

2.37 Support for environmental defenders

UNDERSTANDING that the participation of non-governmental organizations and individual advocates is essential to the fundamentals of civil society to assure the accountability of governments and multinational corporations;

RECOGNIZING that grassroots organizing and environmental advocacy are often viewed as politically threatening activities and can thus be dangerous and sometimes life-threatening;

CONCERNED that human rights violations may lead to environmental degradation and that environmental degradation may lead to human rights violations;

REALIZING that citizen organizations have an important role in making the public more aware of questions relating to environmental protection and ecologically sustainable development issues through activities such as education, training, and research; and

AWARE that a nation's environment is only truly protected when concerned citizens are involved in the process;

The World Conservation Congress at its 2nd Session in Amman, Jordan, 4–11 October 2000:

1. RECOGNIZES and affirms the importance of grassroots environmental organizing and action;
2. APPRECIATES the concerns raised, by both environmental and human rights organizations, that environmental advocates are increasingly in danger for exercising the basic rights of a civil society, including the rights of freedom of opinion, expression, and assembly;
3. FURTHER RECOGNIZES that for the purposes of protecting the environment, promoting ecologically sustainable development, and protecting the rights of persons affected by environmental harm, everyone has the right, in accordance with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, individually and in association with others, at the local, national and international levels to:
 - (a) meet or assemble peacefully;
 - (b) form, join, and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations, or groups;
 - (c) communicate with non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations;
 - (d) participate actively, freely, and meaningfully in environmental decision-making activities and processes that may have an impact on the environment or ecologically sustainable development; and
 - (e) submit to governmental bodies and agencies and organizations concerned with environmental affairs, criticism, proposals for improving their functioning, and proposals for environmental law reform, and to draw attention to any aspect of their work which

may hinder or impede the protection of the environment or the promotion of sustainable development;

4. CALLS ON the Director General to speak out publicly and forcefully:
 - (a) in support of freedom for individuals to participate in grassroots environmental activities as articulated in paragraph 3;
 - (b) in support of environmental advocates who are suffering harassment or persecution; and
 - (c) to discourage harassment or persecution of environmental advocates and environmental organizations using all appropriate means;
5. ENCOURAGES members to inform the Director General of instances of threats, harassment, or persecution of environmental advocates;
6. CALLS ON the Council to regularly publish in member mailings the names of those individuals or communities whose harassment or persecution has been brought to the attention of the Director General.