

## 1.61 Trade and Environment

RECALLING Recommendation 18.20 adopted at the 18th Session and Recommendation 19.25 adopted at the 19th Session of the IUCN General Assembly;

COMMENDING IUCN members on the initiatives and studies which they have undertaken;

NOTING with appreciation the report produced by the IUCN Environmental Law Centre and commissioned by the International Council of Environmental Law which summarizes the major issues and proposals on the trade and environment agenda;

WELCOMING IUCN's contribution to the creation of the International Centre on Trade and Sustainable Development which will provide a new range of services on trade and sustainable development issues to IUCN members;

RECALLING the call in Agenda 21 for trade and environment to be mutually supportive;

RECOGNIZING that an open multilateral trading system can facilitate sustainable development;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that the free flow of goods and services may at times be incompatible with implementing the principles of sustainable development and environmental conservation as elaborated in *Caring for the Earth*;

AFFIRMING that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, as supplemented by the results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, is to be applied in accordance with the objective of sustainable development, seeking both to protect and preserve the environment and to enhance the means for doing so in a manner consistent with respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development, as recognized in the Preamble to the Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO);

REAFFIRMING the important role of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in achieving environmental objectives, including those MEAs containing trade-related environmental measures;

AWARE that developing countries may suffer unduly from the imposition of trade-related environmental measures and, where appropriate, consideration should be given to the need for their equitable treatment;

STRONGLY URGING that the objectives of MEAs not be undercut by the rules of the international trading system, and that the objectives of the WTO be pursued in a manner which ensures environmental conservation and sustainable development;

REAFFIRMING the sovereign rights of all States to establish standards aimed at achieving a high level of environmental protection and conservation and their responsibility to ensure that areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction are protected from environmental degradation;

RECALLING that Agenda 21 called for governments to "encourage expansion of environmental labelling and other environmentally related product information programmes to assist consumers to make informed choices";

AWARE that many developing countries have specialized products for niche markets that would benefit from eco-labelling, but that some developing country producers have indicated that they need assistance or flexibility in eco-labelling criteria to qualify for the labels;

CONCERNED to ensure that efforts to develop disciplines as well as criteria in international law do not reduce the environmental effectiveness of eco-labelling schemes;

APPRECIATING the efforts that the WTO has made to publicize the work of the Committee on Trade and Environment;

BUT CONCERNED that the transparency and public access to its discussions concerning trade and environment continue to be severely restricted;

ENCOURAGING further efforts to ensure coordination with relevant inter-governmental organizations in order to contribute effectively their expertise to the deliberations on trade and environment with the WTO;

NOTING also that several international financial institutions have instituted panels for environmental reviews of their activities;

NOTING the forthcoming Ministerial meeting of the WTO to be held in Singapore, at which the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment may make recommendations concerning the possible reform of the multilateral trading system;

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

1. CALLS UPON all Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO):
  - a) to strengthen their commitment to pursue the objective of sustainable development in accordance with the preamble of the agreement establishing the WTO;
  - b) to strive to enhance the transparency of the deliberations of the WTO and opportunities for NGO input wherever possible into the dispute settlement process;
  - c) to strive to ensure that the objectives of MEAs not be undercut by the rules of the WTO;
  - d) to use, wherever possible, outside environmental expertise to guide the settlement of trade disputes involving environmental matters;
  - e) to establish the Committee on Trade and Environment as a standing body of the WTO;
  - f) to encourage more transparency regarding eco-labelling programmes of WTO members to avoid future conflicts between trade interests and supporters of eco-labelling;
2. URGES all States:
  - a) to integrate their policy-making on trade and environmental issues and to include the views and concerns of NGOs;
  - b) to study eco-labelling programmes and to heed the call of Agenda 21 to develop such programmes to assist consumers in making informed choices about the products they buy;
3. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources:
  - a) to continue efforts to collect and disseminate information to IUCN members about discussions regarding coordination of international trade and environmental law and policy-making;
  - b) to determine how eco-labelling programmes might further initiatives of IUCN, such as the Sustainable Use Initiative;
  - c) to complement existing theoretical studies by addressing the practical problems which arise from the interplay between international trade and environmental conservation.

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