

The Opening of ARCEL

On 14 November 2001, the IUCN Commission of Environmental Law (CEL), in co-operation with the Faculty of Law of Kuwait University, launched the Arab Regional Centre for Environmental Law (ARCEL), the first such center anywhere in the Arab speaking region.

The launch ceremony was attended by the Deans of twenty six law schools drawn from Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, and Syria, as well as the Director General of the Environment Public Authority of the State of Kuwait, Dr. Mohammad A. Al-Sarawi.

Dr. Badria Al-Awadi, CEL Regional Vice-Chair for West Asia, presented ARCEL's first lecture on the origins and scope of work of ARCEL, and invited the participation of legal experts throughout the Arab world in building the region's capacity in environmental law. She emphasised the establishment at ARCEL of the first environmental law library in Arabic

The importance of ARCEL's work had been highlighted by two presentations the day before at the second meeting of the Scientific Committee of Arab Law Faculties. The Speaker of the Parliament of Egypt called for enhancing legal education in the Arab world, and in particular called for the teaching of environmental law in the region's law schools. Professor Nicholas Robinson, Chairman of CEL also made a formal presentation, inviting greater participation in CEL from legal experts of West Asia and North Africa. He noted that the establishment of ARCEL is an excellent example of the kind of co-operative effort envisioned in Agenda 21, which calls upon "competent intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to co-operate to provide ... an integrated programme of environment and development law (sustainable development law) services" (Agenda 21, § 8.19). He noted that this goal can be achieved by "establishing a co-operative training network" enabling international and academic institutions to "co-operate to provide, especially for trainees from developing countries, postgraduate programmes and in-service training facilities in environment and development law" (*Id.*, § 8.20), and to develop, "regional centres of excellence ... to build up specialized databases and training facilities for linguistic/cultural groups of legal systems." (*Id.*, § 8.26)

ARCEL's first project is focused on developing curriculum for environmental law courses in Arab law schools, through a meeting to be funded by UNEP.

ARCEL will also:

- ❑ host a meeting of IUCN's Members from the region (early 2002)
- ❑ organise a course on environmental law and management for protection of the Gulf and its marine resources from on-shore and off-shore pollution.
- ❑ publish the environmental legislation of Arab countries on the Internet in Arabic, with appropriate translations in English and other languages
- ❑ develop additional inter-regional comparative and international environmental law study projects.

- publish the papers from an international conference on "Environmental Law In The Arab Region" convened by CEL and Kuwait University's Law Faculty in Kuwait, and from the CEL Meetings in Amman, Jordan, in October of 2000.
- undertake projects on legal research and on capacity building in environmental law, with UNEO, UNESCO, and The Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Gulf (ROPME).

Dr. Badria Al-Awadi is named as the first Director of ARCEL.

IUCN-CEL participated in the establishment of other regional centers of excellence in environmental law. The first opened five years ago is the Asia-Pacific Center for Environmental Law at the National University of Singapore's Law Faculty. Last June, IUCN and the Institute of Lawyers for a Green Planet launched the Brazilian Center for Rural and Sustainable Development at the Instituto Biológico in São Paulo, Brazil. ARCEL will work with these other regional centers and will co-ordinate globally with the IUCN Environmental Law Centre in Bonn, Germany.

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