

1.30 Protection of the Biodiversity of the Amami Islands of Japan

AWARE of the continued threat to the biodiversity of the Amami Islands by golf course, resort and other development activities;

RECOGNIZING that the Amami Islands of Japan are home to several rare and endemic species of flora and fauna, among them the Amami rabbit (*Pentalagus furnessi*), which is recognized as one of the most primitive lagomorphs in the world and which is endemic to the Japanese islands of Amami and Tokuno;

NOTING that the Amami rabbit is classified in the 1996 *IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals* as Endangered;

RECOGNIZING that the Amami rabbit is a unique component of the world's biodiversity and a natural treasure of not just Japan but of the world;

AWARE that the Government of Japan has declared protected status for the Amami rabbit as a "Special Natural Monument";

CONCERNED that this protected status provides physical protection for the Amami rabbit but does not provide protection of its habitat;

CONSCIOUS that, while reliable survey information is not available, destruction of the Amami rabbit's habitat is resulting in a dramatic decrease in the rabbit population, from roughly 6,000 individuals in 1977 to an estimated 3,000 in 1995;

CONCERNED that in addition to the Amami rabbit, a number of other species have been declared Endangered in Japan and that the unique island biodiversity of the Amami Islands is also threatened by human incursion and development. The threatened species included in the National Red Data Book include the white-backed woodpecker, White's ground thrush, the Amami woodcock and two amphibians, namely Ishikawa's frog and the Otton frog;

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

1. CALLS UPON the Government of Japan:
 - a) to upgrade protection measures for the Amami rabbit to include protection of its habitat taking into consideration the recommendations of the Lagomorph Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission;
 - b) to regulate further construction projects in the Amami Islands and require proof that these will not harm the Amami rabbit population or threaten the biodiversity of the Amami Islands;
 - c) to hold construction companies carrying out development projects in the Amami Islands publicly accountable for the impact of their activities on biodiversity;
 - d) to require an open and public environmental impact assessment process for all proposed construction projects before such projects are started;
2. URGES construction companies carrying out development activities in the Amami Islands to take full responsibility for the rare flora and fauna under their care;
3. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources and in partnership with other concerned international non-governmental organizations, to continue to monitor the status of the Amami rabbit and the biodiversity of the Amami Islands in general, and to work to counter threats to Japan's biodiversity.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member Germany indicated that it had not participated in discussion of the Recommendation nor would it have participated in any voting. The delegations of the State members Norway, Sweden and United States indicated that had there been a vote they would have abstained.