

18.30 Legal Instruments for the Conservation of Forests

CONSIDERING the outstanding biological, ecological, climatological, economic, social and cultural values of forests worldwide;

CONSIDERING the great and increasing pressures on all types of forests and especially on the rapidly diminishing areas of natural forests in tropical regions;

CONCERNED that forest habitat is being destroyed and degraded in all parts of the world;

REFERRING to a worldwide review by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), which concludes that only one million hectares of tropical forest is at present sustainably managed for timber on an operational scale, and to evidence from IUCN that the rate of designation of new protected areas has severely declined in the last five years;

CONSIDERING that the full potential range of social, environmental and economic benefits can only be sustained if the conservation of biological diversity is given high priority and effected by implementing a full range of protective measures;

CONVINCED that the successful sustainable management of tropical forest requires scrupulous attention to the conservation of biological diversity and must involve indigenous people and NGOs in its planning and implementation;

RECOGNIZING that the maintenance of biodiversity requires the protection of complete series of protected areas and remaining intact forests;

CONCERNED about the effect that the exploitation, degradation and destruction of forests have on the welfare of local people;

RECOGNIZING that all forest, if well and sustainably managed, can contribute continuously into the future a wide range of valuable products and services, including timber and many other forest products;

CONSIDERING that the harvesting of these products, if undertaken with appropriate social and ecological care, can make a considerable and sustainable contribution to the economies of the countries concerned and to the welfare and employment of local communities;

RECOGNIZING that appropriate measures to slow down the rate of deforestation, to protect forest ecosystems and to improve forest management will have many significant benefits such as preserving biodiversity and other natural resources, combating soil erosion and desertification, preserving cultures that depend on forests, protecting watersheds and coastal ecosystems, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and enhancing the role of forests as sinks for carbon dioxide;

NOTING that, while it is estimated that deforestation contributes approximately 18 per cent to emissions of carbon dioxide, fossil fuel usage contributes

approximately 80 per cent.

CONVINCED that there must, therefore, be a linkage between measures taken to increase the role of forests as a carbon sink and measures directed towards reducing industrial emissions;

CONSIDERING that it is essential that any international agreements should be aimed at the protection and sustainable management of *all* forests (boreal, temperate, mediterranean, subtropical and tropical) and should recognize linkages between the many sectors affecting forests (energy, agriculture, pollution, population, indigenous rights, trade, debt and economics);

NOTING ALSO that increasing forest area by afforestation and reforestation is one of the few proven ways effectively to increase the take-up of atmospheric carbon dioxide by the biosphere, but that afforestation must be undertaken in ways and in places that are socially and environmentally sound;

RECOGNIZING that there are a number of existing or projected legal instruments that address different aspects of this problem, namely: the International Tropical Timber Agreement, which must be renegotiated in 1992; the ongoing processes of negotiation of the Biodiversity Convention; the proposed general forest agreement or convention; and the proposed forest protocol within the Framework Convention on Climate Change;

CONCERNED that a proliferation of different legal instruments may lead to duplication and overlap, and to overloading the capacities of certain States;

BEING AWARE of the work currently underway, for consideration by the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), on different options for the coordination of national, regional and international action on forests in consultation with relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations;

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

1. REQUESTS the Director General to promote and support the work currently underway by the UNCED Secretariat on options for the protection and sustainable management of boreal, temperate, mediterranean, subtropical and tropical forest ecosystems, which should have as their major objectives:
 - a. the conservation of biological diversity contained in and supported by those forests;
 - b. extension and natural regeneration of forest areas;
 - c. the sustainable, diversified and ecologically sound use of forests;
 - d. the institutionalization of the involvement of indigenous peoples and NGOs in the planning and implementation of forest management;
 - e. assistance to developing countries including the transfer of technologies and skills;
2. URGES State members to negotiate, at the earliest possible time, protocols to a Framework Convention on Climate Change, on the subjects of forest

protection and the reduction of emissions of those greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, and FURTHER URGES non-governmental members to support the process;

3. URGES State members to ensure that in any development of these protocols, the preparation of other international legal instruments in this broad field should be taken into account;
4. FURTHER URGES State members in their negotiations on the Biodiversity Convention to take into full consideration the importance of conservation and sustainable utilization of forests;
5. URGES the Secretary-General of UNCED to speed up the process within the Preparatory Committee for defining the relationships between the different initiatives and proposed international legal instruments;
6. URGES the members of IUCN, once the relationships are clarified, to cooperate fully in developing the legal instruments necessary to address all the above concerns and priorities.

Note: This recommendation was adopted by majority vote. The delegations of the State members Canada and the United States indicated that they had voted against the recommendation because of their inability to accept operative paragraph 2. While supporting the principles underlying the suggested protocols, the State member Canada felt that these principles could be better expressed in the form of a separate international convention on forests. In a statement submitted for the record, the United States noted that it is nevertheless committed to full participation in the process of negotiating the broad series of measures required to protect and conserve the forests of the world.

