

Outcomes of the 5th World Parks Congress, Durban

Neil Burgess. WWF-USA Conservation Science Program, 1250 24th Street NW, Washington DC, USA.

Every 10 years the global conservation community gathers at an international Parks Congress, to assess the status of the global network of protected areas. The fifth such meeting was held in September 2003 in Durban, South Africa, the first time on the African continent. Over 2,500 delegates from around the world worked for 10 days on a range of themes related to the location, establishment, management, financing, and benefits of protected areas. The congress emphasized the importance of these issues to broader societal goals such as equity, good governance, and poverty alleviation.

Key issues emerging from the congress, relevant to forest conservation in Tanzania were.

Building a comprehensive global network of protected areas. The congress showed that governments, communities and private interests have established over 100,000 protected areas, covering 18.8 million square kilometres (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/>). This is slightly over 10% of the earth's land surface – the major target established by the 4th Parks Congress in 1992. Tanzania has already achieved this percentage of protected land, but some of the Tanzanian reserves are not recognised formally as protected areas. A major example is the Tanzanian network of Forest Reserves. These reserves have not been given an IUCN Protected Area code and hence in strict terms they are not regarded as protected areas. However, this impression is misleading. The Tanzanian catchment Forest Reserves contain most of the forest on the Eastern Arc – no exploitation is allowed – and hence they fit the criteria for IUCN Protected Area code IV. Many other Forest Reserves in Tanzania would fit within IUCN Protected Area code VI. The Tanzanian Forest and Beekeeping Division could request the World Commission on Protected Areas to recognise its Forest Reserves in this way to ensure that these important reserves are regarded as 'protected areas'.

Analyses presented at the Congress showed that the current protected area network fails to contain many of the world's species (see <http://www.biodiversityscience.org>), and it was concluded that the targeted creation of new protected areas is a conservation priority for the next decade. Assigning IUCN Protected Area code IV to the Tanzanian Catchment Forest Reserves, and IUCN code VI to relevant Forest Reserves containing coastal forest, would close many of the reserve gaps identified for Tanzania. An important role in improving the network of protected areas was also identified for community-

based or privately-owned reserves.

Management and Finance. The Congress showed that the funding available for protected area management is grossly inadequate. An estimated \$20 billion US is required annually to manage a globally comprehensive terrestrial protected area network, with a further \$10 billion for marine protected areas. Currently there is an estimated shortfall of funding of around \$20 billion per annum. Developing novel systems of financing through case-specific combinations of private business partnerships, payments for ecosystem services, trust funds, and ecotourism operations are needed to improve both the level and stability of funding.

Mainstreaming of protected areas into national development planning. The Congress reviewed efforts to broaden protected area management and integrate it with the needs of local communities. The strong presence of indigenous peoples, mobile peoples and local communities provided new perspectives, and it was recognised that the full value of parks included cultural and sacred elements making protected areas relevant to a wider community. Calls were made to recognise the critical role of protected areas for both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, and for protected areas to play a more central role in national planning. Poverty was seen as a major cause of environmental degradation yet many of the costs of conservation within protected areas remain with the adjacent communities. The congress examined innovative market mechanisms where economic benefits of protected areas could be returned to the rural poor, for example through water payments, biodiversity markets and carbon sequestration as well as more normal tourism and revenue-sharing approaches. Working to support attempts to alleviate poverty was regarded as one of the major challenges facing African protected areas over the coming decade.

Further information on the outputs of the 5th World Parks Congress can be found on <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/index.htm>.

If the goals laid out in Durban are met, the next World Parks Congress in a decade from now will be able to show that global biodiversity is well represented within a network of protected areas that, as an accepted component of global land use, and contributes meaningfully to the economic and societal well-being of the world's people.