



INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION CONGRESS 2000 KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA

1. Context

Rangers are increasingly required to adapt to fast changing and new conditions in the conservation of protected areas. This change ranges from political uncertainty, to diminishing financial and other resources, increasing pressures on protected areas from people, and global climate change.

The IRF congress of 2000, comprising delegates from 58 countries, deliberated on these challenges. It reflected on the roles of the ranger and of the IRF in general, and specifically on issues of area integrity, communities, as well as ecotourism and business.

With respect to the issue of area integrity, it was noted that rangers play a critical role in the pursuit of area integrity, which is essential for the ongoing function and success of protected areas. A range of institutional challenges, which threaten area integrity, are faced by rangers around the world including a lack of political will, the absence of relevant governmental policy and legislation, limited legal recognition of rangers, as well as difficulties in involving communities in protected area management. A conducive institutional environment based on partnerships involving government, business and communities can contribute significantly to area integrity. Rangers are also confronted by a need for training, mentoring and knowledge to support their efforts to protect area integrity. Inadequate resources, including limited finances and other resources such as skilled personnel, bedevil efforts at ensuring area integrity. Threats to biodiversity pose a further distinct challenge to area integrity. These include global warming, the effects of alien invasive species, fire, and a wide array of human activities and impacts.

In its deliberations on the role of rangers with respect to communities, it was noted that, parks do not exist as “islands in a sea of humanity.” Rangers recognise the need to work with local communities and other stakeholders in planning and managing protected areas to ensure their long-term success. A participatory management approach needs to be put in place to reconcile conflicting activities and to ensure that the benefits from protected areas are shared on a sustainable equitable basis. Ongoing financial support, training and other resources are required to ensure that both rangers and communities can work together effectively. Central to this task is building partnerships that are based on trust, mutual respect and a common understanding of the role and benefits of protected areas.

In discussion of protected areas, ecotourism and business, it was noted that there are diminishing financial resources available to protected areas. There are, however opportunities that exist in creating income from ecotourism, as well as the potential for increasing efficiency through outsourcing non-core functions. Rangers recognise their general lack of capacity in business management. They are also concerned that the primary role of biodiversity conservation may be negatively affected by business interests. The overall consideration is the integration of ecotourism and business into conservation management in a way that protects the resources on which these economic benefits can be attained. Key issues that need to be addressed include: business planning skills, conservation development spatial planning, operational visitor servicing and management, ensuring community benefits, managing partnerships in the involvement of the private sector and communities, and marketing.

2. Resolutions

Having noted its changing context, the IRF recognised the critical role of rangers in protected area management. It reaffirmed its mission to empower rangers to deal with new and significant challenges. It reaffirmed that as a federation it needed to continue to play four key roles, namely:

Leadership:

The IRF must continue to play a leadership role in setting a vision for rangers, providing specific direction through communicating best practice and in building the confidence of rangers to deal with current-day and future challenges.

More specifically it resolved to:

- Promote the status and profile of rangers globally.
- Promote the development of national ranger associations.
- Emphasize the traditional role of the ranger as a resource protector and educator while adopting strategies to promote the ranger's newer role as a link between his/her area, local communities, and the private sector.

Lobbying:

The IRF must continue to lobby key international and country-based decision-makers to promote the role of the ranger, as well as secure the future and improve the overall status and management of protected areas.

More specifically it resolved to:

- Make use of international forums that promote protected areas, including the IUCN World Parks Conference in 2003, and the World Commission for Protected Areas.
- Lobby, where appropriate, national governments to legally recognise rangers and their professional status, as well as accord them appropriate powers in law and decision making at the highest level.
- Lobby for political support for the work of rangers.
- Promote linkages between national governmental authorities and rangers.
- Initiate a diversified communications strategy, including a media liaison strategy and the development of an IRF website.
- Petition for representation at CITES meetings to represent field-level personnel.

Training:

The IRF must continue to facilitate the skills development of rangers to enable them to implement best practice.

More specifically it resolved to:

- Establish a set of international standards for ranger training
- Coordinate programmes for the training of rangers, and provide information on training resources.
- Seek to extend the European Ranger Training Project globally.
- Pursue the establishment of mentoring programmes for rangers.
- Encourage the provision of adequate equipment and infrastructure so that rangers can adequately discharge their responsibilities.

Networking:

The IRF must continue to act as a catalyst for continual improvement in protected area management by expanding its current networking function.

More specifically it resolved to:

- Promote linkages with other international organisations engaged in related activities.
- Exchange information and knowledge about their work.
- Promote and facilitate ranger exchange programmes.
- Promote the role of the ranger as an environmental law enforcement agent in those countries in which rangers are assigned such authority.

Area Integrity

In an effort to promote and ensure area integrity, the IRF resolved to:

- Endorse and promote international agreements aimed at the protection of biodiversity.
- Encourage the monitoring of key indicators of biodiversity.
- Facilitate a study to establish the economic value of protected areas.
- Promote policies which seek to retain, at source, fees earned within protected areas.
- Promote the adoption of international, national and local agreements aimed at preventing habitat loss.
- Actively support the promotion of trans-boundary protected areas.
- Establish guidelines for the preparation of management plans for protected areas.
- Continue to pursue the establishment of a United Nations Green Helmet initiative.

Communities and the Ranger

In an effort to promote and ensure that an effective partnership is developed between rangers and local communities and other stakeholders, the IRF resolved to:

- Channel donor funds to park-community projects that are sustainable.
- Establish a global fund to finance alternatives to conflicting uses.
- Develop and implement a training programme that promotes ranger-community partnerships, with a specific focus on cultural sensitivity and community needs and interests.
- Develop and disseminate standards and guidelines for community involvement.
- Facilitate the exchange of best practice on community involvement.
- Establish an inter-cultural relations support committee.
- Lobby for the establishment of strategies to compensate local, traditional people who have been required to discontinue their historical land use practices so that protected areas could be established in areas they once controlled.

Business and Ecotourism

In an effort to promote and ensure that ecotourism and business in protected areas meets the objective of sustainable development, the IRF resolved to:

- Communicate the internationally accepted definition of sustainable ecotourism.
- Promote park-community-business partnerships.
- Encourage the private sector to invest in ecotourism.
- Encourage proper planning and evaluation of ecotourism activities.