

## 19.84 Clearing Native Vegetation in Australia

AWARE that the clearance of the world's native vegetation cover has contributed and will continue to contribute to the loss of biological diversity through the loss of ecosystems and of habitats for native flora and fauna, resulting in the loss of species and of genetic diversity;

AWARE that land clearance has also contributed to the degradation of land, especially in the form of dryland salinity, soil erosion and the eutrophication of water resources;

CONCERNED that clearance is continuing in many parts of the world in many cases without knowledge of, the environmental significance of what is being cleared;

NOTING that knowledge of the structure, function and environmental values of areas of native vegetation is still valuable even if clearance cannot be prevented; NOTING that in some regions only a small amount of native vegetation remains at all and that only a small percentage of land is included within a formal national parks and reserves system and therefore protection of biological diversity is dependent on the conservation of native vegetation and land-use practice on other lands;

NOTING particularly that the brigalow areas of the State of Queensland and the wheatbelt areas of the State of Western Australia are not adequately represented in the formal parks and reserves system;

RECOGNIZING that vegetation is being cleared or poisoned in Queensland at a rate probably exceeding 500,000 ha a year;

CONCERNED that 202,000 ha of land was cleared in Western Australia between 1986 and 1991 and that less than 7 per cent of native vegetation is left in some shires, and that in the State's wheatbelt less than 10 per cent of the original native vegetation currently remains on private land and in the conservation estate;

AWARE that the South West Land Division of Western Australia is one of the major regions of biodiversity in the world, where three quarters of Western Australia's flora is found, and that 74 per cent of the State's extinct species and 71 per cent of the State's threatened species were or are found there;

CONCERNED that clearance rates in other parts of the world are also very high, resulting in global loss of biological diversity and localized land degradation;

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

1. CALLS UPON Australian Governments to ensure that:
  - (a) assessment mechanisms are in place which take account of the full range of environmental

values of sites proposed to be cleared;

- (b) areas assessed as being environmentally and ecologically significant are not cleared;
  - (c) remnant vegetation is managed on a sustainable basis, maintaining ecological and environmental values, and that regeneration in extensively cleared areas is promoted;
  - (d) degraded lands are rehabilitated;
2. CALLS UPON Australian Governments to develop and foster a community appreciation of the value of areas of native vegetation.

*Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegations of the State members Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, Zaire and Zimbabwe, and the delegation of the Department of Environment and Conservation, Papua New Guinea (a Government Agency member), indicated that had there been a vote, they would have abstained.*

