

19.35 Global Initiative for National Environmental Funds

RECALLING that after the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, the IUCN Secretariat developed a proposal for a global initiative to strengthen national funding for environmental conservation;

RECOGNIZING that the ultimate security of biological resources, and the ecosystems which contain them, rests in the hands of the human societies which live in and around those ecosystems;

RECOGNIZING that these societies, at every level from local communities to the national, cannot act as responsible stewards of those natural resources unless they possess financial resources sufficient to allow them to take a long-term view of those resources;

CONCERNED that foreign assistance for conservation and environmental projects offers only a temporary solution to financial need and hence cannot substitute in a sustained way for a society's conscious choice to commit its own resources to environmental stewardship;

NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the recent efforts of many donors and international environmental organizations to create a new approach to put resources and control into the hands of societies;

RECOGNIZING that from these new approaches has begun to emerge the concept of national environmental funds, which offers promise of a qualitative change in the relationship between societies and their resource bases;

RECOGNIZING that national environmental funds can offer societies a new way to balance global and local interests;

BELIEVING that national environmental funds can provide a force for building and sustaining local capacity for natural resource management and biological diversity conservation because they can:

- provide the steady funding necessary for institutional stability and continuity of environmental programmes,
- nurture democratic traditions of accountability and participation;
- provide appropriate levels of funding which do not exceed the absorptive capacities of beneficiary institutions and agencies;
- stimulate local responsibility (at the grass roots) by providing a local source of aid;
- manage funds from multiple sources, including those coming from donor agencies, multilateral agencies, creative financial mechanisms (i.e. debt-for-nature swaps) and national sources (i.e. fees, levies, fines, etc.);

- enhance the viability of national level planning frameworks;
- enhance local capacity to plan and manage;

CONVINCED that national environmental funds have the potential to make a significant contribution to sustainable development, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management, and to shield these activities from local political shifts and policy changes;

The General Assembly of IUCN - The World Conservation Union, at its 19th Session in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 17-26 January 1994:

1. CALLS UPON all nations concerned with making economic development more sustainable to support the wider use of national environmental funds;
2. URGES:
 - (b) (a) all States to review and amend their laws and regulations to allow for autonomous funds to operate as charitable foundations or associations which invest capital and use income to support the efforts of NGOs, private enterprise and government agencies to manage natural resources sustainably; industrialized nations and multilateral aid agencies to consider providing increased support through Official Development Assistance to establish new national environmental funds and to increase the resources of existing funds;
 - (c) all States, international organizations and NGOs to support the efforts of operators of national environmental funds and their donors to upgrade their capacity to operate cost-effectively and accountably;
3. URGES all IUCN members to consider innovative mechanisms to finance national environmental funds;
4. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources, to promote the establishment of such funds through the proposed Global Initiative for National Environmental Funds.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member Australia indicated that had there been a vote, the delegation would have abstained.

