



# *The Asia Protected Areas Partnership*

## **Partnership Document**

(Version: 12 January 2021)

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There are now over 10,900 protected areas across Asia, covering 13.9 per cent of the terrestrial environment and 1.8 per cent of the marine and coastal environment within national jurisdiction. These protected areas make a vital contribution to the well-being of society. They conserve biodiversity; provide clean air and water; reduce the impacts of natural disasters; enhance food security; and store carbon to help mitigate climate change. They provide homes, jobs and livelihoods to millions of people throughout the region. The beauty and natural wonders they protect have been a source of inspiration and spiritual nourishment for millennia.

Protected areas, however, are increasingly under threat. As Asia's economy and populations have grown, so too have the pressures on the region's natural environment. Habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive alien species, pollution, over-exploitation and climate change all threaten Asia's protected areas. Increasingly, it is also being recognized that these trends have transboundary and regional implications, and will require enhanced regional collaboration if they are to be addressed effectively.

The desire for increased regional collaboration among protected area agencies in Asia has been repeatedly expressed, in a diverse array of fora. Most recently, in November 2013, the idea of an "Asia Protected Areas Partnership" (APAP) was endorsed at the 1st Asia Parks Congress held in Sendai, Japan. The Congress was the first of its kind in the region, and brought together over 800 participants from 22 countries. Its principal outcome document, the *Sendai Charter*, highlighted the many shared challenges facing Asia's protected areas and the urgent need for enhanced collaboration.

Following the Asia Parks Congress, formal invitations to join APAP were sent to all countries in the region by IUCN and the Ministry of the Environment, Japan. A discussion paper on regional collaboration for protected areas was commissioned from an international expert, who analyzed experiences from several major regional initiatives around the world and identified key ingredients for success. An International Planning Committee was also established and two meetings held:

- The first meeting was held in Bangkok in April 2014, and attended by representatives from 13 countries. Participants unanimously endorsed the decision to move ahead with the formation of the Asia Protected Areas Partnership;
- The second meeting was held in Pyeonchang in October 2014, on the margins of CBD CoP-12. This meeting provided feedback on APAP's draft operational guidelines, including its objectives, structure, activities and governance arrangements.

APAP was formally launched by the IUCN President, Mr. Zhang Xinsheng, at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney on 18 November 2014. The founding membership consisted of six organizations representing Bangladesh, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam.

The following document establishes an operational framework to guide the future activities and growth of APAP, as a leading network to promote regional collaboration, best practices and innovative solutions for Asia's protected areas.

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The Members of the Asia Protected Areas Partnership mutually consent as follows

**PARAGRAPH 1 - Legal Status**

APAP is an informal and voluntary initiative.

**PARAGRAPH 2 - Purpose**

The purpose of APAP is to facilitate improved conservation outcomes for protected areas in Asia, in accordance with the Sendai Charter and in support of national and regional efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

**PARAGRAPH 3 - Objectives**

In support of its overall purpose, APAP has three objectives:

1. To promote best practices and innovative solutions to the challenges facing the region's protected areas, through knowledge sharing and capacity building;
2. To promote enhanced transboundary and regional cooperation;
3. To raise awareness of the multiple benefits of Asia's protected areas, both within and outside the region.

**PARAGRAPH 4 - Programme and Activities**

A programme of activities will be developed by the Members to achieve APAP's objectives. Activities could include, but should not be limited to, the following:

Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building

APAP will:

- Convene the regional protected area community to share best practices and inspiring solutions, for example, through the organization of experience sharing workshops on priority themes, the holding of the Asia Parks Congress at regular intervals, and the facilitation of site visits to observe best practice on the ground;
- Organise specific capacity development and training opportunities, in partnership with protected area management agencies in other parts of the world, the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), academic and training institutions, and other organisations;
- Promote access to protected area information as well as regional and international guidelines, through, for example, the translation of key protected area references and guidelines into national languages;

- Support the adoption, as appropriate, of regional and global best practice standards, such as the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas;
- Help develop a more systematic approach for obtaining technical advice from WCPA's network of protected area experts.

#### Transboundary and Regional Cooperation

APAP will:

- Organize experience sharing opportunities to enable APAP members to learn from transboundary collaboration in the region and in other parts of the world;
- Organize training workshops on transboundary approaches to PA management;
- Make the IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidelines on Transboundary Protected Areas widely available, including through translation;
- Facilitate dialogue among countries wishing to explore the potential for transboundary collaboration;
- Assist with the development of funding proposals for specific transboundary/regional projects and initiatives.

#### Awareness Raising and Advocacy

APAP will:

- Develop an APAP website, e-newsletter and promotional material. (These activities will be the responsibility of the Secretariat.);
- Facilitate studies which highlight the economic and other benefits of protected areas, and help ensure that the results are widely disseminated;
- Strengthen the voice of the Asian protected area community at key regional and global policy fora such as the CBD, eg, by organising preparatory workshops focusing on key agenda items related to protected areas, and circulating IUCN policy briefs;
- Explore the potential for establishing strategic alliances with relevant sectors (eg, tourism).

### **PARAGRAPH 5 - Membership**

5.1 Membership in APAP shall be available under the following categories:

- **Country Membership:** Government protected area agencies from Asia<sup>1</sup>, working at national or sub-national level;

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Partnership Document, "Asia" is defined as encompassing the following 24 countries: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; India;

- **Associate Membership:**

- a) Institutions responsible for the management of protected areas under other forms of governance<sup>2</sup> (e.g., Indigenous and Community-Conserved Areas);
- b) International/inter-governmental organizations and donor agencies involved in supporting protected areas in Asia;
- c) NGOs, universities, research institutions, and private sector companies that: a) are working across more than one country in Asia; *and* b) can demonstrate active involvement in the management, support and/or study of protected areas in Asia; *and* c) are based in a country that already has an APAP Country member.

5.2 In recognition of the fact that responsibility for protected areas in many countries of Asia is divided among multiple government institutions, there shall be no limit on the number of these institutions from any given country that can become members under the Country Membership category.

5.3 Organizations wishing to apply for Associate Membership shall submit their request in writing to the APAP Secretariat. The request shall be circulated to all members of the Steering Committee and if no issues are raised within a period of three months, the applicant will be added to the list of APAP Members. In the event of objections to an organization's application for Membership, the issue shall be put to a vote of the Steering Committee, with a simple majority required for passage.

5.4 Country Membership is automatic upon submission of a formal request to the APAP Secretariat.

5.5 Members may withdraw their Membership at any time, but are requested to provide advance notice.

5.6 Associate Members that fail to meet the aims and objectives of APAP may be expelled by vote of the Steering Committee, with a simple majority required for passage.

5.7 An up-to-date list of Members shall be maintained in Appendix 1.

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Indonesia; Japan; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor Leste; and Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> IUCN and the Convention on Biological Diversity recognize four broad protected area governance types: Type A: Governance by government; Type B: Shared governance; Type C: Private governance; and Type D: Governance by indigenous peoples and local communities.

## **PARAGRAPH 6 - Governance and Administration**

6.1 APAP shall be chaired by the Regional Director, IUCN Asia or her nominee, and co-chaired by an APAP Country Member, beginning with the National Park Division of Japan. The Steering Committee shall elect a new co-chairing organization from amongst the Country Members every three years.<sup>3</sup>

6.2 The three WCPA Regional Vice-Chairs from Asia shall serve as Senior Advisors to APAP.

6.3 Members will establish a Steering Committee to facilitate the effective operation of the Partnership, composed of:

- a) the two APAP Co-chairs;
- b) one representative from the apex Country Member in each country
- c) one WCPA Regional Vice-Chair from Asia (to be elected by the three Vice-Chairs themselves);
- d) IUCN Regional Councillors from Asia, to be invited by the Co-Chairs;
- e) representatives from selected Associate Members, to be invited by unanimous consent of the Steering Committee.

Only categories a and b have voting rights. At its discretion, the Steering Committee may also invite a selected number of observers.

6.4 A meeting of the APAP Steering Committee shall be held annually or as needed, at mutually convenient locations.

6.5 Decisions will, in principle be taken by consensus. However, as a last resort, issues on which a consensus cannot be reached shall be put to a vote of the Steering Committee, with a simple majority required for passage.

6.6 The Steering Committee may establish Advisory Groups and permanent or *ad hoc* Working Groups/Task Forces as needed.

6.7 The Steering Committee will establish a Secretariat based within the IUCN Asia Regional Office, to facilitate effective communication and the day-to-day coordination of APAP.

6.8 The Steering Committee will develop and adopt Terms of Reference for the Secretariat, the Steering Committee and any Advisory Groups, Working Groups or Task Forces that may be established.

6.9 The Steering Committee may amend the text of this Partnership document by consensus.

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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of the Environment, Japan, became the first Co-Chair at the launch of APAP on 18 November 2014, and continued in this role until 17 November 2017. The Ministry of the Environment, Republic of Korea, became the second Co-Chair from 18 November 2017 to 17 November 2020. The current Co-Chair is the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India.

**PARAGRAPH 7 - Finances**

7.1 APAP shall not charge a membership fee.

7.2 Funding for the activities of APAP shall be obtained from voluntary contributions and through the development of project proposals for specific initiatives. Members are encouraged to provide resources (including in-kind assistance) to support the activities of APAP.

7.3 The Steering Committee will assess the need and options for generating the financial resources required to:

- achieve APAP's objectives; and
- support the operation of the Secretariat, Advisory Groups, and Working Groups/Task Forces established under APAP.

**PARAGRAPH 8 - Language**

The official language of APAP shall be English.

*Adopted on 15 July 2016, at the 2nd meeting of the APAP Steering Committee, Bangkok, Thailand*

**Appendix 1: List of Members**

**Country Members**

	<b>Member</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Represented By</b>	<b>Date of Joining</b>
1.	Forest Department, Ministry of Environment and Forest	Bangladesh	Conservator of Forests	20 July 2014
2.	Department of Forests and Park Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests	Bhutan	Chief Forestry Officer	10 February 2015
3.	Department of Terrestrial Protected Areas Conservation, Ministry of Environment	Cambodia	Director	14 June 2016
4.	Research Institute of Protected Areas of the Chinese Academy of Forestry	China	Division Chief	30 January 2018
5.	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	India	Joint Director, Wild Life	8 July 2016
6.	National Park Division, Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment	Japan	Director	Founding Member
7.	Protected Area Management Division, Department of Forestry	Lao PDR	Director	25 December 2018
8.	Sabah Parks	Malaysia	Director	13 September 2018
9.	Environmental Protection Agency	Maldives	Assistant Director	18 December 2018
10.	Department for Special Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment and Tourism	Mongolia	Senior Specialist	21 May 2015
11.	Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation	Myanmar	Director	14 December 2015
12.	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation	Nepal	Director General	25 July 2014



13.	Forestry Wing, Ministry of Climate Change	Pakistan	Inspector General of Forests	18 November 2014
14.	Forestry, Environment & Wildlife Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Pakistan	Chief Conservator of Wildlife	3 September 2015
15.	Korea National Park Service	Republic of Korea	Executive Director Nature Conservation	15 September 2014
16.	Nature Conservation Policy Bureau, Ministry of Environment	Republic of Korea	Director General	15 June 2017
17.	Forest Department, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka	Conservator General of Forests	30 August 2016
18.	Department of Wildlife Conservation	Sri Lanka	Deputy Director	7 October 2016
19.	Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation	Thailand	Deputy Director General	25 July 2019
20.	Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Vietnam Environment Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	Viet Nam	Deputy Director	27 August 2014
21.	Vietnam Administration of Forestry	Viet Nam	Director	2 July 2019

#### **Associate Member**

	<b>Member</b>	<b>Represented By</b>	<b>Date of Joining</b>
1.	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)	Deputy Director General	20 March 2018
2.	ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)	Executive Director	27 January 2019

## **Appendix 2: The Asia Protected Areas Charter (Sendai Charter)**

### **The Asia Challenge**

Asia is the world's most rapidly growing region as well as one of the most bio-diverse. This dynamic development has led to unprecedented growth, but also to unprecedented demands on nature and its bounty.

Asian peoples have historically lived in harmony with nature, developing cultures and traditions that benefit from it, while also respecting the power, beauty and delicate balance of the natural world.

However, the pace of growth and development is now such that this ancient balance is being destroyed, threatening species and ecosystems – the very foundations on which our development depends.

Throughout history, protected areas<sup>i</sup> have proved to be one of the most successful approaches to conserve nature and associated cultural resources in Asia and worldwide. Now, as Asia emerges on the world stage, our protected areas – and the vital role they play in connecting people to nature, people to community and culture, and people to people – require our urgent attention if we are to build a brighter future for the region and guarantee human well-being for generations to come.

We, the delegates to the first Asia Parks Congress, recognize the crucial value of Asia's protected areas for both ecological and economic well-being, and for building a safe, harmonious and prosperous future for communities in Asia and worldwide. We further recognize that the Asia boom has resulted in a young continent, with a thriving population of youth to which we must pass on our current protected areas knowledge and work, and whose energy and innovation we must embrace to secure this future.

We recognize that Asia's extensive and diverse protected area systems have a crucial role to play in reaching global biodiversity goals, including Aichi Target 11, which calls for at least 17 per cent of the world's terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, to be equitably managed and conserved by 2020.

We are, therefore, acutely aware of the urgent need to enhance the management of Asia's protected areas, by increasing their share of human and financial resources, particularly for those on the ground at the conservation frontlines, and adopting global best practice approaches.

### **Protected Areas for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery**

We recognize that disasters in Asia are a significant and ever-present threat, as exemplified by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, and typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in 2013, and that damage caused by disasters has become more severe as a result of population growth, urbanization, poorly planned development, inappropriate land use and climate change.

We also recognize that ecosystem based disaster risk reduction and protected areas enhance local resilience in areas at high risk of disasters. Such proactive approaches also contribute to disaster

prevention and mitigation through utilization of ecosystem services. Furthermore, healthy ecosystems sustain industries which are underpinned by local biodiversity, such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism.

We recognize that nature restoration efforts that contribute to local community recovery in disaster-affected areas can promote people's understanding of the natural environment and ecosystems. Robust systems of protected areas can help increase safety for people and communities, and help reduce damage to property and infrastructure.

### **Harmonization of Regional Development and the Conservation of Biodiversity**

We recognize that development in Asia is now accelerating. We must find a way to harmonize this development with the conservation of nature, by drawing upon and revitalizing the region's rich heritage of traditional practices, systems and beliefs. The region holds rich flora and fauna in its natural environments, and harbors some of the world's highest biodiversity. Its wide range of climatic regions stretches across an exceedingly wide terrestrial and marine range. Many biodiversity hotspots are found within these areas, and the effective management and expansion of protected areas in them is critical. The integrity of protected areas needs to be maintained within this development context.

We believe that protected areas are not only a means for the protection of the natural environment, but also a means for achieving harmony between humans and nature. They are also powerful engines for sustainable development and for securing human well-being. As such, human interventions through promoting best practices and good management in protected areas are instrumental to the maintenance of biodiversity in Asia's landscapes and seascapes.

### **Collaborative Management of Protected Areas**

We recognize that communities in Asia are traditionally connected to the land and sea, and that protected areas must take this into account. Protected areas must therefore also help provide economic benefits and improved livelihoods to the region in which they are located without compromising biodiversity.

We recognize that in order to prosper, protected areas in Asia must connect to the wider landscapes and seascapes within which they exist, and that governments must help facilitate this. Asia must extol traditional approaches that see protected areas not as isolated islands in a sea of development, but as blue and green threads that restore the fabric of nature. Beyond the physical landscapes and seascapes, a diverse range of individuals, local communities and institutions must be engaged and resourced to ensure protected areas benefit all. These include local governments, the private sector, indigenous peoples, NGOs and youth. Diverse governance regimes are necessary for protected areas in Asia and should contribute to effective conservation of biodiversity. Governance for protected areas should be based on their specific ecological, historical and political contexts.

## **Linkages between Protected Area Management and Cultures and Traditions**

We recognize that protected areas, especially sacred natural sites and indigenous peoples and community conserved areas, are often deeply rooted in local cultures and traditions and that these must be supported and encouraged in order to flourish and reconnect people with nature.

Furthermore, we recognize that many cultures and religions originating in Asia have a deep reverence for natural features and phenomena, and have created sacred natural sites that are protected and managed by local communities. These special places not only contribute to the spiritual richness and well-being of people and communities, but also play a valuable role in conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services.

## **Sustainable Tourism and Education for Environment and Sustainable Development**

We recognize that protected areas provide opportunities for tourism and education, and that nature contributes to human health and well-being. Protected areas also contribute to community welfare, by serving as ecotourism assets which benefit local peoples and businesses. As the pace of life in Asia quickens and more and more people live in cities, protected areas are becoming increasingly important as harbors of relaxation and refuge which reconnect people to nature's rhythms.

We recognize that protected areas with beautiful scenery, rich biodiversity, and strong local cultures and traditions are attractive destinations for tourism. Tourism in protected areas must be responsible and sustainable, and act as an incentive to encourage a sense of stewardship in visitors, managers, local communities, businesses and other stakeholders. Education for environment and sustainable development is a useful tool to help interpret the natural and cultural values of protected areas.

## **Strengthening Protected Area Collaboration**

We recognize that protected areas in Asia cannot address the challenges of Asia's growth and development without strengthening cooperation and collaboration. We must promote international collaboration to identify important places for biodiversity, especially in developing countries, so as to ensure resilience to climate change. Enhancing Asian protected area collaboration would increase the effectiveness of the region's protected areas, and lead to increased dialogue and strengthened ties among countries. We also recognize the importance of embedding protected areas into broader land use and sectoral planning. Furthermore, we also note the importance of stimulating national and site level alliances, and point to the necessity of increased coordination and cooperation with existing biodiversity related international and regional agreements and frameworks.

## **Our Commitments**

The time to seize the opportunities associated with Asia's unprecedented growth and dynamism is now. As Asia increasingly begins to lead on the world stage, it is imperative that our protected areas also take the lead, and that we use our wealth of cultures, traditions, and human and natural resources, coupled with our optimism and creativity, to actively address challenges here and worldwide.

We affirm our commitment to broaden understanding of the important role that protected areas play in disaster risk reduction and recovery.

We affirm our commitment to increase the potential of protected areas to provide opportunities for responsible tourism and environmental education in a way that is participatory, sustainable and beneficial to local communities.

We affirm our commitment to enhance protected area networks and cooperation through stronger engagement with central and local governments, business, indigenous peoples, NGOs and youth, to strengthen the efforts to mainstream protected area conservation and management in the developmental agenda, and to increase financial and technical support for protected areas.

We affirm our commitment to respect and integrate local cultures and traditions, and to listen to the voices of those practicing them, in the designation and management of protected areas.

We affirm our commitment to ensure the integrity of protected areas by reducing the threats to biodiversity and the ecosystem services they hold, in addition to strengthening their ability to serve as reservoirs of globally threatened biodiversity and to contribute to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

We affirm our commitment to increase protected areas collaboration, to inspire and innovate through these enhanced relationships, to improve governance and management capacity, and to champion the value of protected areas in Asia.

Through these commitments, we will strengthen our collaborative spirit and heighten our resolve to ensure Asia remains a leader in protected area policy and practice. We will capture the energy and imagination of the current Asia boom to build a foundation of connection, respect, and momentum for protected areas to conserve biodiversity. We will work toward a future where protected areas enhance human progress, resulting in people living in harmony with nature.

***Adopted by the delegates of the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia Parks Congress on 17 November 2013, at Sendai, Japan.***

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<sup>i</sup> For the purposes of this Charter, 'protected areas' are as defined by IUCN: "A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values". Protected areas include terrestrial, marine and freshwater systems and include protected areas established and managed under the four governance types recognized by IUCN, viz: governance by government (at various levels); governance by various rightsholders and stakeholders together (shared governance); governance by private individuals and organizations; and governance by indigenous peoples and/or local communities. Finally, this Charter also concerns the many private protected areas (PPAs), sacred sites, indigenous peoples' and community conserved areas (ICCAs), and other protected areas which may not yet have achieved formal recognition and recording within the UNEP-WCMC World Database on Protected Areas.