

REC 3.111 Impact of roads and other infrastructure through the ecosystems of Darién

CONCERNED with conserving the biological, natural and human values that led the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to designate Darién as a World Heritage Site in 1982 and as a Biosphere Reserve in 1983;

RECALLING also that the construction in the 1970s of the existing stretch of the Pan-American Highway through part of the region of Darién triggered processes that resulted in very high annual deforestation rates and the loss of a great part of the forests in the region;

CONSIDERING that the expanse of contiguous forests centred around Darién constitutes the largest remaining mass of woodland in Panama, and that recent studies through the ecoregion of Chocó-Darién, including portions of Colombia and Ecuador, indicate that this mass of woodland, including the adjacent Colombian sectors, constitute the largest-remaining mass of woodland left in the entire ecoregion;

ALSO CONSIDERING the presence of various ethnic groups in the region and the legally formed indigenous territories, the populations of which have developed an interdependence with the land, coastal and marine ecosystems in the area;

OBSERVING the new and intensive dialogue and lobbying carried out by the Governments of Panama, Colombia and the governments of neighbouring countries, in order to build a stretch of highway to connect Colombia and Panama by land via Darién and to construct power-grid connections between the two countries as well; and

RECALLING the considerations expressed by Resolution 19.66 *Opening the Darién Plug*, adopted by the 19th IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994);

The World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17–25 November 2004:

1. URGES the Government of Panama and the Government of Colombia to:

(a) consider and evaluate the greatest possible number of alternative proposals to achieve the proposed interconnections of power supplies and transportation, including alternatives other than the immediate construction of a highway;

(b) publicize the considered options and call for ample consultation and debate in all sectors, well in advance, paying particular attention to the ethnic groups and indigenous peoples of the area;

(c) make sure that extensive evaluations are carried out on the ecological, social and cultural impact that each alternative might generate in Darién and the neighbouring regions, before making any decision about whether or not to construct infrastructure;

(d) make sure that the construction of the proposed infrastructure only takes place if and when an agreement is reached on the measures to be taken and the programmes to be established to guarantee the integrity and conservation of biological, natural and human values; and

(e) ensure the prior existence of official commitments and the resources necessary to execute these measures and establish those programmes in a long-term, sustained way; and

2. URGES the international financial institutions to lend their support to the above-mentioned considerations and to make sure that compliance with them is assured before financing the construction of the proposed infrastructure.

State member Sweden abstained from voting on this motion for reasons given in the Swedish Government's general statement on the motions process (see page x).

The Department of State, United States, provided the following statement for the record:

State and agency members United States refrained from engaging in deliberations on this motion and took no national government position on the motion as adopted for reasons given in the US General Statement on the IUCN Resolution Process.