Dear Colleagues,

We would like to request your input into a consultation to define the set of minimum documentation standards required to support IUCN Red List assessments. This is because many people have mentioned that they find them somewhat challenging and time consuming to complete.

At its recent meeting in April 2011, the IUCN Red List Technical Working Group discussed the current set of minimum documentation standards required to support an IUCN Red List assessment, in response to a variety of concerns raised in recent years. Their recommendations are summarised in the attached document, and the purpose of this consultation is to seek your views.

Firstly, the Working Group noted that the current description of these requirements in the Red List Authority Terms of Reference (attached to this e-mail) is not as helpful as it might be, as many of them are only relevant to assessments under particular circumstances, and that relatively few fields are necessary for all assessments.

Secondly, the Working Group considered all the required and recommended fields against three criteria that the minimum set of documentation on any Red List assessment of a taxon would ideally meet:

* ***To support and justify adequately each Red List assessment*** - the data that support the assessment of the taxon, and that are needed to allow the Red List criteria to be applied appropriately and consistently across taxa.
* ***To permit basic analyses of Red List status across species*** - the data underpinning the type of analyses presented in IUCN publications such as ‘Wildlife in a Changing World’, depicting for each taxonomic group the proportion of species threatened, their geographic distribution, the nature of threats impacting them etc. Such analyses underpin scientific, communications and advocacy materials to advance conservation for these species.
* ***To allow people to search iucnredlist.org for species*** - the data permitting people to undertake basic searches on the Red List website that allow them to find sets of species in particular taxonomic groups, habitats, countries or impacted by particular threats etc.

Using these criteria, the Working Group has proposed a revised set of required fields for all assessments, a set of required fields for particular assessments under specified conditions, and a set of recommended (but not obligatory) fields; the latter fields include information that helps to inform conservation and research actions and which has formed a core part of the supporting documentation collected through IUCN Global Species Programme, and many IUCN Red List Partner-led, assessments to date.  These can be found in the attached document entitled “Documentation\_Requirements\_Consultations”.

I would be very grateful if you would send me your comments on the proposals contained in this document. Specialist Groups and stand-alone Red List Authorities are urged to send a consolidated response to the document, where possible, after consultation within their respective constituencies via a designated focal point. This document will be sent to the following:

SSC Specialist Group Chairs

Red List Authorities and focal points

Plant Conservation Subcommittee

Marine Conservation Subcommittee

Freshwater Conservation Subcommittee

Invertebrate Conservation Subcommittee

Species Conservation Planning Subcommittee

IUCN Red List Partners

Standards and Petitions Subcommittee

IUCN Global Species Programme

IUCN Regional Species staff

The deadline for feedback is **October 14th 2011** and comments will be synthesised into a report to be submitted for discussion at the next Red List Technical Working Group meeting, and advice from this meeting will be provided to the IUCN Red List Committee, who will provide recommendations to the SSC Chair and the Director of the Global Species Programme for changes to the current Red List Authority Terms of Reference at the beginning of the next quadrennium 2013-2016.

Please bear in mind when making your comments that while this process aims to facilitate the Red List assessment process for its users it should not undermine its scientific rigour.  The ultimate goal of this consultation is a broad consensus agreement on how the process can be accelerated without reducing the quality of its scientific underpinnings.

I realise that this is an important issue for many of you so please use this important opportunity to share your own experiences and opinions of the Red List Documentation Standards.  If you should have any questions regarding the consultation, please do not hesitate to contact me -andrew.rodrigues@iucn.org and, so that you do not forget to comment, I will send out a monthly reminder to you all!

I look forward to hearing from you all.

Kind regards,

Andrew Rodrigues.