



# Environmental Issues in the Republic of Korea and the World Conservation Congress

## Updated IUCN Statement

18 July 2012

A number of concerned groups and individuals in Korea and elsewhere have recently called on IUCN to postpone or cancel the World Conservation Congress, in Jeju, Republic of Korea, from 6-15 September and/or to express disapproval on several environmental issues, including a naval base under construction on Jeju Island and the Four Rivers restoration project.

IUCN, along with its Korean Members, has been planning the Congress for three years. While these issues were known to us during this time, it is only in recent weeks that we have been contacted by these concerned groups, despite the fact that the open call to participate in the Congress was issued last year.

With regard to reports in the press and elsewhere in which IUCN has been misquoted, IUCN has no authority to endorse the Jeju naval base. In April, we asked the Korean Government to provide more detailed information on the project, which is available on their website. Based on this, we issued our statement on 25 April in which we wrote that "IUCN recognizes that the Republic of Korea has a responsibility for its own national security, particularly given geopolitical sensitivities in its region. In addition it is accountable for steering its own economic and social development, as well as safeguarding its own natural environment. We trust that the Korean government has complied with all relevant domestic laws in planning and developing this port, as well as international conventions that it has signed. IUCN stands ready to offer technical assistance to the Korean government to help ensure the development is as environmentally sustainable as possible."

IUCN has for decades held the position that infrastructure projects on rivers remain an option for meeting development needs, and at the same time we have consistently advocated that this should be pursued in harmony with nature. Where such projects cannot be avoided, the environmental and social impacts should be minimized, remedied or compensated. On the Four Rivers restoration project, we have not been asked by any of our Korean NGO and government Members to engage directly in this issue, but we have offered our long-standing expertise and experience from all parts of the world on similar challenges. IUCN is not a campaign organization but rather a trusted science-based convener and mediator and we continue to stand ready to help find solutions on this and other issues.

We are working assiduously with the Korean Organizing Committee to engage with all groups and address their concerns when the IUCN constituency gathers in Jeju. We are committed to ensuring that this Congress, like all previous ones, provides a platform for open and constructive dialogue on issues like these.

Ashok Khosla  
IUCN President

Julia Marton-Lefèvre  
IUCN Director General

Further information:

[www.iucn.org/congress](http://www.iucn.org/congress)

[IUCN statement 13 July 2012 - Environmental Issues in the Republic of Korea and the World Conservation Congress](#)

[IUCN Statement 25 April 2012 - Jeju Civilian-Military Complex Port Development](#)

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