

#### 4.126 Protection of Chilean Patagonia

RECOGNIZING that Chilean Patagonia is one of the most pristine places on the planet, with rivers that flow freely and extensive forest areas, glaciers and fjords, among other virgin and wildlife areas;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that it is the habitat of the Patagonian Huemul *Hippocamelus bisulcus*, the heraldic animal of Chile, which is listed as 'Endangered' on the 2008 *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, together with the Southern River Otter *Lontra provocax* and various cats and fish, among others;

THANKING the State of Chile for the recognition that it has given to this area by declaring almost 50% as under protection, and its decision to adopt the designation 'Life Reserve' for the Aysén region of Patagonian Chile;

TAKING NOTE moreover that within Aysén the State of Chile has declared the Area of Environmental and Cultural Conservation of Patagonia, the National Tourism Zone of Lake General Carrera, and has prioritized extensive sectors in the Regional Biodiversity Strategy;

RECOGNIZING the plans to develop large-scale hydroelectric projects, such as the one referred to as 'HidroAysén' of the consortium formed by the Italian/ Spanish company Endesa and the Chilean company Colbún, that would mean the construction of five large dams on the Baker and Pascua Rivers;

AWARE that Chilean environmental legislation currently makes the presentation of environmental impact studies obligatory in the case of hydroelectric projects of this magnitude;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the plans of Transelec (a Canadian company), that would build a transmission line of 2,300 kilometres, to transmit electricity from Patagonia to the north, crossing a dozen protected areas, which is a threat to endemic forests and intrinsically valuable landscapes;

NOTING the launch in June 2008 of an energy study by the Universities of Chile and Federico Santamaría from which it was concluded that over 70% of the energy that Chile will require in 2025 could be provided through energy efficiency and renewable, non-conventional energy sources, without resorting to mega dams;

RECALLING Resolution 15.13 *Protection of Free Flowing Rivers From River Engineering* adopted by the 15th IUCN General Assembly (Christchurch, 1981), which noted that "free-flowing rivers are increasingly being dammed for hydro-electric power generation... and have all but disappeared from some nations of the world", that "concern for retaining unmodified rivers is mounting in many parts of the world because of the need to retain ecological diversity", and which URGED States "... to protect the diversity of ecological, recreational, scenic and landscape values, only ensured by retaining the natural flow of rivers";

FURTHER RECALLING Resolution 3.1 adopted by the 3rd IUCN General Assembly (Caracas, 1952), in which it is stated that hydroelectric dams can seriously alter the integrity of protected areas, and reminds governments that they are obliged to guarantee not only the safekeeping but also the inviolability of the areas that they have taken the initiative to delimit and protect; and

ALSO RECALLING Resolution 12.12 *Energy and Conservation* adopted by the 12th IUCN General Assembly (Kinshasa, 1975), which recommended that "governments... explore all means for conserving conventional energy resources" and "give full support to research, development and deployment of less conventional technologies that involve renewable... sources of energy";

#### **The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008:**

1. CALLS ON the Government of Chile and specifically the Ministry of the Environment and its National Commission on the Environment (CONAMA), to:
  - (a) evaluate the hydroelectric dams proposed for the Baker and Pascua Rivers and the associated transmission line as a single project, in the context of an integrated watershed management plan;

- (b) carry out an exhaustive study of all the alternative sources of energy before making a decision about the HidroAysén mega projects and transmission line;
  - (c) ensure that the HidroAysén project and the transmission lines do not affect State-protected wilderness, conservation areas and priority areas for biodiversity;
  - (d) carry out an independent technical evaluation at the highest level, utilizing international standards, and working with the national scientific community in collaboration with appropriate international conservation organizations to require meticulous studies of all the resources and potential impacts before approving the projects; and
  - (e) ensure that there is genuine citizen participation in the evaluation process;
2. URGES the Government of Chile to:
- (a) develop a comprehensive National Energy Strategy;
  - (b) develop and fully implement the promised National Hydrographic Watersheds Plan before approving any future project;
  - (c) permanently protect representative examples of the free-flowing rivers of Chile;
  - (d) consult and comply with the mechanisms established under international treaties and agreements such as the Protocol on Shared Water Resources signed with Argentina in 1991; and
  - (e) cooperate with regional and provincial governments and local communities as well as nongovernmental organizations in the 'Life Reserve' of the Aysén region to support the sustainable development of the region; and
3. CALLS ON relevant and interested IUCN members to provide as much technical and scientific support as possible to Chile and especially to CONAMA to help determine the impacts of the construction of the HidroAysén project and its transmission line, and to protect Chilean Patagonia, its free-flowing rivers and other resources.

State and agency members of the 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 U.S. General Statement on the IUCN Motions Process.