

15/7. THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LIFE STYLES AND LOCAL PEOPLE IN CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

RECOGNIZING that human societies have survived only because they have evolved, within their traditional life styles, a viable relationship between population, land management and conservation; RECOGNIZING FURTHER that patterns of cultural behaviour with respect to nature and particularly the conservation of nature, may be unconscious, and that recognition of this element in behaviour is fundamental to strengthening conservation elements of development programmes and activities;

NOTING that human societies are rapidly losing their original spiritual dimensions, self-reliance and wisdom as they change from traditional life styles to modern ways of life;

NOTING FURTHER that conservation and development are increasingly dominated by urban society, often insensitive to the values and significance of the diverse rural traditions which have supported civilisation over long periods of time;

CONVINCED that traditional conservation systems have much to recommend them, not because of sentimental nostalgia, but because they are based on common sense, are cost-effective and fit in with the needs and wishes of many local communities;

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

RECOMMENDS that heads of governments, ministers, members of legislatures, administrators, planners and conservationists:

- (a) take into account the still existing very large reservoir of traditional knowledge and experience within local cultures which must provide a significant basis for the evolution of future management policies and planning actions;
- (b) provide the means for local people who maintain ecologically sound practices to play a primary role in all stages of development in the area they identify with, so that they can participate and benefit directly, in a manner which is consistent with their values, time frames and decision-making processes;
- (c) seek continuous support of these local people in shaping and implementing conservation strategies, programmes and plans, in order to considerably increase conventional conservation potentials for achieving the goals of the World Conservation Strategy; and
- (d) foster further research into the ecology of traditional life styles.