



## PRESS RELEASE

### **IUCN-SA and PhytoTrade Africa develop Natural Products partnership**

IUCN-SA, country office of the World Conservation Union and PhytoTrade Africa will be launching their new Natural Products partnership at the third World Conservation Congress in Bangkok (17<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2004) the general assembly of IUCN members.

“Our vision for the Natural Products programme is for a vibrant natural products sector in Southern Africa that improves livelihoods and enhances environmental sustainability ” says Anthea Stephens, Programme Manager at IUCN-SA. “The partnership is extremely opportune,” says Gus Le Breton, Director of PhytoTrade Africa. “There are clear synergies between our promotion of the sustainable use of plant resources as a way of providing economic benefits to poor people and IUCN’s focus on business and biodiversity”.

PhytoTrade Africa is the Southern African Natural Products Trade Association established in 2001 to facilitate growth in the region’s natural products industry and to stimulate economic growth in rural areas. The Association’s 50+ members are drawn from seven different countries in the region. They are united by a common interest in the production, processing and sale of natural products that are derived from wild-harvested plant resources. These products supply the booming US\$50 billion a year global market for natural products, which includes the pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, phyto-medicinal, botanical, flavour and fragrance, herbal remedy, dietary supplement, functional food, cosmeceutical and personal care industries.

Key to IUCN-SA’s approach is poverty alleviation and the generation of sustainable livelihoods. “Our view is that the future of conservation and environmental management is intertwined with finding solutions to the social issues faced in South Africa today” says IUCN-SA Country Director, Salim Fakir. “IUCN-SA has re-evaluated its position on environmental conservation to include issues of development beyond the more traditional focus. We work on a range of projects such as the Natural Products initiative that focus on the integration of human development and the environment” says Fakir.

Together, IUCN-SA and PhytoTrade Africa aim to build a natural products industry in the region that is predicted to gross over US\$100 million a year within the next five years. Through the sustainable commercialisation of natural products, the programme will contribute to rural livelihoods in Southern Africa through improving health, nutrition and food security, increasing local skills and knowledge, empowering women, building on social and cultural values and providing enhanced economic opportunities. In addition, both partners feel confident that adding monetary value to plant species is more likely to lead to better environmental management with spin-off soil, water and biodiversity conservation benefits.

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