that his employers allowed him to devote about 75% of his time to the Commission during his initial period in the post. That has now shrunk to more like 25%. Once again, the voluntary nature of the position accords the incumbent and the Commission certain advantages, and imposes some heavy personal and institutional costs. Once again, the current consensus is probably that the position should remain unpaid. This means that the holder's employer, which is probably an institution working in the

conservation sector, is likely to make a substantial contribution, in kind if not in cash, to the cause of the SSC. (The current Chair's employers also fund an administrative position for SSC in his office.) Such a relationship should reflect well on both parties. However, such expectations are likely to exclude individuals and institutions in many parts of the world where resources on this scale are less available. Again, there are no easy answers to this aspect of the voluntarism issue in SSC. ***The Commission should include the question of the voluntary SSC Chair in the work of its proposed task force.***

## 9. Context

### 9.1. The IUCN context

In many ways, the IUCN context has had less impact on SSC's life and work in recent years than might be expected. The reasons for this have been discussed earlier in this report. They include the poor communications between the different parts of the Union that are a general feature of IUCN; and the often poor esteem in which SSC has held the condition and performance of the IUCN Secretariat during the past triennium. Rather than challenge these perceived weaknesses, SSC has usually preferred to go its own way and to develop more and more of the capacity and activities that might more logically be expected to find homes elsewhere in the Union (section 7.3).

One important link that SSC has been able to maintain with the IUCN context is the Secretariat staff who play such a key role in the Commission's planning, funding and operational management (section 7.1). As the Union has started to regroup itself around the draft Programme for the next triennium, the SSC has complimented itself on the major contribution that 'its' staff in Gland have made to the preparation of the Programme. (At the same time, some have complained that the Commission's own work suffered while the Species Programme staff were diverted to work on drafting the Programme.)

In any event, the key challenge now is for SSC to respond positively to the major changes in the IUCN context that are embodied in the change of leadership and the newly focused character of the forthcoming Programme. ***The response can be supportive or questioning, but it should at all times be proactive and committed.*** During its March 2000 planning work, the Commission did not make a convincing start by deferring the question of how its Strategic Plan should be dovetailed with the new IUCN Programme. ***It will be important for SSC to display a more active and positive profile in this regard before and during the forthcoming World Conservation Congress.*** Planning work done since March 2000 suggests good progress in this regard.

### 9.2. The conservation sector

The members and leadership of SSC are well informed about trends in their operational context within the conservation and environmental sectors. The Commission does not always respond optimally to these trends, but that must be expected in the behaviour of such a large and various network. At least three kinds of potential response can be identified:

- in response to increased scientific knowledge and enhanced scientific and communications procedures around the world, SSC should upgrade its scientific services. In this sense, the Commission has proved to be responsive – notably with its revision of Red List criteria and its development of the Species Information Service. Neither of these initiatives is without its critics or competitors, and both have been much delayed by the chronic shortage of funds that afflicts SSC and the rest of IUCN. There is no room for complacency about the quality or delivery of SSC science, but for a network of its character and resources the Commission can be commended for its performance with this kind of response to changing context;

- in response to the increasing urgency and higher political profile of many of the species survival and trade issues with which it deals, SSC should take a more central role as an impartial arbiter backed up by scientific data and expertise of the high

## **Annex 1. Terms of Reference**

The consultant is required to undertake an external review of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), focusing on the criteria given below. However, since this is an end of term review, it is recognised that it will not be possible to go into depth on each of these points.

### **1. To what extent has the SSC achieved its objectives/fulfilled its mandate?**

- What has happened as a result of the SSC's work?
- What are the unplanned effects of the SSC's work?
- What are the probable long-term consequences of the SSC's work?
- What lessons can be learned from the SSC's experience of the past three years?

### **2. Rationale/ Relevance (Is the SSC relevant to its stakeholders?)**

- Are the SSC's mandate and goals based on a sound rationale?
- To what degree will the achievement of the SSC's goals contribute to the achievement of IUCN's mission and goals?
- Are the SSC's mandate and objectives still relevant?
- Do stakeholders inside and outside IUCN support the work of the SSC?

### **3. Efficiency (Does the work of the SSC provide good value (results) for the resources it utilises?)**

- Has the SSC used its resources in a cost-effective way? (Resources = money, volunteers, staff)
- Are there better ways for the SSC to achieve the same results at less cost?
- Are there better vehicles than a Commission to achieve the same results?

### **4. Financial viability (Is the SSC financially viable for IUCN?)**

- Is the SSC financially sustainable?
- Has the SSC been able to generate funds outside of IUCN?
- Does it manage its resources responsibly?

### **5. Strategic leadership (Is the SSC led in a strategic fashion?)**

- To what extent has strategy and leadership affected the SSC's performance?
- Does the SSC have a strategic plan to guide its work? Is it participative? Transparent? Aligned with the Union? Is it used?

### **6. Management (Is the SSC well managed?)**

- Is the SSC able to plan, implement, and monitor its programme and projects?
- Does the SSC projects and programmes represent the state of the art work in their areas of expertise?
- Are the programmes and projects linked to the Programme of the Union at global and regional level and to the work of other Commissions?
- How has the SSC planned, implement1df -0 -12.C planned, implement1df -0 -12.C Tj -197F0 11.25 ?d2hslam



- Are the SSC's monitoring and evaluation processes adequate to improve its performance?

**7. SSC's voluntary spirit (How does the voluntary spirit of the SSC affect its membership and IUCN?)**

- To what extent does the SSC 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 SSC drive / motivate IUCN to perform better.

**8. Impact of the context on SSC (What is the impact of the changing context and stakeholders on the work of the SSC?)**

- What impact has the IUCN context had on the performance of the SSC?
- How well has the SSC dealt with the changes in the IUCN context.
- What impact have any changes in the conservation world related directly to the content of the SSC had on the SSC performance?
- How well has the SSC responded to changes in their field of endeavor?
- What impact have any changes in the conservation / environment sector in general had on the SSC's performance?
- How well has the SSC responded to changes in the broader conservation world.
- What has been the impact of donors on the SSC?

In order to perform the external review, the consultant will take part in meetings of the SSC, to be held in White Oak, Florida, USA, on 20-24 March 2000. At these meetings, the consultant will gather information through interviews with leading SSC members, review of documentation, taking part in the overall discussions.

The consultant will prepare a report to be submitted to Nancy MacPherson at IUCN headquarters by 25 April 2000.

## References

Brackett, D., 2000. *Species Survival Commission (SSC) triennial report, 1997-1999*. Ottawa: SSC.

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