COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RESOLUTION (76) 17

ON THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF BIOGENETIC RESERVES

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15 March 1976 at the 255th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers,

Having regard to the recommendation of the European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Vienna from 28 to 30 March 1973, concerning the preparation "of a programme for the establishment of a European network of reserves (including frontier areas, where necessary) to conserve representative examples of European flora, fauna and natural areas" (Resolution No. 2, point 3) ;

Noting that, despite the efforts made by member states in recent years to protect flora, fauna and their habitats, the effects of human activities on the natural environment are becoming more and more pronounced,

I. Recommends that the governments of member states consider creating a European network of biogenetic reserves and, for that purpose, designate biogenetic reserves in their territory, bearing in mind the concepts, objectives and principles set forth in the annex to this resolution ;

II. Asks the governments of member states to notify the Secretary General of the reserves they have designated in accordance with the recommendation in point I ;

III. Resolves to assign to the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources the task of drawing up proposals concerning the procedural and institutional aspects of the establishment of the European network of biogenetic reserves, bearing in mind :

a. the possibility of including transfrontier habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems in this network, on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements to be concluded between the states concerned ;

b. the expediency of indicating the location of the biogenetic reserves at appropriate places and by appropriate means ;

c. the need to arrange for co-operation between the relevant national and local organisations and the Council of Europe bodies concerned ;

d. the fact that the European network should constitute a contribution to Unesco's worldwide network of biosphere reserves.

ANNEX

I. CONCEPTS

1. **Biogenetic reserve** means a protected area enjoying legal status and characterised by one or more typical, unique, endangered or rare habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems ;

2. **Habitat** means a biological and physico-chemical site constituting the environment of the individuals of one or more species in a given place and permitting their proper development ;

3. **Biocenosis** means a balanced community of plants and animals inhabiting a given environment and their interaction ;

4. **Ecosystem** means a characteristic whole comprising a number of biocenoses.

II. PRINCIPAL PURPOSES OF A BIOGENETIC RESERVE

1. To guarantee the biological balance and hence the conservation, potential, genetic diversity and representativeness of the various types of habitat, biocenosis and ecosystem as being essential to :

— ensuring their survival and evolution for the benefit of future generations ;

— the new genetic combinations on which biological evolution depends ;

— maintaining our life-support systems ;

— serve as reproduction stocks available for transport to degraded areas which it is hoped to restore by their reintroduction ;

2. To make the ecosystems of the biogenetic reserves available for biological research with a view to :

— defining ecological interactions more accurately ;

— enabling scientific plans to be prepared for the proper protection and management of ecosystems ;

— enabling specialists to be trained and kept informed ;

— enabling the public to be instructed and as fully informed as possible.

III. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING BIOGENETIC RESERVES

Principle 1

The main purpose of a biogenetic reserve is to preserve the biological balance and ensure the effective conservation of one or more terrestrial or aquatic habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems, which may be characterised by the criteria given below (Principle 5).

Principle 2

A biogenetic reserve must enjoy legal status ensuring effective long-term protection of the habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems. The methods of protection may differ but must conform to the criteria mentioned in Principle 6. Thus biogenetic reserves should correspond as far as possible to categories A and B of the terminology for protected areas in Europe (Resolution (73) 30 of the Committee of Ministers).

Principle 3

The size of a biogenetic reserve is not subject to any limit. It should, however, be such as to ensure the long-term viability of habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems.

Wherever possible, a biogenetic reserve should be surrounded by a buffer zone.

Principle 4

The environment in a biogenetic reserve must be natural. However, it may have been altered by man to some extent, though it should not have suffered any serious deterioration.

The environment should therefore be left to evolve naturally, subject to the possibility of human intervention to keep the environment to be protected in its characteristic state or to restore it.

Principle 5

A reserve should satisfy at least one of the following criteria :

1. **Typical**

There must be specimens of flora and fauna which together constitute the typical aspects of a given region. Thus it may be a matter of conserving a habitat, biocenosis or ecosystem typical of one country only

or of Europe. A typical habitat, biocenosis or ecosystem may be widespread nationally or even regionally but seldom found elsewhere in Europe. The converse may also apply.

2. **Unique**

A unique habitat, biocenosis or ecosystem is characterised by a specific feature which distinguishes it from the habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems of which it is a part. Its uniqueness may lie partly in some special evolution due to biogeographical factors, to limited geographical distribution etc.

3. **Rare**

Rare habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems are of great importance for the biogenetic reserves. They may be rare nationally but not necessarily in the rest of Europe, or vice versa. They are often characterised by typical or unique features.

4. **Endangered**

As the conservation of habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems is a primary purpose of the biogenetic reserves, the danger factor is of great importance, especially if the environment is a fragile one. They may be in danger in one country but not in another.

Principle 6

Because the conservation of the habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems in a biogenetic reserve is so important, the following management rules should be observed by the responsible authorities :

— any action liable to impair the environment must be avoided ;

— effective long-term protective measures must be taken to maintain and, if possible, enhance the potential and the diversity of the habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems ;

— management must conform to ecological principles :

a. the traditional or any new human activities must be regulated or prohibited if necessary ;

b. public access must be regulated or prohibited according to the ecological fragility of the reserve.

Principle 7

Several habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems of each type should be designated for a biogenetic network. The total number required will vary with the type of network. Each country should make an inventory of the different types of habitat, biocenosis or ecosystem. A list of these priority environments should be established as soon as possible so that the rarest and most endangered may be preserved and designated for the creation of a biogenetic network.

Principle 8

It is essential that national and international research programmes should be prepared for this sector and that interdisciplinary field research should be carried out in the biogenetic reserve in order to achieve the above-mentioned purposes.

Principle 9

Some results obtained from the research should be incorporated into information, education and training programmes. Appropriate information and instruction for the public should be provided in the biogenetic reserves or in the buffer zones.