

## **WCC-2012-Res-090-EN**

### **Exploration and exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels**

NOTING the rapid and unprecedented expansion of exploration and exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels, including, *inter alia*, shale gas, tight gas coal seam gas, coal liquefaction and coal gasification;

NOTING that hydraulic fracturing is a method of resource extraction that involves injecting, at an extremely high pressure, a mixture of water, sand, and a mix of chemicals to break up rock formations otherwise impermeable to the flow of fuels;

CONCERNED that hydraulic fracturing to release natural gas, petroleum or other substances for extraction has negative impacts on the environment, including causing seismic phenomena, such as earthquakes and landslides, and pollution of the air, soils, surface water and groundwater;

CONCERNED that unconventional fossil fuel activities result in the extraction, use and contamination of large quantities of fresh water, reducing the availability of clean, safe water for local communities, food production and natural ecosystems;

CONCERNED that the construction of numerous gas wells, pipelines and associated infrastructure can result in the removal, fragmentation and degradation of extensive areas of natural habitat, including forests and woodlands;

CONSIDERING the potential for serious unintended consequences associated with unconventional exploration and exploitation methods on the natural environment, agricultural resources and on local populations;

ACKNOWLEDGING the gaps in and inconsistencies between States' laws regulating oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities;

CONCERNED that the body of research on the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on the environment and relevant legal mechanisms is limited;

CONSIDERING that the world is facing global climate change and that the large-scale exploitation of fossil fuels will accentuate its impact on the planet, undermining the commitments made by the international community; and

NOTING the decisions by France and Bulgaria to forbid the exploitation of shale gas through hydraulic fracturing and the suspension of numerous projects in Germany, the United Kingdom, Romania and Quebec, whilst awaiting complementary studies;

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

1. CALLS ON States to:
  - a. prohibit hydraulic fracturing unless the following measures to protect human health and the environment are first enacted:
    - i. unconditional prohibition in the vicinity of major drinking water supplies, in areas of seismic faults, drinking water shortages and high conservation value (HCV);

- ii. specifications for pipeline construction and wastewater repositories to prevent leakage of chemical and radioactive materials and methane under all foreseeable contingencies;
  - iii. disclosure of chemicals used, at least to the regulatory authorities;
  - iv. prohibiting of the transmission of water to treatment plants lacking the ability to remove toxic and radioactive materials;
  - v. specifications for road transport of wastewater with adequate safeguards against leakage in the event of accidents or driver negligence, including appropriate training in safe handling of materials;
  - vi. requirements for regular testing and monitoring of drinking water supplies;
  - vii. procedures for foreseeable accidents and equipment necessary to handle such events at each site;
  - viii. repeal of the exemption of operations from environmental laws;
  - ix. enforcement of regulations with severe penalties for failure to abide while hiring and adequately training enforcers;
  - x. strict liability for damages caused by operations while requiring a fund or insurance to compensate all persons and communities that suffer damages resulting from operations;
  - xi. assistance to developing countries enabling them to adopt and enforce these regulatory measures; and
  - xii. measures paid for by a tax on the revenues from operation;
- b. consistent with the preceding paragraph, reevaluate and strengthen the regulation and monitoring of existing unconventional fossil fuel activities to prevent adverse impacts on the environment and local communities;
  - c. cease to issue new permits for the exploration or exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels until new techniques and practices that avoid adverse impacts on the environment and local communities have been assessed and then approved through independent scientific review;
  - d. ensure the necessary transparency and dialogue, in particular with environmental stakeholders regarding their countries' energy choices; and
  - e. strengthen energy conservation policies and support for the development of renewable energy sources as the main alternatives to the exploitation of fossil fuels;
2. ASKS the Director General to commission the development of a report on the impacts of the exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels on biodiversity, ecosystems, climate and local communities; and
  3. REQUESTS the IUCN Environmental Law Programme to coordinate a comparative study of the various legal regimes governing the exploration and exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels and to provide guidance on best practices and draft legislation or regulations.

State and agency Members of the United States voted against this Motion.