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IUCN Academy on Environmental Law Preparatory Meeting, April 2003

A Message to the Participants from the Director General of IUCN

Dear colleagues in the environmental law community,

Welcome to this exciting meeting which marks the beginning of the next stage in a process which began with an idea and has evolved into practical action.

Let me, however, begin by congratulating Professor Nicholas Robinson and our 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 could potentially be a leading academic resource in the area of environmental law. Having received the IUCN Council's blessing, it is now time to roll up our sleeves and get down to the complex task of deciding how your vision for the IUCN Academy can be brought to life. I am pleased with the level of excitement that the establishment of the IUCN Academy has generated, as shown by the presence of so many distinguished professors from around the globe here at this meeting.

We deeply value 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. The spirit of academic exchange and collaboration that the IUCN Academy seeks to foster bodes well for the strengthening of environmental law, an important discipline without which much of our work in conservation would have no solid institutional and legal basis. The IUCN Academy's work will contribute to keeping the global IUCN family at the cutting edge of developing and implementing new approaches to conservation and sustainable development.

Thank you for putting your time and energy into this important endeavour. I 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, whose Director and Chair, respectively, are *ex officio* members of the Academy Bureau and Collegium.

I wish you a productive meeting and all the best for your future work. For those of you who are working with IUCN for the first time, welcome to the Union!

With my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Achim Steiner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Achim Steiner
Director General