

## **Press Release**

### **Mobile Indigenous Peoples at the IUCN V World Parks Congress**

Durban, South Africa  
16 September 2003

We, the mobile indigenous peoples drawn together from all regions of the world, met for the first time in a World Parks Congress (WPC) to share our experiences in environmental and biodiversity conservation. The WPC created a unique opportunity for us as nomads, pastoralists, shifting agriculturalists and hunter-gatherers to come together during a preparatory meeting during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of September to identify the dominant misconceptions popularly held about us and to articulate the problems we are facing as our unique input to the streams and workshops of this Congress.

We are pleased to announce that as a result of our work at the WPC, we have established the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples, with the vision: to establish solidarity among mobile indigenous peoples worldwide; complementarity with other societies; just policies leading to freedom and respect for the rights of mobile indigenous peoples; to maintain livelihoods in balance with nature; and to restore our empowerment.

As part of the Congress, we contributed with a Workshop on Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation (held 12 September) that covered community conserved areas, co-management of protected areas and our recommendations on Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation for the Durban Accord and Plan of Action, which were adopted by the Congress by consensus.

The mobile indigenous peoples present at the V World Parks Congress urge governments to adopt before the end of the International Decade on the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004) the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples currently under discussion at the United Nations Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights (Geneva, 15-26 September 2003), and send a message of support to our indigenous brothers and sisters present at the Working Group.

Our mobility is way of life that holds both a management strategy for sustainable land use and conservation, and is a distinct source of our cultural identity, our connection with our past, and our livelihoods. As such, we have special needs due to our mobility and we share many problems in common. Our situation is little understood and we are here to raise awareness on the following particular issues that concern us:

- Mobile land use is based on local and specialised knowledge.
- There is no real alternative to mobility for our survival.
- Experience has shown that change of land use is not sustainable in arid and semi-arid zones, and other types of ecosystems.
- Mobile land use in areas that have been traditionally used by mobile indigenous peoples have been shown to conserve biodiversity by virtue of our mobility.
- The change from mobile to sedentary land use is only productive in the short-term and requires high external inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, introduction of non-native species).

- Productivity means many things – not just sacks of grain per hectare. Diverse valuations must be taken into account, including benefits such as wildlife, water quality, scenic values, and culture.
- Mobile indigenous peoples whose lifestyles and environments are maintained intact are mainly self-supportive.
- We can be major producers of livestock and sustain secondary industries.
- There are many underlying contributions to the economy.
- The statement is a defence mechanism by governments to justify marginalisation and place conditions for forced sedentarisation of mobile indigenous peoples.
- Many mobile indigenous peoples prefer to maintain our own social structures and norms, and this right should be respected, while those who want social services should be given equal access in culturally appropriate ways.
- When desired, it is possible to develop the capacities of mobile indigenous peoples to provide mobile services for themselves.

Our core message is:

- Policies of sedentarisation are a threat to mobile indigenous peoples' cultural identity, to our capacity to manage land properly and lead to poverty.
- There are strong links between the lifestyle of mobile indigenous peoples and biodiversity.
- The problems of mobile indigenous peoples are very similar throughout the world.
- Mobile indigenous peoples have our own institutions, leadership, decision-making mechanisms, sanctions and law.
- Mobile indigenous peoples have flexible and adaptive management systems requiring movement across different ecological zones and sometimes transboundary movement.
- The rights of mobile indigenous peoples in many countries have been abused, including rights to our culture, to maintain control and access to our resources, and our right to mobility.

### **Recommendations of Mobile Indigenous Peoples to the Vth World Parks Congress**

For these reasons, our key recommendations adopted by the WPC in Recommendation 5.27 on Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas include to:

RECOMMEND that governments, NGOs, local communities, civil society, international organizations and inter-governmental bodies give due recognition to mobile indigenous peoples' rights and special needs and thereby:

1. ENSURE that mobile indigenous peoples have secure and full rights to co-manage and self-manage their lands, that they can derive equitable benefits from the use of natural resources, including eco-tourism, and that their customary law is respected and recognised in national law;
2. RECOGNISE collective and customary rights of mobile communities and respect the integrity of the mobile indigenous peoples' resource management systems;

3. RECOGNISE mobile indigenous peoples' community conserved areas as a protected area governance type, and build upon their traditional and evolving institutions and customary norms.
4. PROMOTE policies to facilitate cross-border mobility and trade in transboundary protected areas by mobile indigenous peoples who have traditionally lived in and used those areas;
5. ADOPT and PROMOTE adaptive management approaches that recognise the dependence of mobile indigenous peoples on common property resources and build on their mobility and different lifestyles, livelihoods, resource rights and tenure, customary laws, and dynamic scales of land use;
6. ADAPT protected area and community conserved area management to the special needs of mobile communities, including their use rights, resource management practices, seasonal and temporal rights, corridors for movement, and targeting mobile use to achieve conservation objectives;
7. RESPECT, PROMOTE and INTEGRATE the use of traditional knowledge, institutions and customary laws and resource management practices of mobile indigenous peoples alongside mainstream science on a complementary basis. Develop common conservation objectives. Ensure that development of protected areas and related interventions are evaluated on the basis of local knowledge and are implemented through mobile indigenous peoples' institutions.
8. RECOGNISE and GUARANTEE the rights of mobile indigenous peoples to the restitution of their lands, territories and resources, conserved and traditionally occupied and used sustainably by them, that have been incorporated within protected areas without their free, prior and informed consent; mobility should be restored where appropriate;
9. PROMOTE cross-cultural dialogue and conflict resolution within and between mobile indigenous and sedentary peoples around and in protected areas;
10. URGE governments to approve the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted in 1994 by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, and for those peoples who want it, to ratify and effectively implement ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

We also fully share and endorse the recommendations made by indigenous peoples, including Recommendation 5.24 on Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas, likewise adopted at this Congress by consensus. We aspire to see these recommendations implemented urgently in the conservation of our resources, the recognition and preservation of our cultural identity, values and knowledge, and to see ourselves as the managers of the areas in which we live. In support of our vision, the mobile indigenous peoples present at the V World Parks Congress fully endorse the Dana Declaration (Dana, Jordan, 2000).