

## 1.22 Voluntary Independent Certification of Forest Management and Marketing Claims

RECOGNIZING the potential of voluntary, independent certification of forest management and product labelling as market-based incentives to improve forest management, and to build and maintain consumer confidence in forest products;

RECOGNIZING that voluntary independent certification is one of many tools to improve forest management and conservation;

RECALLING Action 14.8 in *Caring for the Earth*, “Create a market for forest products from sustainably managed sources and use wood more efficiently”;

NOTING that there is growing private and public sector support for credible forest certification that:

- a) assesses specific forest management units;
- b) operates independently of parties with either an equity interest in, or decision-making authority over, specific forest operations being assessed, is transparent, and involves a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties in the setting of certification standards;
- c) utilizes a comprehensive range of environmental and social criteria which include specific performance goals as well as effective administrative management systems to ensure continuous improvement, and which enable certifiers to determine whether the performance goals have actually been attained in the forest;
- d) assures through product labelling and chain-of-custody tracking that a certified product came from a certified forest; and
- e) is accredited by an internationally recognized accreditation body that can hold the certifier accountable to a common set of principles and protocols, and thereby ensure a level playing field worldwide;

NOTING that this private and public sector support is creating demand for forests and forest products that are certified in reference to:

- a) compliance with all applicable laws;
- b) tenure and use rights and responsibilities;
- c) rights of indigenous peoples;
- d) community relations and workers rights;
- e) multiple benefits from the forest;
- f) the conservation of biological diversity;
- g) ecological functions and integrity of the forest;
- h) management plans appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations;

- i) monitoring and assessment;
- j) natural forests and conservation of sites of major environmental, social, or cultural significance within them;
- k) plantation management in accordance with the above;

NOTING that there are many and various current activities related to voluntary certification and labelling;

NOTING that certification and product labelling can be improved by learning from practical experience and further research;

NOTING that as chain-of-custody is at its early stages of development but is an important and complex issue it warrants further study and development to remove uncertainties along the chain-of-custody from the forest to the final point of purchase;

NOTING that the Forest Stewardship Council has developed a set of principles which serve as a reference standard for the assessment and certification of specific forest management units;

NOTING the work of various other national and international organizations related to the certification of forest management;

FURTHER NOTING that the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) established a working group with the task of preparing a report describing reference material on the application of the ISO 14001 to the forest sector, and recognizing that this report cannot form the basis for performance claims nor create a product label;

The World Conservation Congress at its 1st Session in Montreal, Canada, 14–23 October 1996:

REQUESTS IUCN members and the Director General to monitor, evaluate and where appropriate provide technical and scientific assistance, and foster and if necessary initiate policy discussion in the development of voluntary, independent certification of forest management and associated products labelling.

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

*The use of the term “indigenous peoples” in this Recommendation shall not be construed as having any implications as regards the rights which may attach to that term in international law.*