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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
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**ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'EDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**CONVENTION CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE
MONDIAL, CULTUREL ET NATUREL**

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE / COMITE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

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**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed
on the World Heritage List and/or on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

**Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire: Etat de conservation de biens inscrits sur
la Liste du patrimoine mondial et/ou sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril**

MISSION REPORT / RAPPORT DE MISSION

**Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve (Honduras) (N 196)
Réserve de la biosphère Río Plátano (Honduras) (N 196)**

1 - 9 February 2011 / 1 - 9 février 2011

This mission report should be read in conjunction with Document:
Ce rapport de mission doit être lu conjointement avec le document suivant:

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Report on the Monitoring Mission to

Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve

Honduras

01 - 9 FEBRUARY 2011



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Community meetings were organized in Belén, Juan Francisco Bulnes (both Gracias a Dios), El Venado, and La Celia (both Sico Paulaya, Colon) bringing together a broad range of local residents. The Mission team is very grateful for the invaluable contributions made by local small scale farmers and fishermen which provided a local perspective.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COHDEFOR	Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal
CONADEH	Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ENEE	Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (formerly GTZ)
ICF	Instituto Nacional de Conservación y Desarrollo Forestal, Áreas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
SERNA	Secretaría de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHC	World Heritage Centre
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve is the largest protected area in Honduras, recognized for both its natural and cultural wealth. It is part of a much larger conservation complex comprised of several existing and proposed protected areas and extending into neighboring Nicaragua. Ongoing concerns about the integrity and conservation status of Río Plátano date back to the early 1980s, and in 1996 triggered the inclusion of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger for more than a decade until 2007.

A climate of insecurity and lawlessness in Honduras' remote north-east region along with a procedural vacuum and institutional weakness provide a difficult framework for addressing the multiple threats. The more recent increase of major drug-trafficking has become an overarching part of the socio-economic reality of the *Mosquitia*, as this region of Honduras is nationally and locally referred to. Clearly, the challenges in Río Plátano are beyond the scope of a protected area agency as they are related to the poverty, security and political stability of an entire region.

Despite important efforts and encouraging success stories, such as increased land tenure security, locally protected watersheds, and forest management co-operatives, the ability of the government to relocate and compensate illegal settlers in the core zone, and a clearly articulated political willingness at the highest level to improve the management and conservation of Río Plátano, the World Heritage property finds itself in a process of rapid degradation. The threats and shortcomings in terms of governance and management are well documented. Forests continue to be converted into cattle ranches. Illegal logging, fishing and hunting are widespread. The controversial construction of a series of dams along the Patuca River was not discussed in a conclusive fashion but clearly deserves a more in-depth consideration as requested by the World Heritage Committee.

Discussions with senior government representatives, including the President of Honduras and several Ministers indicate a consensus on the severity of the situation and the urgent need to improve governance and management. The Mission team concluded that the conditions for recommending the listing of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger are most probably met. The highest levels of the government expressed the intention to take the sovereign governmental decision to request inclusion on that List in anticipation of a possible Committee decision to this effect. In this regard, the World Heritage Centre received a formal letter from the State Party on 11 April 2011, requesting that the property be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. IUCN and the World Heritage Centre have also been provided with a copy of the Decree declaring a status of special interest on 15 February 2011, and an Action Plan at the level of the Council of Ministers (*Consejo de Ministros*) and approved by Presidential Decree.

Building upon earlier efforts, a permanent technical committee (*Comité Técnico Ad-Hoc de carácter permanente*) to address and prioritize needed interventions,

including evictions from the core area has been created. The challenge will be to operationalize and to sustain this Committee and the Action Plan and to secure implementation, co-ordination and funding on a long-term basis. In support of these efforts an International Assistance Request under the World Heritage Fund could be considered.

The following section lists the 10 recommendations extracted from the report's main body. All 10 recommendations compiled in this synthesis are explained in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Invest immediately and on a long term basis in the presence and effectiveness of the full cycle of the legal system in order to counter the severe law enforcement deficit in line with previous WHC/IUCN recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Establish permanent and systematic monitoring to identify encroachment and land use changes for the entire protected area, and if possible the broader region, and relocate illegal occupants who have recently settled in the property, in particular in the core zone.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Take into account the international lessons regarding large scale dam developments, which are well-documented by the World Commission on Dams, and consider in particular the economic, environmental and social costs and impacts.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Provide the World Heritage Committee urgently with an updated overview of the current situation of all active or planned dam construction along the Patuca River, including their exact locations, clarify the legal procedures and requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment under Honduran law, the implications of protected area status on dam construction, and also submit the plans for social and environmental impact assessments of the proposed Patuca I and II dams.

RECOMMENDATION 5

To consider the various options to redefine the boundaries of the World Heritage property to reflect the increased size of the protected area, the new zonation, and the existing land uses. This should include consideration of the feasibility and usefulness of a re-nomination, as per the procedure in Paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines as a platform for the ongoing, internationally supported efforts to conserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Strengthen the capacity and resources of ICF and SERNA, and other governmental agencies with responsibilities for applying legal protection to the property, in particular at the regional and local level, and ensure improved co-ordination and co-operation with other governmental and non-governmental institutions, local and Indigenous communities and externally supported projects as part of a concerted effort to secure effective management of the property.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Continue efforts to negotiate and clarify access to land and natural resources while enforcing existing land tenure and access arrangements and explore opportunities for more meaningful co-management with a particular focus on the indigenous communities of the cultural zone.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Use the envisaged updating of the management plan as an instrument, opportunity and a platform to bring together and co-ordinate the many actors, various institutions and external supporters involved in Río Plátano in order to improve coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of future management.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Translate the political recognition of the severity of the threats to the property into a co-ordinated, workable and budgeted long term Action Plan and consider a request for International Assistance in support of corresponding efforts.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, one of two World Heritage properties in Honduras and the country's only natural World Heritage property was inscribed in 1982 according to all four natural World Heritage criteria, classified today as criteria (vii) – (x). The original IUCN evaluation emphasized as key values (i) the coverage of the entire watershed of the Río Plátano all the way from the headwaters in the mountains to the river mouth on the Caribbean coast, and (ii) the "high diversity of biological and anthropological features". From a World Heritage perspective, any boundary design and zonation, as well as any assessment and management intervention will have to consider these key values as integral elements of the property's "Outstanding Universal Value".

It is noteworthy that the nomination document dated 1981 and the evaluations by IUCN and ICOMOS point out substantial cultural values, both in terms of archaeology and the living culture of indigenous peoples. Remarkably, the first formal conservation status of the area was that of "National Archaeological Park" designated as early as 1969, which Río Plátano formally retains to this day. Only later, in 1980, the area was nationally declared and internationally recognized as a biosphere reserve, prior to the inscription on the World Heritage List in 1982.

Ongoing concerns about the integrity and conservation status of the property date back more than two decades. IUCN is on record as pointing out "extreme pressure" (12 COM, 1988), and "concerns about the integrity" (13 COM, 1989). A 15 COM Decision (1991) makes reference to a possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Four years later, the 19 COM Decision (1995) triggered an IUCN field mission. Based on the findings of that Mission, the World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1996 at its 20th Session. Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve remained on the List of World Heritage in Danger until 2007.

Supported by WWF, KfW, GTZ (now GIZ), as well as national and local non-governmental organizations, including IUCN member MOPAWI, the Honduran government intensified management and conservation efforts after the area was put on the List of World Heritage in Danger. As detailed in numerous reports the efforts were met with partial success (see IUCN Reports of 1995 and 2000; WHC/IUCN Reports 2003 and 2006, all publicly available at <http://whc.unesco.org>) but failed to turn around the overall trend of deterioration. Yet, in 2007, the Committee at its 31st Session decided to remove Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve from the List of World Heritage in Danger. The WHC/IUCN Mission report at the time, while acknowledging important progress and stating that Honduras was "on the right track", did not support the decision at that point in time but recommended to retain the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger pending further, defined achievements. In IUCN's opinion, the Committee's Decision appears to have been considered as premature by some observers, including within Honduras. There are differing views on the consequences however some discussions during the Mission seem to suggest that the removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger may have sent the unfortunate signal that the situation was fully under control, which turned out to be incorrect.

The WHC/IUCN monitoring mission recommendations documented in this report has to be understood against the backdrop of these longstanding concerns and many years of World Heritage Committee scrutiny. The Report makes reference to threats identified in earlier reports, such as the advancing agricultural frontier, uncontrolled logging and management deficiencies. Likewise, earlier recommendations are considered in light of new information and developments.

As detailed in the annexed Terms of Reference, the Mission had the following overall goals:

- To assess the state of conservation of the property, focusing on the factors affecting the property's Outstanding Universal Value generally, and specifically on concerns expressed by the World Heritage Committee in its recent decisions;
- To make recommendations on conservation interventions designed to ensure that the property's Outstanding Universal Value is conserved over the long term.

More concretely, the World Heritage Committee requested to shed light on the implementation of the 2006 monitoring mission recommendations, as well as on:

- information regarding any plans for dam construction that might affect the property;
- a map unambiguously illustrating the boundaries of the property;
- an in-depth analysis of the status of illegal logging, land tenure regulation and involvement of local communities.

2. BROADER CONTEXT AND NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Natural resource management in the north-eastern coastal region known as the Honduran Mosquitia, including nature conservation efforts cannot be seen or analyzed in isolation of the striking rural poverty and the remarkable ethnic diversity. A more recent and increasingly dramatic trend in the region is drug trafficking with important social, economic and environmental consequences in addition to security implications.

According to IFAD, Honduras is the third poorest country in Latin America, and the second poorest country in Central America - despite its well-known wealth in natural resources, in particular timber and minerals. The same source states that roughly three out of every four persons are poor, and as many as 86% of the extremely poor, live in rural areas. Other sources point out that rural poverty in Honduras tends to coincide with forested areas, which to this day covers 40% of the national territory (FAO, 2011). The remote World Heritage property and its surroundings are inhabited by a mostly poor and resource-dependent local population.

Less than 7% of the overall population of Honduras is recognized as belonging to the nine minorities of indigenous and African descent. Communities of indigenous origin are often comprised of subsistence farmers and temporary rural workers. Many of them are landless. It is well documented that indigenous peoples have substantially higher poverty rates with almost three quarters of indigenous peoples in Honduras living below the poverty line. Indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent in and around Río Plátano include the Pech, Tawahka, Miskito and Garifuna, living alongside the Mestizo (Ladino) population. The Mission team regrets that representatives of the Pech and Tawahka peoples could not be met

The impressions on site and various discussions both in the capital and in the field leave little doubt that increasing drug trafficking in the entire Honduran Mosquitia and the World Heritage property has become one overarching issue. The easy money available in supporting the drug traffickers is a source of income for residents never before available in the region. A link to the expansion of the agricultural frontier was consistently and plausibly suggested. A good deal of the land clearing for cattle ranching along with illegal logging and trade of precious timber are considered by many a form of money laundering. While poor immigrants, sometimes from other parts of Honduras act as the visible spearhead of the agricultural frontier, they often appear to be only the first wave of colonization rather than the driving force. It was explained that these first settlers are eventually followed by more powerful actors crowding out the original settlers. New settlers also seem to have conflicts with resident settlers. Despite the absence of a legal basis, an informal land trade was reported. This seems particularly dramatic in the valleys of the Paulaya, Sico and Guapote Rivers, as well as in the lower and middle watershed of the Río Plátano. While a detailed analysis of the land trade is beyond the scope of this report, the visible advance of the agricultural frontier is undoubtedly alarming.

Other effects of or aggravated by drug trafficking include the striking and ubiquitous presence of fire arms and the reportedly high level of violence and intimidation. The view expressed by Thiel *et al.* (2008) that drug trafficking contributes to an overall climate of insecurity and lawlessness was widely shared by Honduran colleagues both in the capital and locally. The local presence and power of governmental institutions, including the military, appears marginal thereby posing a huge challenge to systematic law enforcement. This in turn is plausibly reported to favour all sorts of illegal trade and behaviour. Legitimate businesses, such as the still modest legal timber harvesting and trade by local co-operatives are faced with illegal competitors. The attempts to promote tourism, seen by some as a major future potential and source of local income, are likewise severely suffering from the overall security situation.

To conclude, the property is under extreme threat from deforestation for cattle ranching within its boundaries, underwritten by drug trafficking, and accompanied by an increasing numbers of settlers. The World Heritage property is located in a region of considerable rural poverty, in particular in the case of the different ethnic minorities. Strong, at times violent tensions surrounding access to land and resources and fragile social and economic conditions in a climate of lawlessness and

impunity are a recipe for even more severe conflicts in the future. Any medium and long-term effort to find a better balance between conservation and development in Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve will have to address this broader context or is likely to fail.

The legal umbrella for all formally protected areas in Honduras is the national General Environmental Law (Ley General de Medio Ambiente, Decreto No. 104 - 93), which establishes the national protected area system SINAPH. The associated regulations are specified in a corresponding by-law (Republica de Honduras, 1999).

Further relevant legislation includes stipulations for territorial planning/ land-use planning (Ley de Ordenamiento Territorial Decreto No. 180 – 2003). At the national level, Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve was originally designated in 1980 (Decreto No. 977-80) and later extended in 1997 by a further decree (Decreto No. 170-97).

More recently, the Forest Law (Ley Forestal) approved in 2007 came into force, jointly with the establishment of the new forest management and conservation authority ICF (Instituto Nacional de Conservacion y Desarrollo Forestal, Áreas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre). The new law and ICF are widely considered a major improvement in terms of enabling conditions. ICF fundamentally differs from its predecessor COHDEFOR (Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal) in that it has a much more comprehensive *raison d'être* and mandate when compared to COHDEFOR's focus on timber production. The hope associated with ICF is therefore that there will be no more need and incentive to exclusively focus on logging, a situation which had resulted in allegations of corruption and involvement in illegal timber in the case of COHDEFOR. One example is the well-documented and widely discussed case of the so-called "abandoned timber" (Global Witness, 2009, see also independent forest monitoring by the National Human Rights Commission - CONADEH). Furthermore, ICF is described to be more open-minded as regards the technical background and work experience of its staff. A broader range of skills in addition to the technical forest management expertise of COHDEFOR seems highly promising.

ICF's mandate encompasses forest conservation, protected area management and species conservation. Conceptually, the new law and the associated establishment of ICF represent an encouraging and overdue step. It remains to be seen whether capacities and resourcing will allow ICF to realize its full mandate and potential.

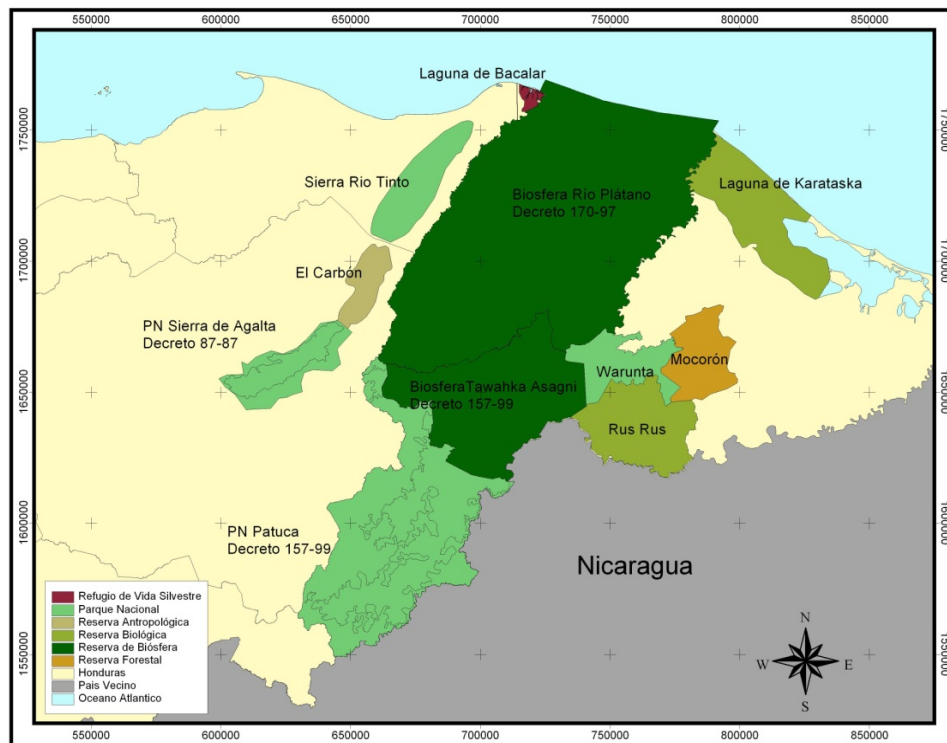
The Management Plan for Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve was approved in 2000. It is currently envisaged to update the Plan within the framework of the GEF supported "Corazon del Corridor" project, as detailed in Terms of Reference provided by Honduras as an annex to the State of Conservation report. This represents a great opportunity to re-visit and update the Management Plan. It should be based on broad local consultation and co-ordinated with other ongoing projects with similar objectives so as to make the most of this promising exercise.

As illustrated in the map below, Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve is not only by far the country's largest protected area but part of a significantly larger conservation

complex which encompasses Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve (not part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves but a national designation) and Patuca National Park. A full list of existing and currently proposed protected areas of the Hbelow table and map (courtesy of SERNA and Gloria Zelaya, ICF).

Protected area	Management category and Decree	Location in relation to Río Plátano
Tawahka-Asangni	Reserva de Biosfera (157/99)	South-East
Patuca	Parque Nacional (157-99)	
Rus-Rus	Reserva Biológica (proposed)	
Warunta	Parque Nacional (proposed)	
Mocorón	Reserva Forestal (proposed)	
Sierra de Río Tinto	Reserva Forestal (proposed)	West
Montaña de El Carbón	Reserva Antropológica (proposed)	
El Boquerón	Monumento Natural (for Congress approval)	
Sierra de Agalta	Parque Nacional (87/87)	
Laguna de Caratasca	Reserva Biológica (proposed)	North-East
Laguna de Bacalar	Refugio de Vida Silvestre (RAMSAR site No. 1254) (proposed)	Link between Río Plátano and Sierra de Río Tinto

The series of contiguous protected areas of different categories just west of Río Plátano (Sierra de Agalta, Montaña de El Carbon, Sierra de Río Tinto) covers an adjacent mountain range, reportedly of very high conservation value. This large-scale conservation complex currently proposed is only interrupted from Río Plátano by a river valley. This is a noteworthy and very positive development in the region from a conservation perspective. The question of connectivity between these two major conservation areas should be addressed in broader landscape management considerations.



Taken as a whole, the conservation complex in north-eastern Honduras is contiguous with Bosawas Biosphere Reserve in neighbouring Nicaragua. The area is known as the transboundary "Heart of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor", the largest contiguous forest area in Latin America north of the Amazon. Originally conceived as the "Paseo Pantera" Project around 1990 the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor has the objective to provide an umbrella and a platform for co-ordinated regional efforts. The area under consideration, of which Río Plátano is an integral part, is one of the key areas of the sub-regional corridor and of high symbolic importance.

3. IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES / THREATS

Threats previously identified in monitoring missions and documented in World Heritage Committee Decisions include Illegal settlements; illegal livestock grazing and agricultural intrusions; illegal logging; poaching; alien invasive species; management deficiencies; and potential impacts from hydro-electric development on the Patuca River.

The governmental state of conservation report dated January 2011 is structured according to Committee Decision 34 COM7B.34, i.e. it responds to the request (i) to document progress on the implementation of the 2006 monitoring mission recommendations; (ii) to provide information regarding dam construction that might affect the property, (iii) to provide a map unambiguously illustrating the boundaries of the property and (iv) to provide an in-depth analysis of the status of illegal logging, land tenure regulation and involvement of local communities.

This report adopts the slightly modified structure. The 2006 recommendations are integrated into other sections where applicable as follows:

- A. Systematic law enforcement and response to new intrusions*
- B. Hydroelectric development on the Patuca River*
- C. Reserve design and zonation of the World Heritage property*
- D. Governance and management: Illegal logging, regulation of land tenure, involvement of local communities*

A. Systematic law enforcement and response to new intrusions

Rural poverty, including extreme poverty and the climate of insecurity and lawlessness, significantly exacerbated by the rise in drug trafficking in the area, are undisputed elements of the social reality of the World Heritage property and its surroundings. It is difficult to imagine effective law enforcement in the Mosquitia without major investments in the overall security situation. The view expressed in earlier reports that more efforts are needed as regards the implementation of the full cycle of the law, i.e. lawyers, judges etc., was widely shared and seems as pertinent as ever. While necessary elements of a broader strategy, investments restricted to military and police will fall short of addressing the complex challenges. As long as there is no functioning framework for the application of the full cycle of the law and for follow-up to military and police interventions fundamental obstacles to security and law enforcement will remain.

As stated in the annual report of the governmental "*Fiscalia Especial de Medio Ambiente*" there is a very limited presence or even absence of specialized staff and a shortage of equipment and resources at the regional and local level to deal with violations of environmental laws. Therefore, regardless of the political willingness in the regions, the few arrests made often cannot be followed up upon, which undermines the authority of the law. Furthermore, concern was repeatedly expressed that existing law enforcement tends to focus on the powerless actors while avoiding politically or otherwise more powerful and often armed actors. The community meetings and individual discussions indicated serious tensions and disappointment with the severely limited governmental presence and action, in particular the seemingly uneven application of the law, perceived as arbitrary and unfair.

In addition to the intrusions and illegal land trade, the severe law enforcement deficit extends to illegal fishing, logging and wildlife trade, which is further elaborated in the governance and management section below.

As a basis of any management and conservation effort in the World Heritage property and in the region, a basic governmental presence and effectiveness to ensure the full cycle of the law is indispensable. Military and police will have to play a role along with many other institutions, including but not limited to technical experts, attorneys and judges (technical terms in Spanish language as used by the Honduran to avoid possible translation errors: *Fiscalia Especial de Medio Ambiente*, *jueces*, *fiscales*, *procuradores*, *tecnicos*, *agentes de investigacion*, *fuerzas armadas*, *policia*,

guardas forestales). This will require major investments, capacity development and incentives to attract qualified staff to what are currently difficult, little attractive and potentially dangerous duty stations.

All conservation and development efforts in the region, including the World Heritage property are severely compromised by the overall security situation and limited presence and effectiveness of governmental institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Invest immediately and on a long term basis in the presence and effectiveness of the full cycle of the legal system in order to counter the severe law enforcement deficit in line with previous WHC/IUCN recommendations.

The situation documented by earlier missions and in governmental reports continues to compromise the state of conservation of the property and clearly threaten its conservation values, provision of ecosystem services (in particular water) and long-term integrity. The over flight and a time series of Landsat satellite images made available to the Mission (data from 1995, 2001, 2010) clearly illustrate that the conversion of forested land in the cultural zone is advancing at an unprecedented scale. The development of the buffer zone seems largely driven by processes beyond the control of governmental institutions.

The core zone remains largely under dense forest cover. A few years ago settlers in the core zone had been relocated based on a negotiated compensation scheme supported by international donors. New intrusions in the core zone appear to be limited in numbers and scale, yet have a high symbolic value in terms of governmental commitment and willingness to act upon violations of clearly defined and well-known laws. There are reports about intrusions on the eastern side of the core zone and possibly further north along the Río Plátano. Necessary relocation efforts in the core zone must not create an incentive to invade the core zone based on the expectation of financial compensation for relocation. The rules and the enforcement policy should be accompanied by clear communication of the policy and procedures.

The property is particularly vulnerable in its north-western and western quadrants, which are easily accessible, including to migrants from other parts of Honduras and where flat and fertile land is more abundant in wide river valleys. Additional pressure arises from the south-west, as the advancing agricultural frontier approaches the site. Lands on both sides of the Río Plátano, easily accessible by river in what is today the cultural zone of the biosphere reserve and parts of the northern core zone are likewise affected and under enormous future threat. Though there are reports of incursions in the north-east, east and south-east the pressure seems less intense there due to relatively low population densities and reportedly different land and resource use patterns of indigenous communities in those areas.

While there are legally recognized inhabitants in the property, mostly comprised of indigenous and Garífuna communities, there has been an alarming increase in illegal squatting by new, non-traditional settlers in the core and buffer zones. New intrusions have to be monitored and immediately followed up upon. Otherwise, a situation of impunity or passiveness as regards unregulated squatting in the property may lead to a degree of invasions, which will be much harder or impossible to deal with. The experience of the field visit suggests that local residents are well aware of intrusions and movements in the property. While the monitoring of resource use, including hunting and fishing is more challenging, the monitoring of forest clearing is technically straightforward. The use of standard remote sensing techniques or even publicly available data from Google Earth, military over flights and "eyes and ears on the ground" should make it easy to identify intrusions. Once identified, military interventions are in order as part of a broader scheme to ensure the integrity of the property. The Mission was informed that a comprehensive remote sensing exercise to assess the current state of intrusions is foreseen in 2011. This would be a much welcome opportunity to generate detailed, unambiguous and updated information as a basis for decisive action.

Again, the full cycle of law enforcement is needed, which in the end is a matter of political willingness. The likelihood of local acceptance of relocations from the core zone and prevention of unregulated invasions is likely to increase as a function of the effective and collaborative management of the buffer and cultural zones.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Establish permanent and systematic monitoring to identify encroachment and land use changes of the entire protected area, and if possible the broader region, and relocate illegal occupants who have recently settled in the property, in particular in the core zone.

B. Hydroelectric development on the Patuca River

With a length of around 320 kilometers, the Patuca River is the longest river in Honduras and the second longest in Central America. The World Heritage Committee had repeatedly requested Honduras to submit information regarding "any plans for the construction of a hydro-electric dam that might affect the property". Consequently, the terms of reference for the monitoring mission included the clarification of "issues related to the Patuca hydro-electric dam" and "the location of the Dam in relation to the property, and potential impacts to the property's Outstanding Universal Value".

The 2010 State Party report did not address dam construction. The written information provided by the State Party in January 2011 is limited to a very brief reference of less than one page stating that three dam projects, Patuca I, II and III, are planned along the River Patuca in response to the "urgent necessity to generate clean energy at the national level". Of these three, Patuca III is described to be "in the process of execution". The text does not state the location of any of these

projects and does not discuss direct or indirect impacts of the dams and associated infrastructure and road access etc. Given that the location of the dams is not specified and in the absence of a consensus on the boundaries of the World Heritage property (see below) the claim made that there will be "no impact whatsoever" is not substantiated by the information provided. It is important to remember that part of the Patuca River constitutes a considerable stretch of the eastern boundary of the biosphere reserve, which in the local perception is equaled with the World Heritage property.

There is no reference to Patuca I and Patuca II in the State Party report. Annex 4 of the governmental state of conservation report provides excerpts of "mitigation and compensation measures" referring to the Patuca III project. The source and legal relevance of the text is not specified. Some of the measures proposed appear out of line with professional practices, such as the questionable transfer of birds' nests out of the flooded area and even potentially dangerous or counter-productive, such as the proposed introduction of *Brachiaria humidicola*, a grass species of African origin considered an invasive pest species elsewhere in Latin America.

Given this unsatisfactory written response, the Mission asked for additional information which was supplied at the end of the Mission to IUCN in the form of an electronic copy of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Patuca III dated January 2008 and authored by the EIA Unit of the governmental energy agency (*Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica*). This much more comprehensive document has since been shared with the World Heritage Centre but could only be considered after the Mission. The EIA mentions Sierra de Agalta National Park, Patuca National Park, Tawahka Asangni and Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve but makes no reference to World Heritage or biosphere reserve status.

According to colleagues consulted during the Mission, the Patuca River has been considered as a possible source for hydro-electric power since at least the 1960s. The EIA of the national energy agency states 1975 as the year of identification of the project. In an effort described in the EIA as an attempt to develop a secure source of electricity, the Honduran government contracted two North American companies in the 1990s to build a dam on the Patuca River, and granted them concessions to sell electricity back to the national power company for a period of 40 years. The very quick agreement with a foreign company and a hasty environmental impact assessment conducted by a consultancy based in Costa Rica triggered strong unease from the local to the international level. Due to substantial environmental and social concerns from civil society and members of the international community the project was placed on hold.

The Mission team understands from numerous media reports (e.g. Honduras Weekly, 21 February 2011; La Tribuna, 18 January 2011; La Prensa, 18 January 2011) that a governmental decision to go ahead with all three proposed dams on the Patuca River was approved by the National Honduran Congress on 17 January 2011, Patuca III being the first project to be implemented. The first source states that construction on Patuca III began on 01 February 2011. According to information received by the Mission, an agreement has been reached with Chinese corporation

“Sinohydro” to go ahead with all three projects. There is no reference in the governmental reporting that Patuca II and Patuca I appear to have been approved by the government.

Patuca III is located outside of the World Heritage property, regardless of the ambiguous boundaries described below. This, however, does not necessarily exclude environmental or social impacts downriver. More strikingly, Patuca I and Patuca II would be located in Patuca National Park, the former in the National Park's core zone. Patuca National Park is contiguous with Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve and an integral part of the bi-national "Heart of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor", an internationally renowned and supported global conservation priority also known for its cultural diversity and for being the largest uninterrupted neo-tropical rain forest north of the Amazon. It is a key conservation area of the entire region and belongs to the largest undeveloped tract of Central America.

Proponents argue that hydro-electricity is a green form of energy but the debate surrounding large dams has long moved on in response to the complexity and increasing experience from all over the world. While it is partially true that hydro-electricity does not depend on fossil fuels and does not pollute air or water, the high social and environmental impacts and the often questionable longer term economic viability are widely accepted elements of today's more nuanced debate. As well documented by the World Commission on Dams, the most comprehensive global and independent review of experience with large dams, the question boils down to the distribution of costs and benefits, to whether the benefits outweigh the inevitable social and environmental costs and how the unavoidable impacts can be minimized and mitigated.

Representatives of the civil society and scientists have documented their concerns about possible dam development on the Patuca River for many years. Impacts and costs to be considered and contrasted with expected benefits include:

- Interruption of a major traditional transportation route and access to the coast through the creation of physical barriers and modified water levels;
- The economic value of land drowned;
- Flooding of the upstream river;
- Disruption and modification of downstream flow patterns through controlled water release differing from natural patterns;
- Loss of nutrient and mineral rich sediments downriver with effects on agricultural productivity and food security;
- Sedimentation in the reservoir as a challenge to long term economic viability;
- Effects of possible riverbed dredging which may be needed for transportation of construction material;
- Eutrophication of the reservoir;
- Effects on river fisheries through impacts on fish migration and reproduction;

- Fragmentation of terrestrial habitats through road infrastructure and high voltage lines;
- Secondary impacts related to "door-opener" effect of new road access, such as in-migration and associated land conflicts, as well as logging;
- Social and environmental effects of expected construction boom towns, in particular after the end of major construction works;
- Uneven distribution of costs and benefits between local and national level.

The Mission understands that the Inter American Development Bank (IADB, regionally known by its Spanish language acronym BID), is involved and appears to have suggested a need for additional and more in-depth feasibility studies and impact assessments for all three planned dams. The Mission further understands from a debriefing session on 8 February 2011 in Tegucigalpa that IADB may consider financial support but that such support would have to be based on more rigorous assessments.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Take into account the international lessons regarding large scale dam developments, which are well-documented by the World Commission on Dams, and consider in particular the economic, environmental and social costs and impacts.

A number of severe questions arise directly and indirectly related to World Heritage. From a technical perspective, there is no doubt that the series of planned and apparently approved dams will have impacts on the broader conservation complex, of which Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve is an integral part. Several existing protected areas will clearly be affected by any dam construction on the Patuca River. It seems contradictory to receive international support for a conservation complex when at the same time large scale development is approved in an existing national park in that very conservation complex despite severe concerns from local to international level.

As long as there is no unambiguous map of the exact boundaries of the World Heritage property (see below) there is no solid basis to assess impacts on the "Outstanding Universal Value" and the integrity of the World Heritage property in detail. The fact is, that Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, as legally defined in 2007, extends to the Patuca River, which constitutes a considerable stretch of its eastern boundary.

The EIA provided by the government at the end of the monitoring mission suggests that the national energy institution is tasked with the EIA. This seems slightly unusual as a procedure and raises the question of the role of SERNA and ICF in EIA in general, and within protected areas in particular. In the case of Patuca I and II there is a question of compatibility with protected areas legislation, which the governmental report does not elaborate on.

As traditional dwellers of the Patuca River the Tawahka, Pech und Miskito are directly affected by any dam development along that river. Honduras has ratified ILO 169 which stipulates "Indigenous participation in national projects affecting them". This suggests an additional international legal dimension of the hydro-electric development plans.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Provide the World Heritage Committee urgently with an updated overview of the current situation of all active or planned dam construction along the Patuca River, including their exact locations, clarify the legal procedures and requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment under Honduran law, the implications of protected area status on dam construction, and also submit the plans for social and environmental impact assessments of the proposed Patuca I and II dams.

C. Reserve design and zonation of the World Heritage property

The seemingly straightforward issue of what constitutes the exact boundaries of a World Heritage property is often less than clear, in particular when sites were inscribed decades ago, as is the case with Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve. A factor potentially adding to certain confusion is the dual status as a World Heritage property and a Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme.

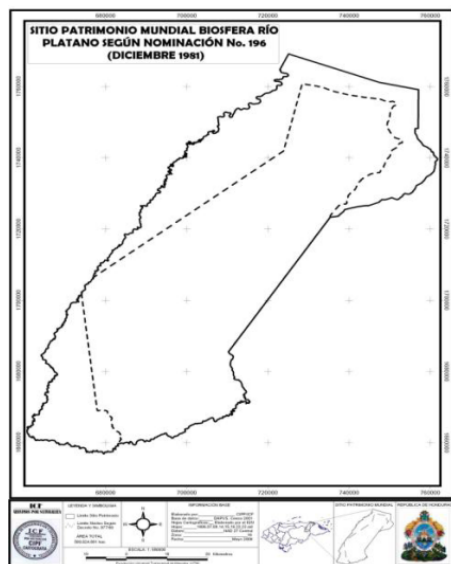
It is not uncommon that monitoring missions are tasked with boundary and zonation (internal boundaries) issues. The World Heritage Committee requested Honduras to produce and submit "a map unambiguously illustrating the boundaries of the property".

According to the 2011 governmental state of conservation report, the original extension nominated for World Heritage status was 350,000 hectares, at the time equaling the extension of the biosphere reserve recognized earlier plus an additional 150,000 hectares of buffer zone as specified in Decree 977-80. The IUCN evaluation at the time refers to 350,000 hectares indicating that the additional buffer zone was not formally considered part of the property at the time of inscription. This situation, however, was only visualized in a general overview map.

Decree 170-97 revised the boundaries of the biosphere reserve and introduced a zonation scheme differentiating core, buffer and cultural zone. This changed the legal status of the protected area, as well as its local perception. Overall, it appears to be a positive development in that the decree increased the overall surface of the conserved area and also recognized the need for a more nuanced consideration of the needs of local communities. The cultural zone of Río Plátano was extended all the way to the left bank of the Patuca River. It is also a formal recognition of the "human dimension" of conservation in line with broader trends in conservation thinking.

A change in World Heritage property boundaries can have the form of a "minor boundary modification" or may require a re-nomination. In all cases, it formally requires approval by the World Heritage Committee. As Decree 170-97 does not make reference to World Heritage status, this requirement appears to have been neglected by the State Party and visiting Missions. The time has come to jointly address this lack of clarity. As per Decree 170-97, the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve now has an overall size of 833,616 hectares. Of this surface area 210,432 hectares constitute the core zone, whereas 233,659 hectares form the buffer zone with 389,525 being the newly created cultural zone. It is important to point out that the area under a strict conservation regime (core zone) is significantly smaller than the original extension of the World Heritage property of 350,000 hectares. It is also noteworthy that the current core zone consists mostly of the broadleaf forest ecosystem in the southern part the biosphere reserve whereas it does not cover the highly diverse mosaic of other ecosystem types in the lowlands, coastal and marine areas. Last but not least, it deserves to be mentioned that the 1997 biosphere reserve boundaries appear to include a marine area which is not the case in the World Heritage map referring to the 1982 inscription and may well be adding value to the potential future configuration of the World Heritage property.

The below map broadly illustrates the boundaries according to the 1981 nomination (left) versus the still legally valid 1997 extension and zonation of the biosphere reserve (right) as submitted by Honduras in the January 2011 state of conservation report (maps courtesy of State Party).



Any workable solution for a new design of the World Heritage property will have to:

- Be compatible with the Operational Guidelines, in particular provisions for "minor boundary modifications" (Paragraph 163) and "extensions" or

"significant boundary modifications", in which case the procedure for new nominations will apply (Paragraph 164, 165);

- Be compatible with developments in the management arrangements in the different zones;
- Consider the zonation scheme introduced in 1997;
- Consider the original nomination, IUCN evaluation and World Heritage Committee Decision to inscribe the property;
- Consider the key values according to World Heritage criteria, i.e. the conservation and management of an entire watershed of a major river and the ecosystem diversity, mostly inside of what today is located in the cultural zone in any new boundary configuration;
- Consider ecological, cultural, spiritual values and ecosystem services, in particular water provision based on existing attempts to locally protect watersheds in the buffer and cultural zone;

In addition, connectivity within the overall property and adjacent conservation areas and integration of marine components could strengthen the integrity of the site and deserve to be considered. It is hoped that the above list provides ingredients for a way forward. Clearly, a major effort seems in order. There are several options to proceed listed hereafter which have to be weighed carefully:

- 1.** Maintaining and more clearly defining the 1982 boundaries while making sure that the integrity, protection and management issues are addressed in a way that is compatible with World Heritage requirements;
- 2.** Propose a minor boundary modification while maintaining the overall rationale of the original inscription with a certain flexibility to adapt the boundaries according to landscape features
- 3.** Re-nominate the property as part of a major effort to consolidate the management and conservation of the property taking into account the current status and socio-economic reality.

From a technical perspective a linear reserve design (option 1) as opposed to a design adapted to the geography and resource use is an outdated approach. While superior in its flexibility, option 2 likewise seems out of touch with developments on the ground. This leaves option 3 as the most promising and at the same time most challenging way forward.

The core zone will doubtlessly continue to be a fundamental component of the overall future property. However, isolated from the northern part of the biosphere reserve, it is unlikely to meet World Heritage criteria, which were justified on the grounds of the conservation of an entire watershed and a high degree of ecosystem diversity north of today's core zone. A new nomination with the objective to negotiate, agree and document clear and accepted boundaries of the World Heritage property as part of a broader effort would put an end to decades of ambiguity. It could help to co-ordinate

a process bringing together the various institutions, non-governmental organizations, local and Indigenous communities and donor agencies operating in the region. Discussions with representatives of most projects operating in the region indicate a strong willingness to support such a joint approach.

In fact, such an approach could constitute a very welcome example of using the World Heritage prestige as an umbrella and platform for an integrated and large-scale conservation and development effort. An effort, which explicitly considers rights, resource use and cultural needs of local and indigenous communities in the boundary design, zonation, governance and management. The overall approach to a newly defined World Heritage property would then be comprised of different governance and management set-ups. One form among others could be the consideration of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs), an increasingly accepted and relevant form of protected areas governance in addition to conventional protected areas.

As already communicated to the State Party during the Mission, the International Assistance available under the World Heritage Fund lends itself to this purpose of revisiting a threatened World Heritage property. While comparatively modest in budget, a project funded through International Assistance would constitute an opportunity to bring together different institutions, projects and actors as a platform for a joint initiative of the many interested parties

RECOMMENDATION 5

To consider the various options to redefine the boundaries of the World Heritage property to reflect the increased size of the protected area, the new zonation, and the existing land uses. This should include consideration of the feasibility and usefulness of a re-nomination, as per the procedure in Paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines as a platform for the ongoing, internationally supported efforts to conserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

D. Governance and management: Illegal logging, regulation of land tenure, involvement of local and Indigenous communities

This report attempts to synthesize a number of governance and management issues, which have been dealt with under various headings in earlier governmental state of conservation reports and monitoring reports. It is important to note that the issues noted occur in the context of significant drug trafficking in and around the property.

The expansion of the agricultural frontier and in particular cattle ranching have resulted in extensive deforestation and related environmental degradation, including the deterioration of water resources and soil erosion. In a country that is susceptible to natural disasters, such as hurricanes and flooding, environmental degradation increases the vulnerability and decreases resilience. The disastrous impact of

Hurricane Mitch in late 1998 continues to be a much remembered and talked about event in the communities in and around the property.

Illegal logging is well documented, including by Honduras' National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH). The Mission came across several incidents of illegal logging during the field, providing evidence that the situation may not have changed for the better.

The investments in sustainable forest management operations through local co-operatives near the western boundary are encouraging. They are backed up by the new forest law that is widely considered a major improvement. These operations tend to focus on the extraction of a limited number of high value trees, typically Mahogany (Caoba). Some operations are certified under the Forest Stewardship Council, one of the major forest management certification schemes worldwide and specialist buyers are reported to be paying a premium price for this wood. The overall climate of lawlessness and parallel illicit operations and markets present an obstacle to the prospects of these operations as legal operators must compete with illegal suppliers. Sadly, it was reported that legal operators routinely have to pay bribes to pass control posts. Further support to the co-operatives is needed if they are to develop beyond its current state of infancy.

The pattern is similar when it comes to hunting and fishing. Both are traditional activities but appear partly out of control through commercialization and changes in techniques. For example, the seasonal migration of Cuyamel (Bobo mullet, *Joturus pichardi*) has always attracted fishermen. However, the large quantities extracted and the use of explosives has exhausted populations in many rivers discharging into the Atlantic. The pressure on Cuyamel populations in the Río Plátano was described as excessive by colleagues from ICF and SERNA. The same holds true for commercial fishing in the Atlantic, where indiscriminate fishing and extraction of shellfish under often precarious and sometimes lethal working conditions was reported. According to local residents, manatees, increasingly rare marine mammals, are hunted for their meat in the various lagoons near the Atlantic coast. As for hunting, a recent jaguar survey in Río Plátano found ample evidence of poaching and illegal wildlife trade, even in the core zone (Castañeda, 2009). This is a clear indication not only of illegal activities but of pressure and qualitative changes even in areas remaining under dense forest cover, i.e. not affected by full-scale deforestation.

Consequently, it is safe to conclude that the current management effectiveness of the World Heritage property is limited at best. Intrusions, clearing of forests and illegal extraction of timber, wildlife and fish are common and do not appear to trigger a systematic and consolidated management response. The task at hand is substantial and it became obvious that ICF and SERNA are insufficiently prepared. Both will require increased human, technical and financial capacities and increased presence on the ground. Both will also have to operate in even closer co-ordination and co-operation with other pertinent governmental institutions, local and Indigenous communities and externally supported projects as part of a concerted effort.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Strengthen the capacity and resources of ICF and SERNA, and other governmental agencies with responsibilities for applying legal protection to the property, in particular at the regional and local level, and ensure improved co-ordination and co-operation with other governmental and non-governmental institutions, local and Indigenous communities and externally supported projects as part of a concerted effort to secure effective management of the property.

The rules of access to land and natural resources are widely accepted as a key issue in natural resource management. A duality of customary and formal rights is common in many rural areas around the world. Many attempts have been made to understand and influence such systems in order to increase the likelihood of sustainable use and fair benefit-sharing. There are often different opinions on the technical details and appropriate legal arrangements. This is related to actually differing viewpoints but often related to a lack of communication and mutual trust.

Much of the land in and around the property is considered as the last frontier in Honduras, and though not expressly encouraged, the unrestricted migration and settlement of Hondurans in search of a better life here has nurtured a “frontier” attitude. It is not uncommon that government responses and capacity to regulate such processes take time to develop. It is critical that the government does establish a presence and begin to order the process. The government of Honduras has started to do this but much remains to be done.

The zonation of 1997 in itself constitutes an important recognition of local resource use. In Río Plátano, ambiguity in regards to ownership and boundaries had led to disagreements and conflicts in the past, at times to violence and intimidation. There are ongoing and promising efforts to clarify access to natural resources in the Mosquitia, acknowledged by governmental and non-governmental actors. At the same time, starkly differing views on the progress made were presented to the Mission suggesting a need for further negotiation and communication. While the technical details are beyond the scope of this report, the Mission considers the ongoing process to clarify land tenure and user rights an important component in resolving the underlying drivers of the degradation and loss of natural resources in the Mosquitia and the World Heritage property. The initiating co-management process involving local organizations and communities is intricately linked to the question of access to natural resources. In particular, the indigenous and community access rights and titles cannot be seen in isolation of any co-management strategy in the cultural zone and buffer zone.

German technical and financial development co-operation has a long history of supporting the Honduran government in Río Plátano, including as regards land

tenure and access rights. It is understood that the governments of Honduras and Germany have recently agreed on the continuation of the longstanding co-operation.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Continue efforts to negotiate and clarify access to land and natural resources while enforcing existing land tenure and access arrangements and explore opportunities for more meaningful co-management with a particular focus on the indigenous communities of the cultural zone.

In addition to support by the German government there are further internationally supported projects, such as "Heart of the Corridor" and the GEF-supported "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Indigenous Productive Landscapes of the Mosquitia" implemented by UNDP. In other words, there are resources, capacities, as well as an international recognition of the importance of the area and a willingness to support Honduras. Contributions from these initiatives, and coherence and co-ordination, are critical and should be sustained and consolidated.

The management plan foreseen and budgeted under the "Heart of the Corridor" has the potential to become a key instrument to guide further negotiation and action, provided that it is co-ordinated as a process-oriented rather than document-oriented exercise. The opportunity must not be missed and every effort should be made to bring all players on board and to use the process as a platform for communication and co-ordination.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Use the envisaged updating of the management plan as an instrument and opportunity to bring together and co-ordinate the various institutions and external supporters involved in Río Plátano in order to improve coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of future management.

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY

Despite important efforts and a clearly articulated political willingness at the highest level to improve the management and conservation of Río Plátano, the World Heritage property finds itself in a process of rapid degradation. A detailed remote sensing exercise based on current satellite data is expected to be produced in 2011, which will quantify deforestation and land use changes in addition to the less visible degradation through hunting, fishing and disturbance.

The threats and shortcomings in terms of governance and management are well documented. The vulnerable state of conservation of Río Plátano had previously

resulted in the inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger between 1996 and 2007. The surge in drug trafficking in the past several years has contributed significantly to undermining conservation efforts and good management, resulting in an accelerated degradation of the property.

The important efforts, including international support are laudable and should be continued and intensified. They are, however, clearly insufficient. If the widely recognized trends are allowed to continue, the property is likely to lose the exceptional natural values, which justified World Heritage listing, the most prestigious international recognition of nature conservation values.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve is the largest protected area in Honduras, recognized for both its natural and cultural wealth. The Mission drew a high degree of political and media attention suggesting a prominent role and indeed highly symbolic value of the area in the political perception and public opinion. There is little doubt that the situation of Río Plátano is well-known and taken seriously. The findings of the Mission confirmed the longstanding and well documented concerns about severe threats to the property, illustrated also by the many years during which Río Plátano was retained on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

A climate of insecurity and lawlessness in the remote and impoverished region along with a procedural vacuum and institutional weakness provide a difficult framework for addressing the multiple threats. The more recent increase of drug-trafficking has become an overarching part of the socio-economic reality of the Honduran Mosquitia region. Clearly, the challenges are beyond the scope of a protected area agency as they are related to the poverty, security and political stability of an entire region.

Despite signs of positive change in the region and encouraging success stories, such as increased land tenure security, locally protected watersheds, forest management cooperatives and the ability of the government to relocate and compensate illegal settlers in the core zone, the current efforts are insufficient and the longer term prognosis is negative. Forests continue to be logged and converted, illegal logging, fishing and hunting are widespread.

As stated in several World Heritage Committee Decisions, including most recently 34 COM 7B.34, the property continues to face very severe and acute problems requiring the highest level political recognition and support. In this sense the findings of the Mission as regards the problems are not entirely unexpected. What is new and encouraging, however, is a full and unambiguous political acknowledgement by the highest level and across all sectors and a stated willingness to act. This current momentum, to which the Mission may have contributed, and the considerable international support constitute a valuable opportunity to address the challenges in a more comprehensive and decisive fashion.

The Mission encountered a much welcome openness to discuss the situation. All discussions suggest a consensus on the severity of the situation and the urgent need to improve governance and management.

The conditions for recommending the inscription of a property on the List of World Heritage in Danger are defined in the Operational Guidelines (Paragraphs 177 – 191, UNESCO, 2008). As indicators for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger the Operational Guidelines state the condition that "the property is threatened by serious and specific danger" and "major operations are necessary for the conservation of the property". These paragraphs appear to be applicable to the situation encountered.

The Mission team concluded that the conditions for recommending listing of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger based on the stipulations of the Operational Guidelines are most probably met. The conclusion sparked little surprise on the part of Honduran colleagues. In final meetings, including with the President of Honduras and several Ministers, including Environment, Defense and Presidency, the possibility and indeed high likelihood of a renewed listing of Río Plátano on the List of World Heritage in Danger was openly discussed at the highest level. The Mission informed the participants of this meeting of its opinion that conditions for recommending inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger appear to be met and that the property would benefit from being inscribed onto that List, if managed and communicated appropriately and proactively. The value of doing so was acknowledged.

Rather than perceiving such a decision as an external imposition, a constructive way to look at the List of World Heritage in Danger is to see it as an opportunity to recognize real problems as a starting point to address them and to draw national and international attention and support to a situation. Several States to the World Heritage Convention, including recently Colombia (Los Katios), and the USA (Everglades) have requested the status of sites in their jurisdiction on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Benefits include receiving an independent and external assessment, advice and recommendations and privileged access to International Assistance. Requesting inscription on the list prior to a World Heritage Committee decision when there is a high probability of listing is a sovereign and constructive governmental decision.

The Mission had the privilege to openly discuss and indeed recommend this option to the Honduran President of the Republic and several of his Ministers. The matter was taken seriously and Honduras demonstrated a willingness to take the leadership on the issue. Communication with the State Party during and after the Mission indicated that Honduras is considering such a proactive request. In this regard, the World Heritage Centre received a formal letter from the State Party on 11 April 2011, requesting that the property be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. IUCN and the World Heritage Centre have since been provided with a Decree adopted on 15 February 2011, declaring a status of special interest, an Action Plan at the level of the Council of Ministers (*Consejo de Ministros*) and approved by Presidential Decree.

Building upon earlier efforts a Permanent Technical Committee to address and prioritize needed interventions, including evictions from the core area has been created. The challenge will be to operationalize and to sustain this Action Plan and to secure implementation, co-ordination and funding on a long-term basis.

In support of the efforts, an International Assistance Request may be helpful. It is useful to remember that according to Paragraph 188 of the Operational Guidelines the "Committee shall allocate a specific, significant portion of the World Heritage Fund to financing of possible assistance to World Heritage properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger."

RECOMMENDATION 9

Translate the political recognition of the severity of the threats to the property into a coordinated, workable and budgeted long term Action Plan and consider a request for International Assistance in support of corresponding efforts.

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World Resources Institute. 2003. Biodiversity and Protected Areas – Honduras. EarthTrends Country Profiles.

7. USEFUL LINKS

<http://whc.unesco.org>; Official website of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre providing access to a wealth of information, including site-specific IUCN evaluations and technical reports and Committee decisions.

www.conadeh.hn/informes_monitoreo_forestal.htm; Documents independent forest monitoring in Honduras carried out by *Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras* (CONADEH) with support by Global Witness.

www.dams.org/; Official website of the World Commission on Dams providing a balanced and widely used wealth of information based on a comprehensive multi-stakeholder process. Considered the most comprehensive global and independent review of experience with large dams.

www.icf.gob.hn/; Official website of the *Instituto Nacional de Conservacion y Desarrollo Forestal, Áreas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre*.

www.iucn.org/; Website of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, one of the advisory bodies under the World Heritage Convention specialized in natural World Heritage. Technical documents on protected areas and World Heritage available for download.

<http://rainforest-alliance.org/adopt/projects/honduras>; Brief overview of the situation in Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve near the World Heritage property.

www.serna.gob.hn/; Official website of the *Secretaría de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente*.

8. ANNEXES

- A. Terms of reference
- B. Itinerary and programme
- C. List of people met
- D. Maps
- E. Photographic documentation

A. Terms of Reference

Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve **Monitoring Mission Terms of Reference**

Mandate: **Decision: 34 COM 7B.34**

The World Heritage Committee, (see full text, annex 1)

...

7. *Also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN reactive monitoring mission in 2010 to assess the state of conservation of the property and progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2006 mission;*

Background: This property was inscribed onto the World Heritage List in 1982 and forms the core zone of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, itself recognized under the Man and the Biosphere Programme in 1980. Between 1996 and 2007, the site was on the Danger List due primarily to illegal logging, invasions of the park by illegal settlers, and an advancing agricultural frontier. Issues related to uncertain boundaries were raised during the 2006 mission and referred to in the 2008 WH Committee meeting. To date, the precise boundaries remain unclear. Concerns raised at the Committee level include:

- a) Illegal settlements;
- b) Illegal livestock grazing and agricultural intrusions;
- c) Illegal logging;
- d) Poaching;
- f) Management deficiencies;
- g) Potential impacts from hydroelectric development project on the Patuca River

Mission Dates:

February 1 (Tuesday):	Arrive in Tegucigalpa
February 2 (Wednesday):	Meetings with government authorities, other conservation organizations, bi-lateral development assistance offices.
February 3-7:	Site visit – as a function of threats identified in WH Committee report.
February 8: (Tuesday):	AM: Debriefing government authorities PM: Departure

Mission Team: The mission team will consist of 1 representative from the World Heritage Centre and 1 from IUCN.

Mission Goal:

- To assess the state of conservation of the property, focusing on the factors affecting the property's Outstanding Universal Value generally, and specifically on concerns expressed by the World Heritage Committee in its recent decisions.
- To make recommendations on conservation interventions designed to ensure that the property's outstanding universal value is conserved over the long term.

Mission Objectives:

- Obtain information on trends in regards to agriculture encroachment and the presence of illegal settlers both near and within the property. The mission should develop a clear understanding of the actual situation and recommend appropriate measures.
- Investigate the situation regarding illegal logging, particular in relation to observations made during previous missions. Attention should be given to the legal framework around which logging and the operation of sawmills take place. Obtain more information on the volumes, sources, driving factors, and on the SP's efforts at dealing with this threat and make a statement on the impact of this trade on the property's integrity.
- Review management structure, financing and effectiveness of the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve.
- Clarify issues related to the Patuca hydroelectric dam. Obtain clear information on the location of the dam in relation to the property, and potential impacts to the property's OUV.
- Obtain information on land tenure process, and the reported on-going encroachment of settlers near the property's border and within the property.

General:

1. Suggested Mission strategy:
 - i) An initial meeting in Tegucigalpa with the pertinent national authorities. Mission objectives can be reviewed, and the agenda shared. Opportunities to maximize the use of the mission team can be explored and any ambiguities clarified. Additional visits in Tegucigalpa, taking advantage of the presence of pertinent agencies (national, international) and NGOs.
 - ii) A thorough field visit is strongly recommended, with a particular focus on the zones of interest as identified in the 2010 State of Conservation Report. A visit to the property boundaries, particularly in the Sico Paulaya area, might be considered, as well as to the cultural zone. Additional visits to areas susceptible to illegal logging, and local sawmills / sawmill operators, is also recommended.
 - iii) Whenever possible, the mission team should have the opportunity to meet with concerned stakeholders – these could include civil society, NGOs, timber industry representatives if pertinent, park staff, cattle ranchers / community leaders, local elected officials.
 - iv) Finally, a debriefing session with pertinent authorities is requested, so that the observations and preliminary conclusions of the mission can be discussed with them.

2. The visit of a World Heritage monitoring mission is a good opportunity to consult with various stakeholder groups and government bodies involved in the management of the property. It is also a good opportunity to demonstrate to pertinent stakeholders the implications for a protected area to be inscribed onto the list of World Heritage. The State Party is encouraged to make best use of the mission in this regard by organizing strategic meetings with key stakeholders.

Logistics:

UNESCO and IUCN will arrange their respective commercial travel to Tegucigalpa.

UNESCO and IUCN will arrange hotel accommodations in the city, but welcome assistance from the SP in arranging suitable accommodations elsewhere. Similarly, all travel logistics via non-commercial means should be organized and paid for by the State Party.

Deliverable:

The Mission team (IUCN to take the lead) will provide a report in the standard format for reactive monitoring missions no later than 6 weeks after the completion of the mission.

References:

IUCN Evaluation of the nomination of the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve (1982):

http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/196.pdf

Government of Honduras State of Conservation Reports, Previous mission reports and other pertinent documentation can be found here:
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/196/documents/>

B. Itinerary and programme

Agenda

Agenda Misión de Evaluación y monitoreo del Estado de Conservación de la RHBRP

Note: This agenda details as planned and agreed prior to the mission. Additional agenda items not included in the below overview include:

- President
- working group
- Appearance of a mission team member in national TV programme "frente a frente" jointly with the Defense Minister, the Minister of the Environment, MOPAWI and Fical on 09.02.2011

01.02.2011

Arribo de la Misión a Tegucigalpa

17:00 Reunion preliminar (Lobby Intercontinental)

02.02.2011

08:30 Traslado de la Misión UICN-UNESCO a las instalaciones de la SERNA/Centro Interactivo de Información Hídrica y Ambiental de la SERNA, Tegucigalpa

09:00 Presentación de la mesa principal

09:10 Bienvenida y Apertura de la Misión

09:30 Presentación de Antecedentes

10:00 Presentación del Informe del Estado de Conservación de la RHBRP

10:40 Presentación de Objetivos de la Misión

11:00 Preguntas

12:00 Almuerzo

División del equipo técnico (una parte para realizar el sobrevuelo para el 3 de febrero, la segunda parte para viajar en avión comercial el 02.02.2011 a las 14:10)

13:30 Reunion del Equipo técnico (SERNA-ICF-UNESCO-UICN-FFAA)

16:00 Cierre del Primer día

13:30 Salida al Aeropuerto (Rolando Casco/Proyecto Corazón, Gloria Zelaya/ ICF AP, Daisy Samayoa/SERNA, Ramon Nuila/ periodista)

16:00 Llegada a La Ceiba

17:00 Hospedaje en La Ceiba

03.02.2011

06:00 Desayuno La Ceiba, Atlántida

07:30 Salida a la Fuerza aérea de Honduras

08:30 Arribo al Aguacate (reabastecimiento de combustible)

09:00 Sobrevuelo por la zona núcleo y zona cultural de la Reserva

11:30 Arribo a Belén

12:00 Almuerzo Cocina de doña Elma

13:00 Reunion con autoridades y lideres locales, Oficinas de MOPAWI, Belen
15:00 Refrigerio Cocina de doña Elma, Belen
16:00 Clausura de la Reunion
19:00 Cena
20:00 Hospedaje Raista/Belen

04.02.2011

06:30 Desayuno Raista/Belen
07:30 Belen, salida a Palacios
09:00 Arribo a Palacios
10:00 Reunion comunitaria, Alcaldía de Juan Francisco Bulnes
13:00 Almuerzo Palacios
14:00 Salida a Iriona
16:00 Arribo a Iriona
16:30 Salida de Iriona a Sico y Paulaya
17:30 Arribo a Sico y Paulaya
18:00 Cena Comedor la Champa
19:00 Hospedaje en Sico y Paulaya

05.02.2011

06:00 Desayuno Sico y Paulaya
07:00 Salida al Venado
09:00 Arribo al Venado/ Cooperativa Miraveza, El Venado
09:30 Recorrido por el aserrio, implementación de Cadena de Custodia
12:00 Almuerzo El Venado
14:00 Regreso a Sico Paulaya
15:00 Reunion comunitaria Sico y Paulaya
18:00 Clausura de la Reunion Sico y Paulaya
17:00 Hospedaje en Sico y Paulaya
19:00 Cena Sico Paulaya

06.02.2011

08:00 Desayuno Sico Paulaya/ Comedor La Champa
09:30 Visita grupos campesinos La Celia (asentamientos campesinos)
10:00 Reunion comunitaria
12:00 Almuerzo en La Celia
13:00 Retorno a Sico Paulaya
14:30 Espacio para sistematización de la gira
19:00 Cena Sico Paulaya/ Comedor La Champa

07.02.2011

06:00 Desayuno Sico Paulaya
06:30 Salida a La Ceiba
12:00 Almuerzo La Ceiba
15:00 Salida de la Ceiba a Tegucigalpa
16:00 Arribo a Tegucigalpa
16:30 Traslado de la Mision UICN-UNESCO al hotel

08.02.2011

- 07:30 Informal breakfast with Ministers ICF and SERNA
- 08:00 Meeting with President and several Ministers
- 09:00 Apertura de la reunion de clausura de la Mision Centro Interactivo de
Información Hidrica y Ambiental de la SERNA
- 09:30 Presentacion del informe de la Misión
- 11:00 Preguntas
- 11:30 Recomendaciones y Compromisos
- 12:00 Cierre de la mision y Almuerzo

09.02.2011

- 08:00 Public discussion on daily TV show "Frente a frente" (Minister of Defense,
Minister of Environment, Fiscalía de Medio Ambiente, MOPAWI, IUCN)
- 09:00 Participation in discussion on next steps with Ministers and other
representatives of Ministries (IUCN), see Annex C.

Helicopter flight path and communities visited



C. List of people met

High-level representatives of the Government of Honduras

Nombre	Institución
Porfirio Lobo Sosa	Presidente de la Republica
María Antonieta de Bogran	Designada Presidencial
Víctor Barnica	Designado Presidencial
Rigoberto Cuéllar	Ministro de SERNA
Marco Jonathan Laínez	Viceministro de SERNA
José Galdames	Viceministro ICF
Marlon Pascua	Ministro de Defensa
Nelly Jerez	Ministra de Turismo
Luis Fernando Green	Ministro SEDINAFROH
Edy Mc Nab	Viceministro SEDINAFROH
Juan Carlos Ordoñez	Viceministro de la SAG
Augusto Cruz Asensio	Diputado Congreso Nacional
Abog. Reina Pineda	Fiscal del Medio Ambiente
Gilberto Ochoa	Procurador del medio ambiente
Norman García	Gerente de UNICAF
Oswaldo Munguia	Director MOPAWI
Norvin Goff	Presidente de MASTA
Salomon Escato	Secretaria Seguridad

Opening meeting 01.02.201, SERNA, Tegucigalpa

N°	Nombre y Apellidos	Institución
1	Marlon Pascua	Ministro de Defensa
2	Luis Green	Ministro Etnias
3	Africo Madrid	Ministro Gobernación y Justicia
4	Trinidad Suazo	Ministro ICF
5	Mario Canahuati	Ministro Relaciones Exteriores
6	Rigoberto Cuéllar	Ministro SERNA
7	Holger Afflerbach	GIZ
8	Jerson Perdomo	CIPF/ICF
9	Gloria Zelaya	DAP/ICF
10	Irina Pineda	Directora Cooperación Externa/SERNA
11	Gabriela Pineda	DIGEPESCA
12	Amaro García	Director Biodiversidad/SERNA
13	Julio Egugurems	Director DECA/SERNA
14	Coronel Klaus Korte	FFAA
15	Lorena Fernandez	Fiscal Medio Ambiente
16	Edy Lagos	Fiscalia Medio Ambiente
17	Oswaldo Munguia	MOPAWI
18	Ramon Nuila	Periodista
19	Hugo Galeano	PPD
20	Gilberto Ochoa	Procurador Medio Ambiente
21	Geovani Laffite	Procuradoría
22	Dittmar Jenrich	PROTEP
23	Luis Corrales	PROTEP
24	Mauricio Irias	Proyecto Corazón
25	Marco Espinoza	Region Biosfera/ICF
26	Daisy Samayoa	SERNA
27	Marc Patry	UNESCO
28	Olman Varela	UICN
29	Marilu Rivas	Comunicaciones SERNA
30	Darío Guzman	Periodista
31	Karla Matute	Periodista
32	Dolores Valenzuela	Periodista
33	Rene Nuñez	Periodista

Selection of people met during the Mission (28 page full list available upon request)

Daisy Samayoa, SERNA

Ramon Nuila, Periodista

Lorena Fernandez, Special Environmental Public Prosecutor (FEMA).

Rolando Casco, Proyecto Corazon

Gilberto Ochoa Vasquez, Procurador General de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales

Elias Melgar, Armed Forces of Honduras

Jose Trinidad Suazo, Director Ejecutivo, ICF (Ministro)

Jose Antonio Galdames, ICF

Juan Jose Ferrando, Coordinador Unidad de Ambiente y Gestión de Riesgos, UNDP/PNUD Honduras

Marco Jonathan Lainez Ordonez, Sub Secretario de Medio Ambiente

Marco Espinoza, Regional Director, ICF/RBRP

Gloria Zelaya, ICF/Areas Protegidas

Jose Luis Mendieta, Armed Forces of Honduras

Klaus Werner Korte, Armed Forces of Honduras

Wolfgang Lutz, Country Director, GIZ Honduras

Holger Afflerbach, GIZ/PRORENA, GFA

Nico Schuetzhofer, Director, Agencia Regional del KfW para Guatemala, Honduras y el BCIE (telephone and email Exchange)

Fausto Ramirez, Tecnico, Fiscalia Ambiental

Osvaldo Munguia, Director Mopawi

Stefan Rischar, Senior Project Manager, KfW Frankfurt

Sergio Palacios, Tecnico, Proyecto Ecosistemas

Maria Elena Flores, Facilitadora Tecnica, Proyecto Ecosistemas

Eduardo Castro, Ganadero, Juan Francisco Bulnes,

Karla Cueva, Secretaria Desarrollo Social

Oscar Acosta, Secretaria Interior

Inés Ordoñez Salinas, SEDINAFROH

Lidia Cayetano, SEDINAFROH

Wilma Calderon, SEDINAFROH

Rigoberto Romero, FFAA

Roy Murillo, INA



E. Photographic documentation



Photo 1: Aerial view of Belen, Laguna Ibans and the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in the Northwestern part of the Biosphere Reserve. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 2: Agricultural frontier near Sico River. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 3: Meeting with Miraveza Forest Cooperative, El Venado, Sico Paulaya, Colon. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 4: Meeting with Miraveza Forest Cooperative, El Venado, Sico Paulaya, Colon. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 5: Aerial view of the recently cleared forest land in the Cultural Zone of the Biopshere Reserve south of Laguna Ibans, inside the World Heritage property. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 6: Aerial view of dense forest cover in the Core Zone. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 7: Landscape in the Sico River valley. The river forms the boundary of the Buffer Zone, the forested mountains in the background are located in the Core Zone (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).



Photo 8: Cattle in El Venado, buffer zone of the Biosphere Reserve, core zone in the background. (©Tilman Jaeger, IUCN).

F. IUCN Resolution 4.051 (Source: Resolutions and Recommendations, World Conservation Congress, Barcelona, 5 – 14 October 2008)

4.051 Indigenous peoples and protected areas of La Mosquitia in Mesoamerica

RECALLING previous IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations that address the roles and rights of indigenous peoples:

(a) Recommendation 18.16 *Recognition of the Role of Indigenous Communities* adopted by the 18th IUCN General Assembly (Perth, 1990);

(b) Resolution 19.20 *IUCN Action on Indigenous People and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*, Resolution 19.23 *The Importance of Community-based Approaches*, Recommendation 19.21 *Indigenous People and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources* and Recommendation 19.22 *Indigenous People* adopted by the 19th IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994); and

(c) Resolution 1.53 *Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas*, Resolution 1.54 *Indigenous Peoples and Conservation in Meso-America*, Resolution 1.55 *Indigenous Peoples and Forests* and Resolution 1.56 *Indigenous Peoples and the Andes* adopted by the 1st IUCN World Conservation Congress (Montreal, 1996);

ALSO RECALLING Resolution 2.81 *Mining concessions and protected areas in Mesoamerica* adopted by the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000) and Recommendation V.24 *Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas* noted at the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003);

MINDFUL of the provisions of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and of those of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (September 2007), and the Draft *American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination, prior informed consultation and the ownership, use, management and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources of their territories;

RECALLING that IUCN, in the framework of its Initiative for Indigenous Peoples and Conservation, committed itself to establish a Mesoamerican Working Group on indigenous peoples and protected areas;

BEARING IN MIND that the indigenous territories of La Mosquitia in Honduras and Nicaragua host the largest contiguous remaining tropical rainforest area in Mesoamerica, as well as most of the protected areas of the countries concerned; and that they jointly constitute the so-called 'core' of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC), including the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve, designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, the Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve and the Patuca National Park in Honduras, and the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve in Nicaragua;

CONCERNED by the pressures to which the indigenous territories and protected areas of La Mosquitia, which constitute the core of the MBC, are subjected, particularly the rapid escalation of uncontrolled agricultural, logging and livestock encroachment, which results in accelerated forest loss and conversion, estimated at 10,000 hectares annually in Honduras alone, with increasingly severe impacts on watersheds, wetlands and marine/ coastal areas;

FURTHER CONCERNED, that these damaging impacts will further increase with agrobiofuel production, mining exploration and exploitation and construction of the Patuca III mega-dam, and that all of these activities endanger the medium- and long-term sustainability of this important transboundary system of protected areas, as well as the habitat and life of the indigenous and afrodescendant communities who have historically lived in these territories, thus violating these peoples' rights, guaranteed by international standards;

RECALLING that the MBC core protected areas are priority sites for Mesoamerican and global conservation, pursuant to the provisions of the Central American Regional Biodiversity Convention (1992); and

RECOGNIZING the contribution received from the IUCN Regional Office for Meso-America (IUCNORMA) facilitating the holding of meetings of representatives of indigenous peoples in the Mesoamerican region, especially after the II Latin American Congress of National Parks and Other Protected Areas (Bariloche, 2007), and noting that this support and encouragement from the Union was invaluable for creating the first draft of the Regional Indigenous Agenda, and improving the organization and positioning of the Indigenous Networks of Mesoamerica;

The World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN

Programme 2009-2012:

REQUESTS the Director General, IUCN Commissions, members, Regional Councillors and particularly IUCNORMA, utilizing available resources, as well as other resources that could be raised, to work on the following:

- (a) carrying out an assessment of the current status of MBC's core protected areas, highlighting biodiversity threats and the exercise of the rights of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples;
- (b) lobbying the Governments of Honduras and Nicaragua so that they respond to the findings of the assessment and contribute to the creation of short-, medium- and long-term plans to tackle these challenges;
- (c) submitting the assessment report to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, and lobbying them so that UNESCO presents recommendations to Honduras and Nicaragua to safeguard the integrity of the protected areas and the rights of the indigenous and afro-descendant peoples;
- (d) forming alliances with members of IUCN in the Mesoamerican Region in order to implement an action plan based on the findings of the assessment, so as to start a process aimed at reducing the advance of the agricultural frontier, as well as restoring and protecting watersheds, wetlands and forests in protected areas located on the agricultural frontiers of the MBC's core area and other important ecosystems in the indigenous peoples' territory;
- (e) asking the Government of Honduras, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams and the rights of the indigenous peoples guaranteed in the ILO Convention 169 and in the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, to present complete documentation on the social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts of the Patuca III mega dam project, building of which is planned to start 2009, and to consider whether it will be compatible with the CBD *Akwé Kon Voluntary Guidelines*;
- (f) consulting the Government of Taiwan, a Province of China, as a funding body of the Patuca III mega dam project, on whether it has assessed the social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts on indigenous peoples, and on the MBC's core protected areas;
- (g) jointly formulating with IUCN members in Mesoamerica, sectoral guides for the assessment of infrastructure projects such as development of roads, dams, mining resources and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation and the growing of agrobiofuel crops, which can compromise the integrity of natural resources, biodiversity, livelihoods and the rights of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples, ensuring the incorporation of the CBD *Akwé Kon Voluntary Guidelines* and other similar guidelines;
- (h) creating a Mesoamerican working group of indigenous peoples along with IUCN-ORMA, as an area for dialogue, understanding, consultation and lobbying on governance issues, management categories, restitution and the specific indigenous system found in the protected areas, as well as the impacts of climate change and projects that have a negative effect on their territories and natural resources, as set out in the ILO Convention 169;
- (i) implementing an appropriate internal surveillance, monitoring and assessment system on the inclusion of and compliance with the rights of indigenous peoples in the strategies, policies, programmes and projects facilitated by the different IUCN-ORMA offices; and (j) including La Mosquitia Honduras and Nicaragua region, as part of IUCN ORMA's geographical priorities for intervention, guaranteeing strategic alliances with the members of the Union present in the region.

The statement for the record made by the State member Canada in relation to Resolution 4.048 also applies to this Resolution.