

LITTLE SYDNEY: CALL FOR ACTION IN EUROPE

Concluding remarks by Roger Crofts Hainburg, Austria 31 May 2015

1. Call is for action for Europe's Special Places of Nature: for nature, for people and for the Planet to move from the Promise of Sydney to action on the ground.
2. Key European dimensions:
 - remember lots of good things have happened and are happening and many examples of good practice, let's share and show case them and also learn from past mistakes. Developing Panorama is very relevant here.
 - remember Europe's protected areas are not just for biodiversity but, remembering the new IUCN definition of a protected area, i.e. nature is key, also they are for geodiversity and landscape diversity as a result of the long, 5000 years plus, of nature/human interaction.
 - remember not just the CBD Aichi Target 11 but include the remaining 83% of land and 90% of the sea especially given cross boundary effects of habitat fragmentation and resource over exploitation.
3. IUCN WCPA has lots of highly relevant and well developed knowledge tools. Particularly important are gap analysis methodologies, connectivity knowledge, transboundary guidelines, governance protocols and guidance, management effectiveness evaluation methodology. Let's use them not as single tools as they are effective if used in an integrated manner.
4. Challenge to achieve action is two-fold: within IUCN.
 - vitally important that IUCN Secretariat, especially Brussels and Belgrade, but also Mediterranean Offices and the Global Protected Areas Programme team remain fully engaged with volunteer network of WCPA and provide real support.
 - Leadership from the Regional Vice-Chair and WCPA Europe Steering Committee essential: will happen under Andrej Sovinc's leadership as clear from Little Sydney meeting.
 - Essential that WCPA members and other protected areas specialists are fully engaged and active in delivering the new activities. No more meeting for meetings sake but action groups and task groups working virtually with clearly defined actions, timescales and outcomes.
 - Active role for and by youth with not so young guiding and advising as needed. Youth should take the lead and not wait to be invited in to the groups led by the oldies.
 - also role for IUCN National Committees, as evidenced in the UK in following up WPC.
5. Second challenge is also more effective engagement and working with partners. Some partners will be friends but some maybe adversaries. This means changing our mindsets from the defensive and at times adversarial to a more collaborative approach which recognises that other interests have a legitimate role in nature conservation We need to understand the world from their perspective and maybe develop partnerships on neutral ground rather than expect them to meet us on our ground.
6. Main action is for a clear, firm and focussed statement from IUCN to positively influence the Natura 2000 fitness review. Strongly welcome positive statement from Jane Smart on behalf of Secretariat for defining our position. Need to remember that the politics are delicate, that Natura is not just about biodiversity conservation but also about social and economic benefits. First, priority has to be to improve implementation in Member States and subsidiary authorities WCPA can help though application of the knowledge tools and the application of our expertise on, for example, filling the gaps, governance, effective planning and management, transboundary consistency. Equal priority has to be given to and strong evidence-based advocacy on policies and financial instruments which get in the way, especially the CAP and the EU Structural Funds.

We are professionals, we are dedicated and committed but we need to be even more action orientated to turn the Promise of Sydney into effective action for protected areas in Europe which improves conservation of nature, most especially meets biodiversity targets, and engages the citizens of Europe to celebrate our heritage of nature and gain benefits from all of the services it provides.

Roger Crofts
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