

19.69 The Biosphere Reserve of the Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare, Venezuela

RECALLING Resolution 18.9, adopted at the 18th Session of the General Assembly, on the conservation of priority ecosystems in South America;

GIVEN that the Alto Orinoco area represents approximately 20 per cent of the Venezuelan Amazonian Region and constitutes one of the areas of greatest wealth in terms of biodiversity;

CONSIDERING the ethnocultural importance of the indigenous communities who have lived there since ancestral times, in particular the Yanomani and Yekwa-na ethnic groups;

NOTING the good level of current conservation of the Alto Orinoco area, which maintains one of the largest continuous expanses of tropical moist forests in the world in pristine condition;

AWARE of the ecological fragility of the area due to its edaphic, climatic, geomorphological and ethnobiological characteristics;

NOTING the interest of Venezuela in conserving and promoting a sustainable development policy in the region through the creation of the Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare Biosphere Reserve, the largest protected area in the tropics, as well as the promulgation of decrees freezing mining and forest exploitation and controlling tourism;

ALARMED by the increasing pressure to exploit the natural resources of the Alto Orinoco area in an unsustainable way, which is currently manifest in the illegal activities of the garimpeiros and in the attempt to implement old development plans which have already failed;

BEARING IN MIND the recommendation adopted at the third Meeting of IUCN South American Members of IUCN in Paratf, Brazil, in 1992 and confirmed by the meetings of the IUCN South American Committee in Quito, Ecuador, and La Paz, Bolivia, on the importance of this Biosphere Reserve and the need to support it;

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

1. EXPRESSES its gratitude to Venezuela for the creation of the Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare Biosphere Reserve and for its environmental policy in the Amazon;
2. ENCOURAGES the Government of Venezuela to continue this policy in order to counter the development of actions aimed at exploiting the area's natural resources in an unsustainable way;
3. CONGRATULATES the Government of Venezuela for enforcing the provisions and actions listed in the Decree creating the Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare Biosphere Reserve and those considered in the above-mentioned environmental decrees, and ENCOURAGES the Government to involve the indigenous communities and organized civil society in the management of this protected area;
4. REQUESTS UNESCO, UNEP, IUCN and other international institutions and organizations interested in conservation to give priority to making the importance of the Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare

Biosphere Reserve widely known;

5. RECOMMENDS international institutions to support technically and financially the conservation, planning and sustainable development activities which are being promoted and implemented in this Biosphere Reserve;
6. RECOMMENDS international cooperation on the creation of protected areas with the aim of reducing current pressures and improving the state of conservation of this important area in the Amazonian Orinoco.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegations of the State members Norway and Sweden indicated that had there been a vote, they would have abstained.