

May 1, 2017

Ms. Inger Andersen
Director General, IUCN
Rue Mauvemeys 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland

Mr. Sean Southey
Chair, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication

Ms. Angela Andrade
Chair, Commission on Ecosystem Management

Ms. Kristen Waker Painemilla
Chair, IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy

Mr. Jon Paul Rodriguez
Chair, IUCN Species Survival Commission

Mr. Antonio Benjamin
Chair, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law

Ms. MACKINNON, Kathy MacKinnon
Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

Mr. Tim Badman
Director, IUCN World Heritage Programme

Request regarding the IUCN Recommendations on the U.S. military base construction project in the Henoko-Oura Bay, Nago City, Okinawa, Japan in conjunction with the IUCN's field inspection to consider Amami Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern area of Okinawa Island and Iriomote Island as sites for inclusion on the World Heritage List

Dear Ms. Inger Andersen, Mr. Sean Southey, Ms. Angela Andrade, Ms. Painemilla Walker, Mr. Jon Paul Rodriguez, Mr. Antonio Benjamin, Ms. Kathy Mackinnon and Mr. Tim Badman,

We are truly grateful to the International Union for Conservation of Nature for adopting recommendations on four occasions regarding the plan to construct a U.S. military base in the Henoko-Oura Bay area in Nago City in Okinawa, Japan, and for providing me with the opportunity to talk about the environmental problems related to this base construction at the 6th IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii last year. From a desire to resolve the environmental problems just referred to, I would now like to outline my concerns based what has occurred to date and also to make some requests to the IUCN.

At present, the Japanese government is ignoring long-standing opposition from the residents of Nago City and Okinawa Prefecture by pressing ahead with the land reclamation required for the construction of a military base in the Henoko-Oura Bay area. This is one of Japan's most biodiverse coastal areas, having been given a ranking of 1 (the highest ranking possible) in Okinawa Prefecture's Guidelines for the Protection of the Natural Environment. (Please refer to pamphlet attached. → <http://www.city.nago.okinawa.jp/10/9546.html>)

The Japanese government states that the base construction can go ahead because the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted by the Okinawa Defense Bureau in 2012 concluded that 1) its construction and operation will not have an adverse impact on the

environment and 2) that the protective measures planned are both appropriate and sufficient. However, given that scientists, various experts, environmental NGOs, and Okinawa Prefecture's Environmental Impact Assessment Review Committee have pointed out numerous problems with both the conclusion and the manner by which it was reached, in terms of my position of protecting the natural environment of the Nago District, I too am unable to accept the assessment. In particular, given the identity of the "experts" who produced the conclusion has not been made public, I contend that the conclusion lacks scientific legitimacy.

Nineteen academic societies, including the Ecological Society of Japan issued a joint statement in 2014 in which they called for further investigation and a reassessment. The statement indicated that the Defense Bureau EIA "makes no mention of unrecorded species recently discovered" and that "the unique nature of the diverse and complex ecosystem that exists in these waters is not properly evaluated." Also, in the surveys carried out in 2014 by the Defense Bureau itself and by environmental NGOs there were numerous examples provided of evidence of dugong feeding in the area planned for the base construction. This is in stark contrast to the findings published in the 2012 Okinawa Defense Bureau Environmental Impact Assessment, which stated that there was no evidence of dugong feeding in the area. In addition, appropriate measures have not been taken to deal with the issue of the alien species that will be brought in among the huge quantities of soil and sand required from outside Okinawa in order to carry out the reclamation.

While the IUCN has raised the matter of the dugongs and the introduction of alien species in its recommendations, and last year I was given the opportunity to speak at the 6th IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii, no effective or substantive measures have been taken in response, so at this point in time the IUCN recommendations have not been acted upon.

Throughout the ages the sea in the Henoko-Oura Bay area has provided food to support the lives of local residents. Oura Bay is part of the Kushi District and I am from the Kushi District, so I too have benefited from the bounty of Oura Bay. The Henoko-Oura Bay area is part of a fragile island ecological system and, as a local, I am concerned at how development of this area will expose the fragile nature of the local ecosystem.

We now have a situation unfolding in front us in which the Japanese and United States governments are in the process of destroying Oura Bay. They show total disregard to the opposition from residents of Nago City and Okinawa Prefecture to the reclamation works and the construction that will follow and ignore the fact that questions have been raised about the validity of the Environmental Impact Assessment. It is especially painful and sad for us to watch as the sea around part of our homeland is faced with destruction. This is particularly so, when we consider that these waters are so incredibly beautiful and that this is an area of sea totally unique among the world's marine environments.

The construction of a military base in the Henoko-Oura Bay area is more than an issue of military bases; it is an extremely important environmental issue as well as something that has an impact upon the very soul of the local people in Nago and the people of Okinawa in general. The Japanese government insists that maintaining United States military bases in Okinawa is essential for the defense of Japan. In addition to the current situation in which 70 percent of the United States military bases in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6 percent of Japan's land area, the people of Okinawa are incredibly angry at the fact that there are plans to further strengthen the functions of existing bases. For these reasons, I believe that resolution of this matter needs to occur according to the principles of democracy and be based upon scientific knowledge.

I understand that on 1 February 2017, the IUCN received nominations from the Japanese government for Amami Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the northern area of Okinawa Island and Iriomote Island to be considered for inclusion on the World Heritage List, and that related field inspection is to be carried out this summer. The Henoko-Oura Bay area is part of the ecosystem of the northern area of Okinawa Island and is located less than 20kms from the area that has been nominated by the Japanese government as a World Heritage site. I consider it to be in no way inferior to the sites nominated by the Japanese government and to be just as precious.

In this respect, when the IUCN carries out its field inspection of the nominated sites this summer, I ask that you take the following requests into consideration.

Requests:

1. That an expert in the area of invasive alien species be included among the people who take part in the field inspection this summer

There is less than 20kms between Nago City and the site nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List. As part of the United States Marine Corps Futenma Air Station Relocation Project, 21 million cubic meters of soil and rock is scheduled to be used as landfill materials in the reclamation of waters in the Henoko-Oura Bay area and 17 million cubic meters of the landfill materials is scheduled to be brought from outside of Okinawa. Environment organizations such as the Nature Conservation Society of Japan are raising questions about the presence of alien species in landfill materials. If there are alien species in the landfill materials to be dumped into Oura Bay off Henoko, it is highly likely that they will eventually move to the area that has been nominated as a World Heritage site. At the 6th IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii last September a resolution was adopted regarding "Strengthening pathway management of alien species in island ecosystems" and specific mention was made of the need to "address introduction pathways for alien species, especially those contaminating landfill materials." Therefore, we request that an expert in this area come to Okinawa to inspect this aspect of the situation.

2. That the IUCN carry out an inspection visit to the Henoko-Oura Bay area

The USMC Futenma Air Station Relocation Project is currently underway in the Henoko-Oura Bay in Nago City. To date, the area has had three IUCN recommendations issued (2000, 2004 and 2008) regarding the environment impact assessment and conservation of rare species such as dugong and one (2016) regarding "Strengthening pathway management of alien species in island ecosystems." We request that the area where the base relocation project is being carried out be included in the areas scheduled for inspection this year, and that the IUCN review what measures the Japanese government has taken in response to the IUCN recommendations and consider a response to that.

3. That time be put aside for discussion with Nago Municipal Office staff during the IUCN field inspection referred to in 2. above

We understand that during the inspection carried out when the Ogasawara Islands were registered as a World Heritage site, there was time put aside for discussion with local residents. We request to be given an opportunity to discuss the issue of the Henoko-Oura Bay area with the IUCN representatives during the field inspection.

4. That IUCN pay more attention to military activities and their impacts on the environment.

Proactive and ongoing debate and review need to be undertaken from a conservation standpoint regarding military activities, including the construction of military bases. In particular, we are keen to hear the opinions of experts in the IUCN regarding the environmental impact of the reclamation of land for the USMC Futenma Air Station Relocation Project and the expected increase in the area of military training exercises.

Further Requests:

1. That the IUCN seek the opinion of Dr. Kunitoshi Sakurai (*1), professor emeritus at Okinawa University, regarding the legal procedures undertaken with respect to the USMC Futenma Air Station Relocation Project. Professor Sakurai was a member of the Okinawan Third Party (Experts) Commission, which reviewed the land reclamation approval process for the Okinawa Prefectural Government. He also participated in the hearings held in preparation to submitting the official statements of opinion from the Mayor of Nago regarding the application for approval to reclaim public waters for the Relocation Project.
2. That the IUCN seek the opinion of Dr. Mariko Abe (*2) of the Nature Conservation Society of Japan regarding the potential impact of landfill materials. Dr. Abe is a marine biologist and has conducted surveys on corals and ecosystems in the Henoko -Oura Bay area. She participated in the hearings held in preparation to submitting official statements of opinion from the Mayor of Nago regarding the application for approval to reclaim public waters for the Relocation Project.
3. That the IUCN seek the opinion of Associate Professor Takeshi Tokashiki (*3) of the University of the Ryukyus with regard to the level of noise resulting from US military training and its impact on the environment. Associate Professor Tokashiki participates in the hearings held in preparation to submitting statements of opinion from the Mayor of Nago regarding the application for approval to reclaim public waters for the Relocation Project.
4. That the IUCN seek the opinion of Mr. Hideki Yoshikawa (*4) with regard to communication and discussion between environmental NGOs- residents and the Japanese government on the matter of the United States Marine Corps Futenma Air Station Relocation Project. Mr. Yoshikawa is a Nago resident who has been involved in these requests and negotiations and serves as the international Director of the Save the Dugong Campaign Centre and as the Director of the Okinawa Environmental Justice Project.

※1 sakurai@okinawa-u.ac.jp
※2 abe@nacsj.or.jp
※3 tokat@tec.u-ryukyu.ac.jp
※4 yhidekiy@gmail.com

As mayor of Nago City, I intend to continue to do my best to cooperate with the IUCN and look very much look forward to receiving a positive response to our requests.

Susumu Inamine



Mayor of Nago City
Okinawa
Japan