

1.85 Conservation of Plants in Europe

KNOWING that plants are essential to human and animal life, form the fabric of our landscapes and contribute greatly to the quality of human life;

CONCERNED that over 2,500 higher plant species in Europe have become dangerously rare or are under threat of extinction;

AWARE that the Ministère de l'Environnement, France, and Plantlife, UK, with the support of the Council of Europe, IUCN and many IUCN members, organized Planta Europa, the first conference on wild plant conservation in Europe, held at Hyères, France, 2–8 September 1995;

AWARE of the decision by participants at the Planta Europa conference that a new network for plant conservation was needed and that a further meeting in June 1996 agreed an interim constitution and ground rules for its operation;

RECALLING the importance of legal provisions for the conservation of plants, especially those in the Convention on Biological Diversity and in two major European agreements:

- a) The Bern Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats in Europe (Council of Europe, 1979); and,
- b) The Directive on Conservation of Wild Fauna, Flora and Habitats (European Community, 1992) which will lead to the establishment of the Natura 2000 network of Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) in the Member States of the European Union;

WELCOMING the initiative of the Council of Europe to undertake a comparative evaluation of national legislation on the protection of plants, as called for by Planta Europa;

AWARE of the European Union's important CORINE biotopes project, now being extended to Central and Eastern Europe;

RECALLING that "Parks for Life", the IUCN Action Plan for Protected Areas in Europe, includes as one of its 30 Priority Projects the identification of Important Plant Areas in Europe, and the important work of the World Commission on Protected Areas in other parts of Europe;

NOTING that the interim constitution of Planta Europa specifically highlights cooperation with IUCN;

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

1. URGES all IUCN members in Europe:
 - a) to make renewed and expanded efforts to prevent rare plants from becoming extinct and common plants from becoming rare;
 - b) to devote more attention to the conservation of lower plants, including mosses, liverworts, lichens, fungi and algae;
2. WELCOMES the creation of Planta Europa as a vital network of institutions, governmental and non-governmental, with the goal of conserving the wild plants of Europe, both higher and lower, and their habitats;
3. CALLS upon all appropriate organizations to support the new network and contribute to its activities;
4. SUPPORTS Planta Europa's chosen approach of capacity-building through the implementation of agreed, high-priority tasks by its membership;

5. FURTHER SUPPORTS Planta Europa's call for the use of integrated approaches, involving both *in situ* and *ex situ* techniques, in the conservation of rare plant species, with the emphasis on the viability and vitality of wild populations;
6. ENDORSES in particular the Important Plant Areas project, to be coordinated by Plantlife on behalf of IUCN and Planta Europa;
7. ENDORSES the call from Planta Europa to develop an appropriate scientific base for the study of wild plants and in particular to give new impetus and recognition to plant taxonomy, which is vital for conservation of biodiversity;
8. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources, to provide support from the IUCN Secretariat for the development of Planta Europa and in particular to:
 - a) facilitate a meeting between the IUCN Species Survival Commission (with its European Plant Specialist Group), the IUCN European Programme, the Planta Europa Executive Group, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the Group of Experts on Plant Conservation (Bern Convention, Council of Europe) and the European Topic Centre for Nature Conservation to explore further means of collaboration;
 - b) promote a reciprocal exchange of relevant information;
 - c) help facilitate the raising of funds, especially for the Important Plant Areas project;
 - d) continue to coordinate IUCN's own plant conservation activities with the work of Planta Europa.