

1.35 Protected Areas

RECALLING Resolution 19.4 of the 19th Session of the General Assembly, on National Parks and Protected Areas, and in particular the adoption in 1992 of the Caracas Action Plan at the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas;

NOTING the publication in 1994 by IUCN of *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories*, which has encouraged States to adopt systems of protected areas using six management categories;

RECOGNIZING that protected areas are essential to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in particular is proving a valuable means to strengthen and extend protected areas;

NOTING that the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves (adopted in November 1995) and the outcome of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention (Brisbane, March 1996) recognized the central importance of protected areas to the successful achievement of objectives for Biosphere Reserves and wetland conservation respectively;

NOTING also that the work of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) identifies clear regional priorities for protected areas in many parts of the world, demonstrates the important economic benefits of protected areas, shows the desirability of inviting a wide range of public and private bodies to participate in the management of protected areas, and shows the need for a systematic approach to the development of a national network of protected areas;

RECOGNIZING moreover that while protected areas are vital components of national strategies for protecting biodiversity, fostering the sustainable use of biological resources and promoting the equitable sharing of benefits from these resources to all sectors of society, protected areas alone are insufficient to meet all the needs of conserving plant, animal and microbial life forms, populations and communities, especially if these geographic areas become isolated wildlands and waters set in landscapes that are increasingly modified by human activity, settlement and infrastructure;

REAFFIRMING the importance of protected areas as one of the principal means by which biodiversity can be conserved and other essential development objectives realized;

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

1. CALLS ON all State Parties to the CBD to include within their national biodiversity action plans proposals for the development and the strengthening of national systems of protected areas in line with Article 8(a) of the CBD;
2. URGES bilateral and multilateral donors, including the GEF, in their assistance to developing countries to give priority to implementing such protected areas systems;
3. REQUESTS all States, agencies and organizations working in the fields of conservation and development:
 - a) to take into account the recommendations in WCPA's regional action plans for protected areas;
 - b) to adopt policies towards protected areas which:
 - i) recognize that protected areas will survive only if they are seen to be of value, in the widest sense, to the nation as a whole and to local people in particular;
 - ii) complement the traditional focus of protected area management with actions outside the protected areas designed to meet sustainably the resource needs of human populations living in and around the protected areas;
 - iii) apply the IUCN system of protected area management categories which both provide strict protection primarily in order to protect nature and which provide for a balance of conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources and thereby help meet the needs of local people;

- iv) apply existing experience on buffer zone management and development from UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Reserve programme and other relevant research so as to prepare and promote practical alternative development strategies for human populations living in and around protected areas;
 - v) recognize that the maintenance of the cultural integrity and the traditional rights of indigenous peoples can often be supported by protected area policies and practices which safeguard traditional forms of sustainable resource use;
 - vi) while affirming the essential role of national governments in protected areas planning and management, also provide for a fuller role to be played by provincial and local governments, indigenous peoples, other local communities, NGOs and private organizations and individuals;
- c) to adopt policies toward bioregional planning which:
- i) apply the lessons of a growing body of ecological, biological and landscape science which call for the careful maintenance and restoration of remaining wildland and water areas as strictly protected areas; the sustainable management of those other protected area categories which permit resource extraction; and the protection or development of connections between these valuable sites by corridors of biodiversity-friendly land uses;
 - ii) adopt ecosystems or bioregions as the appropriate geographic scale for resource management programmes, within which protected areas are enveloped as components in a diverse landscape, including farms, harvested forests, fishing grounds, human settlements and infrastructure;
 - iii) support the above approaches to bioregional planning around protected areas with actions which encourage cooperation between private landowners, indigenous peoples, other local communities, industry and resource users; the use of economic incentives, tax arrangements, land exchanges and other mechanisms to promote biodiversity conservation; and the development of administrative and technical capacities which encourage local stakeholders, academic and research institutions and public agencies to harmonize their efforts.

Note. 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.