

WCC-2012-Rec-149-EN

Transboundary ecological corridors in the Western Iberian Peninsula

MINDFUL of the fact that the Portuguese/Spanish transboundary area in the west of the Iberian Peninsula represents one of the best examples of the Mediterranean forest agrosystem and one of the most extensive and significant biodiversity hotspots in Europe, home to various examples of internationally-important fauna such as Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*), Iberian Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*), Eurasian Black or Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*);

BEARING IN MIND that the area is *per se* one of the most important reservoirs of threatened vascular flora in the world, given the characteristics of this ecosystem, composed mainly of dehesa (an agrosilvopastoral system) with evergreen woodlands of Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*) and/or Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), as well as Pyrenean Oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*), the result of the centuries-old interaction of the environment with the traditional human activities of the area, and with examples such as Paradise Lily (*Paradisea lusitanica*), *Delphinium fissum* subsp. *sordidum*, *Omphalodes brassicifolia* and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*);

RECOGNIZING the importance of the Portuguese/Spanish transboundary area, as illustrated by the 119 protected areas forming part of the European Union's Natura 2000 Network (57 Special Bird Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive, with a surface area of 1,093,679 hectares; 62 Sites of Community Importance (SCI) under the Habitats Directive, with a surface area of 830,742 hectares; and other national- and regional-level protection statuses);

RECALLING that Resolution 4.024 *Conservation of the habitat of the Iberian Lynx* *Lynx pardinus* and Recommendation 4.131 *Conservation of the Western Iberian Peninsula* approved by the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 2008) called for the conservation of the Western Iberian Peninsula's biodiversity, recognizing it as a global biodiversity hotspot;

FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution 4.061 *The Great Ecological Connectivity Corridor: Cantabric Range – Pyrenees – Massif Central – Western Alps* called on national administrations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to strengthen ecological connectivity in the Mediterranean mountains and that Resolution 4.072 *Private protected areas and nature stewardship* highlights the global importance of private protected areas and nature stewardship through the creation of a related Working Group;

CONCERNED at the fragmentation trends that are affecting the transboundary natural spaces found in this territory;

AWARE of the threats that such trends mean for the conservation of its biodiversity, and that of its transitional zones;

RECOGNIZING the severe threats facing this territory, including depopulation, the abandonment of traditional resource use, the uncontrolled proliferation of human infrastructure, the fragmentation of ecosystems and the effects of climate change, which are placing its high biodiversity at risk;

MINDFUL of the opportunities that the spaces included in the Natura 2000 Network, which represents 35% of the scope of this Initiative, will offer for the conservation of a physically inter-connected and geographically functional ecological network; and

BEARING IN MIND the need to promote preventive strategies in order to avoid future fragmentation, and strategies that will promote the restoration of key zones that have already

been severely affected, with the aim of enhancing the resilience of the area's ecosystems and human communities to face up to global change;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:

1. URGES the Governments of Spain and Portugal to:
 - a. work together to ensure the ecological connectivity of the natural spaces of this transboundary area, based on the Natura 2000 Network spaces;
 - b. coordinate their efforts to preserve the biodiversity of the transboundary spaces;
 - c. link biodiversity objectives to the relevant production sectors: agriculture, livestock rearing, forestry and fishing, in the transboundary environment;
 - d. support and encourage initiatives aimed at conserving the biodiversity and the ecological connectivity of the organizations working in the transboundary area;
 - e. support and promote the Declaration of the Transboundary Biosphere Reserves of Braganza-Zamora and Douro Superior-Salamanca, and Sierra de Gata-Dehesas de Azaba-Sierra Malcata; and
 - f. exclude the whole area from wind energy and large infrastructure development, particularly dams, as a way of preventing and safeguarding its great wealth and biodiversity; and
2. CALLS on the Governments of Spain and Portugal, IUCN Members and other concerned parties to develop action plans which:
 - a. encourage a vision of a single natural environment, regardless of the great diversity of protected areas that it comprises;
 - b. guarantee ecological connectivity, the maintenance of biological diversity and the ecological processes typical of the transboundary area;
 - c. promote the protection and creation of networks of private protection areas, involving private owners and NGOs, by means of nature stewardship; and
 - d. define the boundaries of an area within the Western Iberian Peninsula that could be declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.

State and agency Members of the United States abstained during the vote on this Motion for reasons given in the US General Statement on the IUCN Resolutions Process.