

WCC-2012-Rec-159-EN

Ensuring the conservation of Chilean Patagonia's natural ecosystems

RECOGNIZING that Chilean Patagonia is one of the planet's most remote and virgin areas of forest, with extensive native forests, fjords and glaciers, and some of the last free-flowing rivers in the world, as well as being the habitat of species such as the endemic Patagonian Huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*), and the Southern River Otter (*Lontra provocax*), both listed as Endangered on the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*;

THANKING the Government of Chile for its commitment to preserving this majestic and unique area by declaring almost 50% of the region's territory as under protection, and for its decision to adopt the designation of 'Life Reserve' for the Aysén region;

MINDFUL of the fact that in 2011 Chile granted regional environmental approval to the HidroAysén project, a hydroelectric complex that intends to build five dams on two of Chile's most powerful free-flowing rivers, the Baker and the Pascua, flooding some 6,000 hectares of land, including a part of the Laguna San Rafael National Park, a World Biosphere Reserve;

FURTHER MINDFUL of the fact that the HidroAysén hydroelectric project will require the construction of transmission lines from Patagonia to the main electricity grid in Chile's central zone, along a route of almost 2,000 kilometres, including a 160-km segment under water;

RECOGNIZING that the transmission route would cross areas of volcanic and seismic activity and would potentially disturb more than a dozen national parks and reserves, along with important biological corridors representing thousands of hectares of wildlife habitat;

NOTING WITH CONCERN that the environmental impact assessment for HidroAysén fragmented the project by not assessing the impact of the transmission line together with the impact of the dams, contrary to international best practice for environmental assessments and Resolution 4.126 *Protection of Chilean Patagonia* adopted at the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 2008), which called on the Government of Chile to "evaluate the hydroelectric dams ... and the associated transmission line as a single project";

CONCERNED by the fact that this distinction between the dams and the transmission components will prevent an appropriate assessment of the cumulative and combined impacts of the projects;

FURTHER CONCERNED that the construction of a transmission line between Patagonia and Chile's central zone could lead to a proliferation of other mega-dams, such as Energía Austral's proposals, along with extractive projects in priority conservation areas;

RECALLING Resolution 2.58 *Ecological management issues relating to large dams* approved by the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000) which recognizes "the need for the precautionary approach because of the high degree of uncertainty associated with dam development actions ... and associated land use activities"; and

FURTHER RECALLING Resolution 1 *Hydroelectricity and the protection of nature* approved by the 3rd IUCN General Assembly (Caracas, 1952) which, considering that dams are capable of "seriously altering the integrity" of national parks and reserves, reminds governments "that they are pledged to guarantee not only the safekeeping but the inviolability of the areas they have taken the initiative to delimit and to protect";

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

1. CALLS on the Government of Chile, and particularly the Ministry of Environment and the Environmental Assessment Service:
 - a. to ensure that the development of HidroAysén's transmission infrastructure does not affect the protection given to areas protected by the State, priority conservation areas and sites, and priority biological corridors, and will not damage landscapes of intrinsic value;
 - b. to ensure true public participation in the evaluation process for the route and transmission infrastructure;
 - c. to conduct a strategic environmental assessment and an independent technical and environmental assessment based on the highest international standards, in cooperation with the national scientific community and appropriate national and international conservation organizations, in order to determine the overall and cumulative impact of the transmission infrastructure proposed, along the whole length of the route;
 - d. to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of the transmission line in the context of the cumulative impact of the transmission infrastructure and of the possible energy mega-projects that might use this infrastructure, such as the mega-dams proposed by HidroAysén on the Pascua and Baker rivers and the mega-dams proposed by Energía Austral-Xstrata on the Cuervo, Blanco and Cóndor rivers; and
 - e. not to authorize the HidroAysén and Energía Austral transmission lines unless an exhaustive assessment of the cumulative and combined impacts demonstrates that the transmission project will not lead to a degradation or destruction of natural areas and wildlife habitat;
2. URGES the Government of Chile:
 - a. to conduct an exhaustive evaluation of unconventional renewable energy sources and energy efficient alternatives in Chile in order to follow up on the results of a study conducted by the Universities of Chile and Federico Santamaría (June, 2008), which found that more than 70% of the demand for electricity in Chile in 2025 could be covered by alternative sustainable energy sources;
 - b. to create the necessary regulatory and normative frameworks that will enable energy efficient and unconventional renewable energy sources to form part of an energy solution based on distributed generation; and
 - c. to designate the permanent protection of the most important of Chile's free-flowing rivers given their high value to conservation, to ecosystem services and to tourism;
3. CALLS on relevant and interested IUCN Members, as far as possible, to provide technical and scientific support to Chile, and particularly to the Environmental Assessment Service, to help determine the cumulative impact of constructing the HidroAysén and Energía Austral transmission line and dams, and to protect the wildlife and unique natural areas of Chilean Patagonia; and
4. ENCOURAGES all interested parties and relevant IUCN Members to seriously consider the possibility of supporting the development of new energy efficient and unconventional renewable energy initiatives in Chile as an alternative to new mega-dams in Patagonia and as an indication of their commitment to the environmentally-sustainable development of Patagonia and Chile.

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.