



Vision for Water and Nature

A World Strategy

for Conservation

and Sustainable

Management

of Water Resources

in the 21st Century



A brief synopsis
of the Vision for
Water and Nature

For full document
please refer to address
on the back cover



Early on a February morning in the year 2025, on a vast floodplain of the Sahel, Ibrahim Diaw leads his herd of long-horned cattle to their dry-season pastures. He watches the animals closely with squinted eyes and with soft calls he urges them on. The grazing routes for nomadic herders are based on the ecosystem restoration programme initiated at the turn of the millennium. Using these migration pathways no longer results in violent conflicts with farmers, as was the case 40 years ago after intensive irrigated rice schemes were constructed throughout the plain. Now his herd prospers through access to large expanses of restored perennial grassland, including those of the new Wahta Biosphere Reserve. Throughout the wet and dry seasons, water holes provide drinking water for his animals and the floodplain 'works' for the benefit of Ibrahim and the local people. They can now count on stable livelihoods based on recession agriculture, semi-intensive production, and artisanal and small-scale fishing. Ibrahim walks in the grass and thinks of the past – desiccated flats, 25 years without a single wedding in the village, his father who thought that they had been forgotten by God... He thinks that efforts to mitigate the impacts of infrastructure development are about to pay off: the dikes have been put to good use, artificial flooding schemes are effective and water is no longer wasted. Ibrahim's floodplain is alive and its water resources are used wisely.

Vision for Water and Nature

A Vision is presented here of a world in which the benefits of freshwater and related ecosystems to humankind are optimised, while the intrinsic values of these systems are respected and preserved. In this world, the mutual dependence of people and ecosystems is accepted, and unavoidable loss of ecosystems' functions and biodiversity is more than compensated through restoration.

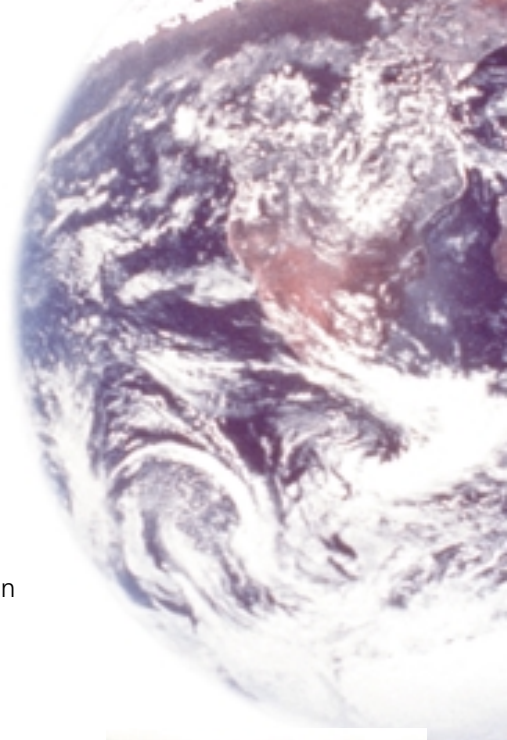
This Vision describes a world in which **environmental security** is guaranteed because everyone values and accepts personal responsibility for the conservation and wise use of freshwater and related ecosystems. The maintenance of environmental security is based on integrated management of all land and water use through an ecosystem-based approach within river and drainage basins, including their associated marine and coastal zones.

It is also a world in which **social security** is strengthened by providing everyone with equitable access to and responsibility for safe and sufficient water resources to meet their needs and rights, by means that maintain the integrity of freshwater and related ecosystems.

Finally, it is a world where ecosystems are managed and used in a fair and equitable manner for **economic security**. Efforts are made to rectify and reverse existing trends in demographics, consumption patterns and human-nature relationships, in order to ensure that the current and future demands for water resources are realistically achievable without compromising the ecological, biological and hydrological basis and integrity of freshwater and related ecosystems.



Why?



Why do we need a Vision for Water and Nature?

At the start of the new millennium, we realise the world is reaching the limits of its water resources. No longer can we depend on engineering and technical solutions to support further growth of our population and increases in consumption.

Freshwater and related ecosystems supply and renew the water that we use. But more and more, they are being degraded to the point that they can no longer support the diversity of life and the life-giving functions they have always served.



Must we follow a path which leads to a world in which...

Contamination of surface and groundwater render it useless for humans or nature?

Declining fish populations intensify demands for protein from livestock?

Conflicts erupt due to competition over increasingly scarce water resources?

Collapse of ecosystems results from failure to control human population growth and rising consumption?

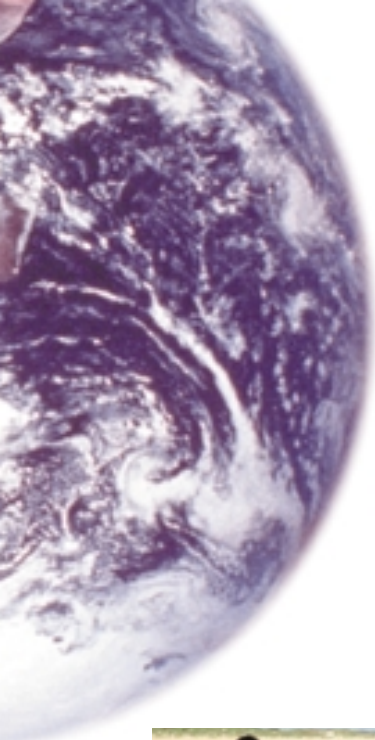
Degradation and loss of wetlands leads to erosion and flooding?

Loss of species and habitats reduces the world's biological diversity?

Dead Rivers become open sewers that transport pollutants to degraded coastal and marine ecosystems?

No... The Vision proposes a

NEW PATH of conservation and equitable sharing for a sustainable world.



What **actions** will help us to achieve the world of our vision in 2025?

A new strategy is required in order to cope with increasing demands for water resources...

... a **strategy** for development which satisfies basic human needs while at the same time conserving the vitality and diversity of ecosystems.

... a **strategy** which addresses the destruction and degradation of ecosystems in the context of increasing competition for water resources.



We must profoundly reconsider our attitudes and behaviour towards water its uses and its management. The Vision for Water and Nature provides an action plan for achieving these goals. It is not a prescription, but is intended to assist in bringing about fundamental change in the way we value and care for our water resources.

Actions

By 1995, one global assessment showed that freshwater biodiversity had decreased by 50 per cent in 25 years.

(World Conservation Monitoring Centre 1998. Freshwater Biodiversity: a preliminary assessment)

CARE

Conserve and restore the planet's freshwater resources

RIVER BASINS

Adopt an ecosystem-based approach within basins for sustainable water resources management

PEOPLE

Empower local groups to establish responsible water use and take part in decision-making

GOVERNANCE

Create political will and good governance to establish wise water use and prevent water conflicts

COMMUNICATION

Raise awareness and build capacity to counter human water wastage and ecosystem destruction

KNOW-HOW

Develop and exchange knowledge of ecosystem functions and the technology to improve water resources management



How?

How was the Vision for Water and Nature developed?

The Vision for Water and Nature is the environment and ecosystems component of the Vision for Water, Life and the Environment for the 21st century, generally known as the World Water Vision.

IUCN – The World Conservation Union accepted with pride and some measure of trepidation the awesome task of leading the development of this Vision. After all, this was the first attempt to fully integrate environmental issues into a comprehensive strategy for water resources management at the global level. Too often, the environment is treated as a sub-sector of the water resources management issue. In the Vision process it was clear that the environment should be integrated at every step; this is what the IUCN team endeavoured to do.

A large group of organisations and individuals were involved in the production of this Vision. From January 1999 until early 2000, extensive consultations with stakeholders took place. Three thought-provoking papers were discussed in three theme-based workshops:

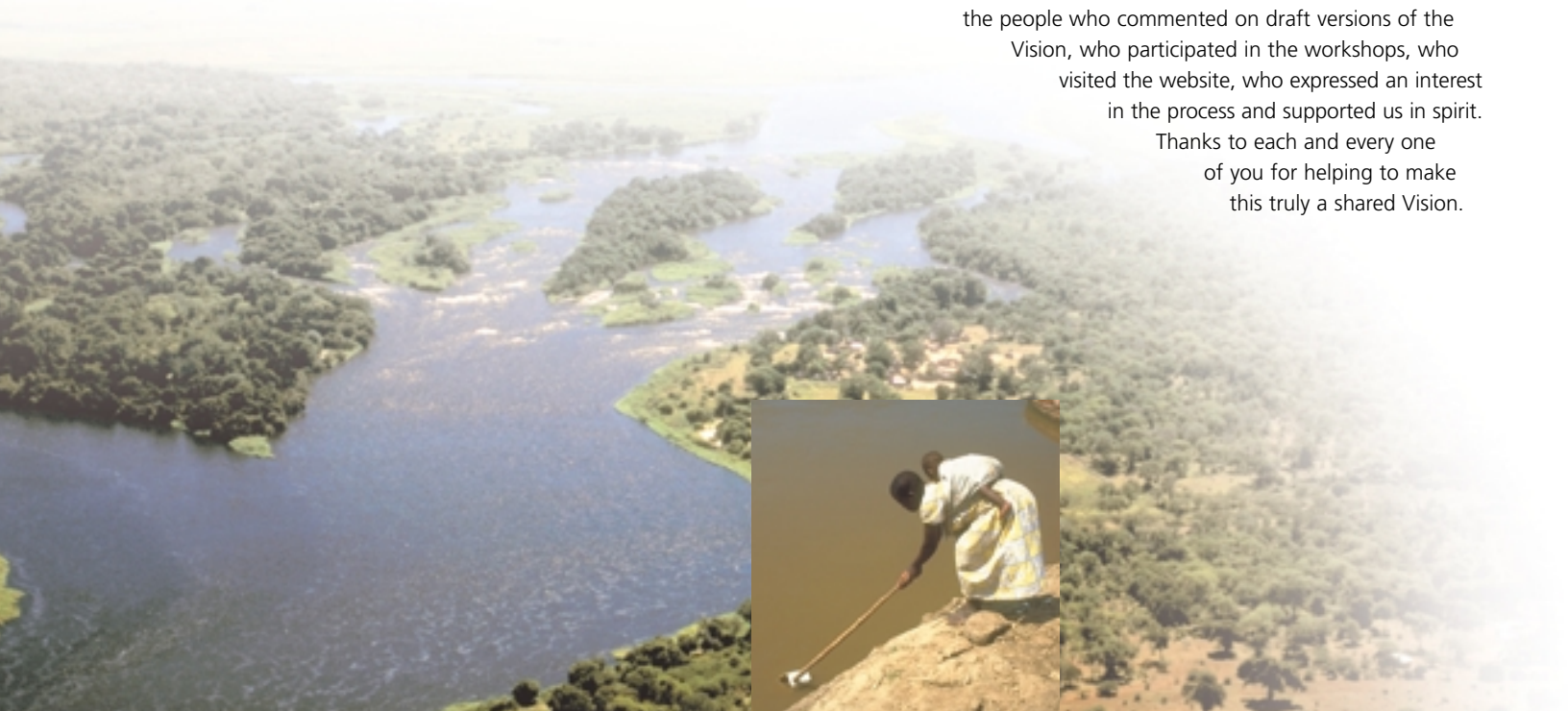
Freshwater ecosystem management and **social** security, Harare, Zimbabwe

Freshwater ecosystem management and **economic** security, Bangkok, Thailand

Freshwater ecosystem management and **environmental** security, San José, Costa Rica

A dedicated internet site and discussion group yielded more inputs. Results from this process were provided to other fora and to the World Water Vision team, and vice versa.

We are grateful to all those who helped build this Vision: the people who commented on draft versions of the Vision, who participated in the workshops, who visited the website, who expressed an interest in the process and supported us in spirit. Thanks to each and every one of you for helping to make this truly a shared Vision.





“For many nations today, security concerns centre less on boundaries and external military might than on increasing conflicts stemming from poverty, displaced peoples, economic instability and competition over shared resources. These conflicts are major issues and all of them are environment related... Though the environment today is a cause of political tension around the globe and will likely become a substantial source of conflict in the years ahead, there is also evidence that the equitable resolution of resource disputes can help promote wider peace among nations.”

Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan,
Patron of IUCN

VISION

www.waterandnature.org

Full *Vision for Water and Nature* available in English, French and Spanish.

A compilation of all *Vision for Water and Nature* documents also available.

Ce document est également disponible en français

Disponible en español

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