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WORLD LIST OF NATIONAL PARKS AND EQUIVALENT RESERVES

by

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ABSTRACT

The author describes the United Nations List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves, giving its background, objectives, progress to date, present status and future plans, under the following general topics: Establishment; Utility of the list; Explanation of the terms "national parks" and "equivalent reserves"; Initial accomplishments and reactions to them; Present plans; Criteria for inclusion of areas on the list; Summary definitions; Items included on the list; Methods used; Present status; Assistance of participants at the Bangkok Conference; Future plans; the International Biological Programme. The text of the Resolution establishing the U. N. list is included as Appendix.

Introduction:

The United Nations accorded recognition to the significance of national parks and equivalent reserves as an important aspect of the wise use of natural resources, by the decision in 1959 to establish the United Nations World List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves. This World List is an annotated catalogue of protected areas throughout the world whose characteristics and status meet certain basic criteria which render them deserving of international recognition.

1. Who decided to establish this list?

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by its Resolution 713 (XXVII), adopted at its twenty-seventh session in 1959. As a result, the IUCN was instructed to collect the necessary documentation and to draw up this list.

The proposal to establish such a list originated from a resolution concerning national parks and reserves adopted by the Sixth General Assembly of the IUCN held at Athens and Delphi, Greece, in 1958, and transmitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. What is the utility of such a list?

- i) Obviously to provide information and documentation.
- ii) To contribute to the objective, long required but never successful, of achieving some coordination between the various countries, if not in their activities in the field of parks and reserves, at least in the terms used to designate them.
- iii) To stimulate and encourage governments to create and to carefully maintain such natural reserves. The U. N. list might be a kind of "list of honour" proclaiming the names of those areas considered as valuable by an important international authority. The countries which are not mentioned in such a list of honour would be stimulated to make the necessary effort in order to be included on the list, i.e., to set aside new

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reserves or improve those theoretically in existence. The countries mentioned on the list would be encouraged to carry on their efforts and to assign the staff and budget necessary to the supervision and management of their national parks and equivalent reserves.

3. Why: "national parks and equivalent reserves"?

The authors of the ECOSOC Resolution clearly pictured what they wanted to be enumerated in the list. However, the nomenclature varied so much from one part of the world to another, that it was not possible to use one single term to designate all the areas to be included on the list. The words "national park" were used as a basic term, because in many countries this term has the meaning that was desired for the list, since the definition of a national park had been given already in international conventions (London, 1933, for Africa, and Washington, 1940, for the American continent). But it was obvious that there were other areas, not called "national parks", which should be mentioned on the list. Therefore the complementary term "equivalent reserve" was used. This term has the disadvantage of being vague, but the advantage of being adaptable.

4. What is an equivalent reserve?

As soon as action on the ECOSOC Resolution was started, the Secretary General of the United Nations tried to clarify the meaning of the terms "national park" and "equivalent reserve". For the purposes of the U. N. List he gave the term "national park" the definition made in London (1933) and Washington (1940); he tried (Memorandum S.O. 614/2) to establish the limitations of the meaning of "equivalent reserves" by ruling out, "reservations set aside purely for the protection of single species of wildlife or plant or for limited purposes, such as the preservation of an historical object or a forest used for commercial purposes." The opinion of the ICNP on the meaning of "equivalent reserve" is given in paragraph 9 below.

5. First realizations

A questionnaire, established with the help of IUCN, was sent to all governments in September 1959 by the Secretary General of the United Nations. Some governments gave long answers, others brief, some did not answer at all. Some answers were received within a short delay, and therefore the Secretariat of the IUCN's International Commission on National Parks (ICNP) in Washington was able to establish in February 1961 a preliminary list, (ref. E/3436) covering 52 countries, which was submitted to ECOSOC, under ref. E/3436, and approved at its session of April 24, 1961. Answers were still coming at the Secretariat General of the U. N. and the ICNP was able to issue a first supplement to this list just before the First World Conference on National Parks (Seattle, July 1962). This supplement, Part Two, includes 29 new countries and additional information on some countries mentioned in E/3436, Part One.

6. Reaction to these first realizations

These first two documents were examined at Seattle by a working group and by several delegations, then, on various subsequent occasions

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by IUCN's Executive Council, and in Nairobi (1963) by the members of the International Commission on National Parks. These documents were considered to be most valuable and congratulations were addressed to their authors. It was decided to complete and orient their contents in order to better achieve their purpose. As a matter of fact, very different interpretations had been given to the questionnaire by the various governments; and in the first two documents the answers given by the governments to the questionnaires were reprinted without any modification, since the authors of the list judged that they were not authorized to make any changes. As a result there was a lack of balance in the List, not only because some large countries such as France were not mentioned; but also because some countries with many valuable reserves and parks had only given brief descriptions of them, whereas other countries, obviously poorer in accomplishments, gave very long enumerations -- even going so far as to include a small stream theoretically set aside by some local administration.

7. The present plan of the ICNP

A definition of this plan is to be found in the printed note of June 1963 (a few copies of this note are available at the Secretariat of the Bangkok meeting). It can be summarized as follows:

To be included on the list, a "national park or equivalent reserve" area should be accorded a strict status aiming, in a sufficiently large area, at preventing natural resources from being destroyed, degraded, or transformed due to human exploitation or occupation.

This means that the following areas should be excluded from the list:

- i) Areas where measures are taken, but not sufficiently enforced, to achieve the above mentioned purpose, i.e. partial reserves, as already mentioned by the Secretary General of the U. N. in his memorandum S.O. 614/2 (see paragraph 4 above), and areas such as the British National Parks where fields, pastures, various kinds of exploitation, rural and urban occupation still exist, but where extension of industrialization and urbanization are not allowed;
- ii) areas which are too small;
- iii) areas where legal acts and measures have been issued for their protection but where they are not sufficiently enforced because
 - a) funds are not sufficient to compensate those who had pre-existing rights;
 - b) staff and budget are insufficient to ensure effective supervision and management.

8. ICNP's selective criteria

There are four criteria, which are enumerated and explained in the June 1963 note.

- I. Criterion of status. This is the difficult notion of "sufficient protection." Exceptions might be admitted if they are considered

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as such, and if, when they are regrettable, attempts are made to suppress them. Various interpretations can be given to the criterion, depending on whether the reserve is in a densely populated country or, on the contrary, in a sparsely inhabited and developing country.

- II. Criterion of size. A minimum is required "unless and notwithstanding its small size it was deemed advisable to include it, for an especial reason briefly stated in population density of the country: 500 ha. if the density is more than 50 inhabitants/km² (densely populated country) - 2,000 ha. if the population density is less than 50 inhabitants/km².
- III. Criterion of effectiveness: staff. A minimum of one person working full time is required per 4,000 ha. in densely populated countries, per 10,000 ha. in sparsely inhabited countries.
- IV. Criterion of effectiveness: budget. Expenditure on the management and supervision of the area: minimum of 100 \$US annually per 500 ha. (about 2 sq.m.) in densely populated countries; minimum of 50 \$US annually per 1,000 ha. in sparsely inhabited countries.

9. Summary definition of the national park and the equivalent reserve

According to the above mentioned criteria and to the comments of June 1963 note, a national park is considered: an area where the necessary measures have been taken by the central government in order to meet the three basic requirements: status, size, effectiveness, and where tourism is admitted and generally organized.

When tourism is not permitted and when the other requirements are answered, the area is called strict natural reserve (cf. London 1933, Washington 1940). When the status has not been enacted by the central government, it is a provincial, country council, or private reserve. In these cases the area is an equivalent reserve, inasmuch as the three basic requirements are answered.

10. What is to be mentioned on the list?

When the selection is made, after verification of the application of the criteria, the list is established under five main headings:

Chapter I: names of the protected areas to be included on the list, arbitrarily classification is not perfect, as the value of a protected biotope can, sometimes, largely compensate for a more extensive area. But a better classification could not be found.

Chapter II: how, in each area, the four basic requirements are applied (status, size, staff and budget), with, if possible precise numbers.

Chapter III; further general information including: the legal status; the kind of administration; the land status; the general organization of a) tourism sensu lato (explanatory services, etc.) b) scientific researches within the protected area; the date of creation of each park or reserve; specific details regarding the means of access, accommodations, facilities, etc.

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Chapter IV: a summary description of the protected ecological environment. General geographic description. Principal vegetation formations. The most/important species of animals. Species threatened with extinction for which the reserve provides protection.

Chapter V: list of the areas which might have been included if the selection had been less severe, but which are not meeting the four criteria mentioned in above paragraph 8. Justification of this exclusion.

11. How was this information obtained by ICNP?

On behalf of the Secretary General of the United Nations and with his agreement, the Brussels' secretariat of ICNP in 1963 and at the beginning of 1964, applied to all member governments of the United Nations, asking very precise questions on the areas believed to be qualified for inclusion on the list because they seemed to meet the selective criteria, and asking for their advice as to other areas to be included.

In favorable cases an official answer was received to these requests. Fortunately, this is what happened most often.

When no reaction was given given to letters of reminder, a project draft was drawn up for the country concerned, based either on official but old information, or on unofficial information (publications, answers given by private correspondence), which was recent, or in less propitious cases, old. This draft was then submitted for advice to the government concerned before being published.

12. State of advancement in November 1965

The complete set of monographs concerning all information mentioned in paragraph 10 above (within the bounds of possibility) for every member country of the United Nations, will be submitted to New York by December 31, 1965.

13. Request to participants in the Bangkok Conference

Every official government delegate is requested to look at the text prepared for his country and make appropriate criticism. The same wish is expressed to participants who are not officially delegated; their advice and comments will be welcome. Gaps exist, which could be filled in. Errors have been made, which should be corrected. Everyone's contribution is earnestly requested.

14. Further steps

This list, which will be submitted to New York, contains a number of improvements, compared with Part One and Part Two of 1961 and 1962, but it will be far from satisfactory. Moreover, its purpose being to promote the creation of new parks or the re-inforcement of statutes in old parks, it is most desirable for it to become out of date within a relatively short time. It is therefore arranged to continue gathering in Brussels all information and documentation likely to facilitate the preparation of the next edition of the world list, by correcting the errors, filling the gaps and describing new creations. The wish is expressed that authorities will

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take local measures: engage staff, assign larger votes, in order that their country be better represented on the next edition of the List.

15. International Biological Programme

The IBP has created a Section on "Conservation". The objective of this Section is to draw up a list of the main characteristic biotopes of the world, find out which among these biotopes have at least one sample effectively protected in a natural reserve worthy of this name, then undertake international action to assure that other biotopes -- if possible beginning with the most important and most threatened ones -- are also the object of such protective measures. The authorities of the IBP are interested in the ICNP list which is likely to serve as their basic document. In order to best meet their requirements, it has been arranged that in 1966 the entire "Chapter IV" (see paragraph 10 above) will be submitted for completion and corrections to the Commission on Ecology and the Survival Service Commission of the IUCN.

APPENDIX

United Nations World List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves

Resolution 713 (XXVII) adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council at its twenty-seventh Session in 1959, reads as follows:

"The Economic and Social Council,

"Noting that national parks and equivalent reserves have been established in most countries which are Members of the United Nations or the specialized agencies, and that they contribute to the inspiration, culture and welfare of mankind,

"Believing that these national parks are valuable for economic and scientific reasons and also as areas for the future preservation of fauna and flora and geologic structures in their natural state,

"1. Requests the Secretary-General to establish in co-operation with UNESCO, FAO, and other interested specialized agencies, a list of national parks and equivalent reserves, with a brief description of each, for consideration by the Council at its twenty-ninth session, together with his recommendation for maintaining and developing the list on a current basis and for its distribution;

"2. Invites State Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies to transmit to the Secretary-General a description of the areas they desire to have internationally registered as national parks or equivalent reserves; and

"3. Furthermore invites the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and other interested non-governmental organizations in consultative status to assist the Secretary-General, upon his request, in the preparation of the proposed list."