



Convention on
Biological Diversity



UN
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Protected Areas for the 21st Century: Lessons from UNDP/GEF's Portfolio



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Designed by Sandra Rojas

Cover photo: Woman on a horse in Kure National Park, Turkey © Ismail Mentés

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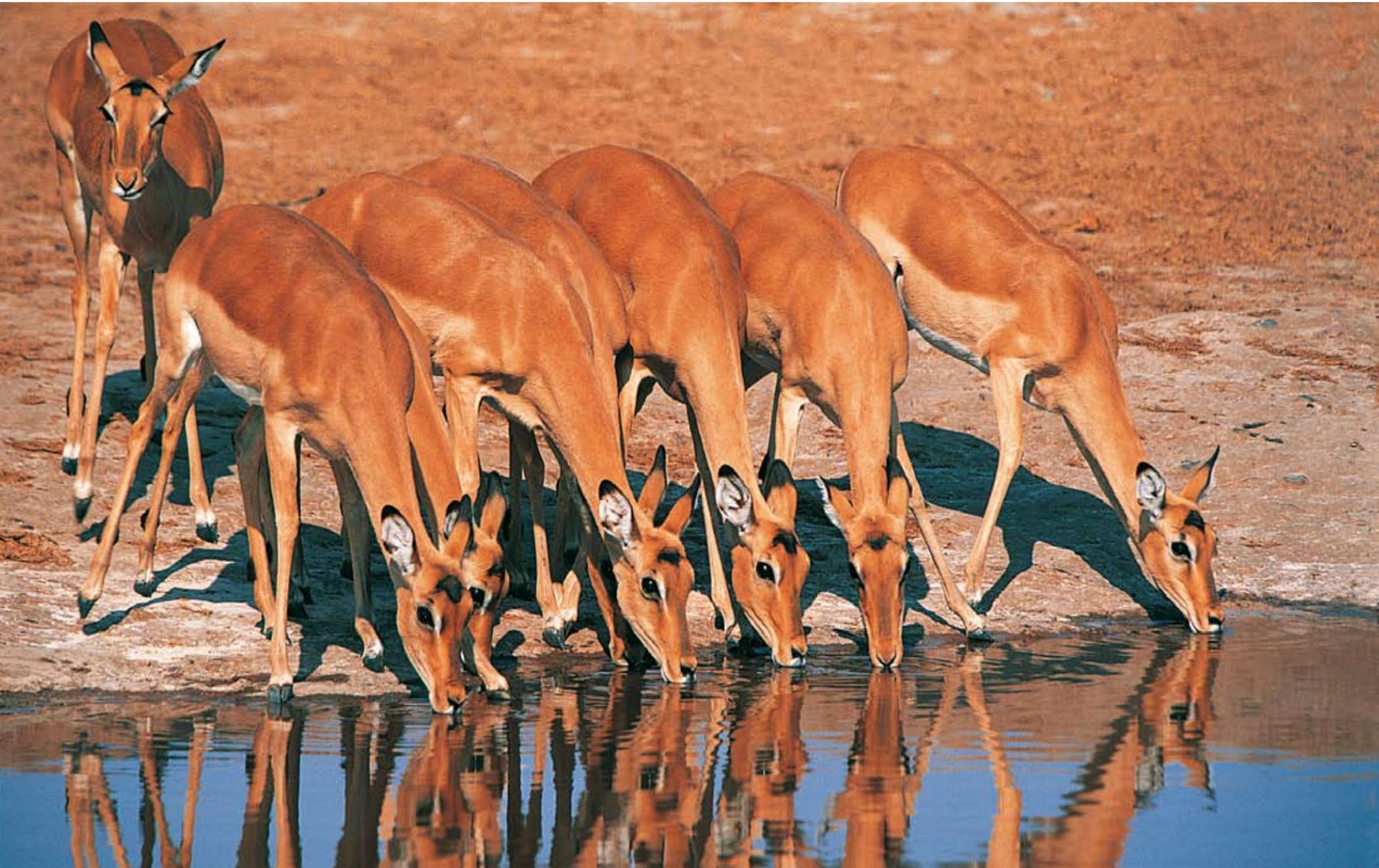


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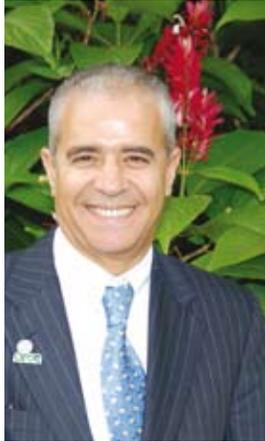


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FOREWORD

Close to 80 percent of the world's threatened species owe their poor status to widespread habitat loss. Therefore, the most immediate and effective response to the imminent biodiversity crisis is the strategic expansion in the coverage of protected areas worldwide. Moreover, protected areas provide a range of vital ecosystem services that people everywhere rely upon. For example, 33 out of 105 of the world's largest cities source their clean water from protected areas. The economies of many developing countries depend heavily on tourism revenue associated with protected areas, and governments increasingly consider protected areas to be true engines of local development. Therefore, the establishment of comprehensive, effectively managed and financially secure protected area networks is a critical strategy not only for conserving biodiversity, but for securing ecosystem goods and services, enabling climate change adaptation and mitigation, and helping countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Recognizing the critical role of protected areas in conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in February 2004 committed to a comprehensive and specific set of actions called the Programme of Work on Protected Areas. Its goal is to establish comprehensive, ecologically representative and effectively managed networks of terrestrial protected areas by 2010 and of marine protected areas by 2012. The program includes measurable targets and actions with specific timelines and can be considered to be the defining framework or blueprint for protected areas in the coming decades. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the Programme of Work on Protected Areas is the Convention's most successful initiative; since the Convention on Biological Diversity came into force in 1993, the world's protected areas have increased by nearly 60 percent in both numbers and total area. As a result, the concept of protected areas is arguably the most widespread societal franchise worldwide. There are three times as many protected areas as there are McDonald's restaurants and Walmart stores – two icons of the global economy - combined.

While hard data are still scant, there is emerging evidence that the global network of protected areas is responsible, directly and indirectly, for the generation of jobs that rival in number those provided by these companies. Sometimes criticized for presumably preventing people from accessing natural resources, the sheer scale in the global coverage of protected areas is a testimony that the concept, in its many forms, has been embraced by virtually all governments, civil society and local and indigenous communities, all in a relatively short period of time.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), the operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, is widely recognized as the world's leading facility for catalyzing countries to implement their obligations under the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas. A key strategic objective of the GEF biodiversity strategy is enhancing the sustainability of protected area systems by a) improving financial sustainability; b) improving protected area coverage, representativeness and connectivity; and c) improving protected area capacity and management effectiveness. The GEF has invested in more than 2,300 protected areas, covering more than 634 million hectares – an area equivalent to Greenland, Mongolia and Kazakhstan combined. The GEF has also provided more than \$1.89 billion to fund protected areas, leveraging an additional \$4.5 billion in co-financing from project partners. This investment will be further strengthened through the commitment of \$700 million specifically for protected areas within the GEF V (2010-2014) funding cycle. In this new cycle, the aim is to enhance the sustainability of protected area systems such that they continue to deliver the global benefits of conserving biodiversity, provide a range of ecosystem goods and services, and enable climate change mitigation and adaptation. But this is not all. During GEF V, a new \$250 million window dealing with REDD+ has also become available for eligible countries, which could be used to establish new protected areas that can generate global benefits in biodiversity and help to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

UNDP, as one of the implementing agencies of the Global Environmental Facility, is the world's most significant contributor of technical assistance to protected areas. Since the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas was ratified in 2004, UNDP has supported more than 700 protected areas in 55 countries, covering nearly every goal, target and action of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas. UNDP

has helped to improve protected area management effectiveness across more than 85 million hectares, and to establish new protected areas covering more than 15 million hectares. UNDP's rationale for making such a significant investment in protected areas is simple: protected areas and community conserved areas together represent as much as a quarter of the world's land surface, and this land and sea mass represents an enormous potential to contribute to human development by securing ecosystem services, maintaining the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people, and buffering humanity from the impacts of climate change.

With this publication we aim to both showcase success stories of UNDP-implemented projects financed by the GEF in supporting the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas, and to explore emerging best practices under a new paradigm that views protected areas as part of a planetary life-support system. As nations begin to chart a course toward a low-emission and climate-resilient future, they will be looking for ways to find the most efficient and innovative solutions to meet both their social development needs and their biodiversity conservation goals. Protected areas are one of the most efficient and effective strategies available for simultaneously addressing the global challenges of alleviating poverty, adapting to and mitigating climate change, and maintaining key ecosystem services. Although the upfront investments in protected areas are high, the long-term ecological, social and economic dividends are enormous. By taking bold steps and by demonstrating firm political will, the world's leaders and decision makers can ensure that protected areas truly are for the 21st Century. This publication is an attempt to point the way forward.

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Introduction

The world's biodiversity – the species, ecosystems and ecological processes that compose the natural world – are of incalculable value to humanity. The world's agricultural systems depend upon biodiversity to sustain genetic plant and animal diversity, to provide pollination services, and to maintain irrigation services.¹ The world's cities depend upon biodiversity to provide clean drinking water to their burgeoning populations.² The world's coastal communities, in which one-half to two-thirds of all of humanity resides,³ depend upon the natural infrastructure of coral reefs, sea grass beds, and mangroves to buffer them from the impacts of climate change, including sea-level rise and increased storm surges. The world's inland communities depend upon the natural infrastructure of healthy forests, grasslands and wetlands to buffer them against increased drought, flooding, disease and natural disasters.⁴ While biodiversity provides the fundamental goods and services upon which all life depends, including human societies, it is of particular importance to the 2.7 billion people – more than a quarter of the world's population – who survive on less than \$2 a day.⁵ As much as 70 percent of the world's poorest people depend critically upon biodiversity to provide them with life's most basic necessities, including food, water, shelter, medicine and their livelihoods, and a sixth of the world's population depends upon the biodiversity within protected areas for their livelihoods.^{6,7}

Despite the fundamental importance of biodiversity to human life and social development, the world is facing unprecedented and largely irreversible

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