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# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF CEESP

**D**ear CEESP members and partners,

I am particularly proud to introduce to you this timely and controversial issue of our Journal on “Climate change, energy change and conservation”, for which I would like to commend all the members and partners who have produced the engrossing papers collected here and in particular the main Editor of the issue— Nigel Dudley— and his collaborators. As our affectionate readers know, our Journal is a forum where we explore and debate a variety of subjects of relevance to conservation. At times— like when we dedicated an issue to “History, culture and conservation” these subjects are important but subtle. At other times, like in the case of this issue, they are budding— if not exploding in our face— every way we look.

Climate change is occurring: we see the impacts on species, ecosystems, glaciers, low-lying countries, the new Northwest Passage, and other climate related disasters.... Climate change is the strongest force we have ever fought in our pursuit of conservation. It is wiping out entire habitats, debilitating species, and disrupting the lives of people and their capacity to be effective managers of their lands. The poor and those without a strong enough voice (including wild species) lose out disproportionately. They are the ones who cannot buffer themselves against drought years, who have to settle in flood plains, live in cheap buildings that collapse, fall prey to new diseases.... Clearly, we need to respond, but we should be afraid of two types of responses: 1) meek, insufficient, politically timid responses, and 2) panic-motivated and hastily thought-out responses that do not touch the heart of the problem.



Charcoal making is a toiling activity, in Cambodia as in many other countries. (Courtesy Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)



CEESP has stood the test of time, and has shown great resilience. Let us remember that a previous Council killed our Commission by failing to send a mandate to Congress for its approval.... yet she was revived from its ashes—phoenix-like— by the passionate support of IUCN's Members in the Congress of 2000, at the very time when I was asked to become the Chair. CEESP has survived detractors, lack of financial support and attempts at diminishing our standing within the Union. I am leaving to the next Chair a vibrant organisation, strengthened by the conscience and commitment



# EDITORIAL

## Climate change, energy change and conservation— preparing for the long haul

Nigel Dudley

with Clive Wicks and Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend

The point of departure for this issue of *Policy Matters* is that the evidence for serious climate change is very strong, although the extent or timing of many of the impacts are still not yet precisely known. But the threats are not so overwhelming as to be hopeless. If we really thought the situation was without hope we would be concentrating on enjoying ourselves as the ship sailed on towards the edge of the world, rather than wasting time trying to solve the problems... Furthermore, while CEESP has argued strongly that IUCN should address climate change as a central part of its mission, we are also aware that a sudden rush of concern about climate should not blind us to other pressing problems; when nations start to panic the solutions they propose are seldom either very effective or very equitable. We can see a classical example unfolding in front of us at the moment in the rush to develop bio fuels without considering the impact on biodiversity or food production. Now is an important time to hold our collective nerve as well as pushing hard for some solutions.

Addressing climate change means embracing energy change: the two issues are intricately and profoundly related. Since the industrial revolution, the world has been increasingly addicted to fossil fuels; an addiction that is still accelerating today. The huge political and economic stake in these finite and polluting sources of energy has a colossal influence on events throughout

the world, building or collapsing economies, fomenting wars and revolution







in practice, let alone less concerned and more sceptical people. Many people around the world still aspire to join the consumption lifestyle lived by the minority (including of course most of the people reading this journal). And even more still need to take care of the basic necessities of life. For them, there is simply no chance of diminishing consumption, as they are already on the brink of survival.

The challenge of selling bad news will be made more acute when the current flurry of interest in climate change dies away. Which it probably will; the rush of books, articles and television shows on the environment is uncomfortably similar to those in the mid 1970s during the last oil shock and in the early 1990s during the Earth Summit. Next year, unless something dramatic happens, climate change may be way down many people's agendas again for a while...

### **What should IUCN be doing?**

This leads us to the question of strategy. IUCN is about to start a new quadrennial programme that puts a high emphasis on climate change. But the organisation has little institutional history on this issue. What should be the priorities? For the sake of stimulating debate, we identify five key themes.

The first is to galvanise and ramp up the heartlands of the union: conservation and particularly species conservation and the role of protected areas as critical tools for conservation. Deforestation and uncontrolled forest fires still need to be stopped and forest conservation measures vastly increased. In the enthusiasm to build new partnerships and explore new territories there is sometimes a

tendency to ignore what the world already knows us for and instinctively looks to us for advice. Developing and implementing effective species survival strategies and strengthening and providing advice on the rapid expansion of global protected area networks should be our first and most concrete contributions.

Second, amongst the plethora of proposals for addressing climate change, those involving indigenous peoples and local communities are appearing with increasing frequency; several are written about here. Many of these people are those already suffering from the impacts of climate change and environmental destruction. IUCN has built a solid body of experience in addressing issues of localising governance in various ways, notably relating to protected areas but with ideas applicable much further afield as well. It is time to both celebrate and further build on these successes. Appropriate recognition and support to indigenous peoples managing their own territories in customary ways and communities conserving natural resources for a variety of purposes should become central to IUCN's responses to climate change as well.

*...recognition and support to Indigenous peoples managing their own territories in customary ways and commu*



genuine and radical change to energy supply: a veritable Energy Revolution, replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources and, as a precursor to that, replacing the current vast subsidies for fossil fuels with similar levels of support to help build genuine energy alternatives. The article by SEAPRISE in this issue of the journal lays out a clear and compelling strategic direction.

Third, we must strengthen IUCN's unparalleled cooperation with governments. IUCN is almost unique in the environmental field in having both governmental and non-governmental members, providing a rare "demilitarised zone" in which governments can meet each other and their own and other NGO members on neutral ground and hopefully with mutual respect. It is important that these meetings are not confined to occasional massive conferences such as the World Conservation Congress but that IUCN continues to facilitate hard and necessary debate about responses to climate change, while upholding the values of conservation with equity, and the respect of human rights.

Fourth if, as is intended, IUCN engages more fully in climate and energy policy over the next few years, it should do so in the context of promoting a

Next and perhaps most difficult, IUCN has also been building increasing links with industry and sees partnerships with both individual companies and corporate bodies as critical to its mission. We agree on the necessity of working with the industry sector and of IUCN's important role here, but recommend that IUCN should consider a careful review of both its existing relationships and any others that are in the planning stage. There are genuine worries amongst many IUCN members, including some government members, about the institutional framework for partnerships with industry (the very word "partner" is problematic as it assumes an equal relationship). Has IUCN been successful

in promoting genuine change or is the Union simply overseeing some “green-washing”?

Overall, is our relationship with any given business playing a positive, neutral or negative role vis-à-vis climate change? If the role of an industry partner is inherently negative in terms of, for instance, producing greenhouses gases, are there real, on-the-ground changes and substantial policy changes that we can point at to justify the relationship with our Union? Are the partners supporting or undermining relevant IUCN Resolutions, such as the Amman 2000 Resolution asking that oil and gas exploration should not take place in category I-IV protected areas? Any kind of partnership is difficult; it implies some give and take, and some trade-offs as with every relationship; but we hear increasing concern about whether or not the current balance is right. Failing concrete signs of progress over time, it will be very difficult to justify our “partnerships” and “alliances” with business. In other words, working with industry is indeed essential (and IUCN is in a very strong position to do it) but the

Union should argue from a position of strength and not be afraid to disengage if this seems justified. We are convinced that even industry, in the long run, will benefit

from and will be grateful about such as a principled stand.

All the changes we are suggesting as necessary will cost money. But money is available. If the current massive subsidies to fossil fuels were shifted, even gradually, towards renewable sources and energy saving

technologies, we would go a long way to addressing the shortfall. Even better, additional money could be found if polluting industries would pay a more realistic contribution to funding the solutions.

In this light, and in the light of current enormous profits of some companies, the argument for a carbon tax is simply compelling.

At a time of jitters about a global recession, the idea of governments

taking a hand at addressing the problems by creating new and sustainable jobs through a large scale change in energy technologies becomes increasingly attractive. The concept of a Green New Deal is floated here, and we are confident it would repay careful consideration.