

For immediate release

Creating a common language for protected areas

IUCN paves the way for a common understanding of the world's natural gems

Almería, Spain, 11 May, 2007 (IUCN)

From 7 to 11 May 2007 over 100 experts from about 40 countries gathered in Almería, Spain, to improve the internationally-recognized IUCN Categories System, which since 1994 has created a “common language” for the world’s protected areas.

“The IUCN Categories System, which fills a void unfilled by others, has been endorsed by international conventions like the CBD and by regional agreements,” stated **Julia Marton-Lefèvre**, Director General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). *“It is increasingly used by numerous countries around the world, including in the application of legislation and policy instruments,”* she added.

There are over 140 different names for protected areas around the world, creating confusion when setting standards for improving nature conservation through protected area systems. The six IUCN protected

otherwise disappear. In the case of this park, human activities have actually shaped the biodiversity characteristics of the area, as illustrated by the presence of salt fields which play a key role in the protection of migratory bird species.

“The Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park is a clear example of how nature conservation objectives and human wellbeing can be compatible”, commented **David Sheppard**, Director of the IUCN Programme on Protected Areas. *“This category of protected area is growing in importance, especially in Europe and the Mediterranean, but it is important to highlight that all six categories of the system are equally important depending on the management objective at hand,”* he added.

The Summit has been organized by IUCN, its Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation and WCPA, with the support of the regional Spanish authorities (Consejería de Medio Ambiente of the Junta de Andalucía), Fundación Biodiversidad and the Spanish Ministry of the Environment.

Notes to editors

IUCN Protected Area Categories: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/theme/categories>

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About the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Created in 1948, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) brings together 83 States, 110 government agencies, 800 plus NGOs, and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. The Union’s mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout