

4.099 Recognition of the diversity of concepts and values of nature

CONSCIOUS that nature is a foundational concept for IUCN;

AWARE that the IUCN Mission requires the conservation of nature to be understood as an action based on the diverse visions that different living cultures have of nature;

NOTING that the concept of nature conveyed in the official languages of IUCN was shaped after the seventeenth century scientific revolution in Europe, gradually reducing the original scope from the Latin concept of 'natura' to its material dimension or component;

AWARE that a great number of the world's languages lack an exact equivalent for the concept of 'nature' that IUCN uses, and that, instead, the word or words they use include human beings, agrobiodiversity, and non-material realms, which are perceived as alive and often a more significant part of nature than their material counterparts;

UNDERSTANDING that the Cartesian distinction between material and spiritual does not exist in most cultures, where people consider that spiritual realities permeate everything and that humans, nature and the entire universe share the same material and spiritual dimensions;

NOTING that many of the concepts used instead of 'nature' are more holistic, and may be loosely translated in expressions such as 'Mother', 'Mother Earth', 'Mother who makes all things possible', 'Community of all beings', 'Source of all', 'Self-regenerating', 'Angel', or 'Spirit';

NOTING FURTHER that mainstream religions and philosophies, followed by most of humankind, have other concepts related to nature such as 'Creation', 'Samsara', 'Prakriti' or 'Shan-shui';

ACKNOWLEDGING that from all these diverse concepts of nature, flow a tremendous diversity of conservation values, ranging from intrinsic values related to sacred species, sites, landscapes, etc., to use values for livelihood, and functional values;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the Ethics Specialist Group of the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law (CEL) is currently addressing this issue;

CONCERNED about the impacts that the prevalent concept of nature conservation has already had in parts of the world, reducing the potential support for conservation from those societies that have different world views;

CONCERNED FURTHER about the impossibility of producing accurate translations for many of the IUCN documents into some of the most widely used languages of the world, which lack the equivalent of the concept of nature as it is used in IUCN; and

CONSCIOUS that respect of the rich cultural diversity conveyed by different concepts of nature and its related values is a right of concerned communities or societies;

The World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN

Programme 2009-2012:

1. CALLS ON the Director General to promote understanding that nature conservation as a human action is rooted in diverse, evolving cultures and world views; and
2. REQUESTS the Director General and IUCN Commissions to work with IUCN's members to:
 - (a) find ways to incorporate other understandings of the human relationship with the natural world to increase intercultural efforts for nature conservation;
 - (b) develop appropriate guidance to fully recognize the existing diversity of concepts and values of nature, and nature conservation, where appropriate; and
 - (c) promote and support nature conservation actions including and reflecting practices and traditions that are rooted in culture and embody the cultural values of the diversity of peoples of the world.

State and agency members of the United States abstained during the vote on this motion.