

19.77 North American Coastal Temperate Forests

RECOGNIZING that temperate coniferous coastal forests, and especially rainforests, constitute a very rare type of ecosystem in the world, originally covering less than one-fifth of one per cent of the earth's land surface, and that one half of the earth's original forest of this type occurs along the Pacific Coast of North America from northwestern California to southeastern Alaska;

UNDERSTANDING that many endemic and unusual plants and animals occur only in these forests and that in biomass productivity the old growth forests (ancient forests) of this biome are unequalled anywhere;

AWARE that more than one half of the Earth's original coastal coniferous forests (ancient forests) have been logged, including more than 40 per cent of the ancient forests of this type in North America, and that few large unfragmented examples of this type of forest, other than in protected areas, exist outside British Columbia and Alaska;

MINDFUL of the fact that such ancient forests on Vancouver Island and on the mid-coast of British Columbia are disappearing at a rapid rate as a result of practices that have, to date, not been ecologically sustainable;

ALSO MINDFUL that past management practices in southeast Alaska have been controversial, and that while the United States Government has enacted legislation to ensure sustainable management of all forest resources, questions continue to arise concerning the sustainability of forest management in the area;

UNDERSTANDING that the Rainforest Coalition, the Sierra Club of Western Canada and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee have proposed a large network of protected areas, including conservation corridors, in areas of such ancient forests on Vancouver Island and the mid-coast of British Columbia;

AWARE of the fact that none of the protected areas that Canada maintains in forest areas along the Pacific Coast have been designated as World Heritage Sites under the provisions of the World Heritage Convention and that these ancient forests may be of outstanding universal value;

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

1. URGES the Governments of Canada, British Columbia and the United States to manage the temperate coastal coniferous forests of the Pacific Coast of North America by establishing appropriate protected areas and by adopting ecologically oriented systems of forest management which can be permanently sustained and which protect biodiversity;
2. CALLS UPON the Governments of Canada, British Columbia and the United States to expand substantially the amount of land in networks of protected areas, with connecting corridors, on Vancouver Island, the mid-coast of British Columbia and, where appropriate, in southeastern Alaska, taking into consideration the recommendations of environmental groups active in the regions such as the Rainforest Coalition, the Sierra Club and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee;
3. URGES the Government of Canada to consider nominating sites, or combinations of sites (such as

networks), in these forests as World Heritage Sites under the World Heritage Convention;

4. RECOMMENDS that special efforts be made by these parties and their citizens to restore degraded parts of these forests and to secure the overall integrity of the biome by linking now separated forest stands.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member of Canada indicated that had there been a vote, the delegation would have abstained, because Canada intends to take into consideration not only the recommendations of environmental groups active in the region but also the needs of indigenous people in the region (Operative Paragraph 2).