

UNITED NATIONS LIST OF NATIONAL PARKS AND EQUIVALENT RESERVES

In 1959, by its resolution n°713 (XXVII), the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations recognized the great economic and scientific interest of the "national parks and equivalent reserves" and decided that the Secretary General of the United Nations should establish, then keep up to date, a list of these protected areas, list to be prepared by I.U.C.N., a non governmental organism located in Morges (Switzerland) being a consultative agency to Ecosoc.

By virtue of this decision, a first list, containing descriptions and comments on natural reserves located in 52 countries, was issued on February 15th, 1961 as a document Ecosoc E/3436 and sanctioned by an Ecosoc Resolution n°810 (XXXI). As this resolution requested that the work be continued, this first list was followed by an addendum, dealing with 29 further countries, issued in 1962, with the agreement of the United Nations, by the International Commission on National Parks of I.U.C.N.

In July 1962, at the request of IUCN, was convened at Seattle (Washington, USA) the first world conference on national parks, during which were examined the two first list mentioned in the above paragraph. The authors of this considerable work were congratulated and it was decided to continue, as only 81 countries were dealt with. But it was also considered as necessary, at Seattle, to modify the very spirit of the enumeration, which until then only reproduced, without being able to make any selection, the totality of names of natural reserves mentioned to the Secretary General of the United Nations by the member governments in answer to the questionnaire which had been sent to them from New York. This operational method could only lead to an heterogeneous and unbalanced documentation, some countries with many very beautiful realizations did only mention a few of them, among the most important ones, whereas other countries much less wealthy, looked as if they had more because in their answer they did not forget any oak set aside, any small cascade protected by some municipal rule.

Seattle's discussions pointed out the necessity to correct such lack of balance and heterogeneity: the final list should only mention national parks and equivalent reserves selected according to objective criteria able to prove the real value and effectiveness of these natural sanctuaries. The International Commission on National Parks (ICPN) was asked to define these criteria and see that they be applied in the definitive list.

In Autumn 1962, I.U.C.N. asked the undersigned, its former Secretary-General (1948-1955) then Vice-Chairman of I.C.N.P. - he is Chairman since July 1966 - to have these selective criteria requested at Seattle established by the I.C.N.P., then to undertake himself the preparation of the definitive list to be drawn up by virtue of the application of these criteria.

Four years were needed to carry out this often difficult and sometimes deceiving work, before obtaining, generally through various permanent national missions to the United Nations, the most numerous scientific, juridical, administrative data which were necessary for applying with some equity the criteria which had been officially adopted. It has been possible for the author of this note to complete or control on the spot many official information, thanks to visits he was able to make in four of five continents or by conversations he had with experts from every concerned countries, at international meetings he was able to attend.

His immense work of collecting information, of using the gathered elements, then of drawing up the 136 monographies included in the volume which is issued to-day, was finished by the beginning of 1966. The manuscript was then submitted to various authorities of IUCN, then to the Secretary of the United Nations.

The manuscript being examined and approved, and after several contacts between IUCN and the Secretary General of the United Nations, at Geneva and especially at New York, the publication methods were decided, with everyone's agreement, aiming at pointing out that it was a United Nations list, prepared and issued by the ICNP of IUCN pursuant Ecosoc Resolution 840.

This is therefore the book which is now (May 1967) being edited in French by HAYEZ, in Brussels. (An English edition is as well being prepared).

Selective criteria which have been used:

A brief definition of the selective criteria adopted by the International Commission on National Parks can be given by indicating that this selection is based upon three principles :

1. In the included areas protective measures should be applied in order that the ecosystems be maintained in a state of balance as less as possible disturbed by human activity : traffic, occupation and, especially, exploitation : cultivation, cattle breeding, hunting, fishing, etc.

2. These areas should not be too small. Unless for special reasons, they are only included in the United Nations list if their superficies is above 500 ha in a densely populated country (more than 50 inhabitants to the square km.) and 2.000 ha in sparsely inhabited countries.

3. The protective measures should be duly enforced. A criterion of "effectiveness" has been chosen for this purpose. A minimum staff working full-time and a minimum budget spent at the management is therefore requested per size unit.
each

Information received for the list.

For each area included on the list, it is first indicated how the criteria of ICNP are applied, i.e. what are exactly the protective status, the superficies, the staff and the budget of the natural reserve.

In another chapter general information are given on its juridical status, its organization and administration, the land tenure and date of creation, the means of access and accomodation of tourists, and finally on the eventual scientific research undertaken in the reserve.

Then, in the following chapter, is given a brief description of each protected area, its main geographical features and vegetation, the most important animal species and, eventually, the species threatened with extinction which are duly preserved in the sanctuary.

In a last chapter is indicated whether any national parks or equivalent reserves are going to be created, which announces an eventual future inclusion on the list, or whether any are already created but do not qualify for inclusion on the list because they are not meeting the I.C.N.P.L. criteria.

Purpose of this list.

Table of honour, it is aiming first at giving information on the governments which seriously worked in order to effectively set aside portions of their "wild nature" to the benefit of their populations, men of all countries, future generations. Its purpose is therefore not only to induce countries to maintain their "national parks and equivalent reserves" already qualifying for inclusion on the United Nations List, but also to induce governments either to create natural reserves meeting the ICNP criteria, or to reinforce the existing protective measures prevailing in their areas already partly protected, but nevertheless excluded from the list because they do not meet these criteria.

The United Nations List is a document which gives to every persons and institutions concerned with the problem of the last wild life sanctuaries of the world, most important and up-to-date information, duly classified and presented in such a manner that comparisons between the various countries is made easy.

Important detail : the Section "Conservation of Terrestrial Communities" of the International Biological Programme (IBP/CT) which is preparing for the six years to come a world campaign in order to ensure the preservation of at least one sample of each important ecosystems in the five continents, has decided to

consider the United Nations List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves as a basic document. During the future works of the various national sub-committees of IRP/OT (the undersigned is chairman of the Belgian sub-committee), many improvements and additions to the present list will be made, which will prepare the indispensable next edition of this table of honour, which can be expected by 1972, anniversary of the creation of the ancestor, first to be called a national park : Yellowstone.

What are the "equivalent reserves" ?

Finally, it might be useful, to anticipate a question which might puzzle more than one lecturer, to give some precisions on the motives which induced the U.N. to speak about national parks and equivalent reserves.

Here is briefly the I.C.N.P. position in this respect.

National Park :

Area where 1° the central authority 2° took the necessary measures in order that the three criteria of the I.C.N.P. be satisfied : status, of general protection, minimum superficies, sufficiently enforced status and 3° where tourism is authorized even organized.

Equivalent reserve :

Other area where the three I.C.N.P. criteria are duly applied, but where tourism is not allowed (strict nature reserve) or which are not created by the central authority (provincial park, State park, private reserve, etc.)

Columbia's special case.

After some hesitation, the International Commission on National Parks considered that in their present state of organization (status, supervision staff, budget) the national parks of Columbia : Farallones de Cali and Puracé did not yet duly meet the criteria of I.C.N.P. and, as well as the relatively small Macarena reserve (400 ha), could not yet be included on the United Nations List.

It is much to be hoped that soon, and perhaps on the occasion of this Third National Congress on Forestry, precise information will be obtained, showing that these sanctuaries are henceforth deserving to be listed on the table of honour issued by IUCN or, at least, that their status and management staff will soon be improved in order that their inclusion on this table become possible.

As a matter of fact, Columbia is well aware of its wealth in typical and natural ecosystems and of the necessity of preserving some important parts for the benefit of future generations and its responsible authorities will therefore certainly soon take adequate measures in order that this country be mentioned, as it wishes to and as it must, beside the other Latin American republics on the United Nations List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves.

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