

A Preliminary Strategy and Action Plan for the Conservation of Sacred Natural Sites

WCPA Specialist Group on the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas
The Sacred Natural Sites Initiative

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More information: Custodians and supporters of sacred natural sites are invited to learn more about the implementation of the action plan at www.sacrednaturalsites.org or send any responses to info@sacrednaturalsites.org

Overall Goal: Promote, conserve and restore sacred natural sites protecting both biological and cultural diversity

Strategic Direction 1: Support the autonomous protection and management of sacred natural sites by their custodians

Action 1.1: Recognize the rights of indigenous people and custodians from mainstream faiths to lead the management of their own sacred sites

Action 1.2: Facilitate dialogue and mutual support between the custodians of sacred natural sites and encourage dialogue between indigenous, folk and mainstream traditions

Action 1.3: Establish mediation processes in cases of dispute between custodians of sacred natural sites and between custodians and other stakeholders (e.g. an ombudsman or broker mechanism)

Action 1.4: Encourage government planning agencies and protected areas authorities to engage with custodians of sacred natural sites especially where those incorporated into sacred natural sites have not been properly recognized (IUCN Best Practice Guidelines 16)

Action 1.5: Encourage economic and development planning departments and other land use agencies to recognize sacred natural sites as legitimate land uses and their custodians as legitimate managers. Apply appropriate EIA procedures and other guidance (e.g. CBD Akwé: Kon Guidelines, 2004) when considering development proposals that affect SNS

Action 1.6: Support the development, testing, dissemination and implementation of relevant international and national agreements and guidance as appropriate e.g. UNDRIP, 2007; CBD Akwé: Kon Guidelines, 2004; IUCN/UNESCO Guidelines, 2008; IUCN policy decisions (motions)**Action 1.7 Provide specific and respectful advice on scientific approaches to the

management of sacred natural sites when requested by custodians

Access 1.8: Form multi actor networks and coalitions of organizations in support of sacred natural sites and their custodians at both national and international levels.

Strategic Direction 2: Reduce the threats and halt the loss of sacred natural sites

Action 2.1: Call upon and engage with extractive industries, plantation forestry, industrial agriculture companies and other commercial entities to respect the integrity to sacred natural sites and to support their protection

Action 2.2: Provide livelihood support for (materially, socially and spiritually) needy communities associated with sacred natural sites when requested

Action 2.3: Advocate for the implementation of national policies and laws that will reduce the threats to sacred natural sites and allow for bottom up action to improve the quality of sacred natural sites

Action 2.4: Recognize the social cohesion that is promoted by well managed and maintained sacred natural sites, and promote this as part of sustainable development

Action 2.5: Support religious and social cohesive networks of sacred natural sites custodians and communities by facilitating multi-stakeholder processes that help them face the challenges of modern change and development.

Strategic Direction 3: Support cultural revitalization and the strengthening of communities and their connections with their sacred natural sites

Action 3.1: Understand, respect and support the fundamental relationship of people to their

sacred sites and lands including culture, language, prayer and ceremony.

Action 3.2: Support the revival, reawakening and rekindling of these relationships and ties to sacred land and places.

Action 3.3: Promoted respectful and appropriate education that imparts to young people the language and values of custodian communities as well as the skills and the 'the laws of the land' as a crucial step to protect sacred sites.

Action 3.4: Adopt a fundamental community first (or 'bottom up') approach while creating respectful and supportive laws, policies and education processes at the district, provincial and nation state level.

Action 3.5: Develop sharing of information and experiences between and across communities, including children and youth, regarding revitalization of culture and protection of sacred natural sites.

Strategic Direction 4: Increase understanding and awareness, particularly at national level, of the importance and role of sacred natural sites and promote the formation of appropriate national policies and laws

Action 4.1: Promote mutual understanding and working relationships between sacred natural sites custodians, protected area managers, scientists, planners and decision-makers at conceptual and practical levels

Action 4.2: Carry out a review of different national legislation and develop pilot sites and case studies

Action 4.3: Advocate the sensitive recognition of sacred natural sites at national level, particularly through protected area and development planning authorities

Action 4.4: Develop appropriate publicity campaigns that promote sacred natural sites using applicable forms of communication.

Action 4.5: Facilitate the exchange of experiences on traditional governance and national policy making for sacred natural sites in international fora and working groups.

Strategic Direction 4: Build up a body of increased knowledge of sacred natural sites, using different ways of knowing, including the, traditional knowledge, holistic science, the arts and media

Action 5.1: Develop sensitive and respectful inventories of sacred natural sites at appropriate levels, documenting biological, spiritual, religious, cultural and heritage values, maintaining secrecy where required

Action 5.2: Seek new models for the relationship between humans and the environment, based on the principles established at sacred natural sites

Action 5.3: Promote the holistic integration of traditional knowledge, sciences, humanities and arts at sacred natural sites (e.g. traditional knowledge, ecology, anthropology, archeology, economics, media, arts, etc.)

Action 5.4: Give particular attention to understanding sacred natural sites as part of the adaptive response to global changes in climate, economics, governance, communications and so forth

Action 5.5: Establish a global research and information programme where types of knowledge, wisdom and science can be at the basis of the improved understanding of the values of sacred natural sites for human well-being, human development and planetary care.

Strategic Direction 6: Access and generate funding for sacred natural sites identifying a diversity of resources (financial and otherwise) to support sacred natural sites

Action 6.1: Explore the possibility of establishing a dedicated fund for sacred natural sites

Action 6.2: Understand and utilize the full range of funding options and sources that might be applicable to sacred natural sites

Action 6.3: Increasingly advocate to funding agencies that they fund sacred natural sites as part of their portfolio of giving

Action 6.4: Develop mechanisms for local funding and self-support of sacred natural sites to put them on a long-term sustainable footing.