

18.29 Tropical Forest Alteration and Species Extinctions

RECOGNIZING that recent estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations show that rates of deforestation in the tropics are at least 50 per cent higher than had previously been thought and that there is also an increase in areas of primary forest being utilized for timber;

RECOGNIZING that all forest alteration leads to local extinction and genetic erosion of species;

NOTING that tropical forests are generally acknowledged to be the most species-rich environment on earth;

NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop on Tropical Deforestation Rates and their Implications for Species Extinction, held at the present General Assembly;

CONCERNED that the rate of acquisition of new national parks and equivalent totally protected areas has declined, that less than 5 per cent of tropical moist forests are included in such areas and that this is inadequate to conserve the full range of biological diversity of tropical forests;

FURTHER CONCERNED that past estimates of species loss from tropical deforestation have been based upon simple species-area relationships and that these may underestimate the problem by failing to take account of patterns of forest loss and particularly the risks associated with forest fragmentation;

AWARE that by optimally locating protected areas in regions of high species diversity and endemism the value of these areas for species conservation can be greatly enhanced;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

1. CALLS UPON all nations concerned with the impact of tropical forest loss or change on species richness and diversity to:
 - a. urgently undertake surveys to identify additional sites of critical importance for conservation of biological diversity due to the endemism, representivity, richness or scarcity

of their species, and wherever possible accord total protection to these sites;

- b. relocate harvesting from primary forests to secondary forests and to tree plantations in previously deforested areas or, where this is not possible, work towards the development and introduction of forest harvesting systems which favour natural species diversity;
 - c. manage the national forest estate so as to optimize the conservation of natural species diversity by appropriate use of managed forests to buffer totally protected areas and provide corridors to link them;
2. RECOMMENDS nations whose tropical forests are already severely depleted, or whose tropical forest areas were never large, to protect and maintain all forest remnants in the interests of conserving their heritage of wild species;
 3. URGES the industrialized nations to support the efforts of nations to conserve their tropical forests, through appropriate development aid and measures to decrease the foreign debts and improve the trade relations of these countries;
 4. REQUESTS the Director General of IUCN to support, within the resources available, as well as through contacts with members and potential sources of funding, those nations and organizations striving to achieve development objectives in harmony with the maintenance of the biological diversity of tropical forests.