

SSC, IUCN and the Plant Conservation Network: Change and Action

1st Meeting of SSC Chairs, Al Ain, UAE

Side –meeting of plant chairs and RLAs

14 February 2008

The challenge is clear: The contributions of the SSC network of Plant Specialist Groups and Red List Authorities to the SSC strategic plan and the IUCN programme are substantial. These contributions could be immense with greater engagement of the strengths of this network and action to address important weaknesses. The opportunity to meet together, for the first time, in Al Ain, has provided a valuable opportunity for the chairs and RLAs of the plant network to share our successes and concerns, and to discuss and to agree on actions that should be taken by our own network, by SSC, and by the IUCN Species Programme to strengthen our contribution to the SSC strategic plan and the IUCN programme.

The need to act is urgent:

- Plants (flowering plants, algae, lichens, bryophytes) and fungi are the foundation of the world's ecosystems, including key biodiversity areas, upon which animal and other taxa depend for survival.
- Plants provide the structure and most of the ecosystem and livelihood services that support human survival on earth.
- Plants are equally (possibly more) threatened than animals by unsustainable use, habitat degradation, invasive species, and climate change.
- IUCN's mandate is to conserve biodiversity and to provide fundamental expertise on the role of species, habitats, and ecosystems, all of which are comprised largely of plants. The work of the SSC plant network contributes to the core of IUCN's 2009-2012 programme, "Shaping a Sustainable Future".
- The global community, through the CBD and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), have given IUCN the mandate to assess, monitor, and report on the conservation status of the world's flora by 2010, relying largely on the expertise of the SSC plant network. IUCN and SSC have so far not secured the resources needed to support the SSC plant network and its partners required to fulfill this mandate.
- The work of SSC plant specialist groups contributes more broadly to the targets of the GSPC, the 2010 indicators, and to monitoring impacts of climate change.
- Funding for plant conservation, including Red List Assessment, can be found within a framework for strategic efforts of the plant community, assisted by IUCN's Species Programme to identify and access funding sources. These efforts will be more successful with recognition within SSC and IUCN of the important role of plant conservation to biodiversity conservation, and the valuable contributions of the SSC plant network.

Actions recommended to SSC:

- Include more individuals who are knowledgeable about plant conservation challenges and opportunities, and who are influential within the global plant community, in the membership of the SSC Steering Committee;

- Reconstitute the SSC Plant Conservation Sub-Committee as a committee of plant chairs and RLAs to enable and facilitate the productive networking initiated by this 1st Chairs meeting
- Retain and support Red List assessment capacity within the specialist groups where assessment and conservation action are interdependent activities.

Actions recommended to the IUCN Species Programme:

- Support the SSC plant network to develop and implement a global plant assessment project, (Plants for People: The State of the World's Flora) including assistance to:
 - survey (by taxon, region) of current plant assessment activities undertaken in botanic gardens, herbaria, and elsewhere outside the SSC plant network (e.g., Bioversity, BGCI and its associated networks and members, RBG-Kew and Missouri Botanical Garden, Bioversity, etc.) to identify progress, gaps, and partnerships.
 - inventory of completed, in-process, and planned Red List assessments and identified priorities of the SSC plant network (build on existing SP report to CBD secretariat on IUCN/SSC contributions to GSPC targets)
 - prepare an assessment tool kit (e.g., data entry and mapping technology) appropriate and efficient for assessing plants and large numbers of species.
- Invite BGCI and other key botanical research institutions and organizations to become Red List partners.
- Work with the plant network and SSC to finance and establish a sufficient number of plant programme officers in the Species Programme who are experts in botany and dedicated to enabling and facilitating plant assessments
- Red List assessment training (possibly by other members of the SSC plant network) for all plant chairs/RLAs who need it
- Raise profile, facilitate plant network collaboration with IUCN programmes and other commissions.

Actions recommended to members of the SSC plant network:

- Share our achievements and stories with the SSC network, IUCN, and more widely.
- Communicate with each other to coordinate and promote collaboration.
- Make more effective use of our contributions to IUCN's programme focus on biodiversity conservation, climate change, and poverty reduction to develop other partnerships and funding opportunities
- Agree on a process and criteria for selecting priority taxa for assessment.

Danna Leaman (Medicinal Plants)
 Stephen Talbot (Arctic Plants)
 Hector Hernandez (Cacti and Succulents)
 Aljos Farjon (Conifers)
 Ehsan Dulloo (Crop Wild Relatives)
 Anders Dahlberg (Fungi)
 Alan Tye (Galapagos Plants)
 Sara Oldfield (Global Trees)
 Mohammed Ahmedullah (Indian Subcontinent Plants)
 Kim Yong-Shik (Korean Plants)
 Christoph Scheidegger (Lichens)
 Charlotte Rajeriarison (Madagascar Plants)
 Bertrand de Montmollin (Mediterranean Island Plants)

Domitilla Raimondo (Southern African Plants)
 Carlos Villamil (Temperate S. American Plants)
 Eugenio Santiago Valentin (Caribbean Island Plants)
 David Kenfack (Central African Plants)
 Quentin Luke (Eastern African Plants)
 Tetsukazu Yahara (Japanese Plants)
 Ben Tan (Bryophytes)
 Qin Hai-ning (Chinese Plants)
 Vincent Florens (Indian Ocean Island Plants)