

1.91 Sustainable Forest Resource Use Policy in Suriname

RECALLING that primary tropical rainforest is rapidly disappearing around the world, with more than 60 per cent already gone with serious consequences for biodiversity conservation and climate stabilization;

RECALLING that large-scale unsustainable harvesting of such resources globally is on the increase;

RECOGNIZING that 90 per cent of Suriname is still covered with primary tropical rainforest, the highest percent rainforest cover on Earth;

CONSIDERING the enormous economic potential of such resources if used sustainably as demonstrated by a recent World Bank analysis of the wealth of nations based on natural resources that put Suriname in the top 20 countries on Earth;

RECOGNIZING that Suriname, under economic hardship, has resisted offers to sell off large tracts of its primary forest estate to forest resource extraction companies for over three years, and is currently giving very careful consideration to the full range of alternatives to non-renewable exploitation;

RECOGNIZING that the forest-covered interior of Suriname is home to two very important indigenous peoples, the Maroon communities of African origin and the native Amerindians, whose survival would be compromised by unsustainable forest practices;

NOTING that many alternative, truly sustainable uses of tropical rainforests are being identified and put into practice (for example, ecotourism and non-timber forest products) in a number of tropical countries;

NOTING that the Suriname Government has also very clearly heard the concerns of its indigenous peoples and responded to them;

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

1. STRONGLY commends the Government of Suriname for its leadership and enlightened positions on the future of one of the world's last primary forests;
2. REQUESTS the Director General, Commissions and members of IUCN, within available resources, to:
 - a) offer technical assistance;
 - b) strongly encourage bilateral and multilateral donors (as exemplified by the existing involvement of the Inter-American Development Bank) and international foundations and conservation organizations to assist Suriname in being one of the first tropical forest countries to take an enlightened approach to truly sustainable use of tropical forest resources and biological wealth.

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.

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.