

#### 4.090 Open-pit metal mining exploration and exploitation in Mesoamerica

CONSIDERING that there are plans to invest in the exploitation of metallic minerals in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, which will affect thousands of hectares of primary forest, key watersheds in the area, marine coastal zones rich in biodiversity and, finally, human health and the food safety of local populations;

WARNING that there has been an increase in authorizations for open-pit mining exploration and exploitation in the region;

BEARING IN MIND that the Mesoamerican region is considered a biodiversity hotspot;

CONSIDERING that the conservation of these areas constitutes the basis for the conservation of biological corridors and the survival of endemic species of fauna and flora, and that they are extremely fragile ecosystems;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that in countries of the Mesoamerican region the institutional and legal framework that could ensure the control, monitoring and regulation of mining activities is poor;

ALSO CONSIDERING that the mechanisms for public consultation and environmental impact studies are also poor, and that they limit the population's broad and objective participation;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that experiences in tropical countries around the world have been extremely negative, and that open-pit mining has not solved the poverty problem in any country;

CONCERNED that, in particular, the high precipitation in most of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor creates great risks to the environment from open-pit mining extraction, that water management becomes uncontrollable, leading to high levels of erosion and sedimentation, and that acid mine drainage presents a health hazard due to the pollution of water and soils and because it lasts for decades;

FURTHER CONCERNED that for the processing of metals it is necessary to extract large quantities of water, in competition with traditional human activities, endangering human health, food safety and the well-being of local populations;

BEARING IN MIND the great vulnerability of the Mesoamerican region to climate change in all areas of development, which would be exacerbated by the impacts of open-pit metal mining on forests, water, soil, health and human activities;

AWARE that in the economic, tax, social and environmental sectors, the net profit for the countries involved has not been proven, bearing in mind the tax benefits and low royalties granted by governments to mining companies, as well as this sector's vulnerability to rises and falls in prices, the deforestation of thousands of hectares, the pollution of ecosystems and impacts on human health, all related to the development of the metal-mining sector; and

FURTHER AWARE that if measures are not taken quickly to avoid these negative activities, they will have irreversible and devastating impacts on the environment and human populations in the region;

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

1. CALLS ON the governments of the Mesoamerican region to cancel current open-pit metal mining exploration and exploitation with proven negative impacts on the environment, and to take the necessary preventative measures so that, in the future, the granting of mining exploration and exploitation permits does not include permits for open-pit metal mining, and to carry out and apply strictly strategic environmental assessments and other relevant environmental instruments, in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor in particular;

**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. REQUESTS the IUCN Secretariat and Commissions to work with members in the Mesoamerican region to:
- (a) support local NGOs and indigenous peoples, in securing effective consultation prior to any mining exploration and exploitation concession, in accordance with ILO Convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples;
  - (b) promote communication campaigns on the current situation and the future risks of open-pit metal exploitation, and warn local communities of these risks, informing them objectively what risks they might be exposed to; and
  - (c) urge the governments of the region to ensure that consultation processes and environmental impact studies include the cumulative and synergetic impacts on broad zones of the region and the need for strategic environmental assessments.

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.