

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION
of the INTERNATIONAL UNION
FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
to the UNITED NATIONS

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IUCN Statement on Integrated Water Resources Management

Delivered by Achim Steiner, Director General

**13th Session of the UN
Commission on Sustainable Development**

**21 April 2005
New York**

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IUCN
The World Conservation Union

IUCN Statement to 13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

New York, 21 October 2005

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on a number of recent reports that inform our consideration of the issues of water, sanitation and human settlements.

The Millennium Project Report, the Secretary General's "In Larger Freedom" and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provide a series of powerful tools to connect our discussions to the upcoming Millennium + 5 Summit in September.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in particular points out that "the loss of services derived from ecosystems is a significant barrier to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to reduce poverty, hunger, and disease."

In terms of water, we are reaching our limits. Some rivers no longer reach the sea, and groundwater levels are falling dramatically in many parts of the world. We are seriously undermining the capacity of our life-support systems to provide us with the water resources that are vital to the lives of people and the economies of countries.

IUCN is encouraged by many of the positive developments taking place to reach the MDGs. Increasing ODA levels, creative financing mechanisms, and governance innovations are all steps in the right direction. Two other technical suggestions to ensure sustainability of water supply are the implementation of environmental flows and the use of economic valuation of ecosystem services in planning and decision-making.

Mr. Chair, the actions and options proposed by the esteemed delegates are based on practical experiences in their countries and reveal innovative solutions that are applicable elsewhere. Such solutions are urgently needed.

But within them and beside them, we need more investments in ecosystems to maintain the goods and services they provide. This is not just essential to ensure sustainable supplies of water, it is vital to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chair, I would like to cite a few examples of such investments, based on IUCN's own field experience and partnerships:

Implement environmental flows

Environmental flows offer a set of tools to rationalize the allocation of water, to protect downstream users and ecosystems, and to ensure the long-term prosperity of a river basin.

Strengthen governance at all levels and involve stakeholders

Water governance can be improved at all levels, from local community involvement, to national level planning, to transnational basin-wide cooperation through legal review and stakeholder participation at all levels.

Apply economic valuation and payment for environmental services

Valuation of multiple water use and ecosystem benefits provides decision-makers with additional information that improves development decisions. Furthermore, it is the basis for the development of innovative payment schemes for environmental services, which help to maintain some of the vital ecological services of freshwater basin ecosystems.

Institutional Follow up

Finally Mr. Chair, IUCN endorses the call for regular, systematic monitoring, assessment and reporting on the broad range of policies and measures that countries, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and local communities are undertaking to meet the MDGs and other internationally agreed targets and goals. IUCN stands ready to contribute to this important work in partnership with others.

Thank you Mr. Chair.

Created in 1948, IUCN - The World Conservation Union brings together 79 States, 114 Government agencies, 800 plus NGO's, and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. IUCN's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

IUCN is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.