

# **MEDIA RELEASE - 05/07/2001**

## **SANParks on track to stage Fifth World Parks Congress (WPC) in Durban in 2003**

The Fifth World Congress on Protected Areas or World Parks Congress (WPC) will be held at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Durban from 8th to 17th September 2003. The Congress is expected to attract between 2000 and 2500 foreign and South African participants. These will be drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds within the protected area professional community and outside.

The Congress occurs once every 10 years and is widely regarded as the premier international event for the protected area world. The last congress was in Caracas, Venezuela in 1992.

The theme for the Durban Congress will be "Benefits beyond Boundaries". This captures the challenges and opportunities that face protected areas in the 21st century and provides the flexibility to explore a wide variety of relevant sub-themes.

The primary aim of the Congress is to review the global status of protected areas, assess the critical issues facing them and map out directions and actions for the next decade and beyond. The institutions involved in the staging of WPC 2003 include:

- The Government of South Africa, through the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. It is hosting WPC 2003. As the host country, South Africa will be responsible for the provision of the venue and associated services.
- South African National Parks (SANParks), South Africa's national conservation agency, which is accountable to the Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and has been designated lead agency responsible for the organization of the congress. SANParks, in conjunction with provincial conservation agencies, has already set up a National Planning Committee (NPC) to coordinate all in-country activities related to the Congress.
- Swiss-based World Conservation Union (IUCN) will be responsible for developing the theme and programme of WPC 2003. The IUCN, through its affiliated agencies, will also be responsible for coordinating all the planning activities necessary to make WPC 2003 a success. To this effect, the IUCN has set up a WPC 2003 International Planning Committee (IPC). (More on IUCN in *Note to Editors*)

A number of Congress Workshops will be organized around the following themes:

- Linkages in the Landscape - "From Islands to Networks".
- Awareness and Support - "Mainstreaming Protected Areas".
- Governance - "New Ways of Working Together".
- Capacity Building - "New Skills for a New Century".
- Management Effectiveness - "Practical Solutions to Maintain Ecological Integrity for Now and the Future".
- Finance & Resources - "Building a Secure Financial Future".
- Gaps in the System - "A Comprehensive System for the New Century".

It is anticipated that throughout these themes, special emphasis will be put on the African continent, the host continent.

According to Mavuso Msimang, the SANParks Chief Executive who is also the Chairman of the National Planning Committee, WPC 2003 will be a major international event in conservation circles. "The Congress will offer a special opportunity to take stock of protected areas; provide an honest appraisal of progress and setbacks; and chart the course for the next decade and beyond", Msimang said.

The Congress, which will cost R20m to stage, represents a great opportunity to showcase South Africa as a world leader in biodiversity management and position it as a tourism destination of first choice. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has already provided R1.5m seed money for the Congress. The United States

National Parks Service (USNPS) has also contributed US\$45 000 towards the costs of staging the Congress in South Africa. The balance will be raised from corporate donations and sponsorships as the Congress offers the opportunity to South African and international corporations to show their commitment to conservation. A number of high profile personalities have been identified and will be requested to serve as "Congress Ambassadors". The role of "Congress Ambassadors" is to raise the profile and awareness of the Congress, and to support fundraising.

The names of Congress Ambassadors and a call for tenders for a professional congress organizer will be released in due course.

A logo has been designed for the Congress and can be viewed at [www.parks-sa.co.za](http://www.parks-sa.co.za).

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*Note to Editors on IUCN and associated agencies:*

*IUCN - The World Conservation Union, which was created in 1948, is the world's largest conservation organization, bringing together 75 states, 111 government agencies 732 NGOs, 36 affiliates, and 12,000 scientists and experts from 140 countries in a unique world partnership.*

*Over the last half century, IUCN has initiated several core environmental debates - such as that on biodiversity - and has helped over 50 countries to prepare and implement National Conservation Strategies within the framework of a number of global conventions that it has participated in drafting. The Union has been instrumental in the development of a number of International Agreements and Conventions including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Heritage Convention.*

*IUCN's Programme on Protected Areas (PPA) and the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) share the mission of "promoting the establishment and management of a world-wide, representative network of terrestrial and marine protected areas, as an integral contribution to the IUCN mission".*

*WCPA is the world's largest network of protected area professionals with 1,300 members in 140 countries who are invited to contribute on the basis of their expertise and willingness.*

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