

## 1.24 Impacts of Human-Induced Fire Events on Biodiversity Conservation

RECOGNIZING that both protected areas and non-protected natural and modified habitats on public and private lands make a vital contribution to the conservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity;

RECOGNIZING that many ecosystems are highly sensitive to fire, for example wetlands, rainforests and alpine areas, and that their ecological integrity may be destroyed, degraded or significantly altered as a result of inappropriate fire regimes; and that other ecosystems such as prairies are dependent on fire to maintain natural processes;

RECOGNIZING that fire is required to renew or to maintain the natural ecological characteristics and functions of ecosystems such as natural grasslands, brush lands, pine forests and the boreal forest, and can be an appropriate landscape management tool;

NOTING that in many parts of the world the natural vegetation is highly flammable under certain conditions and that where land-use patterns are inappropriate this creates risks to life and property;

NOTING that urbanization (residential, recreational, tourism, etc.) increasingly extends into natural or semi-natural areas of value for biodiversity and that protected areas may receive large numbers of visitors;

NOTING that in many such areas the incidence of human-induced fires is increasingly more common than naturally-caused fires because of arson, accidental fire and planned fire events;

NOTING that in both protected and non-protected areas the optimum strategy is one that utilizes a better balance of techniques including planned fire events and non-fire-based risk reduction strategies;

NOTING that in some protected and non-protected areas the current management focus on the use of planned fire events for fuel reduction is giving rise to an increasing reliance on fire-based techniques at the expense of more ecologically and economically sustainable non-fire-based risk reduction strategies; and in some ecosystems the absence of fire-based management techniques may lead to the irreversible loss of biodiversity;

BELIEVING that all human-induced fire management strategies should place emphasis on ecological sustainability when implementing strategies to reduce risks for life and property;

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

1. REQUESTS the Commission on Ecosystem Management to identify the types and extent of ecosystems subject to frequent occurrences of human-induced fire events, and to identify and consider the implications of human-induced changes to natural fire regimes for the biodiversity and ecological integrity of such ecosystems;
2. CALLS upon all governments to have regard for the ecological sustainability of affected ecosystems when implementing bush fire risk management strategies in relation to both public and private lands.