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Caucasus Protected Areas Fund

CPAF Appoints CEO and Launches Operations

The Caucasus Protected Areas Fund announced today that it has appointed David Morrison, a prominent international lawyer, as its first executive director.

The foundation was created last year when the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German development bank KfW joined forces as initial sponsors with two leading nature NGO's—WWF and Conservation International. With David Morrison's appointment and start-up endowment funds of Euro 8 million now in place, the Fund is ready to begin its mission to promote nature conservation in the Caucasus.

Background of the CPAF

The Caucasus is one of the most biologically and geographically diverse regions in the world. Forming the geographic border between Europe and Asia, the Caucasus contains Europe's five highest mountains, its lowest point, nine of the world's eleven climate zones, and one of the world's largest old growth forests in a temperate zone—a valuable carbon-sink in the earth's battle against climate change.

The Caucasus' incredible variety of animal and plant life--symbolized by the spotted leopard which still runs wild-- is threatened by such problems as unsustainable development, destruction of forests for fuel and poaching. Conservation International has designated the region as one of the world's 34 "bio-diversity hotspots".

The CPAF will focus on the core Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, each of which obtained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.¹ In all three countries there is an abundance of pristine nature, much of which is already in national parks or reserves, but a severe shortage of funds for the day-to-day work of preserving it. The CPAF's mission will be to meet this critical but unaddressed need: the funding of operating and maintenance costs for protected areas, such as salaries for rangers, park scientists and information officers, and costs for equipment, supplies and training.

In a region where political strife continues, this initiative represents a rare display of cooperation and dialogue among the three focus countries. In endorsing the establishment of the CPAF, each has agreed to submit proposals to increase funding for the preservation of their natural treasures. Critically, they have also agreed to provide 50% of the funding—assuring local "ownership"--of the programs. The CPAF will supply on an ongoing basis the other 50%. As a by-product, the CPAF hopes to promote this nascent regional dialogue. Indeed, the German government's contribution is in the context of its Caucasus Initiative which encourages cross-border cooperation and contributes to conflict prevention.

Appointment of David Morrison

David Morrison's initial tasks as Executive Director will include:

- seeking the significant additional funding required for the foundation to fulfill its mission;

- negotiating with the governments of the three focus countries the framework under which the foundation will disburse monies; and
- recommending to the CPAF board specific programs for funding proposed by the governments, and monitoring the spending under approved projects.

Mr. Morrison is a U.S. citizen who has lived most of his adult life in France and Germany. He practiced law as a partner of the international law firm Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, where he spent 28 years specializing in international finance. He was instrumental in his former firm's expansion in continental Europe and was responsible for numerous transactions involving governments and businesses all over Europe, including some of the largest privatizations in Europe. He received his undergraduate degree from Yale University, his law degree from UCLA, and was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Frankfurt. He is 55 years old.

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ⁱ Six countries form the eco-regional hotspot—the three core countries plus the border areas with Russia, Turkey and Iran, which for a variety of reasons will not be the focus of the CPAF.