

1.107 Protecting the Habitat of the Porcupine Caribou Herd

RECOGNIZING that the Arctic region contains unique ecosystems essential to the well-being of our planet and important cultural resources, many of international significance;

AWARE that elements of these ecosystems have already been subjected to pollution and other damage as a result of human activities;

AWARE also that ministers of the eight Arctic nations signatory to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy have endorsed the protection of large areas of the Arctic, and have called for cooperation in protecting the Arctic environment;

RECOGNIZING that the range of the porcupine caribou herd (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*) covers a unique ecosystem within Canada and USA, and that the two governments concluded in 1987 the Agreement on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd to protect the herd and its habitat, but that this agreement alone does not prevent industrial development in the range;

PLEASED that within this vast wilderness range straddling the Alaska-Yukon border the Government of Canada and the resident indigenous peoples have set aside Ivvavik National Park and the adjacent Special Conservation Area comprising about 1.4 million hectares and Vuntut National Park and the Old Crow Special Management Area comprising 1.2 million hectares, and that the US Government has set aside the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge of 7.6 million hectares;

CONCERNED that other portions of the herd's range, including areas of sensitive habitat identified under the international agreement, harbour an extraordinary endowment of wildlife and supply the subsistence needs of the Gwich'in, Inupiat and Inuvialuit, but do not enjoy permanent protection under national law and therefore could become degraded by industrial development;

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

CALLS on the governments of Canada and USA, in full consultation with other levels of government, indigenous communities and appropriate wildlife management bodies to:

- a) provide permanent protection under national law for the calving grounds of the porcupine caribou herd and other sensitive habitat areas that are not now so protected;
- b) to work together to consider whether an international designation would enhance protection and management of part or all of the herd's range.

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.

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.