

4.128 Setting up networks of protected urban and periurban natural areas

CONSIDERING that over half the world's population lives in urban areas, and that it is predicted that by 2050 over 70% of the world's population will be concentrated in cities;

NOTING that, over the last few decades, uncontrolled urban sprawl has developed around cities, which has led to the phenomenon known as metropolization; that this has caused a loss of the land's functionality with regard to the environment, social issues, agriculture, fauna, flora, landscapes, etc; and that this in turn has affected the city inhabitants' quality of life and biodiversity in general;

ALSO NOTING that, despite this urban growth, there are still natural urban and periurban areas that contain a considerable level of biodiversity and others that have the potential for ecological restoration and the recovery of nature;

BEARING IN MIND that some metropolises have already undertaken active policies to conserve and enhance the natural areas in their territories, which are located on the outskirts of cities, because they play an important role in improving the inhabitants' quality of life and in biodiversity conservation (e.g. activities of the European Federation of Metropolitan and Periurban Natural and Rural Areas – Fedenatur, Local Governments for Sustainability – ICLEI, RED, Arco Latino, World Association of the Major Metropolises – Metropolis, etc.);

RECALLING that the inhabitants of cities have the right to enjoy the environmental, social, and economic benefits provided by natural areas located on the outskirts of cities, (e.g. biodiversity, clean air, climate stabilization, pollution sink, social integration and integration of vulnerable groups, decrease in violence, access to leisure, sports, health, environmental education, drinking water, landscape, community-supported agriculture), as well as the protection these areas provide against environmental risks (e.g. floods, landslides, building collapses), as summarized in the 2004 Fedenatur report to the European Commission: *The Place of Periurban Natural Areas for a Sustainable City*;

HIGHLIGHTING the important benefits that metropolitan natural parks provide for the physical and mental health of society;

CONSIDERING that there is currently a legislative vacuum with regard to the creation, protection, management and running of these areas; and

RECALLING the work carried out by IUCN, its members and Commissions, in accordance with Recommendation V.14 *Cities and Protected Areas* of the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003) and Resolution 3.063 *Cities and conservation* adopted by the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Bangkok 2004);

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

URGENTLY REQUESTS the relevant administrations at all levels (municipal, supra-municipal, regional, national and supra-national) to:

- (a) integrate, enhance and conserve natural, agricultural and forestry areas, as part of the urban infrastructure, giving them the same importance as other infrastructures, and no longer to consider them merely as empty spaces or areas set aside for urbanization;
- (b) include these areas in public land-use policies, as a tool for containing urban sprawl, setting up systems of periurban green areas (ecological belts, corridors or rings) around and inside cities;
- (c) consider that these natural, agricultural and forestry areas help create a social, environmental, economic and cultural identity for the city;

(d) focus public land-use policies on plans for metropolitan natural areas, considering the system of natural areas as an element that structures the metropolis, and allocating the required budgets for this purpose;

(e) adopt an overarching policy different from the metropolitan area's environmental plan, which recognizes the exemplary role played by the different types of green spaces in terms of management, enhancement, protection and experimentation;

(f) accelerate the protection, environmental control and management of natural and rural areas located near to cities and defend and enrich the diversity of metropolitan ecosystems and landscapes, to encourage the maintenance and diversification of sustainable agriculture, considered as an important facet of the management of periurban areas, based on a mosaic of complementary environments: biological reserves, agricultural and recreational areas, corridors, etc; and

(g) respond to the city inhabitants' needs for leisure, allowing them to access recreational activities, in natural surroundings, raising their awareness about environmental challenges and teaching them respect for the environment, promoting the participation of all stakeholders.

State and agency members of the United States abstained during the vote on this motion.