

IUCN Academy on Environmental Law

Inauguration and Colloquium

Shanghai, November 2003

A Message to the Participants from the Director General of IUCN

Dear friends and supporters of the IUCN Academy,

At the outset I wish to congratulate Professor Nicholas Robinson and other colleagues from the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law for their vision and commitment. The concept of an IUCN Academy has taken years to bear fruit, but they have seen this long process through, conducting countless consultations and meetings to refine this idea.

The IUCN Council approved the establishment of the IUCN Academy at its December 2002 meeting, opening the gates to the creation of what will be a leading academic institution in the area of environmental law. Having received the IUCN Council's blessings, the Commission set about developing a vision for how the IUCN Academy could be brought to life at its Preparatory Meeting held in New York in April. It is inspiring to see that so many distinguished professors from around the globe have gathered here in Shanghai to now bring that vision to life.

IUCN deeply values academic work and the strong foundation it provides for the work that we do. IUCN would not be where it is today without the important contribution of the academic community, whose members have worked with us for years through our volunteer networks to develop the knowledge which underpins our policies and programme. The spirit of academic exchange and collaboration that the IUCN Academy will foster bodes well for the strengthening of environmental law, an important discipline without which much of our work in nature conservation will have no solid institutional and legal basis. The IUCN Academy's work will assist in keeping IUCN, and through it the global conservation community, at the cutting edge of researching new approaches to nature conservation and sustainable development.

The topic of your first Colloquium, 'The Law of Energy for Sustainable Development' will provide guidance in the implementation of the outcomes of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, and is well placed to contribute to the International Conference for Renewable Energies in Bonn in 2004 and the future deliberations of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

I would like to thank all of you for volunteering your time and energy into this important endeavour. We look forward to a fruitful relationship between the IUCN Academy and the Union, primarily through collaboration among the IUCN Academy, the IUCN Environmental Law Centre, and the Commission on Environmental Law, whose collective efforts provide the global community with access to the world's most extensive and committed network of environmental lawyers.

Best wishes for a successful Inauguration and Colloquium in Shanghai and, for those of you who are working with IUCN for the first time, welcome to the family!

Achim Steiner
Director General
IUCN – The World Conservation Union