

4.043 Environmental and social suitability of the Initiative for Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA)

CONSIDERING that in the twelve South American countries the Initiative for Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) has begun implying the construction of large infrastructure projects; that the Initiative is based on the idea that "development in the transport, energy and telecommunications sectors will help overcome geographic obstacles, strengthen markets, and promote new economic opportunities in the region";

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the IIRSA and other large infrastructure development plans have been negotiated and decided in regional settings where the populations, local communities, and indigenous peoples who will be affected have not been able to participate;

CONSIDERING moreover that the governments of the region, upon accepting the IIRSA and other large infrastructure projects, have not honoured the international commitments that they have subscribed to: *Agenda 21*, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, nor the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 on Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Groups in independent countries;

RECOGNIZING that the design of the IIRSA and other large infrastructure projects has been presented in scenarios where climate change is a very low risk factor, and that this situation has changed radically, considering that today it is recognized that various Latin American countries and shared watersheds face critical conditions because of climate change; and recognizing that the economic and social consequences of these large works projects in this new situation are not known, nor have they been evaluated;

CONSIDERING that this type of infrastructure megaproject has, in many cases, irreversible socio-environmental impacts, causing or aggravating the expulsion of human populations, causing chaotic resettlement, promoting greater forest exploitation, and resulting in unregulated replacement cattle ranching, and increased poaching of wild animals; and considering that all these activities have a huge impact on biodiversity and generate social conflicts, including those that occur in indigenous territories, national parks and other protected areas, in accordance with the warnings of the *Bariloche Declaration* adopted by the II Latin American Congress of National Parks and Other Protected Areas (Bariloche, 2007);

AWARE that the principal interest of the IIRSA and its associated projects is the establishment of large interocean highways and channels of communication to increase raw material exports, without taking into account the needs of local communities; and aware that its financing comes from loans that will generate large-scale indebtedness that will have to be assumed by present and future generations of Latin Americans;

CONCERNED that the implementation of these huge infrastructural works projects and large-scale development plans could exacerbate the loss of species and the deterioration of watersheds, as well as levels of poverty and inequality, tending to generate benefits solely for large producers and transnational corporations; and

ALSO CONCERNED by the evidence of the significant impacts that the initiative has already had on natural protected areas and other efforts for conserving biological and cultural diversity in various countries of the continent;

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

1. URGES the governments of South America to:
 - (a) take actions that guarantee the fulfilment of agreed-upon national commitments to international agreements and conventions such as the CBD, (UNFCCC), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNCCD, ILO 169, among others, including in cases where these imply adjustments or modifications to projects already designed or in the planning and development stage;

- (b) put into practice the Precautionary Principle in all of those cases in which the social and environmental impacts that could arise from the IIRSA projects and other large investments in infrastructure are not clearly known; and
 - (c) implement, with the participation of local actors, all the environmental and social safeguards needed to prevent these large-scale infrastructure and development plans from worsening current levels of poverty and environmental deterioration, as well as those safeguards needed to minimize their impact on climate change, biological diversity, and on the populations and economies of the region;
- 2. CALLS ON South American governments and IUCN members to strengthen the capacities of local actors to construct collective visions of sustainability and fairness, permitting them to define their priorities as to regional development processes and integration, and to evaluate with foresight and in an integrated manner the environmental, social and cultural impacts so that they can take timely and adequate measures to avoid these impacts;
- 3. URGES civil society to become a strong force in environmental, social and cultural monitoring and follow-up of the IIRSA projects and other large investments in infrastructure, generating appropriate channels of information and consultation for the benefit of the actors involved, mainly the communities and local territorial organizations; and
- 4. REQUESTS that sub-regional and international financial institutions promote and support development and infrastructure initiatives that are environmentally and socially sustainable and in accordance with the priority of integration aimed at solving the most important problems of the region;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN Programme 2009-2012:

- 5. CALLS ON the Director General to:
 - (a) strengthen IUCN's capacity to monitor ongoing infrastructure projects in South America;
 - (b) collaborate with IUCN's members in the region and IUCN's Commissions to engage in a process of confidence-building, transparency and implementation of environmental and social safeguards; and
 - (c) facilitate bilateral and multilateral cooperation between States and civil society to improve transparency and implementation of environmental and social safeguards.

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.