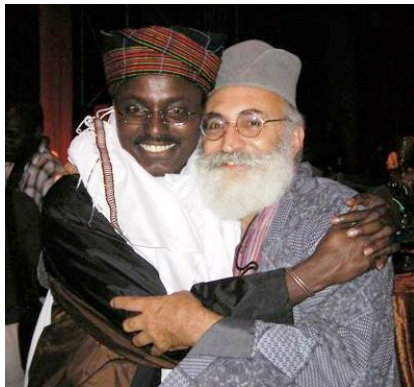


# The ICCA Consortium

## The ICCA Consortium will co-lead the development of the Governance Stream at the next World Parks Congress, Sydney 2014

By M. Taghi Farvar, President of the ICCA Consortium

Dear Members and Honorary members of the ICCA Consortium,



Boku Tache Dida (Ethiopia) and Taghi Farvar (Iran) at the World Parks Congress of Durban, 2003

I have asked to leave space for me in this fourth issue of the Consortium Newsletter to announce an important decision that was recently communicated to us by the International Steering Committee for the next IUCN World Parks Congress: **the proposal prepared by the ICCA Consortium** in association with, and on behalf of, a Team of institutional partners—including GIZ, UNDP, the Indigenous Protected Areas Sub-Committee of Australia and the CBD Secretariat— **has been selected to develop Stream 6** (“Broadening governance”) **of the next World Parks Congress (Sydney, October 2014)**. The Consortium is simply delighted about this important decision and we will work with our partners, the IUCN Protected Areas Programme and the IUCN Commissions to deliver at our best. First of all, let me thank Grazia and Ashish, who have taken the lead for the Consortium to develop the partnership and the document that was approved. Let me then briefly outline why I believe that this is an important decision, and what we hope the Consortium can achieve through that.

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Those of us who are keen on the recognition and promotion of ICCAs, the oldest forms of “conservation” in the world, can take comfort in the on-going process of mainstreaming them in the conservation arena. I am age-privileged enough to remember that it all started with the “discovery” of governance as a dimension of protected areas. As a caricature of the process, I can tell you that, in the decades before the World Parks Congress of 2003, conservationists considered protected areas as the nearly exclusive domain of governments. These were valuable natural landscapes that needed to be rescued from the “ignorant natives” in order to be “managed” by parks managers. Species were in no better position. They existed “despite people” and most conservationists saw local communities and even indigenous peoples as a major threat to them. “Management effectiveness” was the buzzword in conservation circles. At the end of this period, in 2002, a special issue of the Parks magazine published by WCPA (Volume 12, No. 2, edited by Ashish) contained an interview by Grazia of the then past and present chairs of WCPA and CEESP. The main outcome of this interview, which in this sense acquires some historical value, was the

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proposal to add a new “governance dimension” to the then broadly known and accepted IUCN Categories for Protected Areas. It was the birth of the IUCN Matrix for Protected Areas, with the two dimensions of management categories and governance types. Through time, the Matrix became progressively included in IUCN documents<sup>1</sup> and referred to in CBD decisions. The Matrix firmly recognizes that indigenous peoples and local communities can “govern” areas that effectively conserve nature in all categories of protected areas. This clearly shifts the perception of local communities and indigenous peoples from inevitable destroyers to protectors and stewards of nature.

At the Fifth World Parks Congress in Durban, in 2003, many of us witnessed what became another important step in the right direction: for the first time in such congresses, hundreds of representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, of both mobile and sedentary lifestyles, were supported to take part in the Congress.<sup>2</sup> The late Uncle Sayyaad, a Qashqai mobile indigenous leader from Iran, was even asked to deliver an eight-minute speech at the beginning of the Congress. On the background of the music of his people and the marvellous images of the territories conserved by his tribe, Uncle Sayyaad and the Iranian young woman in traditional costume who translated his words into English delivered a speech that moved and remained memorable for many. I annex the speech to this document for whoever would like to read it in full (it is well worth it) but, basically, Uncle Sayyaad extended his hand to the conservationists in the audience, telling them: “Together, we can be very powerful allies for conservation. Alone, we are likely to act at cross-purposes and waste the best of our energies. [...] We, the mobile peoples and pastoralist communities of the world, are prepared to be your strongest allies in conservation. Are *you*?” These were the disarming words that— coupled with the clear articulation of the conservation values of ICCAs demonstrated at the Congress— helped to transform the arrogance of many conservationists into willingness to listen and to learn.

The rest is more recent history. The acceptance of the value for conservation of the knowledge, skills and institutions of indigenous peoples and local communities— clearly put forth in the Durban Accord and Action Plan— soon found their way into the first major international agreement on protected areas: the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was finally agreed at the COP-7 of Kuala Lumpur in 2004. Since then, COP-8, COP-9, COP-10, and COP-11 elaborated upon and increasingly embraced the idea that indigenous peoples and local communities have a crucial positive role to play in the governance of nature. And so did the World Conservation Congresses that took place in 2004, 2008 and 2012. In fact, CBD had included from the beginning the need to support *in situ* conservation and respect traditional knowledge and skills. However, it is attention to governance of “legally protected” and “actually conserved” areas that transformed that rather vague recognition into something concrete and politically

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<sup>1</sup> It was finally formally adopted by IUCN in the Jeju World Parks Congress of 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks are due to the cooperation agencies that behaved with such foresight, such as Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark.

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powerful about *land, water and natural resources related to specific territories*. This—coupled with the “attention to implementation” embraced by the current Executive Secretary of the CBD—

is a powerful encouragement to recognise indigenous peoples’ and community capacities and rights to determine how to govern, conserve and defend their territories and areas, and how to self-determine their lives.

What is the challenge, then? Why should we be spending yet more time and energies to elaborate upon a recognition that has found its way to a relatively broad acceptance<sup>3</sup>?

If the Durban Congress did articulate that governance of protected areas in general and ICCAs in particular are building blocks of effective conservation, it certainly did not go far enough to explain *how* this could be taken to fruition. If a people, a community or a government wishes to respond to the new opportunities brought about by an improved treatment of governance of protected areas, *how* could it do it? What are the steps, tools, and processes that can transform some good ideas into fuller understanding and effective action for conservation? My colleagues and I in the ICCA Consortium believe that this is the real challenge of the Stream ahead of us. We hardly have to state or demonstrate that dealing with governance issues is important. Rather, we need to *build capacities to do it*. We need to make sure that everyone who is approaching “governance of protected areas” can move away from it with a sense not of puzzlement but of empowerment.

Indeed, this is a major task ahead of us, but the benefits promise to be important... for people, nature and governments alike. The governance stream needs to render concrete the lessons we have learned since Durban. For governments, it needs to show how they can *assess and evaluate their systems of protected areas— or their specific protected area sites – and identify feasible action that can improve governance and deliver the desired results*. And it needs to show that some governments have done it, and what they have learned in the process. For conservation NGOs and professionals, it needs to show *how governance can deliver in terms of coverage, feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency of protected areas*. For private conservationists and entrepreneurs, it needs to show *how governance can deliver a fair measure of autonomy but also social responsibility, appreciation and benefits*. And, for indigenous peoples and local communities, it needs to show *how governance can secure their rights, enhance their capacities and help them fight the huge threats they face*.

For us in the Consortium, this is, in fact, the paramount value of “governance”. By strengthening the legality and official recognition of the governing role of indigenous peoples and local communities, we hope to strengthen and amplify the voice of those fighting the unbridled “development” that is taking away the land under their feet, the water and resources in front of their eyes, and the dignity in their souls. This much we know:

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<sup>3</sup> See the relevant [publications](#) released in 2012.

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that indigenous peoples and local communities, empowered with their traditional knowledge and skills and properly supported by the rest of society, can take care of their environment and resources in sustainable ways. These ways are multiple and creative, and are rooted on cultural as well as biological diversity. These ways are crucially dependent on the respect of customary rights and supportiveness of public policies, practices, and laws. Moreover, these ways are comparatively inexpensive, not a minor advantage in times of economic crisis.

Yes, we can still observe these “ways”... but too often they are in pockets of successful resistance or lucky neglect. And the widespread and ominous reality is that such spaces and opportunities are shrinking. The world is under attack by the blind pursuit of yet more natural resources to exploit, by the monochromatic value of financial profit placed before and beyond any other. Only a sense of balance based on human and not only economic values, only a collective sense of identity, dignity and pride that comes with associating culture and nature—specific communities and specific territories in thousands of different environments—can change this disastrous course and steer us away from catastrophic consequences. “Governance” in general and ICCAs in particular are there to tell us that ***another world is possible*** and ***“another conservation” is possible***. And we will make clear, in Sydney, how this can be taken to action.

In the coming months a Stream Development Team will be established and will develop the full scope and depth of the Stream. In November 2013, one year before the Congress, the process of registration for the Congress will open. In parallel, there will be various initiatives to fundraise, communicate and develop ideas and specific initiatives. If you would like to offer contributions towards the Stream, please send those to Paula Bueno ([paula.bueno@iucn.org](mailto:paula.bueno@iucn.org)), Grazia ([gbf@iccacosnortium.org](mailto:gbf@iccacosnortium.org)), Aurélie ([aurelie@iccacosnortium.org](mailto:aurelie@iccacosnortium.org)) and me ([taghi@iccaconsortium.org](mailto:taghi@iccaconsortium.org)). We look forward to receiving them! Many thanks for your attention,

M. Taghi Farvar, President  
The ICCA Consortium

## **Annex 1: Uncle Sayyaad’s talk to the first Plenary Session of the World Parks Congress, Durban, Republic of South Africa, September 2003**

I am Aghaghia Rahimzadeh and I have translated and will read the speech of Uncle Sayyaad Soltani. Some images of the pastoral landscape of his tribe will be shown as a background.

### **Ladies, Gentlemen, and Honourable Excellencies,**

I have come from Iran. I am the elected chair of the council of Elders of the Kuhi sub-tribe of the Qashqai Confederacy, one of the largest pastoralist communities in Iran. We are nomadic herders.

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The memory of our tribe goes as far back as 5000 years and the livelihood of our mobile communities has always been sustained by raising goats and sheep. We never stay in one pasture long enough to do it damage. We may now be a pale remembrance of what we were, but we see signs of resurrection, signs that are very important for conservation.

The tale of my tribe is a long one. We used to graze large herds of sheep and goat on vast pastures and grasslands, which sustained the livelihoods of thousands of mobile households. The plant diversity of our pastures and the health of our wetlands endured over generations. We grazed on higher elevation pastures in the summer and returned to lower elevations in winter. Twice a year, we moved through magnificent migration routes carved, known and improved through centuries of care. We shared our landscape with wildlife– deer and gazelles, wild goats and sheep, lions, leopards, cheetahs, caracals, foxes, jackals and wolves and resident and migratory birds. We told the stories of these animals in our tales and our songs and our migration time has been-- for centuries-- a time of celebration, learning, and spiritual renewal. It has also been a time to connect people and nature in the landscape.

Unfortunately, throughout the twentieth century forced sedentarisation was inflicted upon us. Pastures and natural resources were seized from us by various governments. Our migratory paths were interrupted by all sorts of “development” initiatives including dams, oil refineries, and military bases. Our summering and wintering pastures were consistently degraded and fragmented by outsiders. Not even our social identity was left alone. Our tribal foundations were forcibly “restructured” and our image has been cast as that of backward, stubborn peoples who do not wish to adapt to modernity. Our story is similar to the story of nomadic pastoralist peoples all over the world, under all sorts of regimes that do not bear to let us manage our lands and lives. In fact, in recent times, some of our people have nearly forgotten the magnificence of our pastoralist lifestyle. BUT NOT YET ENTIRELY!

### **Honourable Friends,**

We, pastoral peoples, have always considered our land what you would call a “*protected area*”. We have always embraced “conservation” not as a professional activity but as intimate duty and pride of every member of our tribes, as the heart of our livelihood, because our very subsistence depends on it. I hear you talk of ecosystems, landscapes, and connectivity. We have always known about this without using your terms. Our migration patterns transfer seeds. Our grazing patterns shape the landscape. We subsist on our land, we know and care for its diversity of plants and animals. We pray on this land, and we guard its many sacred spaces. For the land provides us also with spiritual well-being.

But we can no longer do it alone. In the world of today, we need the concurrence of our governments and all the support that others can give.

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Let me give you an example. In the summering grounds of my tribe is a marvellous, life-giving wetland called Chahar Tang-e Kushk-e Zar. It is surrounded by tall reeds, and fields of lush grass, and for hundreds of years it has been used and protected by our ancestors. Today, the water is being diverted for unsustainable agricultural purposes. The wetland's migratory birds, coming from lands far away, are hunted down as soon as we leave for the wintering season. We have been witnessing the shrinking of this wetland, and the destruction of its flora and fauna. I am proud to announce— however— that the Kuhi pastoralist community has discussed this with our government. We have agreed that our wetland will soon be legally recognised as a “Community Conserved Area”. When its management will be entrusted to us we will know how to protect it, and we will do our best to restore it to its past splendour.

### **Honourable Friends,**

Before the beginning of this Congress, the representatives of mobile peoples from many countries convened and reflected on how to solve our common problems. We have drawn several action points, which we will further refine during this congress, but **basically we are here to extend our hand to you. Together, we can be very powerful allies for conservation. Alone, we are likely to act at cross purposes and waste the best of our energies.**

Please help us maintain our nomadic lifestyles. This is not only the heart of our livelihoods. It also creates the bio-cultural corridors that you conservationists need as much as we do. Stand on our side in opposing the forcible settlements of our people and herds. Allow us to preserve the splendid genetic diversity of our herds, as well as the wildlife diversity that depend on it. Help us preserve our cultural integrity and build our capacities. **Talk to us, involve us in decisions, refuse to understand us by stereotypes, and tell us how we can help you. We, the mobile peoples and pastoralist communities of the world, are prepared to be your strongest allies in conservation. Are you?**