
Brazil: NGOs oppose WWF-World Bank's 10% Campaign

We, the undersigned Non-Governmental Organizations, wish to express our concern with both the content and the potential consequences of the campaign lead by the WWF International, and supported by both the World Bank and the Brazilian Government, to protect some ten percent of the Amazon region through the establishment of environmental conservation areas of indirect use.

We do not oppose the creation of new conservation areas of indirect use. On the contrary, we consider the system of protected areas currently in existence as insufficient to protect the Brazilian ecosystem, both in terms of overall size, and in the variety of environmental systems being protected, with respect to the Amazon as well as to other regions.

We do support the creation of new reserves in the entire country, specifically in those areas that have been indicated as priorities for the conservation of biodiversity. But these new reserves should encompass a broad mosaic of protected areas, including extractive reserves which take into account the rights of traditional populations.

In addition, we consider that the quantitative goal of this campaign--ten percent before the year 2000--as randomly chosen, inadequate, and ignorant to the reality of Brazil. For the effective protection of the Amazon--85 percent of which survives today--ten percent is an unacceptable goal. On the other hand, ten percent is most probably excessive for the exclusive creation of areas of indirect use, when there are as yet no studies or dependable data to answer the question of the availability of such a large amount of land without the presence of indigenous populations or extractivists.

We also do not understand the selection of the year 2000 as a deadline, considering that currently less than four percent of the Amazon is reserved for conservation areas of indirect use, and a major part of that has only been formed on paper. In fact, the presence of traditional populations can be found in most of these areas, including 10 parks and reserves, covering more than three million hectares, which have been superimposed on 12 pre-existing indigenous territories.

The plan to create, in two years, twice as many reserves as have been created in all the years to date, means a great risk of creating more paper parks, existing in name only. And without studies to indicate priority areas, or areas which would most benefit from this type of protection, there are the added risks of incorporating lands occupied by traditional populations, and thus intensifying the conflicts that already exist among these populations and IBAMA (Brazilian Environmental Institute).

Moreover, we understand that the protection of the Amazon depends upon defined and articulated government policies, in actuality non-existent, which would allow for more than just the creation of areas of indirect use, and encourage the fundamental role that the traditional populations in reality exercise in this protection. The Brazilian government has not managed to finance the protected areas which already exist, and it is of common knowledge that, were it not for the resistance of these populations to the predatory behaviour of large estate owners, lumber companies, prospectors, and political forces (with some honourable exceptions), the Amazon today would be in an even worse

condition.

Meanwhile, these populations today live in miserable conditions, without access to consistent government support to develop their traditional economic activities, or even to guarantee minimum prices for their products, the making of which essentially depends on the continued existence of the forest.

We would also like to express our surprise with the fact that this campaign does not taken into consideration other regions, some of which are even more fragile, and have been more devastated, than the Amazon forest. For example, the Mata Atlantica, which is of enormous importance in terms of biodiversity, has been reduced to less than seven percent of its original size, while the regions of Caatinga and Cerrado are being converted with increasing rapidity into soybean plantations and cattle ranges.

Moreover, we are surprised at the failure of this campaign to consider efforts already underway, such as the organization of the Amazon Workshop, as a part of Probio [The Protection Fund for Biodiversity], lead by a consortium of Brazilian NGOs. The Workshop has been contracted for one year by the Brazilian government with the purpose, by means of a participatory process, of gathering information and creating alternative suggestions for public conservation policy, including the selection of potential areas for the establishment of new conservation areas of both direct and indirect use.

And finally, we, the undersigned organizations, propose that the Brazilian Government, the World Bank, the World Wildlife Fund, and all concerned organizations, combine forces for the successful realization of the Amazon Workshop. It may be hoped that in this way the Workshop will result in the establishment of collective goals, well-defined, comprehensive regional policies, and mobilization campaigns, which effectively balance the conservation of biodiversity in the Amazon with the respect for the rights of the populations that inhabit it, and with the goal of sustainable development in the country as a whole.

Brasilia, 1 July 1998.- Brazilian NGO and Social Movements Forum for Development and Environment (Forum Brasileiro de ONGs), Rubber-tappers Nacional Council (CNS), Amazon Working Group (GTA), Brazil Network on Multilateral Financial Institutions (Rede Brasil)

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