

Strategic Advocacy Plan

Central America 2006-2010

Looking for the North

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Introduction

IUCN-Mesoamerica is determined to promote a strategic advocacy process to revitalize the environmental agenda of the Central American region. We are convinced that the environment should be mainstreamed into medium- and long-term development programs, and most importantly, it should be linked to the economic integration and commercial globalization, as well as the region's social, energy and productive policies.

The need for a guiding document stems from a collective reflection that began in 2006. This exercise was based on training and analysis sessions involving both, IUCN-Mesoamerica's advocacy experience as well as reading and understanding about the new socio-economic dynamics and the environmental challenges we are up against. Also included were sessions with each of the thematic units and interviews with partner organizations and regional specialists.

In order to contribute to build a more sustainable Mesoamerican society, more meaningful alliances and new social agreements are required. The purpose of the Plan is to identify a number of results, which IUCN-Mesoamerica agrees to promote, in order to develop a deeper impact of the actions undertaken by the thematic units, particularly those implemented jointly with other partners in the region.

This document is the synthesis of a broad, participatory, and thoughtful process, and may be considered as an institutional framework for advocacy interventions in

the next five years. It consists of the following three core components:

First, the **institutional framework** where we highlight the link with the Advocacy Plan and the Mesoamerican Program 2005-2008, line 1 of the Environmental Policy Advocacy and Research Project, as well as IUCN-Mesoamerica's thematic areas.

The second component refers to the **analysis** of the circumstances surrounding the socio-economic and environmental settings of the region. This analysis highlights the challenges facing regional environmental management and presents a synthesis of the opportunities and threats perceived in this field.

The third component involves the **definitions and core orientations of the Advocacy Plan**, including principles, institutional resources, the purpose and goals of the plan, listing of individual guidelines, results, and key stakeholders as well as IUCN-Mesoamerica's role.

The plan is an instrument to guide our advocacy interventions, but we are certain that it will be just as useful to other stakeholders who share in our aspirations, perspectives and efforts in terms of the sustainable development of our region. In this context, it constitutes a new invitation to continue forging alliances that will lead to sound environmental governance which, in turn, will guarantee sustainability and promote equity.

I. Institutional framework of the Advocacy Plan

The Strategic Advocacy Plan for Central America 2006-2010 is an instrument specifically developed for this region, linked to the actions undertaken by IUCN-Mesoamerica as a whole. Thus, it seeks to strengthen such actions as well as the advocacy possibilities based on the work perspective that has characterized the organization throughout its existence.

Therefore, it is important to bear in mind at least three aspects of the institutional framework upon which the Plan is based, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the Regional Office for Mesoamerica.

1.1 The Mesoamerican Program

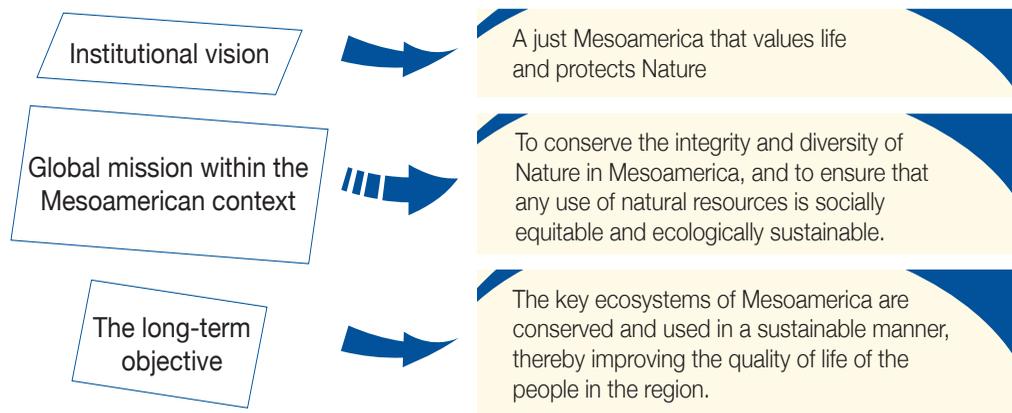
The first aspect of the institutional framework is the work scope defined in our Mesoamerican Program 2005–2008 and summarized in the vision, mission and objectives of development, which are coherent with those of The World Conservation Union.

In this regard, it is important to highlight the institutional perspective linking the environmental and social components.

We believe that the conservation and sustainable use of the resources becomes meaningful when these contribute to improve the quality of life of the people in the region.

This entails a comprehensive vision of the environmental problems where differences are clearly established with regard to orthodox conceptions, whether of an economic or conservation nature.

Vision, mission and purpose of the Mesoamerican Program 2005-2008



Source: IUCN-Mesoamerica, 2004b

1.2 The Environmental Policy Advocacy and Research Project

The second core component of this Plan is the **“Environmental Policy Advocacy and Research”** project, which is one of the components of the Regional Environmental Program in Central America (PREMACA) for the period 2005-2010, funded by the Danish Government.

IUCN-Mesoamerica¹ is responsible for the implementation of this component, and the purpose of one of its fields of work is based, in fact, on seeking to *“strengthen its ability to implement its policy advocacy and research plan in matters related to improving the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources and reducing poverty”* (IUCN-Mesoamerica, 2006).

This objective outlines the sense of justice, social equity and quality of life proposed in the Mesoamerican Program, by relating it to one of the major challenges faced by the Central

American region: linking conservation and the sustainable use of resources to poverty reduction.

We believe that in the manner in which the link “poverty-environment” has been addressed until now, there has prevailed a vision where poverty is seen as a threat to the latter, which is but one element of the equation. From that perspective, attempts should be made towards addressing poverty (through social and economic policy instruments) in order to reduce the pressure of the poor sectors on the natural resources.

Without undermining the relevance of such instruments, but recognizing their limited impacts on the region, efforts are required to broaden the perspective, so that the challenge also considers ensuring that the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources become poverty reduction instruments.

¹ The scope of action and organization of IUCN-Mesoamerica goes beyond the Central American countries, including also Cuba, México and the Dominican Republic. However, the Advocacy and Research Project is part of the Regional Environmental Program in Central America, promoted by DANIDA, for which reason, this Advocacy Plan is limited to the Central American countries.

1.3 Scope and thematic areas of IUCN-Mesoamerica

The third component of the institutional framework is based on our own history as key player in regional environmental management. IUCN-Mesoamerica's active involvement in research and advocacy interventions goes a long way back. We are widely known and recognized as one of the most important networks in the environmental field (IUCN-Mesoamerica, 2004a).

Among the elements that determine such strength it is worth pointing out being part of a worldwide network, and the diversity of members that conform our organization, which fact renders us—among other things—a proven ability for communication and dialogue with stakeholders from different sectors (multilateral, government, civil society) and levels (world, regional, national and specific places or areas).

One of the potentialities derived from those characteristics is the ability to integrate actions vertically, that is, at international as well as local levels, in addition to the possibility of monitoring, evaluating and supporting the implementation of environmental agreements and regulations at international, regional, national and local levels.

Another essential aspect is the coordination of scientific, technical and political capacities to promote our projects, to provide technical assistance and consultancy and in

general to influence environmental management in the region. These abilities have been shaping up areas of expertise and thematic units for the execution of projects and actions.

IUCN-Mesoamerica Program Areas

- Social equity
- Environmental policy and management
- Biodiversity and sustainable use
- Water management

The expertise and specialization of the above units, but most importantly, of the highly-driven staff who make the ball roll, account for the undisputable scope of influence of IUCN in the region, both in terms of specific territories as well as in terms of networks and institutions linked to environmental management.

This plan involves the continuity and building of such scope of influence, the thematic areas of work and projects implemented by the units, as well as any others that may be developed in the future. This aspect is expected to be strengthened and complemented with objectives and results that go beyond the scope of impact of the specific projects, while learning from the resulting experience.

II. Important elements

Central America's population of close to 37.5 million people is expected to increase to 45 millions over the next 10 years (2015). This rate of population growth is high in terms of the most developed countries, which situation is made worse by the accelerated urbanization process, as half of the region's total population currently lives in urban areas.

The region's population is up against considerable economic, social and environmental challenges, many of which stem from the old structural development models followed by these countries in the long- and medium-terms, while others are the result of more recent changes in such style and the particular forms of articulation with the global economic dynamics.

2.1 Weakening of the environmental agenda in the region

The impulse given to the environmental agenda in Central America as of the end of the 80's, was the result of a growing worldwide concern regarding the situation of the natural resources and the different uses these were put to.

Such concern resulted in a number of international agreements and conventions, an increase in international cooperation for sustainable development, the proliferation of studies and research on the situation of the natural resources, as well as proposals targeting improved exploitation and conservation of the natural resources.

The Central American environmental agenda was strongly linked to the revitalization of the regional integration system, being this also the reason for its initial strength. Regional agreements were made and guidelines established for the region's sustainable development, such as the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES); coordination entities were created among government institutions, such as the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), and many regional projects have been implemented around the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

The countries have made substantial progress, which has translated into the ratification, signing and/or endorsement of international environmental agreements; the formulation of environmental policies, legislation and regulations, and the establishment of institutions responsible for such application; the creation of protected areas of various types, which has led to the protection of approximately one fourth of the region's total area; and education and information efforts to increase environmental awareness, among other aspects.

Several stakeholders have been involved in promoting the environmental agenda; on the one hand, a large number of non-governmental organizations, social organizations and movements, which carry out very diverse actions in connection with the environment. Such actions may range from activism, protests and denunciation, to education, research, and drafting of public policy proposals and legislation, among others.

The universities and research centers have also contributed to build knowledge about the biodiversity, the ecosystems and the environmental impact of human activity, as well as to draft technological proposals and alternatives seeking an improved use of resources.

However, despite such significant progress, in the past few years a weakening of the environmental agenda and institutionalism in the region has been noticed; the limitations of current approaches have become evident, but most importantly, great weaknesses prevails in terms of the application of policies, laws and rules. Some of the factors that could explain such situation are:

- The excessive dependence on international cooperation at all levels (regional and governmental institutionalism and NGOs).
- The priority attached by the governments to other agendas like the commercial and economic agenda, and even social policies involving relief and mitigation of social impacts resulting from hurricanes and other natural disasters.
- Financial difficulties of the governments and expenditure control strategies, which limit the availability of resources for environmental management activities.

- Regional institutionalism does not yet have the necessary autonomy and strength in terms of regional guideline and policy application. It depends, on the one hand, on the political will of member governments; and on the other, on international cooperation.
- The priorities attached to conservation and legislation formulation have neglected the changes in the culture and practices of the stakeholders that use the resources or generate external diseconomies upon these.
- A fragmented approach has prevailed towards environmental management, focused on the institutions that are “formally” responsible for its application, including protected area management. Less attention is given to the socio-economic processes—and the corresponding stakeholders—that are largely responsible for the pressure exerted upon the resources, as in the case of uncontrolled urbanization, productive activities, subsistence strategies for poor populations, consumption patterns, etc.

2.2 Changes in the development models: the contrast between economic and social elements

In the last few decades, the Central American region has been experiencing changes in its development model, which situation was accelerated during the 90's, along with the pacification and transition to democracy.

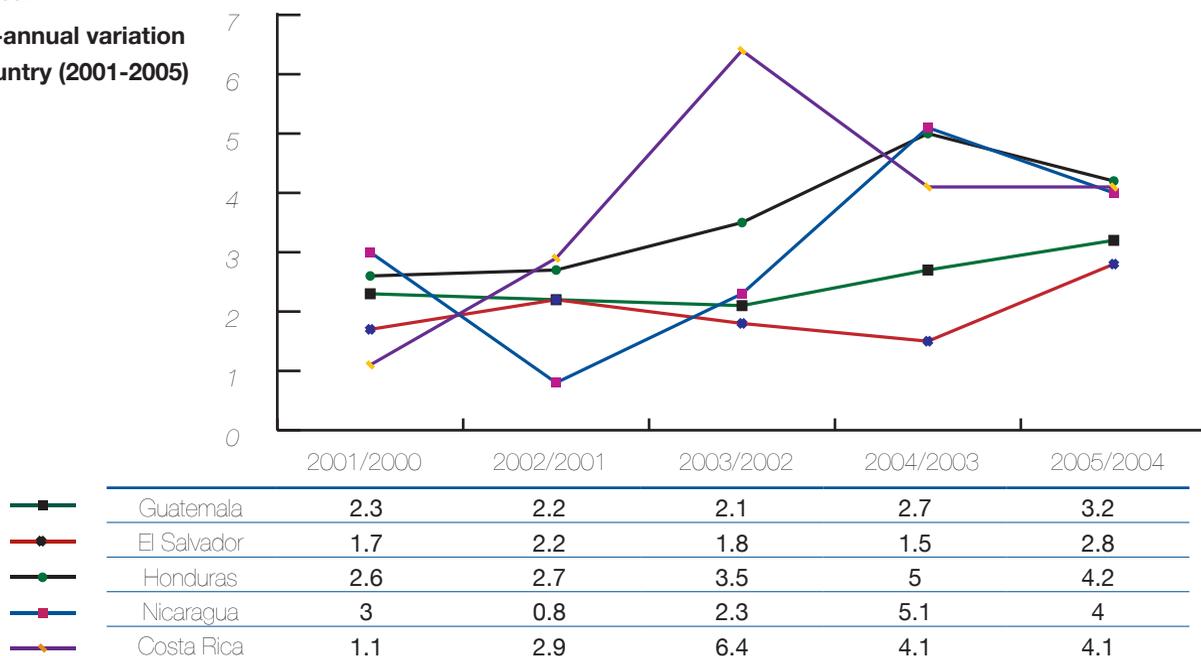
In general terms, the region has promoted commercial globalization strategies, shifting economies towards foreign markets, which—in turn—changed those of a protectionist nature typical of the import substitution model. State involvement has also retracted, as a consequence of which, there has been an increased participation of market forces in the socio-economic dynamics.

Among the economic results of such processes of change, should be noted:

- A moderate and volatile economic growth which, although insufficient in terms of solving structural problems, it has contributed, together with other factors, to achieve a certain degree of macroeconomic stability.
- The increase of a “de facto” economic integration impelled by local and foreign business groups, which has reflected on the increased intra- and extra-regional trade flows, particularly with the United States (Segovia, 2005).
- Commercial globalization has also generated import increases, as a result of which, the region as a whole, is showing an increasingly negative balance of trade. This is partly due to the fact that many of the export activities, like maquila, import a large part of the components and raw materials used.
- A certain diversification of exports has taken place and Direct Foreign Investment flows have increased (IED) (Jaramillo et. al., 2005).
- The activities involving self-consumption and domestic markets, such as basic grain production, have weakened, thus generating greater vulnerability in terms of food security (Segovia, 2004).
- Productive chaining or integration with local economies of some of the productive activities with the largest growth rate (maquila, for instance), is weak, which fact limits their impact on development (UNDP, 2003)

Central America:

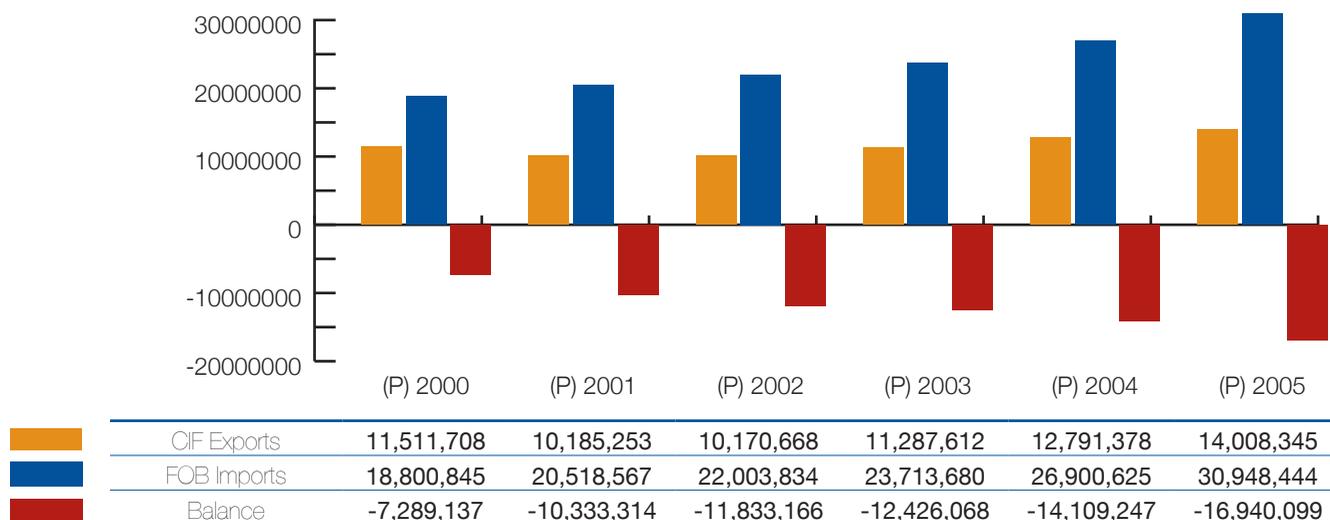
Rates of inter-annual variation of GDP, by country (2001-2005)



Source: SIECA, 2006

Central America:

**Development of total trade 2000-2005
(thousands of Central American pesos)**



Note: (P) Preliminary figures; E (Estimated figures)
Source: SIECA, 2006

In connection with the social context, the type of development resulting from that process of change has been unable to solve the declining living conditions of a large part of the population. Poverty and social inequality persist in the region as a whole, even though significant differences exist between countries.

Half of the Central American population lives in poverty conditions and about one fourth of the population lives in extreme poverty, which situation is even worse in the rural areas. Gaps also exist in terms of failing to meet basic needs such as adequate housing, access to drinking water, public health services and access to the educational system, all of which are but another way of manifestation of poverty and which also tend to be worse in the rural areas.

CENTRAL AMERICA: % OF THE POPULATION LIVING BELOW POVERTY LINES AND IN EXTREME POVERTY, 2001		
Area	Total Poverty	Extreme Poverty
Urban	33,6	10,8
Rural	67,9	35,1
Total	50,8	23,0

Source: UNDP, 2003.

The marked differences between urban and rural areas are directly associated with one of the characteristics of the new economic model which is mostly located in urban areas, as a result of which the growth generated has very little impact on the rural areas, where most of the population under conditions of extreme poverty is located (Segovia, 2005).

This characteristic has intensified the imbalances carried from previous stages between the rural and urban worlds. It is, furthermore, one of the factors that stimulate migratory movements and rural-rural displacements that broaden the agricultural border (Baumeister, 2004) and generate heavy pressures on the natural resources.

**CENTRAL AMERICA:
GDP PER CAPITA AND INCOME DISTRIBUTION INEQUALITY, BY COUNTRY (2000)**

COUNTRY	GDP PER CAPITA (US\$)	TOTAL INCOME SHARE			
		40% POORER	30% NEXT	20% NEXT	10% RICHER
El Salvador	2,104	13,8	25,0	29,1	32,1
Guatemala	1,680	12,8	20,9	26,1	40,3
Honduras	909	11,8	22,9	28,9	36,5
Nicaragua	472	10,4	22,1	27,1	40,5
Panamá	3,508	12,9	22,4	27,7	37,1

Source: UNDP, 2003

Poverty goes hand in hand with an increase in income concentration, i.e., social inequality, which implies societies with increasingly wider gaps between the rich and the poor. In this sense, while 29,4% to 40,5% of the total income is concentrated in 10% of the relatively richer population, to the poorest 40% barely corresponds between 10,4% and 15,3% of the total income. On the other hand, great asymmetries exist between the countries in the region in terms of income per capita, which ranges between US\$3,948 in the case of Costa Rica, and US\$472 in the case of Nicaragua (UNDP, 2003).

Another significant social aspect of the region's development model is the fact that, although the economic growth experienced in the past few years has generated new employment opportunities, these have been insufficient to match the growth rates of the workforce. While informal activities have generated the most employment, they are not

responsible for putting into motion economic growth and exports. As a matter of fact, in some countries the informal sector is equal to or even bigger than the formal sector (UNDP, 2003).

In recent years, migratory flows have increased at different levels in Central America: within the countries (from rural to urban areas); between countries; and outside of the region (mainly to the United States). This means that a large number of Central Americans are forced to seek better opportunities in places other than their own, or their country and/or region as a whole. Migration constitutes yet another example of the constraints of the development model to generate opportunities both, in sectoral as well as territorial terms, thus promoting not only uprooting but also increased inequality. One of the results of this situation is money remittances, which have become very important for the Central American economies (UNDP, 2003).

In general terms, the current development model of the region shows progress in regard to macro-economic stability, moderate economic growth, trade growth, export increase and diversification, and foreign investment attraction.

But the effects on structural social problems affecting a large portion of the Central American population, such as poverty and inequality, as well as the imbalances between the rural and urban worlds, have been very limited.

This contrasts with the expansion and growth of business activities of regional groups and foreign investors, which reinforce the tendency towards wealth concentration.

2.3 The strain between socio-economic dynamics and natural resources

Simultaneously with the economic reforms that have promoted the changes in the development model, the Central American region has been generating changes in connection with the institutional environment and the policies and projects seeking the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources. These have been quite relevant when considering that during the process involving the import substitution model, very little attention was paid to the environmental aspect of development.

However, in spite of the institutional and political progress achieved in this matter, current socio-economic dynamics

continue exerting heavy pressure over the natural resources and degradation thereof, which facts are added to those already experienced in the past.

The region's environmental situation shows the interaction between the socio-economic dynamics (productive activities; human settlements; consumption patterns; social structure; etc.); the political and institutional frameworks dealing with environmental management, and the resources. Following are some of the characteristics of the environmental situation prevailing in the region, which are of great relevance for advocacy guiding purposes:

Commercial globalization:
**cornerstone of the economic
strategy promoted in the region.**

One of the core components of the strategies developed in the Central American countries has been the commercial globalization through instruments such as the Free Trade Agreements (Jaramillo et. al., 2005; CID Initiative, 2004).

This component has been strengthened, in the current situation, by the ratification of the Free Trade Agreement signed between North America and the countries in the region, so far with the exception of Costa Rica (February, 2007). It will also be strengthened by the negotiation and the possible approval of an Agreement of Association with the European Union.

The consolidation of the commercial globalization alone will not solve the contradictory dichotomies formed between economic growth and the increase in poverty and inequality; between the increase in demand and degradation of the natural resources as a result of both, export-oriented productive activities and the subsistence of the poorest populations; and lastly, modifications in the consumption patterns which, associated with higher trade good flows, increase waste production and contamination.

Without the intervention of effectively balanced institutions, policies and instruments, the benefits in some sectors will not translate into improvements in terms of sustainable human development for the whole of the people in the region, let alone if the conditions of the already impoverished sectors

as well as those that could join in as a result of commercial liberalization, are not properly addressed.

In addition, free trade agreements lead to the creation of a supranational regulatory framework in many areas, including the environment (De Miguel and Nuñez, 2001). Hence, the need to assess and follow up on the potential impacts on regional environmental management. There are many different edges to this: first, the manner in which environmental issues are explicitly addressed in the agreements; secondly, the possibilities and limitations derived from such agreements in terms of improving environmental legislation and regulations in each country; and thirdly, the actual market dynamics and pressures over the application of such regulations and the use of the natural resources; in addition, consideration should also be given to the fact that it is quite likely that free trade agreements with large markets will modify the productive structure of the region.

Consideration should further be given to the fact that the environmental commitments that must necessarily be assumed together with the implementation of a free trade agreement, to ensure a healthy and sustainable environment, will generate new institutional and regulatory demands for which the region has not been adequately prepared. Given, furthermore, the regional scope of the Dominican Republic-Central America-North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA-DR) and the agreement with the European Union, we must consider an intensive and accelerated process of regulatory and conceptual harmonization in Central America, particularly in light of the huge disparities that in this regard exist between countries.

The central focus of commercial globalization and its multiple ramifications, force us to include it among the priorities of environmental management in the region.

The weight of agricultural and agroindustrial activities

These activities, which entail a high demand of natural resources and the resulting degradation, have been extremely important in the region's history.

Although in the context of changes in development models other activities such as commerce, services, finances, tourism and maquila, have experienced a greater boost, agricultural activities continue having a prominent place in the productive structure, both in terms of international and domestic markets. In fact, agricultural activities occupy 50% of the Central American territory, thus accounting for the region's main land use (UNEP and CCAD, 2005)

The continuity of traditional activities like bananas, sugar cane, coffee and cattle farming, along with the expansion of non-traditional products for export such as fruits (cantaloupe, pineapple, watermelon, citric fruits, etc.), vegetables and tuber products, flowers and foliage plants, has maintained and even increased the pressure exerted on an extensive use of the soil for agricultural activities. This despite the weakening of activities like the basic grains.

Agricultural activities exert heavy pressure and impact on the ecosystems, not only because of the extension in terms of the land, but also because of soil degradation, erosion, water use and contamination due to the intensive use of agrochemicals (GWP-CA, 2004). In spite of that, this sector is quite unregulated from an environmental management point of view.

Within the context of the commercial globalization strategy, and more specifically the Free Trade Agreement with North America and the possible Agreement of Association with the European Union, one cannot fail to assume that some traditional and non-traditional agricultural export activities will not only consolidate, but expand as well, thus increasing land use demand and other resources, including the associated externalities.

Notwithstanding the above, the environmental regulations of these markets and those included in the agreements, as well as the growing segment of consumers of ecological products, open up a range of opportunities for changes towards better practices, which should be promoted throughout the region at both, political and technical levels.

The promotion of corporate environmental responsibility is of the utmost urgency, especially in the case of high environmental impact activities like agriculture and agroindustry, which will continue having significant weight within the region's productive structure.

Forests and biodiversity:
the strain between protection and degradation

In the last few years, the expansion of protected areas has been an important step forward in the region, as has also been the creation of entities linked to the CCAD, such as the Technical Committee for Forests and the Technical Committee for Protected Areas, the promotion of initiatives like the Central American Tropical Forestry Action Program, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, and the Central American System of Protected Areas (SICAP).

In addition, projects have been developed for the sustainable management of forest resources, and efforts are being made towards the utilization of instruments like payment for environmental services (PES) pursuing the protection and sustainable management of forests (UNDP, 2003).

Another important step forward in the region has been the multiple interventions based on “Shared Management” of Protected Areas, which have promoted the participation of diverse stakeholders both, in management activities as well as in terms of the benefits derived from the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (McCarthy, Martínez and Salas, 2006)

CENTRAL AMERICA: PROTECTED AREAS, QUANTITY, HECTARES AND PERCENTAGE OF THE TERRITORY, BY COUNTRY (2005)			
Country	Number of areas	Hectares	Percentage of territory
Belize	74	1.971.664	47.2
Costa Rica	155	1.288.834	25.2
El Salvador	3	7.110	0.33
Guatemala	123	3.197.579	29.4
Honduras	76	2.220.111	19.7
Nicaragua	76	2.242.193	17.0
Panamá	50	2.941.386	26.0
TOTAL	557	12.968.608	25.4

Source: Rodríguez, 2005.

However, despite the above and other progress made, the region continues experiencing marked strains between the protection efforts and the tendencies towards resource degradation; coordination is non-existent between agricultural and environmental agendas. Protected areas are constantly subjected to use and exploitation pressures, which exceed the limits established by the various protection categories, as a result of increased population displacement due to poverty and lack of production alternatives.

The indigenous populations, which are among the most excluded sectors in every country, are endlessly struggling for

recognition rights over their territories, which matter remains on hold in the region's agenda, thus increasing the problems related to natural resource governance.

By the same token, deforestation has not stopped; it has reached levels estimated at between 375.000 and 400.000 hectares per annum, so the forest cover in the region continues decreasing. Among the activities contributing to this situation are the legal and illegal lumber operations for commercial purposes; the use of firewood and coal for industrial as well as household fuel purposes; the expansion of crop lands; and forest fires (Rodríguez, 2005).

Regional environmental management should continue considering the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources among its priorities, given the huge wealth of the forests and regional biodiversity and the exploitation-related socio-economic pressures.

The major challenge lies in linking this to development objectives such as reduction of poverty, inequality and vulnerability mitigation.

Water resources:

threatened wealth and basic access fragility

The region has made significant efforts in connection with policies and projects to improve the use and protection of this resource, vital to human life and the various economic activities as well. Among such efforts it is worth noting the “Central American Plan for the Integrated Development of Water Resources” (PACADIRH).

Yet, in spite of the fact that it can be said that the region possesses an abundant wealth in terms of water resource availability, there are many situations pointing to the misuse of this resource, both in terms of access as well as degradation and pollution.

One of the most paradoxical situations is the fact that despite water availability, a significant portion of the population has no access to drinking water, other has no running water in their homes, and still other get water only a few hours each day. In addition to the above, there is a very low coverage of basic sanitation services (sewer systems and waste water treatment), which results in high contamination levels (UNDP, 2003; IDB and GWP-CA, 2004).

Another paradoxical situation is the fact that along with the constraints of drinking water access, increases have been experienced in terms of water commercialization, as seen by the sale and even export figures of bottled water.

CENTRAL AMERICA: IMPROVED WATER COVERAGE, BY COUNTRY AND URBAN AND RURAL AREA

Country	% total coverage 1990-1995	% coverage in urban area 2000	% coverage in rural area 2000
Belize	-	90	46,6
Costa Rica	92,0	99,2	91,0 a 98,0
El Salvador	77,0	96,1	30,3
Guatemala	62,0	95,0	55,0
Honduras	65,0	90,0	70,0
Nicaragua	58,0	90,0	46,6
Panamá	84,0	93,0	73,0

Source: IDB / GWP-CA, 2004

The impacts of human activities on water resources are shown on the high levels of pollution of surface waters due to increasingly dense and uncontrolled human settlements and industrial activities.

Agricultural and agroindustrial activities are the major water users and largely responsible for environmental contamination due to the use of pesticides and agrochemicals (UNDP, 2003). Environmental regulations in this field still are quite flimsy (GWP-CA, 2004) and control oriented, showing clear deficiencies in dealing with water pollution problems. This condition, along with a lack of land use planning, poses serious threats to water bodies in river basins.

Coastal zones are also affected by the non-sustainable use of water resources, thereby increasing the vulnerability of ecosystems and resources already subjected to

pressures caused by fishing overexploitation, inadequate fishing practices, pollution generated by the cities and the productive activities carried out along the coastlines, wetland destruction and tourist activity. A proposal involving the region's marine resources is required on an urgent basis.

The inadequate management of water resources accelerates water-related threats, such as floods and droughts, both of which have severe impacts on the populations, especially the poorest ones.

In the last few years, the region has been experiencing an increased competition for this resource, as is the case of the tourist activity which has generated a greater demand for water resources and has started to create conflicts with some communities regarding the use and protection of water sources.

Integrated water resource management is yet another priority in the regional environmental agenda. An ecosystemic-based management is most necessary. The possibilities to improve the quality of life, sanitary conditions, and the region's development in general, are dependent upon the sustainability of the water resources. The equitable access to drinking water for human consumption and the protection of its sources, should also be included in the priorities of environmental management in this area.

The energy challenge:

Increasing oil dependence

One of the greatest challenges posed to the region's development is the increasing energy demand, the use of natural resources to meet such demand, and the type of technologies used.

**CENTRAL AMERICA:
ENERGY PRODUCTION BY SOURCE
(TOTAL PRODUCTION PERCENTAGES) 1990 AND 2001**

Country	Hydroenergy		Oil		Other sources	
	1990	2001	1990	2001	1990	2001
Costa Rica	97,5	81,5	2,5	1,4	-	17,1
El Salvador	73,5	29,8	6,8	45,0	19,7	25,2
Guatemala	76,0	32,9	9,0	44,1	15	23
Honduras	98,3	59,5	1,7	38,6	-	1,9
Nicaragua	28,8	8,0	39,8	82,0	31,4	10
Panamá	83,2	48,8	14,7	50,8	2,1	0,4
Average	76,22	43,42	12,42	43,65	11,37	12,93

Source: FLACSO, 2005

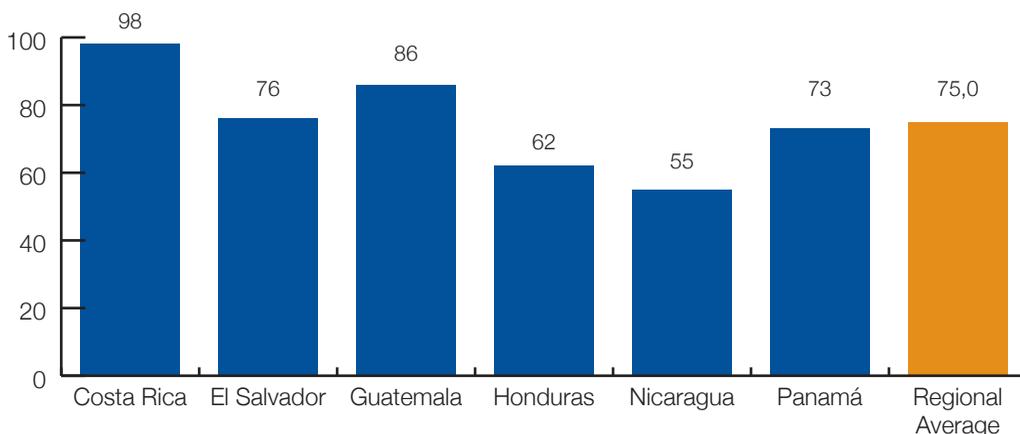
Power generation is one of such challenges. The region has great potential for hydroelectric generation. However, electricity continues being largely produced through the use of oil by-products, which situation became worse between 1990 and 2001. The rate of power generation based on oil by-products has increased in practically all of the countries, while a decrease has been experienced in hydroelectric power generation. Such growing oil dependence entails

considerable impacts, not only at the environmental level but at the economic and social levels as well, given the constantly rising international oil prices.

On the other hand, the region does also show coverage limitations regarding household electricity services, where significant differences exist between countries. In average, one out of every four homes in the region lacks access to this basic service.

Central America:

Percentage of homes with electricity (2003)



Source: OLADE, 2003

The energy situation will continue exerting significant pressures on the natural resources, and the manner in which such situation is ultimately solved will also have significant environmental impacts. The pressure towards oil exploration and exploitation in the region is increasing, as is also increasing the pressure for the expansion of the installed capacity of hydroelectric power generation, which could trigger conflicts with social movements and communities.

Wind, solar, geothermic and biomass-based energy projects have been developed in the region, though the impact is still limited. In the meantime, the pressure continues increasing for the non-sustainable use of resources for fuel purposes, like the industrial and household consumption of firewood (Rodríguez, 2005).

The above situation, characterized by an increasing demand for thermal energy production and oil prices, has raised discussions about alternative energy sources to reduce oil dependence, which have resulted in a large number of initiatives that do not clearly measure the environmental, social and economic impacts derived from each one.

Because of the above, it is imperative to incorporate into any strategic plan for the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources and biodiversity, a policy oriented towards the sustainable use and production of energy for human consumption, including sources, locations, clean and highly efficient energy technologies, as well as strategies to slow-down the demand.

Among the priorities of regional environmental management should be included the coordination of energy and environmental policies, as well as the implementation of alternatives based on environment-friendly technologies.

2.4 Current threats and opportunities for advocacy

A few opportunities and threats to advocacy have been identified in the context of a regional analysis, which represent yet another point of reference for our strategic plan. This is the

result of participatory workshops carried out in the process leading up to plan formulation, where some of the perceptions of the IUCN-Mesoamerica work team are also outlined.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of official statements and initiatives (in governments and international financial and cooperation organizations) about decentralization, social participation, governance and local management, presents opportunities for involvement in such processes. • The development of environmental networks. There are quite a bit of organizations and issues into which advocacy could be integrated. • There is a good disposition at local level (i.e., municipalities) to address environmental issues based on the visible impact of the various development models. • The FTA with North America offers advocacy opportunities in various areas: the Environmental Cooperation Agreement; follow up and evaluation of the environmental impact; compliance with environmental legislation and regulations. • Good disposition exists towards learning about the environment at various levels: notes, oral tradition, as well as people's awareness on environmental degradation. • There is local capacity for advocacy, the stakeholders' profile has changed, they are becoming increasingly reluctant towards "expensive advisors" (they spend too much and very little reaches the advocacy projects). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relegation of the environmental aspect for other issues: national security, free trade, etc. • Strengthening of a development model that is extremely harmful to the environment. It is, furthermore, exclusive in social terms. • Weakening of the regional integration process. • The regional integration agenda is based on economic elements. The environment is subordinated to the commercial subject. • There are agreements and projects with a strong socio-environmental impact, such as the FTA with North America and the Puebla-Panamá Plan. • Regional environmental organization has weakened. • Regional discussion and coordination venues are needed between the various sectors involved in promoting the environmental agenda in the region. • Funding for environmental projects has been restricted, and when available, the projects respond to the donors' priorities and conditioning factors. • Institutional environmental weakness exists in every country in the region.

III. Strategic Advocacy Plan

IUCN-Mesoamerica 2006-2010

3.1 Advocacy concept

In general terms, advocacy is defined as the conscious, targeted and planned intervention of a social group seeking to change a certain reality. It is contained in a field conformed by multiple stakeholders, projects, interests and perspectives, thus entailing multilateral actions. Indeed, advocacy entails facing up against power relations and conflicts that may be solved through negotiations, compromises and agreements, although there are times when these can also lead to confrontations.

Our organization is highly technical, proposal-oriented and conciliatory. Hence, our advocacy efforts are directed towards facilitation, mediation and negotiation, based on strong technical argumentation to strengthen the region's environmental governance.

3.2 Advocacy guiding principles

Mainstreaming

The IUCN maintains that environmental issues should be conceptualized and put into practice from a perspective based on the interaction with dynamic, economic, social and political forces. To achieve effective environmental governance, it is necessary to transcend the fragmented vision that often times is present in environmental policies, institutions and projects.

Integration

Within the institutions and organizations involved in regional environmental management, environmental mainstreaming should be translated into a greater integration of the work and projects carried out. Such integration also implies building of strategic alliances with social stakeholders with different capacities, though complementary in terms of shared global objectives.

Diversity

We recognize the diversity of stakeholders and sectors—with their own perspectives, agendas and needs—involved in natural resource use and management. Environmental governance should be built through the integration of diversity rather than disregarding it.

Dialogue

Recognition of diversity implies assuming the challenge of dialogue to build agreements, voice disagreements and defining joint policies and actions in order to move forward towards improved environmental management in the region.

Building capacity

We firmly believe in the capacity of the people, social stakeholders and politicians, to define environment-related visions, proposals and management plans in line with the historical characteristics of the region and its aspirations for an inclusive, supportive, equitable and nature-friendly development.

3.3 Institutional resources for advocacy

Advocacy interventions will be based on our technical and purposeful capacities, as well as our potential for integration and dialogue with different stakeholders and sectors. In this connection, IUCN-Mesoamerica's advocacy strategy will be based on mechanisms and capacities we have been building upon all along in order to participate in the region's environmental management actions.

Capacity building and strengthening

All local, national and regional empowerment processes entail capacity and skill building within the organizations, not only in terms of technical abilities, but also in terms of organizational, strategic and projective matters. IUCN's contribution regarding capacity building among key stakeholders of civil society has enhanced the impact of its initiatives beyond the life of the projects.

The Regional Office's relationship with IUCN member organizations is based on reciprocity, support and coordination, in line with its conviction that environmental management should be undertaken at all possible levels and scales.

Agreements, negotiation and alliance forging

The IUCN assembles State and civil society organizations into a great alliance. Such ability for dialogue and summoning in the region allows us to promote multisectoral venues to reach agreements and define policies aimed at strengthening the region's environmental governance.

Our participation in consultations, hearings, discussion fora, environmental management analysis and alliances promoted by other stakeholders with shared objectives, will also be essential to governance building.

Environmental management and governance expertise

The IUCN creates the expertise to respond to the needs of natural resource management and sustainability at global, regional, national and local levels. Our research is oriented towards the generation of knowledge useful to the interventions of the multiple stakeholders involved in environmental management.

We believe that knowledge empowers the stakeholders involved, and based on this premise, we promote its public access and make the necessary efforts to update and adjust it to the needs of our region.

We base knowledge building on alliances forged with stakeholders with different but complementary technical abilities and investigative potential, such as universities and research centers. Equally important is the traditional knowledge of the people as well as the knowledge generated by the stakeholders involved in environmental management.

Proposals on environmental management policy, legislation and regulation

Through its vast research and experience the IUCN is able to assist in the discussions and drafting of proposals on environmental policy, legislation and regulation in the region. Such proposals are made available to decision makers and stakeholders involved in environmental management in each of the countries in the region.

The IUCN follows up on initiatives involving policy, legislation and regulation discussion and negotiation at governmental and regional decision-making levels, to ensure its participation in the discussion and definition of agreements.

**Integration of the three pillars:
membership, commissions and secretariat**

The integration and coordination among the various organizational units and fields of action of IUCN-Mesoamerica constitutes an undisputable strength for advocacy interventions, to the extent that it promotes a

comprehensive, multisectoral and multilevel approach to environmental management.

The technical and political abilities of the work units and the organization as a whole, are essential in the development of an advocacy plan based on environmental governance that guarantees sustainability and promotes equity.

**UICN-Mesoamerica's Strategic Advocacy Plan 2006-2010:
Type of advocacy, principles, institutional resources and purpose**



3.4 Guiding image, strategic objectives and guidelines

IUCN-Mesoamerica shares with many other stakeholders and populations a sustainable development perspective for the Central American region. We seek to build environmental governance based on the conservation and sustainable use of the resources as well as social equity. A society built upon justice, equity and opportunities for all should be the goal of economic development, of the use of the natural resources and the regional institutional environment.

We feel that integral environmental management is one of the pillars upon which this goal rests, which includes mainstreaming of the environment into the economic, social and political context of development.

We expect to contribute from our specific field of action to the region's environmental governance in the next decade based on the following guiding image:

A Central America that builds environmental governance to ensure sustainability and promote equity

It is on the basis of this guiding image and our possibilities and abilities to contribute to this goal, that we are hereby proposing this advocacy plan for the next five years, focused on the following overall objective:

To contribute to the revitalization of the agenda and environmental institutionalism by mainstreaming it into the economic, social and political agendas of the region

To this effect, we will focus our actions on the following three specific objectives related to processes plus three related to priority environmental management areas:

SCOPE OF ADVOCACY	OBJECTIVES INVOLVING PROCESSES	PRIORITY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AREAS			
Political framework for environmental governance	To promote a participatory and multisectoral process for the adoption of a new environmental agreement.			Revitalization of the agenda and environmental institutions	
Legal / regulatory framework for environmental management	To build the capacity to enforce international environmental agreements, legislation and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and environmental impacts of the economic integration and commercial globalization processes • Integrated management of water resources 			Revitalization of the agenda and environmental institutions
Tools to link environmental management and social equity	To promote policies and instruments whereby the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity may contribute to reduce poverty and inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy and environmental management 			

3.5 Objectives involving processes

OBJECTIVE 1

To promote a participatory and multisectoral process for the adoption of a new environmental agreement

The definition of regional and national guiding policies on environmental governance should be the result of participatory, plural, transparent and democratic processes, in order to ensure legitimacy and promote application thereof.

We feel the need for an updated environmental agreement that responds to the new historical conditions of the region, characterized by changes in the development model towards a greater integration of the economies, including commercial globalization processes, and development and implementation of agendas simultaneously to the trade agreements, among other processes.

Such a process must necessarily include the active involvement of civil society organizations, the private sector, universities and research centers, State organizations and international cooperation organizations. The agreement should include national, regional and transboundary commitments, in order to become the political framework guiding environmental management over the next decade.

Guidelines

- The agreement will consider an evaluation of previous processes like ALIDES, the policies and stakeholders involved, as well as environmental governance relationships.
- The agreement will be developed so that it integrates environmental management guidelines at both, regional and national levels.
- The process will promote the participation, dialogue and agreement of the various stakeholders and sectors linked to environmental management at national and regional level as well.

Results

- Multisectoral environmental governance agreements at national, regional and transboundary levels.
- Central American integration entities committed to the implementation of agendas stemming from the agreements adopted.
- The agreements and scopes achieved in the region are disseminated at international fora.

IUCN-Mesoamerica's role

- Facilitator and promoter of alliances and agreement processes.
- Technical assistance and consultancy on the elaboration of agreement components, in accordance with the areas of specialization.

OBJECTIVE 2

To strengthen the capacity to enforce international environmental agreements, legislation and regulations

Environmental governance requires not only new legal and regulatory instruments for environmental management, but also the application of existing ones. These are important steps forward taken by the world and the region to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources.

Agreement application improves, among other things, by promoting informed citizens and their active involvement in the follow up, monitoring and evaluation processes.

International environmental commitments represent an opportunity and pressure to improve environmental legislation and regulatory application.

Guidelines

- Dissemination, information and training to the public in general as well as to specific stakeholders involved in the application of these instruments (institutions, business groups, social organizations).
- Promotion and strengthening of civil society auditing processes.
- Alliances and exchange of information with organizations from other countries, as an instrument to monitor,

evaluate and promote application. Identification of synergies for impact improvement purposes.

- Promoting environmental management decentralization.
- Promoting the generation of knowledge, tools and mechanisms to improve the quality of citizen auditing and control over environmental management.

Stakeholders

- Civil society organizations, legislative assemblies, municipalities, business groups, public institutions and programs, universities and research centers.

Results

- Stakeholders are better informed and trained and better able to participate in the application of environmental legislation and regulations.
- Regional and international networks and alliances for follow up and monitoring purposes.
- Citizen participation tools and mechanisms made available to local governments.
- The region's environmental institutionalism is strengthened.

IUCN's role

- Knowledge and tool generation and dissemination.
- Technical assistance and training.
- Promoter of local, national and regional alliances.

OBJECTIVE 3

To promote policies and instruments whereby the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources and biodiversity may contribute to reduce poverty and inequality

The achievement of equity as an innate element of development includes the recognition of the rights of the people. It responds to the needs of the poorest sectors by promoting their empowerment and the identification of opportunities and resources. It promotes gender equity, respect for indigenous populations and their rights, and the inclusion of young adults of rural communities into the development alternatives. The conservation and sustainable use of resources should be effective instruments for improving the quality of life of the region's populations, through the reduction of poverty and inequalities.

Guidelines

- Promoting a process to link policy objectives involving the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and biodiversity with the objectives seeking the reduction of poverty and inequality.
- Promoting venues for analysis, dialogue and intersectoral agreements for the development of proposals relating to environmental management, risk and poverty reduction management, the rights of indigenous populations, and promoting the participatory and equitable involvement of women and men alike.
- Systematization and dissemination of environmental management experiences that may have generated positive impacts in terms of poverty control or reduction.

- Based on the experience of IUCN-Mesoamerica's technical work units, proposals will be developed around instruments to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources.
- Supporting indigenous populations in the recognition of their rights and the recovery of their ancestral knowledge.

Stakeholders

- Institutions responsible for social policy and environmental management, civil society organizations, local groups, indigenous groups, women's groups, municipalities, cooperation organizations.

Results

- Joint plan and policy development actions between the social and environmental sectors allowing new approaches to poverty and inequality reduction management.
- ORMA policy and strategy about the environment and indigenous populations.
- A set of political guidelines and methodological instruments and tools to link environmental management to poverty reduction are made available to institutional and social stakeholders.

IUCN-Mesoamerica's role

- Knowledge and tool generation and dissemination.
- Technical assistance and consultancy.
- Promoter of local, national and regional alliances.

3.6 Objectives in priority environmental management areas

OBJECTIVE 1

To promote the inclusion of environmental issues into the agendas of NAFTA and in the negotiation of the FTA between Central America and the European Union

On account of the central focus of commercial globalization within the region's economic policy and its multiple ramifications, there is no way but to consider it among the region's priorities in terms of environmental management.

It is not only a matter of considering the potential social impacts that may result in terms of the distribution of wealth, the increase of some productive activities and weakening of others, modification in consumption patterns, etc., which suppose different pressures on the use of the natural resources. It is also a matter of considering that the environmental regulatory frameworks of the FTAs should be incorporated into local environmental management, which in many aspects may be considered as a strengthening opportunity in aspects involving business environmental responsibility.

Guidelines

- Efforts will be made to promote the inclusion of the environment into the parallel agendas and negotiations around free trade agreements.
- Efforts will be made to promote the study, reflection and training on the potential social and environmental impacts of the commercial liberalization strategy, in order to define offsetting measures and policy guidelines.

- Actions will be taken to promote the development of a political and regulatory framework to strengthen the application capacity of the regional environmental regulations and business environmental responsibility, clean production and environment-friendly consumption practices.

Stakeholders

- Related public institutions, civil society organizations, social movements, business groups, universities and research centers.

Results

- Fora, discussion and analysis venues, studies on the social and environmental impacts of commercial liberalization in the region.
- Public authorities trained on commerce and environmental subjects.
- Policy guidelines and instruments to deal with such impacts, included in free trade agendas and negotiations.
- Proposals to promote business environmental responsibility.

IUCN's role

- Knowledge and tool generation and dissemination.
- Technical assistance and training.
- Promoter of local, national and regional alliances.
- Proposal development.

OBJECTIVE 2

To promote the integrated management of water resources

The manner in which the region uses its water resources has a serious impact on the sustainable human development. In this sense, the region must address the contradictions that characterize such use: plentiful availability of water, but quite a non-sustainable use; commercial exploitation of the resource while a very important part of the population either lacks access to drinking water or the access is poor; increased demand of water accompanied by increased pollution of surface waters, water tables and degradation of river basins; promotion of coastal marine resources for tourist investment purposes accompanied by weak environmental management and deterioration of same.

Guidelines

- Facilitating public involvement in the processes undertaken towards the recognition of water resources as a public asset in the countries of the region.
- Promoting a regulatory legal framework to ensure the sustainable use and governance of the resources through river basin management strategies including the ecosystemic approach, environmental flows, and payment for environmental services, among others.
- Promoting the priority access to drinking water for the entire population and the ecosystem itself, over other uses and as a strategy to improve the quality of life.
- Promoting clean production and treatment of waste waters.

- Promoting policies for the conservation of marine resources in the region.
- Advocating for any infrastructure development actions to address the risks entailed by social and environmental vulnerability.

Stakeholders

- Legislative branches, institutions responsible for water management, business groups, municipalities, civil society organizations, local groups.

Results

- Processes promoting public participation in the definition of regulatory frameworks for water resources.
- Statements declaring water resources as public assets and declaring human consumption access as a priority over other uses.
- Proposals to improve the regulatory legal framework for water resource management and integrated river basin management.
- Safeguarding policies on water resource and risk management.
- Policy models on marine resources for the region.

IUCN's role

- Knowledge and tool generation and dissemination.
- Consultancy and legislative lobbying.
- Promoter of local, national and regional alliances.
- Proposal development.

OBJECTIVE 3

To promote policies fostering sources, clean technologies and the rational use of energy

The sustainable development we promote for the region expects to solve the energy-related challenges faced by the population and the productive activities. This is directly related to the use of hydrocarbons and the region's dependence with respect to the ups and downs of the international prices and foreign suppliers, which generates an enormous pressure in terms of oil exploration and exploitation in the region.

The increasing power demand and the existing gaps regarding coverage of basic power services, do also generate great pressure towards both, the exploitation of the region's water potential, and the use of fossil fuels.

Furthermore, a large part of the population and industrial activities exert huge pressure over the forest resources on account of the use of firewood as an energy source.

Guidelines

- As part of the new regional environmental agreement, a specific pact should be promoted to link the energy policy to regional environmental management.
- Promoting collaboration agreements between the energy and environmental sectors in the region.
- Promoting the study and use of clean energy sources in the region.

- Promoting policies and programs to provide electricity to the populations that lack such service, improve their quality of life, and reduce the pressure on forest resources as an energy source.
- Promoting the availability to the population of the use of high energy efficient devices and technology.

Stakeholders

- Public institutions linked to energy and environmental management policies and regulations, private enterprises involved in the energy sector, civil society organizations, social movements, universities and research centers, municipalities, local organizations.

Results

- ORMA develops a policy addressing energy and environmental issues, including ongoing work proposals.
- A policy proposal that links the energy policy with the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources.

IUCN's role

- Knowledge and tool generation and dissemination.
- Technical assistance and consultancy.
- Promoter of local, national and regional alliances.
- Proposal elaboration.

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