

17.53 THE ANTARCTIC: MINERALS ACTIVITY

RECOGNIZING the unique qualities of Antarctica, the ethical and other values attached to its status as the last vast realm on earth that is essentially pristine wilderness, its value as a relatively unpolluted site for the monitoring of global pollution, and that the ideal is to conserve it for all time;

RECALLING that the last two Sessions of the General Assembly of IUCN (1981 and 1984), and the World National Parks Congress held in Bali, Indonesia, in 1982, have expressed concern about the threat of mineral activity to the Antarctic environment;

RECALLING ALSO that Resolution 16/8 of the IUCN General Assembly (1984) recommended that no mineral activity should take place in Antarctica until such time as consideration has been given to protecting the Antarctic environment completely, the environmental risks have been fully ascertained, and safeguards developed to avoid adverse environmental effects;

RECOGNIZING that the Ninth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting urged their member and other States to refrain from all exploration or exploitation of Antarctic mineral resources while making progress towards the adoption of an agreed legal regime concerning Antarctic mineral resource activities;

RECALLING also that the Group of Experts on Mineral Exploration and Exploitation established at the Ninth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (London, 1977) stated in its report that "There are no effective methods for the full restoration of sites on land, on ice, or at sea in the Antarctic disturbed by mineral exploration or exploitation";

NOTING also that one of the objectives of a minerals regime is to safeguard the Antarctic environment, and that the viewpoint has frequently been expressed by Treaty Parties that mineral activities are not likely to be commercially viable until well into the next century;

WISHING to ensure that adequate consideration is given to the desirability of fully protecting the Antarctic from mineral activities and for the development of a conservation strategy that includes options for protected area designations for the Antarctic as a whole;

CONCERNED that the proposed Antarctic Minerals Convention at present being negotiated may not provide a framework that totally guarantees environmental protection, and that if minerals exploration and exploitation were to be inaugurated, the wilderness qualities and scientific values of Antarctica could be irreversibly destroyed;

The General Assembly of IUCN, at its 17th Session in San Jose, Costa Rica, 1-10 February 1988:

1. RECOMMENDS that the Antarctic Conservation Strategy provided for in IUCN Recommendation 17.52 include an option prohibiting the extraction of mineral resources from the Antarctic.
2. RECOMMENDS to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties that they:
 - a. Declare their intent to conserve Antarctica for all time;
 - b. Urgently consider the likely effects of minerals activity on the Antarctic environment and its inherent qualities and values;
 - c. Give serious consideration to the desirability of prohibiting the extraction of minerals from the Antarctic, and to accord to Antarctica a designation as a protected area consistent with such a prohibition;
 - d. Take full account of views of Non-Consultative Parties and appropriate nongovernmental organizations regarding the Minerals Convention.
3. URGES the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties:
 - a. To ensure that scientific research programmes to provide sufficient information on which to base rational assessment and judgments in accordance with the Convention are implemented in advance of need;
 - b. Not to authorize exploration and development until a protocol covering liability and detailed arrangements covering compliance and dispute settlement, creating an adequate framework for environmental protection, have been set in place.

4. URGES the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to respect the strong case on conservation grounds for refraining from mineral exploration and development activities in the Antarctic.

