RESOLUTION 12

Protecting the Sámi Forest: Safeguarding Biodiversity and Indigenous Livelihoods

WHEREAS:

The Boreal Forest is a complex and incredibly valuable ecosystem that supports a wide range of life forms. Covering 68% of Sweden's land area, and encompassing four countries, it is one of the earth's most extensive forested regions. The Boreal Forest is the world's second largest above ground carbon sink, containing 22% of the carbon stored on Earth's land surface. Thus, the conservation of Sápmi is essential for its ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The Boreal Forest is also a vital habitat for a unique ecosystem. It is home to the Arctic reindeer, a keystone species crucial for the ecological health of the entire region. The forest also supports an estimated 1,600 species of lichen, which are highly sensitive to ecological changes (once degraded, some species regrow as slowly as 1 millimeter per year); these lichen are also an indispensable, and increasingly rare, food source for the Arctic reindeer.

Sápmi, the homeland of the Sámi people, is a vast land mass where the Boreal Forest covers 62% of the land. The Sámi culture is deeply intertwined with the survival and health of the reindeer, as Sámi food, clothing, language, handicrafts, and tradition all depend on their existence. The decline of the forest, and thus the reindeer population, poses a serious threat to the Sámi way of life.

Despite its ecological significance, Sweden's old-growth boreal forests are being lost at an alarming rate of 1.4% per year (70% over the last 60 years), a rate higher than the Amazon rainforest. Between 2003 and 2019, nearly a quarter of Sweden's remaining old-growth forests were lost. This rate of deforestation poses a significant threat to the ecosystem's integrity and the sustainability of its carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and resilience to threats posed by climate change. Rapid rates of clear cutting and forest degradation also place the Sámi way of life at significant risk, as the decline in lichen-abundant forest land threatens the food security of reindeer populations, which are crucial to the Sámi culture and traditional subsistence living.

THEREFORE:

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the Boreal Forest, and to maintain the ecological and cultural integrity of the forest in Sámi lands, it is imperative to adopt practices and conservation efforts that prioritize the protection of Sápmi and elevate Sámi voices.

Recognizing the Sámi people's traditional knowledge and practices is crucial for sustainable forest management, as the reindeer herding practices of the Sámi people have historically contributed to the health and resilience of the Boreal Forest,

The delegates to the 12th World Wilderness Congress (WILD12), convening in He Sapa, the Black Hills of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate are hereby

RESOLVED:

A. To mobilize public support and influence legislation to ban clear-cutting of forests, protecting the ecological integrity of ecosystems in Sápmi.
B. To call upon the public and all countries to support sustainable forestry practices that maintain the ecological integrity of the Boreal Forests in Sápmi to develop and implement strategies to ensure the protection of reindeer habitats, lichen growth, and the survival of Sámi cultural practices.
C. To work directly with Sámi communities in restoring degraded forests in ways that protect reindeer habitats and promote lichen growth, shifting from consumption-based replanting to long-term restoration of habitat.
D. To advocate for public dialogue and education to teach younger generations to respect and integrate Sámi traditional knowledge and practices.
E. To ensure that the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is upheld by all relevant actors and that Sámi communities are actively involved in local and global conservation efforts.
F. To advocate for monetary support to affected communities to meet the needs for the restoration of lichen-abundant forests and other vital habitats, supporting the food security of reindeer populations as well as the cultural integrity and economic well-being of the Sámi people.

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