

Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation

(English Version)

A group of concerned professionals including social and natural scientists from all regions of the world met in Wadi Dana Nature Reserve, Jordan, 3-7 April 2002, to consider a comprehensive approach to mobile peoples [1] and conservation. At the end of this meeting, they agreed the following declaration:

The world faces unprecedented threats to the conservation and sustainable use of its biodiversity. At the same time, its cultural and linguistic diversity, which includes an immeasurable and irreplaceable range of knowledge and skills, is being lost at an alarming rate.

The linked pressures of human population dynamics, unsustainable consumption patterns, climate change and global and national economic forces threaten both the conservation of biological resources and the livelihoods of many indigenous and traditional peoples. In particular, mobile peoples now find themselves constrained by forces beyond their control, which put them at a special disadvantage.

Mobile peoples are discriminated against. Their rights, including rights of access to natural resources, are often denied and conventional conservation practices insufficiently address their concerns. These factors, together with the pace of global change, undermine their lifestyles, reduce their ability to live in balance with nature and threaten their very existence as distinct peoples.

Nonetheless, through their traditional resource use practices and culture-based respect for nature, many mobile peoples are still making a significant contribution to the maintenance of the earth's ecosystems, species and genetic diversity – even though this often goes unrecognised. Thus the interests of mobile peoples and

conservation converge, especially as they face a number of common challenges. There is therefore an urgent need to create a mutually reinforcing partnership between mobile peoples and those involved with conservation.

In the light of this understanding, we commit ourselves to promoting conservation practices based on the following principles:

Principle 1. Rights and Empowerment

Conservation approaches with potential impact on mobile peoples and their natural resources must recognise mobile peoples' rights, management responsibilities and capacities, and should lead to effective empowerment. These rights include:

- 1.1 Human rights: civil, political, social, economic and cultural;
- 1.2 Land and resource rights, including those under customary law;
- 1.3 Cultural and intellectual property rights;
- 1.4 The right to full participation in decision-making and relevant negotiation processes at different levels;
- 1.5 The right to derive equitable benefits from any consumptive or non-consumptive use of local natural resources.

To this end, appropriate legislative reforms should be promoted as needed, at national and international levels. In addition, because mobile peoples often move through different territories, transboundary co-operation between national authorities may be required.

Recognition of mobile peoples' rights should lead to effective empowerment, and include consideration of gender and age.

Principle 2. Trust and Respect

Beneficial partnerships between conservation interests and mobile peoples should be based upon mutual trust and respect and address the issue of discrimination against mobile peoples. To this end partnerships should:

- 2.1 Be equitable;
- 2.2 Fully respect and acknowledge mobile peoples' institutions;
- 2.3 Balance the exercise of rights by all parties with the fulfilment of responsibilities;
- 2.4 Recognise and incorporate relevant customary law;
- 2.5 Promote the accountability of all parties in relation to the fulfilment of conservation objectives and the needs of mobile peoples.

Principle 3. Different Knowledge Systems

In planning and implementing conservation of biodiversity with mobile peoples, there is a need to respect and incorporate their traditional knowledge and management practices. Given that no knowledge system is infallible, the complementary use of traditional and mainstream sciences is a valuable means of meeting the changing needs of mobile peoples and answering conservation dilemmas. In particular:

- 3.1 Traditional and mainstream sciences and management practices should enter into dialogue on a basis of equal footing and involve two-way learning;
- 3.2 Traditional and mainstream sciences should be appropriately valued and their dynamic nature acknowledged.

Principle 4. Adaptive Management

Conservation of biodiversity and natural resources within areas inhabited or used by mobile peoples requires the application of adaptive management approaches. Such approaches should build on traditional / existing cultural models and incorporate mobile peoples' worldviews, aspirations and customary law. They should work towards the physical and cultural survival of mobile peoples

and the long-term conservation of biodiversity.

More particularly, such adaptive management approaches should:

- 4.1 Build on areas of common interest between the chosen lifestyles of mobile peoples and the conservation objective of sustainable resource management;
- 4.2 Allow for diversification of livelihoods, and ensure provision of a variety of benefits at all levels, including mobile services;
- 4.3 Recognise the diversity of systems of tenure and access to resources, including the customary sharing of resources;
- 4.4 Recognize and support the contributions made by mobile peoples to conserving and enhancing the genetic diversity of domesticated animals and plants;
- 4.5 Learn from the flexible management practices of mobile peoples to enrich conservation;
- 4.6 Develop conservation planning at a larger landscape scale, using the notion of mobility as a central concept, and incorporating both ecological and cultural perspectives.

Principle 5: Collaborative Management

Adequate institutional structures for adaptive management should be based on the concept of equitable sharing of decision-making and management responsibilities between mobile peoples and conservation agencies. This is only possible if the existing decision-making mechanisms for biodiversity conservation become more democratic and transparent, so as to allow for the full and open participation of civil society and mobile peoples in particular, and for the establishment of co-management and self-management systems. This requires that the relevant parties:

- 5.1 Develop processes and means that foster cross-cultural dialogue directed towards consensual decision-making;
- 5.2 Incorporate culturally appropriate conflict-management mechanisms and institutions;
- 5.3 Recognize the time-scale appropriate to cultural processes and the time required to build intercultural partnerships for adaptive management;
- 5.4 Foster locally agreed solutions to conservation problems;
- 5.5 Encourage diverse and pluralistic approaches to conservation planning and implementation;

5.6 Develop their capacities to enter into mutually beneficial partnerships. This declaration is our contribution to narrowing the disciplinary divide. The ideas in it need to be tested, refined and further developed in dialogue with mobile peoples themselves and others. But these issues need to be considered urgently at national and international levels – and in particular at the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Parks Congress.

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[1] By mobile peoples, we mean a subset of indigenous and traditional peoples whose livelihoods depend on extensive common property use of natural resources over an area, who use mobility as a management strategy for dealing with sustainable use and conservation, and who possess a distinctive cultural identity and natural resource management system.

The Dana Declaration Committee fully endorses the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the United Nations draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation calls for a new approach to conservation: one which recognises the rights and interests of 'mobile' peoples. The term mobile peoples covers indigenous and traditional peoples whose livelihoods depend on extensive common property use of natural resources, and who use mobility as a management strategy and as an element of cultural identity. The Dana Declaration Committee fully endorses the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the United Nations draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Declaration is the outcome of an international meeting of social and natural scientists and NGOs that took place in Wadi Dana Nature Reserve in Jordan in early April 2002. The Declaration is an attempt to forge a new partnership between conservationists and mobile peoples in order to ensure that future conservation policies and programmes help maintain the earth's ecosystems, species and genetic diversity while respecting the rights of indigenous and traditional communities which have been disregarded in the past... ([click here to continue](#))

The Wadi Dana conference participants recognise that this is only the first step. The principles need to be considered and developed further in dialogue with mobile peoples and other interested groups and organisations.

The Dana Declaration has been endorsed by representatives of Mobile Peoples attending the IUCN World Parks Congress in Durban 2003 ([click here to see Press Release](#)). A key outcome of the WPC was the adoption of Recommendation 5.27 Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation ([Click here for more](#)). The attending Mobile Indigenous Peoples created a campaigning organisation called the **World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP)**.

The Dana Declaration has also received support at the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, November 2004 where a resolution endorsing the Dana Declaration and recognizing the work of WAMIP adopted resolution number RESWCC3.018 has been approved ([Click here for more details](#)).

A special issue of the journal Nomadic Peoples is devoted to the Dana Declaration and the issues it raises ([Click here for more details](#)). It is also appearing as a special issue of the Journal of Biological Conservation (BIOC).