

WCC-2016-Res-046-EN

Assessing the global applicability of the concept of ancient forests as understood in European forest policy and management

RECALLING that forests play a crucial role in maintaining terrestrial biodiversity;

FURTHER RECALLING that forest ecosystems provide a wide range of ecosystem services that are critical to human survival, including oxygen production, carbon sequestration and storage, water purification and air quality improvement;

NOTING the vital and essential role of forest ecosystems in climate change adaptation; GRAVELY CONCERNED by the continued deforestation, degradation and fragmentation of forests;

NOTING that these trends have significant negative impacts on forest biodiversity and the ability of forests to provide ecosystem services;

RECALLING that the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change specifically note the importance of forested ecosystems;

EMPHASISING that ecological processes in forested systems develop over large time scales, often requiring over a century to evolve;

NOTING that the term 'ancient forest' as understood in Europe is defined by continuous forest cover throughout history;

RECOGNISING that ancient forests as understood in Europe have distinct biodiversity, ecological characteristics and soil types;

RECOGNISING that some ancient forests as understood in Europe have been and are still under management;

RECALLING that many species are restricted to ancient forests as understood in Europe and have little capacity to disperse and colonise other forest types; and

NOTING that with the exception of successional maturity, the characteristics of ancient forests as understood in Europe currently are not well-integrated into decisions regarding forest and landscape management;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:

1. REQUESTS the Director General to:
 - a. recognise the regional applicability of the concept of ancient forests in Europe;
 - b. identify how ancient forests can be incorporated into programmatic activities in Europe; and
 - c. assess the global applicability of the concept of ancient forests as understood in Europe; and
2. ENCOURAGE States in Europe where the concept of ancient forests is recognised scientifically or in public policy to:
 - a. take necessary measures, and in particular regulatory measures, to protect ancient forests;
 - b. recognise ancient forests as forests with high ecological value;
 - c. use geographic information systems to inventory, map and monitor ancient forests at regional and national scales;
 - d. promote ancient forest indicators as understood in Europe in regional and national reporting mechanisms;
 - e. develop publicly available GIS databases on ancient forests;

- f. encourage research to better understand the importance of ancient forests to different taxons;
- g. conduct research to identify the most effective management mechanisms to maintain the ecological values of ancient forests;
- h. raise awareness among stakeholders, decision makers, managers and the public regarding the ecological importance of ancient forests; and
- i. integrate ancient forest as a criterion in biodiversity conservation and land management policies (e.g. establishing them as a category in regional and national protected area classification systems, requiring compensation for their degradation, etc.).

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 Motions Process.