

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE EU OVERSEAS ENTITIES
DRAFT IUCN 2009-2011 ACTION PLAN**

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	<p><i>« Support for EU Overseas Entities in ecosystem management and climate change adaptation »</i></p>

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I. Context and justification

The 7 Outermost Regions and 21 Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union possess very high and globally important biodiversity, which is threatened by a number of factors including climate change. In the face of this situation, IUCN has built a programme dedicated to these entities and has organised the conference « The EU and its overseas entities: strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss » which took place on Reunion Island 7 – 11 July 2008. This meeting brought together for the first time stakeholders from almost every EU Overseas Entities to establish a joint strategy.

The success of this event resulted in the adoption of the « Message from Reunion Island », a reference document, certain aspects of which have already started being implemented by the European Commission and concerned Member States. This draft action plan proposes a strategy to further support the Message's implementation through increased coordination at the European level (with the creation of a specific working group) and strong support at the technical level around the central issue: allowing ORs and OCTs to adapt to climate change and integrate its implications and consequences into their regional and local natural resource and ecosystem management strategies.

On the basis of contents of the Message from Reunion, and taking into account a number of practical and programmatic considerations, a discussion paper was prepared and circulated to the Reunion conference steering committee in February 2009. The comments received from stakeholders gave clear guidance on the priorities that should be addressed and on the type of arrangement that should be put in place to support the implementation of the Message. On 23 March, a meeting was convened in Brussels, which provided additional advice and feedback, and recommended that a new round of consultation be organised, over a period of two months beginning at the end of March, in order to seek opinions from a wider range of stakeholders at all levels. The present document summarises the recommendations made to date, and is being distributed for review and comments.

With respect to the implementation mechanism, the consultation to date suggests a consensus around six key principles, in line with one of the proposals from the Message from Reunion, which have been used in the design of what is being proposed in this paper. The principles are that:

- the mechanism (proposed as a Working Group) should function as an open, interactive mechanism that brings added value to existing networks
- there should not be a formal MOU or formal statutes, but a document should be circulated and approved by members, that would present the nature, governance and objectives, with agreed rules and procedures
- there should be clear governance arrangements, with transparency, effective consultation and active participation
- work should focus on clear and agreed priorities, but the mechanism should remain open to opportunities for new initiatives, especially those that originate from stakeholders
- the overall structure should be both representative and efficient
- there should be a small, flexible and efficient secretariat that facilitates the activities.

II. Summary of the proposed action plan

It is proposed to accelerate the implementation of the Message from Reunion Island with an optimum mobilisation of available expertise and technical capacity (IUCN members and experts, local and national public institutions, etc.) at three levels:

1. Continue the animation of the informal working group inherited from the steering committee of the Reunion conference, in order to:
 - Ensure regular follow-up between stakeholders,
 - Facilitate dialogue between local, national and European levels, and between technical, legal and political efforts, in particular for promoting a sound approach to EU overseas entities' ecological challenges at the EU level
 - Support the efficient mobilization of existing technical and scientific capacities, including IUCN's, on selected priority themes.
2. Launch, in association with the working group and the network, a technical programme to support the implementation of the Message from Reunion Island. This programme will have close links with the working group and the policy work done at the EU level. It will be supported by IUCN global Programmes and the Regional Office for Pan-Europe, with all stakeholders concerned or already involved on the proposed themes.
3. Support the Canary Islands authorities in their initiative to organise an event to follow up on the Reunion conference during the Spanish EU Presidency, and make it a useful step for both the working group's efforts and the actions proposed at the technical level.

III. Proposed working group on EU Overseas Entities

Taking into account the comments received during the February 2009 consultation, IUCN proposes to keep a strictly informal working group, taking as a basis the list of members of the Reunion conference Steering Committee (this committee having not raised major criticism and having allowed concerted work). The objectives of this group will be:

- to keep alive the momentum generated by the Reunion conference and facilitate activities for this purpose
- to provide a forum for dialogue and exchanges of experiences between stakeholders concerned by biodiversity and climate change issues in ORs and OCTs,
- to provide useful advice for an appropriate consideration of ORs and OCTs in environmental programmes carried out by IUCN and other institutions, and in other global international processes,
- to raise awareness at the EU level and generally contribute to building a sound approach to environmental issues in ORs and OCTs at EU level by ensuring that the voice of concerned local stakeholders in ORs and OCTs is carried and heard by European institutions and that useful EU related information reaches them.

This group will remain open to new participants upon agreement of existing members. Its membership and activities will remain flexible and open to evolution based on gained experience and results achieved.

This group will build on a large network of EU Overseas Entities stakeholders. All participants in the Reunion conference and other identified actors will be given the possibility to join this network. It will remain permanently open to new actors and will be systematically consulted by Internet on important issues.

The informal working group will elect a president who will animate the group with IUCN's support. The group will be associated to IUCN's programmes relevant to EU ORs' and OCTs' needs. The group's president will systematically consult the large network on important issues, with IUCN technical support. This flow of information between the network, the working group and activities at the technical level will allow efficient exchanges of experience and support to projects, while contributing to the general follow-up of the Reunion conference by the various stakeholders.

As suggested by many stakeholders, IUCN also proposes, depending on means available, to work with the group on the development of communication and information management tools: a website bringing together all relevant information (on ecological issues in EU overseas entities, on-going initiatives, possible support), and distribution lists allowing stakeholders to give visibility to their initiatives, while ensuring an excellent circulation of information between field work and decision makers. In the mid- to long-term, all actors involved in the working group would have at their disposal a range of communication tools designed in a concerted way, allowing them to build awareness about ecological issues in EU overseas entities.

IV. Programme of technical support to EU overseas entities

IUCN is proposing to mobilise its technical and scientific capacity in favour of EU Overseas Entities, through a double approach:

- a. Concerned Global Programmes are offering to specifically take into account EU overseas entities in selected planned projects that fit the objectives of the Message from Reunion Island. Programmes involved in this efforts will include :
 - The species programme, which will work on the development of Regional Red Lists of threatened species,
 - The initiative on the Economic valuation of biodiversity, which will include ORs and OCTs in its analysis and possibly explore ways of having some specific ORs or OCTs integrated as concrete examples in the report on "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)",
 - IUCN regional programme for Oceania and Caribbean Initiative, which will look at ways of ensuring a strong involvement of concerned ORs and OCTs in regional activities,
 - The initiative on tourism on the role of private sector.

This will be done in cooperation with the informal working group and the wider network, to ensure a very good participation of OR and OCTs in these projects.

Being mostly insular, EU overseas entities will also be able to benefit from efforts recently developed by IUCN in favour of islands. The launch of IUCN's Island Initiative in 2009 aims at ensuring an efficient internal coordination between the EU overseas entities programme, concerned regional activities, and the coordination of the Global Islands Partnership, which is now managed by IUCN. This context will be a new asset which will facilitate the work in favour of EU overseas entities.

- b. The IUCN Regional Office for Pan-Europe is proposing to implement a programme bringing technical support focusing on adaptation to climate change and global changes, with three components:
 - A complete evaluation of habitat and landscape management tools in ORs and OCTs and their capacity to be adaptation tools and increase ecosystems resilience to climate change,
 - A specific attention given to invasive species, a phenomenon the scale and impact of which risks being increased by climate change,
 - A cross-cutting support to interested overseas territories, for the preparation and implementation of climate change adaptation plans.

These priorities were identified on the basis of the Message from Reunion Island, the level of ecological pressure, the opportunities to influence European policies and/or benefit from on-going dynamics at the EU level, the needs expressed by stakeholders during the February 2009 consultation, as well as IUCN's added value on the themes and opportunities for collaboration between the Overseas Entities and their regional areas.

It is proposed that on each theme the first step of the work will be to run an in-depth consultation of concerned stakeholders, in order to get a refined understanding of their roles and needs. On each theme the objective will be to support local stakeholders. Under no circumstances will IUCN work in isolation or duplicate already existing initiatives and efforts.

V. Detail of identified priority themes

IUCN Regional Office for Europe proposes to implement a specific technical programme of support focused on adaptation to climate change and other global changes and declined in three streams:

Axis 1: Analysis of terrestrial and marine habitats and landscapes management tools in the EU overseas entities, recommendations and technical support

EU overseas entities often concentrate considerable biodiversity on relatively limited areas, often altered by invasive species and climate change, and sometimes subject to a strong competition with urban pressure and human activities. There is a great need of protection and management tools, and actually many initiatives have already taken place (National Parks, Nature Reserves, World Heritage Sites, Marine Protected Areas, land use planning, integrated coastal management strategies, etc.). However, existing tools often remain non-systematic, isolated and without enough opportunities to share experience and resources. In addition, the situation of protected areas and other management tools in ORs and OCTs remains very heterogeneous, notably between terrestrial and marine areas and between ORs and OCTs, in terms of both coverage rate and reality of implementation and overall efficiency.

Moreover, EU overseas entities have to prepare for two new elements: 1) a possible new voluntary scheme for the management of habitats and species inspired by Natura 2000, proposed by the Reunion conference and currently envisaged at EU level, 2) the need to integrate climate change adaptation at the heart of the definition and management of all protected areas, land use strategies and other management tools, including through regional approaches and networking (which requires an increased cooperation between ORs, OCTs and ACP countries and SIDS).

IUCN had developed leading expertise at the global level on protected area categories and methods of designation and management and on other tools such as integrated coastal management. The French National Committee of IUCN has begun an analysis of protected areas in the French overseas entities and will be able to contribute to this work.

IUCN is therefore in a position to run a complete analysis of the situation of habitat and landscape management tools in ORs and OCTs and bring support to concerned stakeholders, in line with three recommendations of the Message from Reunion Island on the protection of habitats and species, the management of marine areas, and the adaptation to climate change. This analysis will be designed to bring a strong contribution:

- to the preparation of post 2010 eco-regional biodiversity and ecosystems management strategies,
- to the design and establishment of a potential new voluntary scheme inspired by Natura 2000 in ORs and OCTs (as described in the Message from Reunion).

Envisaged activities on this theme include:

- Working with existing networks and national and local organisations to gather data from all involved stakeholders about the situation and needs in terms terrestrial and marine terrestrial habitats and landscapes management tools in ORs and OCTs
- Bringing technical support to ORs' and OCTs' stakeholders and their regional partners to identify, designate and manage protected areas and other habitats and landscapes while integrating the implications of climate change.

Expected results on this theme are: (to be refined with concerned stakeholders)

- The publication of a complete review of terrestrial and marine habitats and landscapes management tools in ORs and OCTs (location, category, management, designation process, governance, capacity to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation) which would:
 - facilitate the future design and implementation of a possible new voluntary Natura 2000 type approach,
 - present a diagnostic of needs and possibilities in terms of ecological corridors able to increase the ecosystems' response to climate change,
 - include recommendations for the management and networking of the different categories of protected areas and other management tools
- Increased local and eco-regional capacity to manage innovative and efficient management tools taking into account the impacts of climate change.

Axis 2: Coordination at European level and networking against IAS

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are currently the first cause of biodiversity loss (particularly terrestrial) in many EU overseas entities. Prevention and fight against this phenomenon are complex and require good networking of stakeholders and strong mobilisation at technical and political levels. Such efforts are made urgent by the already felt impacts of climate change and its tendency to increase the problem. Indeed, many stakeholders are already mobilised against this threat.

IUCN has developed strong expertise in terms of analysis and coordination on this issue, including with the creation and management of a global reference database. The French National Committee of IUCN has also achieved interesting results for French overseas entities, through a three-year initiative which shows the way: network of stakeholders, focal points in each territory, systematic inventory of threats and analysis of priorities, recommendations, etc. Stakeholders involved in this project have nevertheless expressed the need to find support for these efforts at two levels: at the level of regions, in order to improve prevention and exchange of information between neighbouring islands, and at the level of EU overseas entities, in order to improve coordination and produce concerted proposals related and contributing to EU strategies and policies in this field (e.g. European strategy on IAS or trade regulations).

Envisaged activities on this theme include:

- Networking among interested actors within overseas entities and within regions,
- Data gathering from existing initiatives and stakeholders in ORs and OCTs,
- Gathering and dissemination of data and information on the threats, prevention and diagnostic methods, and monitoring and control techniques, including notably the complete updating for the overseas entities of the global data base (when necessary)
- The dissemination of these results with recommendations to relevant actors and institutions, including at European level

Expected results on this theme include: (to be refined with concerned stakeholders)

- The reinforcement of a network of excellence in this field in ORs and OCTs,
- A situational analysis based on national data and allowing the European institutions to assess the issue and the priorities for the overseas entities, with recommendations taking into account all factors including scenarios for the future impact of climate change,
- A sound integration of ORs and OCTs in the EU strategy on invasive species currently in preparation, adapted to their status, ecological situation and institutional frameworks.

Axis 3: Support to the design and implementation of the ecosystems component of climate change plans

Since they are mainly islands and characterised by high rates of endemism, the overseas territories and their ecosystems are especially vulnerable to climate change and its potential impacts: sea-level rise, extreme meteorological events, weakening and loss of the buffer and regulating role of large ecosystems (coral reefs, mangroves, forests), increase in the frequency and intensity of fires and invasive species, etc. The consequences for human populations could be severe at two levels:

- Direct consequences: the high concentration of human populations and activities on coastal areas means particular vulnerability to sea level rise and extreme weather events, particularly as ecosystems with protection role like coral reefs and mangroves are weakened. This could possibly result in very costly damage, safety issues, and some cases migrations of climate refugees.
- Indirect consequences: the loss of ecosystem services could potentially result in a severe weakening of economic activity and an increase in poverty.

The Reunion Conference has clearly stressed that the questions of adaptation, mitigation and management of ecosystems are inseparable and that tackling these issues together is the only way to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the strategies and actions implemented. This is why the Message from Reunion calls for the establishment, in each OR and OCT, of an integrated climate change plan that would create a strong link between adaptation to climate change, mitigation efforts and the strengthening of ecosystem resilience.

IUCN is dedicated to bringing to this effort the relevant capacities of its staff, members, experts and scientific capacity on all issues related to ecosystems based adaptation, and will be looking for the necessary partnerships allowing to efficiently bring this component in the broader context of adaptation and mitigation efforts, which include agriculture, infrastructure, transport, energy, health and other sectors.

The general main objective on this theme is to mobilise all relevant stakeholders, and provide the best data available, so that fast action can be taken to increase the resilience of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and therefore increase the safety and economic security of human populations.

Envisaged activities on this theme are:

- Working with local authorities, existing networks and national and local organisations to gather data about identified needs and objectives and on-going actions in terms of adaptation plans in the ORs and OCTs,

- The facilitation of networking among EU overseas entities, in their regional areas and with relevant European institutions, especially relevant services within the European Commission,
- Bringing technical support to ORs and OCTs authorities and stakeholders for the design and implementation of climate change adaptation plans.

Expected results on this theme include: (to be refined with concerned stakeholders)

- The publication of an analysis of ecosystem based adaptation in EU overseas entities, that would include:
 - a mapping of relevant stakeholders in EU overseas entities,
 - a practical guide for ORs and OCTs decision makers (best practices, steps to be taken, potential sources of funding and technical support, etc.)
 - an inventory of on-going actions in European overseas entities,
 - the presentation of a number of best practices in EU overseas entities or in countries facing similar challenges
 - if possible, a very deep and detailed scientific analysis for one or two territories, in order to set examples of what can really be done.
- A reinforcement of overseas entities stakeholders' capacity to formulate climate scenarios and to prepare and implement adaptation and mitigation plans.

VI. Canary islands conference

During recent years the Canary Islands have developed a number of tools and initiatives which have been presented during the Reunion conference, such as EL Hierro's renewable energies strategy. During the closing ceremony of the Reunion conference, the President of the Canary Islands Paulino Rivero announced that a follow-up event would be organised in 2010 during the Spanish EU presidency and the Canarian Presidency of the Conference of Outermost Regions.

This event could bring support from the Spanish EU Presidency to the objectives identified during the Reunion conference. Shorter and smaller than the Reunion event, this conference would have two objectives:

- Present to the stakeholders and the media an overview of the status of implementation of the Message from Reunion and the progress made at technical and political levels.
- Support the thematic technical activities described above with 2-3 days long workshops entirely dedicated to selected issues such as invasive species, protected areas and climate change adaptation, plus a workshop on education and awareness raising proposed by the Canary Islands local government.

This conference should take place on the Canary Islands during the first semester of 2010 and be organised by the Canary Islands government in partnership with IUCN for the identification of participants and the preparation of the workshops. The objective is that the work done during this event will be strongly integrated into the efforts from the European working group and the technical programme, to maximise efficiency.

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