

4.077 Climate change and human rights

RECALLING that Principle 1 of the *Stockholm Declaration (Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972)* recognizes that "Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being"; and that Principle 1 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) proclaims that human beings "are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature";

RECALLING MOREOVER Resolution 2.36 *Poverty reduction and conservation of environment* adopted by the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000), through which IUCN and its members adopted the policy of addressing simultaneously poverty reduction and environmental rehabilitation;

BEING AWARE that the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs), including the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, health-related goals, and the goal of ensuring environmental sustainability can be achieved through the affirmation of human rights;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Paragraph 138 of the Decisions of the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*, that points to respect for human rights as fundamental for sustainable development;

OBSERVING that the protection of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights embodied in internationally binding legal instruments and internationally guaranteed as human rights, is indispensable for combating poverty;

CONVINCED that measures for reducing poverty and protecting health must be taken in conjunction with measures for conserving the environment, using an approach based on human rights;

RECOGNIZING that public access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice, highlighted in Principle 10 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, are essential human rights that can guarantee greater participation, development and accountability of all people, as well as comprehensive solutions to poverty and environmental degradation;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the progress made in implementing Principle 10 through the adoption of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus, 1998);

NOTING Decision 2004/119, Science and environment, of the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (Geneva, 2004);

BEING AWARE that the Mission of IUCN is to ensure that "any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable", and that social equity cannot be achieved without the promotion, protection and guarantee of human rights;

ALSO BEING AWARE that during the meeting of the Mesoamerican Committee of IUCN, held in 2003 in El Zamorano, Honduras, a resolution was approved recognizing the link between human rights and the environment and urging that that resolution be presented to the current Congress for adoption;

WELCOMING the recognition of matters related to human rights as cross-cutting themes within the IUCN Environmental Law Programme's (ELC) component programme plan for 2005-2008;

RECOGNIZING resolution A/HRC/7/L.21/Rev.1 of the United Nations Human Rights Council that established a mandate for the UN to carry out a detailed analysis of the relationship between climate change and human rights;

NOTING that the rate of sea level rise, and the frequency of violent storms, droughts and floods could increase due to global warming and, if this occurs, millions of people could lose their homes and find themselves without food and drinking water;

ALSO NOTING that climate change creates multiple concerns related to human rights, from human health risks - such as the increase in the incidence of malaria, massive migration, problems in providing water and food - to the disappearance of sanctuaries, lands, means of subsistence and cultures;

WELCOMING the mandate for 2005-2008 of the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law (CEL), which included as one of its objectives to "innovate and promote new or reformed ethical and legal concepts and instruments that conserve nature and natural resources and reform patterns of unsustainable development";

RECOGNIZING that CEL has established a Human Rights and the Environment Specialist Group;

CONSIDERING that climate change is a threat not only to the global environment and economy but also to life itself, and can negatively impact a decent quality of life;

EMPHASIZING that the world climate system is fundamental for sustaining life, and that today human activities are altering the world's climate; that it is an integral part of the complex processes that sustain life; that climate has always had an effect on the health and wellbeing of human beings; and that climate change poses a new challenge for current initiatives to protect human health;

RECOGNIZING that health is a fundamental and indispensable right for exercising the other human rights, and therefore every human being has the right to enjoy the highest possible level of health that permits him/her to live a dignified life;

EMPHASIZING that if present warming tendencies continue without control, humanity will be facing a large number of losses, diseases and deaths due to natural disasters and heat waves, an increase in diseases transmitted by food, water and vectors, and an increase in premature deaths and diseases due to air pollution;

NOTING that in many parts of the world, numerous populations may become displaced by the rise in sea level and affected by droughts and hunger, and that as glaciers melt, the hydrological cycle and arable land productivity will change;

OBSERVING that with climate change already occurring, it is essential to evaluate the vulnerabilities and determine the options for intervention and adaptation, and that early planning on matters of disaster management and health can reduce future adverse effects in these areas; and

EMPHASIZING that the optimal solution is in the hands of governments, society and individuals, and that the solution demands changes in behaviour, technologies and practices to make the transition to sustainability possible;

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

1. CALLS ON IUCN's members and interested parties to contribute information on the impact of climate change on human rights to the United Nations Human Rights Council in line with the above-mentioned resolution that establishes a mandate for the UN to carry out a detailed analysis of the relationship between climate change and human rights;

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:

2. CALLS ON the Director General to contribute to the consideration of matters related to climate change and human rights in the context of IUCN's global Mission;
3. REQUESTS CEL and the IUCN Environmental Law Programme, in collaboration with the Director General and IUCN's members, to undertake a study on the relationship between climate change and the effective enjoyment of human rights, and to produce a detailed report that takes into account the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council; and

4. REQUESTS the Director General to disseminate the results of the study to the membership, once it has been published.

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.