



## THE VILLA DE LEYVA DECLARATION

### **Knowing ...**

That only healthy and well managed environments can provide the citizens and communities of all our nations with the social, economic and cultural resources they require to lead enriched and fulfilled lives.

### **Understanding...**

That the loss or degradation of natural systems makes our communities vulnerable to flooding, soil erosion and disease, and can seriously reduce the availability of clean water, food, wood, and pollinators for agriculture, and can exacerbate global climate change.

### **Acknowledging...**

That the sustainable management of our natural resources can make significant impact on poverty alleviation, improve the health and well-being of our communities, and provide significant contributions to local and national economies.

### **Recognising...**

That our nations urgently need individuals, communities, organisations and governments with the required skills, knowledge and information to undertake a wide range of actions to monitor, protect and sustainably manage our natural environment.

### **Stressing...**

That actions designed to protect and manage natural systems are more likely to succeed if there is regional and national political support, which is informed by skills, knowledge and information originating at the local level.

### **Defining...**

Capacity building as the strategic development of appropriate conservation skills, knowledge and enabling environments within our nations' communities, organisations and governments.

### **Alarmed ...**

That despite huge efforts in this area by many organisations and governments, there is a widening gap between the levels of conservation capacity available, and the capacity required to adequately confront the loss of biodiversity by monitoring, protecting and sustainably managing our natural resources.

### **Responding ...**

To the collective determination of conference delegates to share experiences and best practice in capacity building for conservation, and participate in delivering effective solutions to common problems.

### **The signatories of this declaration commit to ...**

- ✓ Develop, maintain and grow an international network of people involved in capacity building for the environmental sector.
- ✓ Create a five year plan of prioritised actions to which members of the new network can contribute.
- ✓ Communicate and share resources through websites and other media.
- ✓ Develop greater clarification of the precise meaning of 'capacity building for conservation' and associated issues, and communicating this to relevant donors, organisations and government agencies.
- ✓ Meet at least every two years to share opportunities and best practice in relation to capacity building.
- ✓ Develop systematic methods for evaluating the impact of conservation capacity building and communicate more effectively these results to an international audience

### **The signatories of this declaration strongly urge ...**

Government departments and agencies, environmental organisations, educational organisations and relevant donors to work together to.....

- ✓ Develop and implement national and institutional level capacity building strategies for the environmental sector that will address the urgent need to radically scale-up current levels of capacity.
- ✓ Mobilise adequate funds and ensure 'enabling' policies and legal and institutional frameworks to support and facilitate the required capacity building activities within communities and organisations.
- ✓ Fulfil current capacity building commitments within the work plans of international conventions and national biodiversity strategies.
- ✓ Evaluate levels of environmental capacity within their own staff and implement collaborative actions to improve capacity in key areas.
- ✓ Facilitate the development of comparative indexing methodologies to measure national levels of conservation capacity.
- ✓ Support capacity building initiatives that generate conservation leaders and strong institutions.
- ✓ Participate in collaborative networks to develop and support effective solutions to capacity building issues.
- ✓ Work towards merit based and equitable systems to recruit, retain and promote staff, determine beneficiaries of training opportunities, reward individuals for improved capacity and performance, and promote just working conditions and greater employment stability to maximize the impact of capacity building investments.