

ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY

Identifying IUCN's Role

WORKSHOP REPORT AND DISCUSSION PAPER

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ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY – A ROLE FOR IUCN

Introduction

IUCN has recently undertaken a State-of-the-Art Review of Environment, Security and Development Cooperation, commissioned by the OECD Development Assistance Committee. Its purpose is not only to shed light on the origins of the debate on Environment and Security, how it has developed, what is the current thinking in this field, and what are present trends in research, but also to look at the implications for development cooperation.

In the margins of this study, IUCN organized a two-day workshop on Environment and Security, for which the Review report provided background. This workshop, funded under a grant from the Swiss-supported Fund for Innovation and held at IUCN headquarters in Gland on 20 – 21 July, gathered Environment and Security experts and a broad selection of IUCN senior staff from headquarters and the regions. The aim was to assess the relevance of Environment and Security to IUCN's mission and programme and, assuming a positive assessment, to identify a niche for the Union.

Pinpointing the Union's interest

From the Review and the IUCN workshop it is clear that the relationship between Environment and Security is an important one and highly relevant to the mission and programme of the Union. At the same time, it is essential not to oversimplify the relationship and instead to take a very clear look at IUCN's particular advantages in determining its niche. It is also essential to be clear in the use of terms. Shunning the more abstruse end of the academic debate on the subject, IUCN's interest lies in understanding how resource degradation can aggravate social tensions and bring about the conditions in which conflict is most likely to break out. Put more positively, **the Union's interest lies in determining the extent to which conserving the integrity and diversity of nature, and ensuring the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, may be a significant factor in reducing social tensions and avoiding the costly conflicts from which the world continues to suffer.**

The notion of security has broadened considerably in the past years. Initially the term was used in its military sense, and referred to the security of borders and national institutions from outside threat. Research has shown that many of the more intractable threats can be – and increasingly are – internal to frontiers. Thus the notion of security has broadened from borders and national institutions to embrace the security of societies, communities and, in some cases, even individual human security. The debate on the scope of security is to some extent academic, and IUCN has not sought to adopt a binding definition for its own purposes. The Union is interested in security in terms of the stability and sustainability of society and its essential institutions. It is therefore interested in threats to these societies and institutions, whether these threats are external to the country or community, or internal to them. Expanding the notion of security, as some do, to embrace the security of the individual, and to include all factors that present a risk to the individual's sense of security – ill-health, poor education, unemployment, globalization, etc. – does not seem useful, and certainly leads to watering down the notion of security to the point where it no longer justifies a distinct focus.

The seminar concluded that Environment and Security offers two particular opportunities for the Union. First, it offers a unifying concept around which a number of IUCN activities, whether headquarters-based or operated in the field, might be pulled together, consolidated and given greater coherence. Second, it opens the way towards new partnerships and alliances which go

well beyond IUCN's traditional constituents and appear to offer the opportunity for IUCN to influence society – and therefore achieve its mission – in a more compelling way.

In respect of the first, the above expression of the Union's interest (highlighted in bold) and the close link to the mission that it suggests, offers a new way of presenting conservation to a wider public. Conservation is no longer a matter of ethics or sentiment, but an essential ingredient in managing some of the principal challenges faced by humanity. Indeed, conservation emerges as a compelling and cost-effective investment in managing the transition to the future, and a way of minimizing the tensions and conflicts which exact such a high price in human suffering. Further, a very high proportion of IUCN's existing and planned activities fit very well within this overall template. Environment and Security provides a new and interesting way to present and put over the fundamental purposes of the Union and its programme.

In respect of the second, it is interesting to note that, thanks to the Environment and Security focus, environmental thinking has significantly penetrated defence and foreign policy establishments over the past few years. In some cases such as the United States and the European Union, environment is becoming a significant focus of foreign policy. Thus to the extent that IUCN can contribute to this field, it would appear to have the opportunity to influence defence and foreign policy and – by extension – economic and trade policy as well.

The downside

There are, of course, dangers. Particularly in the developing world, there exist serious doubts about the motivation of military establishments in embracing environmental causes. Many in the developing countries do not have a positive assessment of the role that military establishments have played internally, and there is a strong and sometimes justified suspicion that the military wish to justify their privileged access to national budgets even after the Cold War threat has receded. Further, there is a suspicion that military and intelligence communities are looking for fresh excuses to intervene in the affairs of other countries, particularly in the South. And, finally, there is a fear that security considerations will come to be used as a new form of aid conditionality. These suspicions are real and must be addressed; IUCN can play a valuable role in this respect.

A niche for IUCN

IUCN is not exactly a newcomer to the Environment and Security field. Indeed, the Union has a long track record of involvement in the issues which characterise this field, even if these were not necessarily presented under the Environment and Security banner. IUCN's Sahel Programme, for years, dealt with conflict over access to fragile natural resources, looking for a way to reinforce the security of the societies and communities involved without sacrificing the resource base. Its Sahel Sahel report analyses decades of intervention in the Sahel environment, providing a historical perspective on the security of Sahelian communities and the effects of aid interventions on these. The Horn of Africa study looks even more directly at the security issues in that part of the Sudano-Sahelian zone. Similarly, the Parks for Peace programme is looking specifically at the potential for protected areas to contribute to resolving conflict between countries that so often occur at the borders, and builds on pioneering IUCN work in Central America, especially through the Si-a-Paz programme in the sensitive frontier zone between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Many other examples could be given.

The July workshop concluded that IUCN should give high priority to Environment and Security, introduce it as a unifying theme in respect of the Union's Global Programme, and consider how to realign existing and planned activities around the theme. Consideration would be given to highlighting the slogan **Biosecurity** as a label identifying IUCN's participation in the field.

In respect of Environment and Security, IUCN aims **to promote management of natural resources as a contribution to improved security and the avoidance of social tension and conflict**. In designing its approach, IUCN wishes to take full advantage of both its institutional advantages and the professional experience of its staff, networks and members. The following pages outline a series of proposals for an IUCN focus in this field. They are designed to serve as a starting point for the internal debate on the topic, and do not pretend to represent an exhaustive list of the possible areas of activity for IUCN. The process through which IUCN's approach will be further refined is also set out below.

- **Awareness**

An early priority will be to raise awareness of the link between Environment and Security, especially within the IUCN family, and to set forth a compelling agenda for IUCN in the field. If IUCN is to be effective and begin playing a leadership role, it will have to establish its credentials and build a strong following. In doing so, it has considerable advantages. First, while a great deal of work has been undertaken by universities and research centres, and to a lesser extent by governments, there has been very little activity in the NGO community. There is scope here for IUCN to occupy the high ground. Second, there is a consensus that the field has been dominated by researchers (and perspectives) from the developed countries. IUCN's established presence in both the developed and developing world could help to establish the necessary links. Finally, Environment and Security offers IUCN the possibility of "refreshing" public perception of the importance of the environment by linking it to concerns that are very real and very present both among the public and within governments and parliaments, once again linking conservation very strongly to major public policy priorities.

A major aim of awareness-raising activities might be to enhance understanding of the environmental content of the Environment and Security debate, and to draw public and political attention both to the environmental origins of some conflicts, and to the environmental tools available in seeking to deal with them. The existing tendency of some countries to regard Environment as a key objective of foreign policy should be strongly encouraged, and those promoting this supported through IUCN's awareness activities.

- **Institutional approaches**

IUCN's experience with the World Commission on Dams has reaffirmed the very powerful role which the Union can play on difficult and sensitive topics such as hydropower development. IUCN is uniquely capable of bringing together parties to a dispute or conflict in a neutral forum, and seeking ways to resolve the problem. IUCN should serve as a meeting place - perhaps for parties to a conflict in some cases, but also between the academic experts and local practitioners. IUCN's could have a considerable role in bringing together the broad range of partners who might contribute to advancing this field.

In specific cases, IUCN might promote itself as a neutral arbiter in a conflict, or potential conflict, with a clear link to natural resource management. IUCN should deliberately seek to develop its skills in conflict avoidance and resolution and apply these to environmental disputes which threaten security.

IUCN may consider providing a service to its constituency – and to new partners – in Environment and Security, including awareness and training activities, preparation of policy briefs, promotion of dialogue, and provision of regular information, including news bulletins, bibliographical services (eg. "Recommended Readings"). Consideration is being given to establishing an Advisory Group on Environment and Security to oversee IUCN's activities in relation to Environment and Security, to advise the Director General on issues that arise, and to form the core of a new network of interested experts at the service of IUCN's agenda in this field.

- **Strengthening the developing country perspective on Environment and Security**

The link between Environment and Security now rests on a reasonably solid empirical base and a number of serious research projects have established the link between environment, social tension and conflict. There is, however, a great deal that still needs to be done. Among the significant gaps is the imbalance in the research and case material between developed and developing countries. The research to date has been dominated by institutions and individuals in North America and Western Europe. Much more needs to be done to understand the perspective of Southern partners and to gather examples, case material and best practice from real situations in the field.

This concern is not ideologically motivated. There are real differences in the role of the security establishments – most prominently the military – between different countries and regions, and the role of defence and intelligence agencies in society varies enormously. Research based mostly in North America and the European Union cannot fail to be influenced by assumptions which arise from their particular context. The role of technology in the security establishment is another important distinguishing feature, as is the robustness of democratic institutions, or the existence of traditional conflict management mechanisms. It is not sufficient to study cases in the developing world from the perspective of the North. Research based in the developing world must complement the excellent work which characterises the field at present.

This aspect of IUCN's approach is perhaps the central one. Based on its Regional and Country programmes and in close association with selected members and partners, IUCN should mount a concerted effort to build a body of case studies, best practice and practical ideas from the developing countries along two broad lines:

- **conflict over resources**

IUCN should seek funding to develop a range of specific case studies from developing countries. It should select cases involving conflict, or potential conflict, over natural resources, with a view to identifying both the role of natural resource degradation or depletion in raising levels of tension or in the outbreak of conflict, and the potential for natural resource-based action lowering such tension or averting such conflict. Of particular interest are cases where a disruption of traditional rights of access to natural resources have lowered the security of communities and led to conflict. Illustrative examples, some of which have already involved IUCN, include:

- Fouta Djallon (Guinea)
- Afghan refugees in Pakistan
- Okavango delta (Botswana)
- Waza-Logone floodplain (Cameroon)
- Protected areas in Albania
- Water resources in Kashmir
- the relation between security, environment and nature-based tourism (eg. Kenya, S. Africa, Guatemala, Costa Rica)

- **conflict avoidance**

Of equal interest (particularly since this is a little-studied field) IUCN should seek to identify and understand cases where, despite the ingredients for conflict having been present, conflict was in fact avoided, and also to identify traditional conflict avoidance mechanisms which may be worth preserving.

Case studies in this area could include:

- the Onchocerciasis control programme in West Africa
- transfrontier protected areas, and biological corridors
- negotiated resource-use models
- the issue of mobility of populations as a factor of security
- **“Northern” cases**

IUCN’s focus should not be exclusively on the developing countries. The work should be balanced and include a selection of cases chosen from the developed world. As a background, it would be valuable to undertake an investigation of Northern perceptions of the South as they relate to natural resource management and conflict. Indeed, such an understanding could be an important step in developing a shared consensus on the environment’s contribution to global security, and the priorities for achieving it. Case studies of conflict might include:

- Pacific salmon dispute (US/Canada)

Case studies of conflict avoidance might include:

- the Danube basin agreement
- the Environment for Europe process
- Arctic cooperation
- Okinawa reef/airport
- economic integration
- **global issues**

One of the most promising fields for IUCN is to look at the extent to which global environmental change affects security, as well as how global economic policies affect the environment in ways which undermine security. Case studies might include:

- selected World Bank/IMF policies, eg. pressure to sell fishing rights and the impact on the security of fishing communities and coastal States
- global fisheries
- invasive species
- biosafety
- climate change
- deep seabed biodiversity
- Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- **cooperation with the military**

Beyond these specific issues, there are a few general policy issues which IUCN will have to debate and settle in adopting its approach to Environment and Security. The most prominent is the extent to which it should seek alliance with the military, or more accurately with the “green” elements in the military. On the one hand, military establishments possess, and have access to, very considerable resources, both funding and information. Surely, also, the new interest of the military in environmental matters should be encouraged, given especially the impact of the military sector on the environment and natural resources.

At the same time, the perception of the role and motivation of the military in most developing countries tends to be negative. There is a real risk of alienating key developing country partners if the military is brought in too prominently or too early. It is recommended that this matter be debated fully in the IUCN community before a firm policy stance is adopted.

- **the role of NGOs and the private sector**

It will be necessary to strengthen the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations and the private sector in the Environment and Security field, dominated to date by university-based researchers and government projects. The rich experience of hundreds of NGOs working in the environment or humanitarian aid fields must somehow be harnessed to IUCN's efforts to understand the role and interaction of the different factors that lead to conflict. It was very enriching, at the IUCN workshop, to hear from the Director of the OECD Club du Sahel. His decades of experience on the ground in Africa offered a perspective which no amount of empirical number-crunching could have afforded.

The same is true of the private sector. Corporations are well used to assessing risk – it is, indeed, their bread and butter. The instability of institutions and the risk of conflict are major considerations in evaluating potential investments in developing countries. It would appear worthwhile to engage interested corporations in looking at the role of environmental management in reducing these risks. An initiative in this area may be proposed to the IUCN Private Sector Advisory Group.

The Way Forward

IUCN should design and adopt, following consultation, an initial two-year Action Plan for Environment and Security, with the 50th Anniversary celebrations in November 1998 as the launching point, and the Second World Conservation Congress in September 2000 as the conclusion of this stage of work.

As a first step, this paper should be refined into an IUCN Programme Proposal. Further background work should be undertaken, including an inventory of current and planned activities relating to Environment and Security, both by the Secretariat and the members, and to identify potential partners both from within and outside the IUCN community. A broad consultation with the IUCN constituency should be conducted, with the aim of obtaining serious buy-in to the programme.

The 50th Anniversary should serve to launch the programme and associated campaign. The detailed design of the programme should be completed by the end of 1998, and the necessary funding secured by early 1999. The proposed Advisory Committee on Environment and Security should be established and functioning by early 1999 as well. That year should be devoted to the design and execution of a broad series of case studies as set out above. In late 1999 or early 2000, a global IUCN conference on Environment and Security would be held, bringing a wide range of academic experts together with developing country researchers and practitioners to debate the significance of the case studies, agree on the best practice, and draw up a proposed agenda for further work.

The results of this Conference would be reported to the World Conservation Congress, where Environment and Security would constitute the principal theme. The Technical sessions of the Congress would also be devoted to examining aspects of the subject and debating their significance for the future IUCN programme.

Conclusion

The theme of Environment and Security provides an excellent means to bring together the various strands of the IUCN Programme around a compelling theme, linking the IUCN mission to central areas of human concern and offering the opportunity for IUCN substantially to raise its profile. The July workshop confirmed that there is a very real niche for IUCN in this field. Indeed, it appears that, through its institutional form and its professional experience, IUCN is uniquely positioned to help the Environment and Security field to overcome a number of obstacles currently impeding its smooth evolution.

The timing is also favourable, with a number of major events on the calendar, and the opportunity to link this IUCN endeavour with other major events on the environmental calendar, including the major environmental conventions. But IUCN must be prepared to move quickly and resolutely.

MAH
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