

2.57 Preparation and adoption of guidelines for oil, gas and mineral exploration and exploitation in arid and semi-arid zones

RECALLING that Resolution 19.1 *The Strategy of IUCN – The World Conservation Union*, which was adopted by the 19th Session of the IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994), describes IUCN, its mission, objectives, and the content of the programme;

ALSO RECALLING that Recommendation 1.74 *Combating Desertification*, adopted by the 1st Session of the World Conservation Congress (Montreal, 1996), calls upon States to support the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), notably through allocation of the required means for the implementation of national, regional, or sub-regional action plans;

REMEMBERING the global consensus achieved at and after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) on environmental and development issues and the international legal principles, notably the precautionary principle, principle of preventive action, and the principle that the polluter pays, which underlie sustainable development and accountability;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the *World Conservation Strategy* (WCS) and *Caring for the Earth* describe requirements for maintaining environmental balance and needs for survival of biodiversity in arid and semi-arid zones;

NOTING that arid and semi-arid areas are sites for a wide range of production activities, notably mineral exploration and exploitation, which are useful for growth and development in these areas;

FURTHER NOTING that because of their impacts and scope, oil, gas, and mineral exploration and exploitation activities disrupt and pollute (e.g. physical, geophysical, chemical impacts) and therefore constitute threats to soils, species, human settlements, water quality, and climate in arid and semi-arid zones;

ACKNOWLEDGING therefore, the urgent need to define and adopt clear and comprehensive guidelines setting the conditions under which oil, gas, and mineral exploration and exploitation activities could be conveniently pursued in a manner enabling conservation of the environment and economic development in general in these zones;

BEARING IN MIND the important initiatives undertaken by States and in the private sector, notably through environmental impact studies, legislative reforms, gradual tailoring of technologies and tools to take account of specific needs in concerned zones or spaces, and adoption of guides and standards of reference, including definition of restoration and/or compensation measures, and the adoption of technology and tools taking into account the extreme sensitivity of those areas;

CONSIDERING the extreme fragility of ecosystems in arid, semi-arid, and sub-humid zones and the adverse effects from degradation of these environments on biodiversity, rural economies, and the social life of people living in and near these sites, if appropriate measures are not taken in a timely manner;

BELIEVING that adoption of guidelines, notably within the framework of the CCD, would help to strengthen the capacity and increase the willingness of States, civil society, and the private sector to make arrangements that are environment-friendly and conducive to the equitable distribution of the benefits from oil, gas, and mineral exploration and exploitation, which can contribute to economic development in these zones; and

ALSO BELIEVING that better coordination, lobbying, and innovation would help in the short term to put in place frameworks and procedures that would improve the role and contribution of the oil, gas, and mining industries in the prevention and management of environmental risks, while facilitating optimal development in arid and semi-arid zones;

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

1. REAFFIRMS IUCN's support of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) for continuing the development and adoption of appropriate guidelines aimed at governing oil, gas, and mineral exploration and exploitation in arid and semi-arid zones as a specific contribution to the implementation of the CCD;
2. STRONGLY URGES that all relevant parties, notably States, relevant United Nations agencies and the private sector, are given increased opportunities to contribute to the development and dissemination of these guidelines as programming, negotiation, control, and monitoring tools required for oil, gas, and mineral exploration and exploitation in arid and semi-arid zones;
3. REQUESTS the Director General and Chairs of Commissions to provide special assistance for the development and adoption of these guidelines.