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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA
OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

DRAFT WORLD CHARTER FOR NATURE

Letter dated 2 June 1980 from the Permanent Representative
of Zaire to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-
General

In accordance with the statement made by the Commissioner of State for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, 1/ the Republic of Zaire proposes the inclusion in the agenda of the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly of an item entitled "Draft World Charter for Nature".

To this end, I have the honour to transmit, annexed hereto, the French and English texts of the draft World Charter for Nature, together with an introductory note. The entire philosophy of the document is based upon the idea that all human conduct affecting nature must be guided and judged. In submitting this proposal, the Republic of Zaire is prompted by the following considerations:

1. Life depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems which ensure the supply of energy and nutrients.
2. Life on earth is part of nature. Mankind has evolved from the same origins as other forms of life, and lives in constant interaction with them and the physical elements of the environment.
3. Civilization is rooted in nature; nature has shaped human culture and influences all artistic and scientific achievement. Living in harmony with nature gives man his best opportunities for creativity, rest and recreation.
4. Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its present worth to man. To accord other organisms such recognition, man requires a moral code of action, which takes into account the control of deleterious organisms.

1/ A/34/PV.19, pp. 92-95.

5. Benefits from nature depend upon the maintenance of natural processes and the diversity of life forms, which are jeopardized through excessive exploitation and habitat destruction by man.

6. Man can alter nature and exhaust natural resources by wilful action or its consequences. Therefore man must fully recognize the urgency of maintaining the stability and quality of nature and of conserving natural resources.

7. Failure to conserve natural systems due to excessive consumption and misuse of resources leads to the breakdown of the economic, social and political framework of civilization. Competition for scarce resources creates conflicts among States. Thus, the conservation of nature and natural resources contributes to the maintenance of peace.

8. Man must acquire the knowledge to maintain and enhance his ability to use resources in a manner which benefits present and future generations without lasting injury to nature. Man can be in harmony with nature if the human community acts as a steward for nature in the interests of future generations.

The draft World Charter for Nature sets forth principles for conservation.

The constructive consideration of this proposal and the adoption of an appropriate decision will contribute to the harmonious development of mankind and to the maintenance of peace in the world.

I request you to accord this letter and the annexed introductory note the status of an explanatory memorandum under rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and to circulate the attached texts as official documents of the General Assembly.

(Signed) KAMANDA wa KAMANDA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Zaire

ANNEX I

Introductory note

1. Realizing the growing importance of nature conservation throughout the world and particularly in Africa and the third world, the Republic of Zaire has increased the number of its nature reserves to seven national parks, which today cover 7,710 km² of national territory.
2. The difficulties inherent in managing such areas, both in Zaire and elsewhere, led the Republic of Zaire to envisage more effective conservation methods and principles which could be universally applicable.
3. In September 1975, when the twelfth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) was meeting in Kinshasa, the President of the Republic of Zaire proposed to IUCN that it draw up a world nature charter based on the idea that all human conduct affecting nature must be guided and judged. Such a charter would amount to a code of conduct for managing nature and natural resources.
4. IUCN, convinced of the wisdom of this proposal and using it as a basis, issued a recommendation calling on Governments and international organizations to take an interest in the charter in order to expedite its preparation.
5. In this connexion, the Executive Council of IUCN requested the Chairman of the IUCN Commission on Environmental Policy, Law and Administration to appoint an international group of experts to draw up a draft charter and submit it to the IUCN General Assembly at Ashkhabad (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) in September 1978.
6. The first draft of the charter was presented in 1977, in Geneva, when the statutes of IUCN were being revised. After consideration and further elaboration, the draft was submitted to the thirteenth General Assembly of IUCN, at Ashkhabad, for member States' views and suggestions.
7. The positive contribution made by member States enabled the ad hoc working group of IUCN and Zairian experts to prepare the text of the present draft World Charter for Nature in July 1979. In August 1979, the IUCN President, Mr. Kassas of Egypt, and the Chairman of the expert drafting group, Mr. Bourhenne of the Federal Republic of Germany, presented the final text to the President of Zaire, who had proposed its preparation.
8. In preparing the draft World Charter for Nature, full account was taken of the few existing documents on the subject, dealing with the problems of managing natural resources. We should mention in particular the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the OAU African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the Washington Convention, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Stockholm

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Declaration on the Environment, and disarmament treaties and agreements such as SALT I and SALT II. Account was also taken of religious and philosophical views on the subject.

9. As a result, the text of the draft World Charter for Nature should not prove controversial from a technical standpoint. The Republic of Zaire is taking it upon itself to submit this draft for approval by the United Nations General Assembly.

10. We would hope that Member States will give constructive consideration to this very important question and to the draft World Charter for Nature and that, on the basis of their observations, the Secretary-General of the United Nations will, with the assistance of a group of experts, make final recommendations for the adoption of the World Charter for Nature at the thirty-sixth regular session of the General Assembly.

ANNEX II

Draft World Charter for Nature

PREAMBLE

Life on earth is part of nature. Mankind has evolved from the same origins as other forms of life, and lives in constant interaction with them and the physical elements of the environment.

Life depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems which ensure the supply of energy and nutrients.

Civilization is rooted in nature; nature has shaped human culture and influences all artistic and scientific achievement. Living in harmony with nature gives man his best opportunities for creativity, rest and recreation.

Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its present worth to man. To accord other organisms such recognition, man requires a moral code of action, which takes into account the control of deleterious organisms.

Man can alter nature and exhaust natural resources by wilful action or its consequences. Therefore man must fully recognize the urgency of maintaining the stability and quality of nature and of conserving natural resources.

Benefits from nature depend upon the maintenance of natural processes and the diversity of life forms, which are jeopardized through excessive exploitation and habitat destruction by man.

Failure to conserve natural systems due to excessive consumption and misuse of resources leads to the breakdown of the economic, social and political framework of civilization. Competition for scarce resources creates conflicts among States. Thus, the conservation of nature and natural resources contributes to the maintenance of peace.

Man must acquire the knowledge to maintain and enhance his ability to use resources in a manner which benefits present and future generations without lasting injury to nature. Man can be in harmony with nature if the human community acts as a steward for nature in the interests of future generations.

To this end this World Charter for Nature is proclaimed and the following principles of conservation established as the common standard by which all human conduct affecting nature is to be guided and judged.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Nature shall be respected and its essential processes shall not be disrupted.
2. The continued existence of all forms of life shall not be compromised; the population levels of all species must be at least sufficient for their survival and to this end necessary habitats shall be maintained.
3. All areas shall be subject to the principles of conservation; special protection shall be given to unique areas, representative samples of all ecosystems and the habitats of rare and endangered species.
4. Ecosystems and organisms which are utilized by man shall be managed to achieve and maintain optimum sustainable productivity, but not in such a way as to endanger the integrity of the ecosystems and organisms with which they coexist.
5. Nature shall be secured against degradation caused by warfare or other hostile activities.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

6. In the decision-making process it shall be recognized that man's needs can be met only by ensuring the proper functioning of natural systems, and by acting in accordance with the principles of this Charter.
7. The growth and concentrations of human populations shall be correlated with the capacity of natural systems to sustain them.
8. Natural resources shall not be wasted, but used with a restraint appropriate to the principles of conservation.
9. Allocation of areas by man to various uses shall be planned, paying regard to their physical constraints, biological productivity and diversity and their natural beauty.
10. The use of natural resources shall be as follows:
 - (a) Living resources shall not be utilized in excess of their natural powers of regeneration;
 - (b) Resources, including water, which are not consumed as they are used shall be reused or recycled;
 - (c) Non-renewable resources which are consumed as they are used shall be exploited with restraint according to their abundance, the efficiency with which they can be converted to use, and the compatibility of their development with the functioning of natural systems; and

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(d) The productivity of soils shall be maintained or enhanced through measures which safeguard their continuing fertility and the processes of organic decomposition, and prevent erosion and other forms of degradation.

11. Activities which might have an impact on nature shall be controlled and in particular:

(a) Activities which may cause irreversible damage to nature shall be avoided;

(b) Activities which pose a high risk to nature shall be preceded by an exhaustive examination of that risk; their proponents shall demonstrate that expected benefits outweigh potential damage to nature, and where potential adverse effects are not fully understood, the activities should not proceed;

(c) Activities which may disturb nature shall be preceded by an assessment of their consequences, and, if to be undertaken, such activities shall be planned and carried out so as to minimize adverse effects; and

(d) Areas degraded by human activities shall be rehabilitated for purposes in accordance with their natural potential and compatible with human well-being in nearby settlements.

12. All discharge of pollutants into natural systems shall be avoided:

(a) Where this is not possible, such discharge shall be treated at the source using the best methods available; and

(b) Special precautions shall be taken to prevent discharge of radioactive or other toxic wastes.

13. Measures intended to prevent, control and mitigate natural disasters, infestations and diseases shall be specifically directed to the causes of these and avoid secondary effects in nature.

III. REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

14. The principles set forth in this Charter shall be reflected in the law of each State.

15. Knowledge of nature shall be broadly disseminated by all possible means, particularly by conservation education as an integral part of general education.

16. Conservation strategies, inventories of ecosystems and assessments of the effects on nature of proposed policies and developments shall be essential elements of planning; all of these should be disclosed to the public in time to permit effective consultation.

17. Funds, programmes and administrative structures necessary to achieve conservation objectives shall be provided.

18. Knowledge of nature shall be constantly increased by research and extended by the wide dissemination of information unimpeded by restrictions of any kind.

19. The status of habitats and species shall be monitored to enable early detection of degradation or threat and evaluation of conservation policies and methods.

20. Military activity damaging to nature shall be avoided, and in particular:

(a) Further development, testing and use of nuclear, biological, chemical or environmental modification methods of warfare shall be prohibited; and

(b) Protected areas, the Antarctic region and outer space shall be free of military activity.

21. States, governments, and all other public authorities and, as they are able, individuals, groups, and corporations shall:

(a) Co-operate in the conservation of nature and exchange relevant information;

(b) Ensure that activities within their jurisdictions or control do not cause damage to natural systems located within other States or in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction;

(c) Implement the international legal provisions for conservation of nature and environmental protection;

(d) Establish standards for products and processes that may adversely affect nature; and

(e) Safeguard and conserve nature in areas beyond natural jurisdiction.

22. Each State shall give effect to the requirements of this Charter through all of its competent organs and in co-operation with other States.

23. All persons shall have the right to participate, singly or with others, in the formulation of decisions which directly concern their environment and shall have access to means of redress when their environment has suffered damage or deterioration.

24. Each person has a duty to act in accordance with the requirements set forth in this Charter; acting alone or in groups and through the political process, each person shall strive to ensure that these principles, responsibilities and requirements are met.