

illegal wildlife trade across their border, and leading Asian lawmakers discussed strengthening cooperation.

- an unprecedented meeting of Mekong Region Ministers and civil society representatives that saw an open dialogue about the challenges of transboundary water politics and reported signs of increasing cooperation.
- the strengthening of business-conservation associations with the One Planet Living initiative, a proposal to create major new sustainable communities whilst conserving and recovering thousands of hectares of woodland and wildlife habitat.

The IUCN Members Business Assembly voted on over 100 Resolutions and Recommendations on critical conservation measures. Some of the major decisions were:

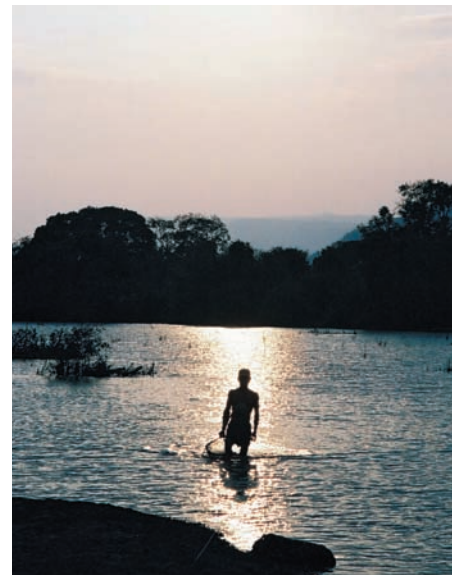
- a call for a moratorium on the further release of genetically modified organisms;
- to establish the World Conservation Learning Network to build capacity of

conservation and development professionals;

- to pursue activities for the conservation of biodiversity in the degraded Aral Sea basin;
- to commence greater actions to combat poverty through nature conservation; and
- to better address the conservation and management of high seas biodiversity.

Kofi Annan, through the Under Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr Kim Hak-Su, stressed the importance of the Congress and welcomed its views on ways to attain the United Nations Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability. 'Every country, and every individual, has a responsibility to change – to move from an era of exploitation to an ethic of stewardship. We have the science and the green technologies to begin the job today.'

In closing remarks, the IUCN's newly-elected President, Mr Valli Moosa, said 'We need to engage, involve and reach out to more people: young, old, rich, poor, urban, rural, scientist and layperson. It is from



A lone fisherman silhouetted at Nom Long, Thailand. Asia's threatened wetlands were a focus of conservation attention at the Congress. Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Programme/PJM

diversity that we gain our strength and political niche, and our unique moral authority.'

Moves to more widely protect deep ocean habitats

Australia will support the United Nations' recent agreement to strongly protect 'high seas' areas of significant biodiversity from destructive fishing practices in waters beyond the national jurisdiction.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the government has committed to take practical steps to reduce the risks to these sensitive marine areas, and has called for improved international governance on the high seas to protect sites and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Discussions are taking place with New Zealand to set an international example in identifying and protecting the most biologically important international waters in the Tasman Sea, and to find ways to control damaging fishing practices.

Australia's Environment and Heritage Minister, Senator Ian Campbell, has acknowledged wide concern about the environ-

mental impact of less responsible forms of bottom trawling, which can damage the ocean floor and undersea mountains.

'Seamounts are recognised by science as the nurseries for productive fisheries and are abundant in diverse marine life', he said. 'The Howard Government has already moved to protect seamounts within the national 200 nautical mile zone to the south-east of Tasmania.'

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There are more than 100 000 known seamounts in the world, including many in the Tasman Sea. Several Australian commercial fisheries, including that of the Orange Roughy, are based on seamount populations

and several prospective fisheries are being assessed by the Australian fishing industry around seamounts in the Indian Ocean.

Referring to national fisheries responsibilities, Fisheries Minister, Senator Ian Macdonald said Australia would continue to fish and trawl responsibly in its

surrounding oceans and to develop legitimate fisheries. He said that while Australian fishing operators used modern gear and low-impact trawl techniques on the high seas, they would continue to be required to use observers and to contribute to the scientific knowledge of the area.



The Orange Roughy is fished around deep seamount habitat. There are wide scientific concerns about the long-term effects on marine ecosystems of trawling in seamount regions. CSIRO Publishing