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Saudi Arabia makes Major Commitment to Conservation

Saudi Arabia recently signed a major agreement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) which marks the beginning of a new drive to conserve the country's wildlife and other natural resources. Under the terms of the new agreement, IUCN will provide expert guidance to Saudi Arabia on how to go about protecting and managing its natural resources.

After signing (Fig. 1) the one million Rial (U.S. \$300,000) Trust Fund Agreement with Saudi Arabia's Meteorology and Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA), IUCN's Director-General said, 'The signing of this Agreement is an historic occasion because it represents the start of a new era of cooperation between IUCN and Saudi Arabia. The first job for our experts is to identify the priorities—once this is done, the work of effective resource management can begin'. A plan for a national conservation strategy, a blueprint for a programme to protect endangered species, and legal and environmental education advice, are all included in the undertaking which IUCN has made with MEPA.

Dr Al-Gain, MEPA's Deputy Director, commented: 'The Koran and Arabic poetry attach great importance to the value to Man of preserving his natural heritage; so this Agreement will support our efforts to *renew* the interest in conservation in Saudi Arabia. IUCN's experts will help us to devise ways of combining the traditional Islamic respect for Nature with the most up-to-date environmental management techniques'.*

Under the terms of the Agreement, IUCN will provide assistance to MEPA on:

- Setting up a network of protected areas;
- Training Saudi Arabians in wildlife management;
- Improving the Government's legal capacity;
- Establishing a Department of Natural Resources;
- Incorporating conservation aims into development

*See our comment and suggestion at the foot of page 21 of this issue.—Ed.



Fig. 1. IUCN: Director-General, Dr Lee M. Talbot, signing the Trust Fund Agreement at Gland on 14 November 1980. Photo: Michèle Dépraz.

planning through the drawing up of a national conservation strategy; and

- Conserving endangered species such as the Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*) and the Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*).

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