

17.64 SHIRAHO REEF, JAPAN

REMEMBERING that the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life support systems, the preservation of biological diversity, and the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems form the cornerstone of IUCN's conservation policy;

RECOGNIZING that the biological diversity of coral reefs is equalled only by that of tropical moist forests, and that coral reefs are one of the most biologically productive ecosystems in the world;

CONCERNED that devastating outbreaks of Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (*Acanthaster planci*), terrestrial run-off and siltation, pollution, coastal development and other effects of human development have resulted in the serious decline and loss of coral reefs throughout the Nansei Shoto (Ryukyo Archipelago) of Japan, including areas designated as protected marine reserves;

AWARE that the Shiraho Reef, Ishigaki Island, Okinawa Prefecture remains a particularly outstanding example of a rich coral reef community with many natural features of scientific importance, including some of the largest and very old stands of Blue Coral (*Heliopora coerulea*) ever identified in the northern hemisphere;

FURTHER AWARE that the Shiraho Reef provides unique cultural, social, economic, and spiritual benefits to the local community, which has maintained a harmonious relationship with the reef fully compatible with the principles of sustainable utilization;

FURTHER AWARE that Shiraho Reef's ecosystem, when healthy, functions as a reproductive reservoir, dispersing pelagic eggs and larvae of fishes, corals and other life to neighbouring reefs and fisheries;

CONCERNED that a proposal to construct a jet airport facility at and on the Shiraho Reef site will result in irreparable damage to the ecological processes and the biological diversity of the reef;

FURTHER CONCERNED that continued soil erosion in the Todoroki River watershed will degrade and stress the biological communities of the Shiraho Reef;

NOTING that the IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC) is currently undertaking an international scientific assessment of Shiraho Reef;

FURTHER NOTING that Ishigaki Island already has an airport; The General Assembly of IUCN, at its 17th Session in San Jose, Costa Rica, 1-10 February 1988:

1. EXPRESSES its appreciation to the Government of Japan for its cooperation with the IUCN research team during field surveys of Shiraho Reef in 1987.
2. STRONGLY URGES the Government of Japan to take immediate steps to reconsider the construction of an airport facility at the Shiraho Reef site in view of the serious environmental consequences for the reef of such an activity.
3. FURTHER REQUESTS the Government of Japan to assign Shiraho Reef the strongest degree of protection possible under Japanese domestic law in order to ensure its future viability as a dynamic reef ecosystem.
4. RESPECTFULLY SUGGESTS that the Government of Japan implements a research programme at Shiraho Reef with studies of its biota, promotes research and management of coral reef ecosystems, monitors the general status of coral reefs in Japan, and addresses the causes of coral reef destruction and degradation.

