

4.051 Indigenous peoples and protected areas of La Mosquitia in Mesoamerica

RECALLING previous IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations that address the roles and rights of indigenous peoples:

- (a) Recommendation 18.16 *Recognition of the Role of Indigenous Communities* adopted by the 18th IUCN General Assembly (Perth, 1990);
- (b) Resolution 19.20 *IUCN Action on Indigenous People and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*, Resolution 19.23 *The Importance of Community-based Approaches*, Recommendation 19.21 *Indigenous People and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources* and Recommendation 19.22 *Indigenous People* adopted by the 19th IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994); and
- (c) Resolution 1.53 *Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas*, Resolution 1.54 *Indigenous Peoples and Conservation in Meso-America*, Resolution 1.55 *Indigenous Peoples and Forests* and Resolution 1.56 *Indigenous Peoples and the Andes* adopted by the 1st IUCN World Conservation Congress (Montreal, 1996);

ALSO RECALLING Resolution 2.81 *Mining concessions and protected areas in Mesoamerica* adopted by the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000) and Recommendation V.24 *Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas* noted at the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003);

MINDFUL of the provisions of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and of those of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (September 2007), and the Draft *American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination, prior informed consultation and the ownership, use, management and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources of their territories;

RECALLING that IUCN, in the framework of its Initiative for Indigenous Peoples and Conservation, committed itself to establish a Mesoamerican Working Group on indigenous peoples and protected areas;

BEARING IN MIND that the indigenous territories of La Mosquitia in Honduras and Nicaragua host the largest contiguous remaining tropical rainforest area in Mesoamerica, as well as most of the protected areas of the countries concerned; and that they jointly constitute the so-called 'core' of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC), including the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve, designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, the Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve and the Patuca National Park in Honduras, and the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve in Nicaragua;

CONCERNED by the pressures to which the indigenous territories and protected areas of La Mosquitia, which constitute the core of the MBC, are subjected, particularly the rapid escalation of uncontrolled agricultural, logging and livestock encroachment, which results in accelerated forest loss and conversion, estimated at 10,000 hectares annually in Honduras alone, with increasingly severe impacts on watersheds, wetlands and marine/ coastal areas;

FURTHER CONCERNED, that these damaging impacts will further increase with agrobiofuel production, mining exploration and exploitation and construction of the Patuca III mega-dam, and that all of these activities endanger the medium- and long-term sustainability of this important transboundary system of protected areas, as well as the habitat and life of the indigenous and afrodescendant communities who have historically lived in these territories, thus violating these peoples' rights, guaranteed by international standards;

RECALLING that the MBC core protected areas are priority sites for Mesoamerican and global conservation, pursuant to the provisions of the Central American Regional Biodiversity Convention (1992); and

RECOGNIZING the contribution received from the IUCN Regional Office for Meso-America (IUCNORMA) facilitating the holding of meetings of representatives of indigenous peoples in the Mesoamerican region, especially after the II Latin American Congress of National Parks and

Other Protected Areas (Bariloche, 2007), and noting that this support and encouragement from the Union was invaluable for creating the first draft of the Regional Indigenous Agenda, and improving the organization and positioning of the Indigenous Networks of Mesoamerica;

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:

REQUESTS the Director General, IUCN Commissions, members, Regional Councillors and particularly IUCNORMA, utilizing available resources, as well as other resources that could be raised, to work on the following:

- (a) carrying out an assessment of the current status of MBC's core protected areas, highlighting biodiversity threats and the exercise of the rights of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples;
- (b) lobbying the Governments of Honduras and Nicaragua so that they respond to the findings of the assessment and contribute to the creation of short-, medium- and long-term plans to tackle these challenges;
- (c) submitting the assessment report to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, and lobbying them so that UNESCO presents recommendations to Honduras and Nicaragua to safeguard the integrity of the protected areas and the rights of the indigenous and afro-descendant peoples;
- (d) forming alliances with members of IUCN in the Mesoamerican Region in order to implement an action plan based on the findings of the assessment, so as to start a process aimed at reducing the advance of the agricultural frontier, as well as restoring and protecting watersheds, wetlands and forests in protected areas located on the agricultural frontiers of the MBC's core area and other important ecosystems in the indigenous peoples' territory;
- (e) asking the Government of Honduras, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams and the rights of the indigenous peoples guaranteed in the ILO Convention 169 and in the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, to present complete documentation on the social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts of the Patuca III mega dam project, building of which is planned to start 2009, and to consider whether it will be compatible with the CBD *Akwé Kon Voluntary Guidelines*;
- (f) consulting the Government of Taiwan, a Province of China, as a funding body of the Patuca III mega dam project, on whether it has assessed the social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts on indigenous peoples, and on the MBC's core protected areas;
- (g) jointly formulating with IUCN members in Mesoamerica, sectoral guides for the assessment of infrastructure projects such as development of roads, dams, mining resources and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation and the growing of agrobiofuel crops, which can compromise the integrity of natural resources, biodiversity, livelihoods and the rights of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples, ensuring the incorporation of the CBD *Akwé Kon Voluntary Guidelines* and other similar guidelines;
- (h) creating a Mesoamerican working group of indigenous peoples along with IUCN-ORMA, as an area for dialogue, understanding, consultation and lobbying on governance issues, management categories, restitution and the specific indigenous system found in the protected areas, as well as the impacts of climate change and projects that have a negative effect on their territories and natural resources, as set out in the ILO Convention 169;
- (i) implementing an appropriate internal surveillance, monitoring and assessment system on the inclusion of and compliance with the rights of indigenous peoples in the strategies, policies, programmes and projects facilitated by the different IUCN-ORMA offices; and

- (j) including La Mosquitia Honduras and Nicaragua region, as part of IUCN ORMA's geographical priorities for intervention, guaranteeing strategic alliances with the members of the Union present in the region.

The statement for the record made by the State member Canada in relation to Resolution 4.048 also applies to this Resolution.