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**Eng. Raed Bani Hani
Ministry of Environment
JORDAN**

Development of National Policy for the Protected Areas in Jordan

1. Introduction:

Jordan as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, is committed to maintaining and preserving the natural heritage of both our lands and waters, and is doing so through the Biological Diversity Strategy and other relevant strategies and action plans, in which the common aim is that habitats and ecosystems will be maintained in a healthy functioning state, and degraded areas will be allowed to recover.

Currently, Jordan does not have a high proportion of its land resources protected; however, several protected areas have been established over the last 25 years. .

Jordan is committed to the conservation and sustainable use of its natural resources through the designation of the many protected areas. Several pieces of legislation have to date provided the legal foundation for the declaration and establishment of protected areas: the Agricultural Law and the Environmental Protection Law.

The country has further demonstrated its commitment through the ratification of a number of legally binding multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on World Heritage Sites, Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Land Degradation), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, among others.

Currently, Jordan is involved in a process of developing and adopting a national policy for PAs. The proposed policy will cover national parks, nature reserves, wildlife forest reserves as well as private reserves. The present paper summarizes the main findings of a synthesis of the existing framework of PAs in Jordan. The synthesis was performed and organized for/around the following general goals:

1. To summarize existing literature relevant to PA management and to the proposed policy;
2. To provide improved clarity with respect to current institutional arrangements for PA management and to the proposed policy

However, for the purpose of this paper, several literatures have been reviewed, *inter alia*:

- The existing former draft policy framework -not adopted,
- Protected Areas Review report
- Relevant policies (e.g. water, forestry, agriculture)
- Relevant strategies and action plans (e.g. BSAP, NAP, Rangelands, Agriculture)
- Institutional charts and structures of the concerned institutions.
- Draft land use planning framework.
- Policy guidelines (e.g. IUCN, CBD)

2. Objectives of the proposed PAs Policy

The general objective of the policy document is to provide a set of guiding policy principles for the declaration, modification and re-designation where necessary; management and administration; socio-economic assessment and analysis; ecological assessment and analysis, and monitoring and evaluation of protected areas in Jordan.

3. Definition of PA's:

The notion of protected areas developed a great deal in recent years and now embodies many different ideas, nonetheless, IUCN has agreed upon a single definition of a protected areas as follows: an area of land or water that is managed for the protection and maintenance of its ecological systems, biodiversity and/or specific natural, cultural or aesthetic resources through legal or other effective means (IUCN, 1994).

4. Key Principles:

The following principles have been derived mainly from the above list of literature:

- The National Protected Area Policy is the key statement on the role and management of protected areas.
- It should be integrated with other national development plans.
- Economic, social and ecological sustainability is a prime objective for the policy which will seek to optimize socio-economic benefits derived from the system as far as these are compatible with maintaining biodiversity values and sustainable resource management.
- Protected areas are valuable because of the environmental, social, economic and cultural goods and services provided by the ecosystems protected, the flora and fauna comprised in those areas, and the current and potential economic activities related to biodiversity management and conservation.

5. Key components of the PA Policy are:

- Fundamental PA policies
- Resource protection and sustainability
- Environmental benefits and awareness
- Optimize Economic Benefits
- Soci-economic and Community Participation
- Research and Information
- Management and Operations
- Regional cooperation
- Capacity Development

6. The Protected Areas System

Jordan does not, as yet, have an officially endorsed policy on protected areas. There is, however, a draft policy framework produced under the guidance of the Ministry of Planning in 1996. This framework was prepared with technical guidance and financial support from USAID and was published in July 1996 in a report entitled “Jordan Parks Policy Project”, but no action has since been taken to develop and ratify these draft policies. This becomes now the responsibility of the new policy- and the implementers- to identify such actions and propose an implementation strategy.

The policies of most relevance to the natural PA system are the so-called ‘Fundamental Policies’ and these presented verbatim as follows:

- Jordan Protected Areas (JPAs) will conserve the natural, cultural, archaeological, and scenic resources of the kingdom, while leaving them unimpaired for use and enjoyment by future generations. Visitor use, scientific study, education, and public enjoyment should be encouraged, but only in such a manner that will not adversely affect the resource.
- JPAs will be designated through a process of evaluation using the “Selecting Areas for a JPA system Criteria.” An approved set of formal criteria will be applied during the designation process to assess significance. Additions to the JPA system will be strategic, and the system will expand in conjunction with the availability of the staff and financial resources to meet protection and operating requirements.

7. Designation and Establishment

Reviewing the relevant legislations and policies have shown that there are some specific policies statements already incorporated into such legislation, however, the following summarizes the way and sequence of dealing with establishment of PA in Jordan- although they are not well enforced.

Before any protected area is established, de-reserved, reclassified or altered, the government –represented by the Ministry of Environment- in consultation with the agencies responsible for protected areas management shall publish at least three weeks in advance, three consecutive Notices in the Gazette and the local newspapers, that:

- (a) Specifies the situation and limits of the area of land or sea which is to be established as a protected area, de-reserved or modified;
- (b) provides reasons why the area has been selected for protected area status or for de-reservation, or for modification;
- (c) invites all persons or agencies who enjoy any rights or interests within the area specified in the Notice to submit their claims and objections to the Minister;
- (d) appoints a date and a place for the hearing of any claims and objections relating to such area of land and sea specified in the Notice;
- (e) appoints an independent technical committee to analyze and advise on the validity of claims and feasibility of change in the status of the area as specified in the Notice.’

8. Governance (Co-management)

According to the existing system of PAs and legislation (regulations and by-laws), it is possible to allow for delegation of management, opening the way for the present generation of co-management arrangements. As this approach is still to be promoted, the provisions should be strengthened and more explicit. The following describes the existing scenario of co-management of PA in Jordan:

- The government –represented by the Ministry of Environment- on the advice of the technical committee, may delegate management responsibility in whole or in part for any protected area declared to any legally registered local body that:
 - (a) is willing, and has the capacity or will soon acquire the capacity to manage the protected area;
 - (b) agrees to implement the management plan that exists for the site;
 - (c) agrees to prepare or periodically update the management plan, based on the inputs from broad-based protected area stakeholder consultations;
 - (d) agrees to comply with any other requirements consistent with the purposes for which the site was declared a protected area.
- The government –represented by the Ministry of Environment- shall cause the preparation of a legally binding agreement that details the duration, terms and conditions for the co-management of the protected area between the government and the body to whom delegation of management responsibility is intended. ‘

9. The Existing Policy Framework for PAs in Jordan

The PAs in Jordan are currently operating in a policy framework that includes, *inter alia*:

- The National Environmental Strategy (NES)
- National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP):
- National Agenda 21:
- The National Agenda 2006:
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Biodiversity Country Study
- The National Strategy for Agricultural Development (NSAD)
- National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat desertification
- The Jordanian National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (JNBSAP)
- Enhanced Productivity Program
- Environmental Law (2003 & 2006)

Cross-Cutting Issues

- Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing
- Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices
- Biological Diversity and Tourism
- Climate Change and Biological Diversity
- Economics, Trade and Incentive Measures
- Ecosystem Approach
- Protected Areas
- Communication, Education and Public Awareness
- Sustainable Use of Biodiversity

10. National Institutional Framework

Institutional Framework at the National/Country Level

As part of the process of formulation and implementation of the national planning, the Government has formulated a number of policies and has enacted several legislations to ensure proper conservation and management of natural resources. The section below explains, in brief, the role played by key ministries and departments and a number of research and development and autonomous organizations functioning at the national level which have a direct role to protect land resources and to combat desertification.

1-Ministry of Environment (MoE)

2-Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)

3-Department of Forestry/ Ministry of Agriculture

4-Ministry of Water and Irrigation

5-Badia Research and Development Centre (BRDC)

6-National Center for Agricultural Research and Transfer of Technology (NCARTT)

11. Challenges

Although the policy document is still in the process, the following –concluded from the present synthesis- could be listed as among challenges that might face the implementation of the policy:

Stakeholder participation: Perhaps the most significant challenge for the government will be achieving thoughtful collaboration of stakeholders in planning and managing protected areas.

Collaboration between government agencies: The government entities with authority in protected areas and the tourism sector will have tough decisions to make in

coordinating their efforts to develop long-term plans. Sustainable and eco-friendly tourism can only be achieved if the policy makers come to a consensus on major issues such as infrastructure, minimizing environmental impacts on the areas, tour operator standards and revenue-sharing.

Maintaining indigenous culture: Tourism can also affect the cultural fabric that binds communities together. As tourism exposes villages to visitor pressures, local communities are at risk of losing traditions. Also tourism has the potential to provide some, but not all members of a community with financial gain, thus disrupting community solidarity.

12. Agencies responsible for the implementation the proposed policy:

The main agencies responsible for the implementation of the PA policy document are the Ministries/Departments responsible for protected areas, archaeological sites and reserves, and tourism as defined by the laws and regulations. However, the key actors – as identified through the synthesis- with respect to the implementation are:

- Ministry of Environment
- Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Water
- Ministry of planning
- Private sector
- NGOs

Implementation should occur in consultation with the various stakeholders in conservation, including but not limited to, non-government organizations, community based organizations, indigenous peoples, private/business sector, and educational institutions.

However, the present review has shown that the role and the mandate of these institutions should be addressed clearly in the policy document with respect to PA management in Jordan.

Thank you