

18.58 Shiraho Reef, Japan

RECALUNG Recommendation 17.64 of the 17th General Assembly which strongly urged the Government of Japan to reconsider construction of an airport facility at the Shiraho Coral Reef site in Ishigaki Island, Okinawa Prefecture, and requested the Government to assign the Shiraho Reef the strongest degree of protection possible;

NOTING that the recommendation respectfully suggested that research, management and monitoring of the coral reef ecosystem as well as steps to address the causes of coral reef destruction and degradation be promoted by the Government of Japan;

RECOGNIZING that IUCN, in partnership with national NGOs and the community of Shiraho, undertook an evaluation of the coral reef that was to be affected by the construction of the airport and found it to be unique in Japan for its diversity of fauna and flora and of international importance;

AWARE that the Prefectural Government of Okinawa has considered the alternative sites for the airport and relocated the proposed airport 4 km northward, and that the Japanese Government supported the decision of the Prefectural Government of Okinawa;

NOTING that IUCN, with the support of national NGOs in Japan, undertook a further investigation and evaluation of the coral reef ecosystem (including the watershed area) that would be affected by the construction at the new site and determined:

- the new site to be an integral part of the Shiraho Coral Reef ecosystem;
- if the airport is constructed at the new site, an integrated ecosystem of land and water will be destroyed with the irreplaceable loss of biological diversity;

NOTING FURTHER that IUCN's assessment determined that irrigation and channelization, reshaping of the land by industrial cultivation and other construction works including building of resort facilities on Ishigaki Island, are principal causes of soil erosion, which is an imminent threat to the survival of the coral reef ecosystem at Shiraho;

CONCERNED that further economic development needed on Ishigaki Island should be pursued in a manner that ensures sustainable and traditional utilization of the unique natural environment;

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

1. EXPRESSES its appreciation to the Okinawa Prefectural Government and the Government of Japan for the consideration they have given to the unique coral reef ecosystem at Shiraho;
2. APPLAUDS the dedication of the people of Shiraho community for their efforts to preserve the coral reef ecosystem;
3. RECOMMENDS that the Okinawa Prefectural Government and the national authorities responsible for the environment and airport development, in cooperation with conservation NGOs and the local community:
 - a. find an alternative solution to the problem, including extension of the present airport to ensure optimal conservation of the coral reef ecosystem at Shiraho;
 - b. review present agricultural and development policies in the subtropical islands of southern Japan with the intention of adopting techniques and projects more suitable to sustaining the unique natural heritage of the islands.

Note: This recommendation was adopted by consensus. The Environment Agency of Japan (Government Agency member) indicated that had there been a vote, it would have abstained.

