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| Healthy Ecosystems Reduce Vulnerability to Disaster Risk  **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**  **Statement to the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva, 19th to 23rd May 2013**  Address made by IUCN | For more information, please contact :  Radhika Murti  Programme Coordinator - DRR  Tel: +41 22 999 0114  [radhika.murti@iucn.org](mailto:radhika.murti@iucn.org)  Lorena Aguilar  Global Senior Gender Adviser  Tel: +16155212523  [Lorena.aguilar@iucn.org](mailto:Lorena.aguilar@iucn.org)  Trevor Sandwith  Director , Global Protected Areas Programme  <Tel:+41229990167>  [Trevor.Sandwith@iucn.org](mailto:Trevor.Sandwith@iucn.org)  IUCN World Headquarters  Rue Mauverney 28  1196 Gland  Switzerland  Tel: +41 22 999 0000  Fax: +41 22 999 0002  [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)  IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.  IUCN is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN is a democratic union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and some 10,000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. IUCN’s work is supported by 1,100 professional staff in 62 countries and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.  **For more information about IUCN at the Global Platform:**  Visit IUCN at the Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction Booth at the Market Place  Or check out our websites [www.iucn.org/ecosystems](http://www.iucn.org/ecosystems)  [www.pedrr.net](http://www.pedrr.net)  We also encourage you to join IUCN’s Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)  [www.iucn.org/cem](http://www.iucn.org/cem)  and/or  World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)  [www.iucn.org/wcpa](http://www.iucn.org/wcpa) |
| Mr/Ms. Chairman, distinguished delegates, resilient and healthy ecosystems are the foundation of resilient and healthy communities, able to avoid, lessen and cope with the impacts of disasters.  As we know, the Hyogo Framework for Action Priority 4 clearly states that ecosystem degradation not only harms and reduces the capacity of the environment to withstand hazards but exacerbates human vulnerability. Environmental degradation reduces the capacity of ecosystems to meet communities’ needs in food and water, and to protect them from hazards through flood regulation, slope stabilization and coastal protection affecting both directly dependent and urban populations Fortunately, there is now sufficient evidence to indicate that resilient ecosystems not only increase societal, but a process of ecosystem management and development planning that fundamentally involves interested and affected populations enhances better governance and coping strategies in the face of risk and challenge. In this light, it is concerning to note inthe mid-term review of the HFA that progress on Priority 4was ‘very limited’ IUCN therefore welcomes the focus of this 2013 Global Platform on “Resilient Planet Resilient People” which brings Earth’s natural resources to centre stage for addressing disaster risk reduction It is however, a truism, unless it is accompanied by a sincere effort to address the barriers and capacity for implementation and to move from advocacy to action.  One such barrier is the perception that there is a choice to be made between ecosystem management and conservation and needed development; a false dichotomy that inhibits progress on this issue. Global studies such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) indicate clearly that the maintenance of healthy and resilient ecosystems are a foundation and part of any strategy for *sustainable* development. Assessing ecosystem risk (e.g. through the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems) and investing in ecosystem management and restoration, and through effective and compatible development ensures the maximum participation and benefit for people at a local level. Widely practiced, this approach can make a significant impact regionally and globally.  Another barrier is the perception that the technology and means are lacking. There are many examples where successful approaches are being implemented. Here in Switzerland, management of protection forests is approximately 5 - 10times less expensive than the construction and maintenance of alternate technical measures to reduce risks from rock falls. From South Africa, we have the widely documented evidence from the Working for Water Programme, that has proven the “win-win-win” outcomes of watershed restoration for job creation, business and skills development, water production, flood and fire risk management and biodiversity conservation.  And Mr Chairman, following the tragic Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, we were heartened to learn of Japan’s announcement of the development of the Sanriku Reconstruction (Fukko) National Park in the disaster-affected area. Japan will expand existing protected areas with the explicit purpose of restoring the coastal and marine ecosystem, together with the associated fisheries and livelihoods, in a traditional satochi-satoumi style in cooperation with local communities. Furthermore, Japan will lead the way by convening the first Asia Parks Congress in the disaster-affected area and taking these insights and findings to the once in ten year IUCN World Parks Congress being held in Sydney in November 2014. This is a concrete opportunity to introduce new thinking and new practice in the DRR field from an ecosystem management perspective.  Mr Chairman, in summary:   1. While these approaches are innovative, they are not necessarily complex or even expensive, and certainly not in relation to the costs of not addressing the risks once these materialize. The lessons that we have learned are that investing in nature-based solutions not only reduces risk in increased preparedness, but can also be a cost-effective and functional means to address restoration and recovery. 2. There is therefore an opportunity for a much wider engagement and dialogue between the authorities, agencies and communities involved with protected areas and ecosystem assessment and management and those responsible for disaster risk reduction, to assess ecosystem vulnerability and to determine when ecosystem conservation is a relevant response. IUCN’s knowledge on ecosystem vulnerability assessment and protected area governance and management can already be employed in this discussion. 3. The Asia Parks Congress to be hosted by Japan in 2013 and the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 to be hosted by Australia are occasions to integrate approaches and remove conceptual and practical barriers, in advance of the process to renew or re-examine the HFA in the next two years.   Thank you. |