

REC 3.097 Conservation of the Wetland Corridor of the Fluvial Littoral, Argentina

CONSIDERING that the three million hectares of the floodplains of the Paraguay and Parana Rivers in Argentina contain exceptional biological diversity, complexity and productivity that arise from the dynamics of flood patterns, and must be conserved;

ACKNOWLEDGING that in this system ecological characteristics converge from several biogeographical regions – Neotropical, Parana, Eastern Chaco, Espinal and others – explaining the existence of species, functions and attributes unique in South America;

EMPHASIZING that in this wetland corridor, one of the world's largest freshwater reserves and an exceptional inland fishery, Fundación PROTEGER, an IUCN member, launched in 2003 with extensive national and international support the initiative for conservation and wise use of the 'Wetland Corridor of the Argentinean Fluvial Littoral';

RECALLING Recommendation 2.85 *Conservation of Middle and Lower Parana River* adopted at the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000), which expressly requests the international community to "recognize and support the initiatives of the Rio de la Plata Basin countries to promote the conservation and sustainable development of the region";

RECOGNIZING that the wetland corridor, which comprises a mosaic of fluvial wetlands, performs important functions in the control and prevention of floods and in the improvement of water quality, and provides special ecological services for the retention of sediments, filtration of water, absorption of pollutants and mitigation of climate change, while also contributing essential resources such as supply of freshwater, fishing, tourism and recreation, among others;

AWARE that significant human disturbances occurring in the Basin, such as expansion of the agricultural frontier and the use of inappropriate technologies, lead to the simplification, contamination and replacement of ecosystems, that the loss of ground cover and wetlands facilitates erosion and sedimentation, and that increased run-off encourages the recurrence of disastrous floods, such as those associated with El Niño;

ALSO AWARE that large infrastructure works generate negative impacts on fish populations, their habitats, reproduction areas and migration routes adding to the growing pressure of overfishing and exportation at unsustainable rates, particularly of the shad *Prochilodus lineatus* which is the keystone species in the system;

RECALLING that the Argentinean Fluvial Littoral is connected to the country's most important population hub;

NOTING that poverty has risen severely in this region, where 68.5 percent of the inhabitants live below the poverty line, and that migration, environmental refugees, loss of food security and malnutrition are linked to this process of impoverishment;

FURTHER RECALLING that there is a close and indissoluble relation of dependency between the ecosystem's characteristics and its resources on one hand, and the social, cultural and technological traits of the local communities on the other, and that the region's economies are deeply entwined with the use of resources of the river and its wetlands;

AGREEING with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, namely conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits deriving from such use – objectives for which adequate access to resources, training, technology transfer and financing is crucial;

NOTING that the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971) establishes that wetlands can be conserved through ‘wise use’ (Article 3.1), and that wise use was defined by the 3rd Conference of Parties (Regina, 1987) as the “sustainable utilisation for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem”, and that the Convention also promotes the development of wetland resources and the sustainable trade of wetland products; and

AWARE of the need for coordinated work by all actors and sectors involved in the management of wetlands and their resources and the need for a strategy based on informed participation, social equity and fair trade, aimed at protecting biodiversity, alleviating poverty, preserving and promoting local livelihoods, thereby improving environmental quality and the quality of life of the riverine population of the Wetland Corridor of the Argentinean Fluvial Littoral;

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

1. RECOMMENDS to members of IUCN that they recognize and support the initiative on the ‘Wetland Corridor of the Argentinean Fluvial Littoral’ (alluvial plains of the Paraguay and Parana rivers), which promotes in a participatory manner the conservation of biodiversity, the wise use of wetlands and the development of their resources and services, with the aim of alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life of riverine populations;
2. URGES the Argentinean Government to give the highest priority to the implementation of conservation, wise use and sustainable management measures related to maintenance of socio-environmental conditions, allowing in this way the complete functioning of the ecological cycles in the entire Wetland Corridor;
3. ENCOURAGES all IUCN members to support the Argentinean Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on this task; and
4. RECOMMENDS to international organizations that they support the Argentinean Government and NGOs in the implementation of conservation and sustainable development policies and programmes in the Wetland Corridor.

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.