

1.97 Conservation of Proposed Volcanoes of Kamchatka World Heritage Site

RECOGNIZING that the Kamchatka Peninsula is a globally unique, striking, varied and active volcanic landscape, and habitat for a great number of endemic species threatened with extinction listed in the Russian Red Data Book and the Red List of IUCN;

WELCOMING the nomination of “Volcanoes of Kamchatka” submitted by the Minister for the Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Russian Federation, which is to be assessed by the World Heritage Committee under their operational guidelines for possible inclusion in the World Heritage List at the Committee’s Twentieth Ordinary Session to be held in Merida, Mexico, 2–7 December 1996;

NOTING that the nomination includes five existing protected areas: the Kronotsky State Biosphere Nature Reserve, the Bystrinsky Nature Park, the Nalychevo Nature Park, the south-western Tundra Nature Reserve, the southern Kamchatka Nature Park and the southern Kamchatka State Nature Reserve;

RECOGNIZING that the salmon spawning rivers in southern Kamchatka, whose watershed is protected by the Bystrinsky Nature Park, are of critical ecological importance and support the trophic web of a critical portion of the proposed World Heritage Site;

NOTING that nomination for the volcanoes of Kamchatka World Heritage states that within the nominated area the “aim has been fixed to recognize all Nature Parks as National Parks” and that with respect to the Bystrinsky Nature Park “industrial development of the southern part of the Park may cause pollution to the salmon-spawning grounds and a general lowering of the sustainability of ecosystems” and that “the people of the area will have a great deal to lose by allowing any amount of disturbance to the salmon habitats;”

NOTING that the livelihood and culture of Kamchatka’s indigenous Itelmen, Koryak and Eveni peoples depend on sustaining the natural resources protected by the proposed World Heritage Site, particularly salmon and wildlife;

RECALLING the December 16, 1994 “Joint Statement on Preservation of Biodiversity and Conservation of Flora and Fauna” of the Prime Minister of Russia and the Vice-President of the United States which recognized the “unique biological resources” of both nations, announced that both governments “will work to take actions as are necessary for the significance of implementation of Agenda 21,” and further stated that both governments “will continue to make efforts towards further increasing the effectiveness of their work in the field of conservation of flora and fauna and the preservation of biodiversity;”

NOTING that in 1991 the Kamchatka Academic Environmental Institute warned in an “Expert Assessment of Environmental and Economic Consequences of Projected Gold Mining in the Central Part of the Middle Range of the Kamchatka Peninsula” of the unavoidable and irreversible threats to Kamchatka’s spawning rivers posed by mining and recommended that mining development not take place in the area of the Bystrinsky Nature Park;

FURTHER NOTING that the proposed mining of the Asachinskoye and Rodnikovoye mineral deposits in southern Kamchatka poses serious threats to the integrity and ecological health of the Southern Kamchatka Nature Park, and to land in the Southern Kamchatka Nature Park legally set aside for the protection of the traditional lifestyle of the indigenous Eveni people;

CONCERNED that the prospective mining and industrial development in Kamchatka may do irreversible damage to the unique natural and cultural values of the proposed “Volcanoes of Kamchatka” World Heritage Site;

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

1. CONGRATULATES the Government of the Russian Federation for its nomination of “Volcanoes of Kamchatka” for consideration for inclusion on the World Heritage List;
2. URGES the Government of the Russian Federation:
 - a) to follow the recommendations of the 1991 Kamchatka Academic Environmental Institute Expert Assessment;

- b) to invite the World Commission on Protected Areas, subject to available resources, to review and evaluate the threats of proposed mining and industrial development in Kamchatka to existing and proposed protected areas of national and international significance;
3. CALLS UPON multilateral and bilateral finance agencies, such as the World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation, not to finance, insure or support activities, such as the proposed Aginskoye and Zolotov gold mines in the southern part of the Bystrinsky Nature Reserve, and the proposed Asachinskoye and Rodnikovoye mining development in Southern Kamchatka, which would threaten the sustainability of the ecosystems and viability of species, and the integrity of indigenous cultures within the five protected areas included in the Volcanoes of Kamchatka World Heritage List nomination.

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 and Sweden indicated that had there been a vote they would have abstained.