

15/6. URBAN FRINGES

RECOGNIZING that the growth of cities poses particular problems, especially for the Third World and that within two decades, more than half of the world population of over 6 billion will be living in cities and that 12 of the 15 largest ones will be in the Third World;

CONSCIOUS that in the past, cities have been supported by the surrounding countryside in a number of ways: their hinterlands provided food, fuel and water and absorbed urban wastes; CONCERNED that this former situation is breaking down and many cities, particularly in the Third World, have now exhausted the capacity of their fringes to support further urban growth and that these cities now rely upon food, fuel and water supplies which must be imported over long distances at great cost, particularly to the urban poor;

CONSCIOUS that the edges of many cities have become a new wasteland due to the destruction of local forests and woodland for fuel, building materials, and that the impoverishment of agricultural land is leading to a permanent loss of soil fertility; CONSCIOUS ALSO that significant areas of prime agricultural land on the fringes of cities, including those in developed countries, are being converted to urban uses and thus permanently lost for food production purposes;

AWARE that landscapes at the edge of cities and the habitat of wildlife which they provide are now increasingly of value for recreation and environmental education and that for most urban dwellers, these areas at the edge of the city provide the only non-urban environment they are ever likely to experience; CONVINCED FURTHER that only by careful development, combined with conservation measures, can food, fuel and water resources continue to be exploited in a profitable and ecologically acceptable way, to ensure support to a local population and make a better contribution to the welfare of a nearby city;

The General Assembly of IUCN, at its 15th Session in Christchurch, New Zealand, 11-23 October 1981:

DRAWS THE ATTENTION of all nations to the urban fringes of rapidly expanding cities, particularly but not only in the Third World, that pose special problems for conservation and development which are often overlooked by international, national and local agencies;

CALLS UPON all nations to acknowledge that urban fringes present problems that require coordinated action to ensure that land near cities remains available for sustainable production of food and fuel wood; for the conservation of water supplies, species, and habitats; and for recreation and environmental education; and URGES all member governments and organizations to take appropriate action to demonstrate that urban fringe management can successfully incorporate the principles of conservation for sustainable development.