

### **Advancing Boreal Forest Conservation**

RECOGNISING that Canada and Russia contain most of the world's boreal forest regions which encircle the northern part of the globe, storing more freshwater in wetlands and lakes and more carbon in its trees, soil and peat than any other terrestrial ecosystems;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that the remaining original forests, primarily boreal forests in Canada and Russia, contain high conservation value examples of ecological processes such as predator-prey, fire and hydrological cycles;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that boreal forest regions are home to a rich array of wildlife such as bears, wolves, wolverines and the world's largest caribou herds, and are also the breeding grounds for migratory bird species including significant percentages of land birds and waterfowl;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that boreal forest regions are an important cultural landscape, home to thousands of indigenous peoples that hold deeply rooted spiritual and cultural relationships to their lands, waters, and creatures, and whose cultures, spirituality, and economic well-being and renewal are inextricably linked to the continuing health of the boreal forest ecosystems and many of which rely primarily on the forest for their livelihood and cultural survival;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that the opportunity for large scale conservation will differ based on current development levels and that unallocated public lands provide a unique opportunity to plan for conservation;

NOTING that much of the boreal forest regions is publicly owned;

FURTHER NOTING that governments, indigenous communities, local communities and civil society organizations have contributed significantly to global forest conservation, including boreal forest conservation, through the development of progressive and knowledge-based sustainable forest management policies and practices, resulting notably in: the Forest Principles endorsed at UNCED (1992); the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests (1995); the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management, and related local level indicators; the IUCN's own Temperate and Boreal Forest Programme established through Resolution 1.1.9 (Montreal, 1996); the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests; the forest programme of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity (2002); the Canadian and International Model Forest Networks; national forestry programs, such as Canada's national sustainable forest strategies; the Canadian Boreal Forest Conservation Framework (2003); Russia's directive on the creation of nature reserves and national parks for the years 2001-2010, as well as through national and sub-

national sustainable forest management policies, legislation and practices, augmented by parks expansion and protected area strategies, developed with and often prompted further by the participation of indigenous peoples and civil society;

CONSIDERING that there is a process in place for the nomination of World Heritage Sites and that Russia and Canada co-chaired an IUCN-UNESCO workshop held in St Petersburg, Russia in October 2003 to consider potential boreal forest World Heritage Sites;

RECALLING the 2001 UNEP document, *An Assessment of the Status of the World's Remaining Closed Forests* that proposes governments should protect remaining closed forest areas, establish new protected areas and rigorously scrutinize any new roads and dams;

AWARE that scientists are finding that large scale conservation in landscapes in and outside of protected areas, through the establishment of protected areas as benchmarks, as well as the use of environmentally sustainable practices where industrial development does take place, are critical to maintain present ecological values and services in boreal forest regions;

CONCERNED that boreal forest regions are subject to the cumulative impacts of forestry operations, agriculture, oil and gas exploration and development, mining and hydropower development, recreation, tourism, roads and other industry uses;

AND RECOGNISING that new industrial development in forests must proceed with adequate local and indigenous community participation and ecosystem-based planning;

The World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17-25 November 2004:

URGES Canada and Russia to:

- recognize, preserve and protect ecological processes through which the overall health of boreal forest regions have been sustained, using community-based and ecosystem-based land use planning, especially before tenure allocation, to maintain forest health, structure, ecological functions, compositions and biodiversity, carbon reservoirs, and indigenous cultural values over the long term;
- initiate restoration standards for those boreal forest areas that have been impacted by industrial activity;
- acknowledge and respect the role of indigenous peoples in achieving conservation goals while respecting their traditional land management regimes and knowledge, in all conservation efforts;
- involve communities in ecologically-based land use planning utilizing scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and public perspectives to help achieve the conservation of natural and cultural values of forest regions;

- create and strengthen partnerships integrating indigenous and non-indigenous ecological knowledge for land management and protection;
- ensure the conservation of boreal forest regions by enhancing and expanding protected areas, establishing new protected areas, and through the enforcement of sustainable land use practices in all areas;
- encourage the effective management of boreal forests and their protected areas through cooperation and communication amongst land managers and civil society;
- ensure future conservation options, by having community and ecosystem land use planning precede the allocation of forestry, oil and gas development, mineral development, hydroelectric development licenses or other industry uses, and new roads;
- support the development and adoption of innovative policies and practices in support of boreal conservation, including but not limited to fiscal reform;
- document trends in the above through public reporting using criteria and indicators of sustainable management;
- facilitate and continue to fund needed scientific, technical, indigenous and local community activity to assist in the nomination and designation of boreal forest regions as recognized international sites, for example, World Heritage Sites such as the indigenous led Atikaki/Woodland Caribou/Accord First Nations –Manitoba and Ontario, recently placed on Canada’s Tentative List for World Heritage Sites, as well as the discussed trans-boundary World Heritage Site Green Belt of Fennoscandia; and
- co-operate and exchange information with other boreal forest region nations concerning forest conservation.