



Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SECOND COMMITTEE

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HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR STATEMENT

- National strategies to achieve the MDGs, among other goals, must be dealt with as an integrated whole, rather than in isolation. For example, the sustainable use of natural resources is key to achieving the other MDGs, not just those related to environmental sustainability, e.g. goal number 7. Costa Rica is aware that protection, conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources are all necessary to achieve a high level of development.
- The sustainable use and conservation of natural resources concerns us all, and should not be treated as a luxury, in light of the serious deterioration that our ecosystems have suffered, as revealed in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and considering their ability to provide goods and services to all humankind, i.e. climate stabilization, soil protection, and protection of water resources, to mention just a few. In this respect, international cooperation and the exchange of successful experiences are of special importance.
- It is important to acknowledge the fundamental role of forests, which provide a variety of products as well as offer a wide array of services to society and humankind in general. The Kyoto Protocol recognizes just one of the multiple services provided by forests: carbon sequestration. Regrettably, clause 3.3 is restrictive. While it compensates those who reforest, it offers nothing for developing countries that protect their primary forests and prevent deforestation. It would appear that to obtain greater benefits from the Cleaner Development Mechanism, countries must deforest first. If we are truly concerned about the future of forests and the valuable services they provide, the International Community should provide adequate incentives.
- Costa Rica, Papua New Guinea, and other developing countries have together founded the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, with the ultimate goal of channeling funds obtained through the carbon and forest product markets to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. We are seeking compensation for environmental services provided by **all forests** and fair prices for forest products, so that those who live in the forests receive a greater percentage of the final price paid by end consumers abroad.

- The primary industry in Costa Rica is based on non-consumptive use of its biodiversity. This US\$1.5 billion industry is ecotourism. In other words, the non-destructive use of biodiversity leaves the country with its important resources. National parks, like any other ecosystem, provide important services to Costa Rican society, including the promotion of tourism. These services are valued at US\$837 million annually, or 5.5% of GNP. It comes as no surprise that for Costa Rica the sustainable use of our natural resources is a source of wealth. The country is also promoting community-based rural tourism, which contributes to the preservation of local traditions, supports the development of rural communities, and increases sources of income.
- However, the rational use of natural resources cannot be restricted to resources in our own countries. Nature has no boundaries and does not travel with a passport. Sustainable activities should include resources in the marine zones outside of our national jurisdiction, as they belong to all humanity. This is why Costa Rica is insisting on a moratorium – until a legal instrument is in place – on one of the most destructive practices for the marine ecosystem: **bottom fish trawling**.
- It is of extreme concern that every year many lives and resources are lost due to natural disasters. As part of the Central American region, which together with the Caribbean was categorized by the Sachs Report as the region with the highest mortality risk index due to natural disasters (earthquakes, landslides, flooding, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions), and obviously moved by the tragedies around the world in recent weeks, we assign great importance to the call made at the World Summit Outcome 2005 for full implementation of the outcomes of the Hyogo Declaration and Plan of Action (2005-2015), “in particular those commitments related to the assistance for developing countries that are prone to natural disasters”. For our countries, each disaster is a setback in achieving the MDGs and other national plans.
- We are pleased to note that the Kyoto Protocol finally entered into force at the beginning of this year, and we encourage all those who have not ratified it, to do so.
- In September 2005, Costa Rica had the honor of hosting the Second International Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production, as a follow up to the Marrakech Process, which emerged from Chapter III of JPOI. The meeting’s report will be presented during CSD 14.
- One of the elements that prevailed during the meeting’s discussions was the need to consider the “Cost of Inaction” when we define policies, since in many cases remediation can be more expensive than if the initial investment was made. The World Bank has done studies on the “Cost of Environmental Degradation”. This instrument is a very valuable decision-making tool that provides the basis for estimating the impact of environmental damage and the costs to restore the ecosystem. For example, huge investments in infrastructure to improve the quality of

water in many cities could be eliminated through integrated management of river basins, sustainable management of forests along the riverbanks, wastewater treatment, and better solid waste management. That is, the required investments are less costly in both financial and environmental terms if they are made at the beginning of the process, rather than at the end. For this to happen, international cooperation and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies are key.

- There were some innovative elements at this meeting, among them, the sale of “Clean Trip Certificates”. Participants on a voluntary basis, and through the use of a software to calculate carbon emissions during their flight from the departure city to Costa Rica, paid a symbolic amount of US\$5 per carbon ton. A participant flying from New York to Costa Rica paid US\$10 to “clean” his/her trip (2 tons of carbon), while a visitor from Germany paid US\$30 (6 tons), and someone from Indonesia paid US\$60 (12 tons). The purpose of this initiative is to recognize the CO₂ absorption services provided by Costa Rican forests. The money collected was deposited in a special FONAFIFO (National Financing Forestry Fund) account, which is the national agency responsible for developing national markets for the goods and services provided by forest ecosystems through the Payment for Environmental Services Program and other similar programs. With this program, more than 450,000 hectares of forests are being protected in Costa Rica (approximately 9% of the national territory). Some NGOs are using this system, and we believe that it is important for the UN to take on a leadership role.
- As a result of this successful initiative, we are developing a project with the Association of Travel Agencies of Costa Rica, airlines, Costa Rican Tourism Board, and others, to offer tourists the possibility to “clean” their trips.
- Costa Rica is aware of the need to promote energy efficiency and an increase in the use of renewable sources as a way to reduce carbon emissions and halt the threat of global warming. We have developed a legal framework that promotes the research and use of renewable sources that are environmentally friendly and lead to sustainable development. Seventy percent of the energy used by the country comes from fossil fuels, of which we are net importers. This makes us very vulnerable to variations in oil prices, which has a direct impact on our economy regardless of the reasons for the high prices.
- The country has researched the development of alternative renewable energy sources, i.e. biological fuels. Two of the main sources are biodiesel and ethanol, which can be produced from sugar cane or corn, both of which are grown in Central America. Currently, 17 of 58 mills in the region participate as co-generators of electricity, and 2 of them are located in Costa Rica.
- Electricity coverage within Costa Rica is currently at 97%. Ninety-nine percent of that electricity comes from renewable sources, i.e. 82% hydropower, 14% geothermal, and 3% wind. Only 1% is thermal (diesel). The country is making great efforts to double the production of wind power, and currently has the largest wind

plant in Latin America. The benefit of this energy source is that it does not require rivers to be diverted or cause deforestation, and it is a viable alternative in the summer when hydropower generation decreases because of the lack of rain. Additionally, the cost per kilowatt produced is on average 10 times lower than power produced by a thermal plant. Although the initial outlays required to start up a wind plant are higher than for a thermal plant, the social, environmental, and economic benefits are greater in the long term.

- As a result of a public-private partnership, Costa Rica also has a landfill that is currently producing biogas out of organic and agribusiness waste. In general, this kind of investment is both costly and risky, which is why the Clean Development Mechanism presents a series of financing opportunities. The transfer of technology under favorable terms likewise plays a key role.