

4.134 Responding to deforestation and land degradation related to climate change and desertification

NOTING that forest ecosystems are considered to be the most complex ecosystems, given that they involve various types of vegetation, such as grasses, shrubs, trees, vegetal formations that provide habitat suitable for other types of organisms such as mushrooms, algae, as well as vertebrate and invertebrate animals, constituting a complex biological system established without the intervention of humans, and with a high biodiversity;

RECALLING that, on the other hand, these ecosystems offer a series of ecosystem goods and services (biological functions – such as climate regulation and soil protection, as well as cultural and recreational goods and services), which are seriously affected by the degradation and eventual loss of native forest stands;

UNDERSTANDING that forest degradation and deforestation have, among others, the following consequences: increase in erosive processes and the risk of desertification, loss of fertility, loss of forest landscape, loss of cultural and spiritual values, loss of water quality, increase in certain greenhouse gasses, loss of biological diversity, internal migration (of forest dwellers to urban centres and their environs), loss of timber and non-timber goods, and loss of the possibility to exploit wildlife sustainably;

ALSO UNDERSTANDING that forest degradation and deforestation will lead to loss of surface- and groundwater regulation, modification of interception processes, infiltration and evapotranspiration;

AWARE that land degradation is a phenomenon with consequences on a global scale, under all climate conditions, and that land productivity is the basis for all development processes;

RECOGNIZING that soil degradation negatively affects the ability to reach multiple environmental and development objectives, including the *Millennium Development Goals*, such as biodiversity preservation, mitigation of global warming and adaptation to climate change, climate regulation, provision of water with sufficient quantity and quality, mitigation of the effects of catastrophic events, provision of landscape services, as well as poverty reduction, food security and the quality of people's lives;

NOTING that it is necessary to act in a systemic and synergetic manner in implementing measures aimed at sustainable development, taking into account the mandate of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the mitigating effects of drought, emphasizing the importance of harmonizing efforts and mobilizing financial resources;

OBSERVING that adoption of an approach to slowing and reversing soil degradation is of the greatest importance;

RECOGNIZING the central role played by the introduction of sustainable land management as the most suitable way to confront the problem;

RECALLING that the concept of sustainable soil management includes the development and application of good agricultural, forestry and water-resource management practices, as well as initiatives that make possible access to financial and market resources, and to social organization and empowerment, among other decisive factors; and

RECOGNIZING desertification and the effects of drought as relevant environmental themes, as well as the need to adopt synergetic approaches that link sustainable soil management with strategies flowing from the various multilateral environmental agreements;

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

1. CALLS ON IUCN's members to promote:

- (a) a regional strategy that defines programmes aimed at assuring the sustained and substantial investment in sustainable land management initiatives within the framework of the UNCCD national, regional, and sub-regional programmes;
- (b) formulation of strategies aimed at assuring mitigation of the effects of drought and convergence of the UNCCD national, regional, and sub-regional programmes for adapting to climate change, managing water and forest resources, given the similarity of their objectives;
- (c) establishment by international financial institutions of programmes and budget projections aimed at sustainable land management;
- (d) coordination between the output of scientific and technological research and the demands and needs of the actors on the ground, as well as a better distribution of available information;
- (e) identification of strategies and priorities for strengthening an emergency system for droughts and floods; and
- (f) development of dynamic policies encouraging the sustainable development of populations in the affected zones, while guaranteeing their access to land and the improvement of their quality of life, and respecting their cultural norms;

2. ENCOURAGES IUCN's members to take urgent measures to reverse the serious situation caused by the advance of the agricultural and livestock frontier over fragile environments, when such expansion fails to take into account agronomic practices that could reconcile the need for more intensive production with the preservation of natural resources, including native forests and other natural ecosystems;

3. ENCOURAGES governments to:

- (a) establish a territorial regulatory system for sustainable resource-use in degraded lands that promotes local participation and advances policies that encourage sustainable development while guaranteeing local peoples' access to land, as well as improvement in their quality of life;
- (b) development and application of a system to promote remediation of degraded lands; and
- (c) development of an early warning system and extreme climate-event prediction systems to forecast the probability of occurrence of climate anomalies, assuring that the information is easily comprehensible and available to policy makers; and

4. RECOMMENDS that national and regional financial institutions incorporate sustainable land management into their action priorities through establishing lines of credit for this purpose, under conditions analogous to those of other areas of socioeconomic development.

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 Resolution Process.