



Society for Conservation Biology

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THAT THE PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL VETO THE AMENDMENTS TO THE BRAZILIAN FOREST CODE (4771/1965)

Whereas, Brazil is a megadiverse country and supports globally important ecosystems, such as Amazon moist, dry and flooded forests, Atlantic Forest, Cerrado, Caatinga, Pantanal, and the Southern Campos; and

Whereas, Brazilian ecosystems provide vital ecosystem services to Brazilians in particular and humanity in general, including climate and hydrological cycle regulation, carbon up-take and storage, clean-water provision, pollutant degradation, crop pollination, and myriad remedies and medicines, among others; and

Whereas, Brazil has established a large number of biological reserves and other conservation units and has made significant progress in reducing deforestation rates and habitat loss in recent years; and

Whereas, enforcement of the current Brazilian Forest Code (4771/1965) has played a key role in regulating land use on private and public properties, and has helped to maintain landscape connectivity for plant and animal populations and protect vital ecosystem services; and

Whereas, agricultural scientists have developed new ways to improve productivity that could be applied to the vast areas of land already dedicated to agricultural and ranching activities in Brazil, thereby greatly reducing the pressures to clear new lands; and

Whereas, the occupation of new natural areas cannot be considered urgent given that a large expanse of land, totaling some 330 million hectares (38.7% of the national territory), is already occupied by rural activities¹ and

Whereas, productivity gains on the 158.8 million hectares of land currently used for cattle grazing – which has an inefficient mean stocking rate of just 1.1 animals per hectare – could allow substantial gains in cattle production without further land conversion¹; and

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Whereas, large expanses of natural lands in Brazil, totaling some 83 million hectares, are already being irregularly occupied¹, raising the prospect that a weakening of the Forest Code could lead to further irregular or illegal land colonization and occupation; and

Whereas, Brazil was a leading negotiator of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the host of the UN Conference on Environment and Development where the conventions on biodiversity and climate were signed by nearly every nation on earth, along with Agenda 21 and its precautionary principle; and

Whereas, Brazil will soon host the Rio+20 conference where the nations, major donors and multilateral organizations of the world are to rededicate themselves and their investments toward achieving the goals approved at the recent Nagoya and Durban Conferences, including increased protection and restoration of biologically diverse forests; and

Whereas, these agreements reached since 1992 together set out procedural and substantive duties that Brazil may fail to meet and indeed may undermine as it considers weakening its forest code to the detriment of Brazil herself and all nations of the world;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Society for Conservation Biology, the world's largest international scientific society devoted to advancing the science and practice of conserving Earth's biological diversity:

- 1) Urges the President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, to veto the amendments to the Brazilian Forest Code (1.876/99) recently passed by the Brazilian Senate; and
- 2) Respectfully requests the Brazilian government to reconsider the negative impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the long-term viability and sustainability of economic enterprises affected by the proposed amendments; and
- 3) Further recommends that the Brazilian government follow the well-considered sustainable development principles proposed by the Brazilian Academy of Science (ABC), the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC), and the Brazilian Association of Ecological Science and Conservation (ABECO), as well as the 2011 UN International Year of the Forest Declaration of the Society for Conservation Biology².

References

¹ Silva, J.A.A., Nobre, A.D., Manzatto, C.V., Joly, C.A., Rodrigues, R.R., Skorupa, L.A., Nobre, C.A. Ahrens, S., May, P.H., Sá, T.D.A., Cunha, M.C., Rech Filho, E.L., 2011. O Código Florestal e a Ciência: Contribuições para o Diálogo. Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência, São Paulo, Brazil, 124 pp.

² SCB Forest Declaration –

http://www.conbio.org/activities/policy/docs/SCB_Forest_Declaration_2011_International_Year_of_the_Forest_1.pdf

See also, SCB statement to the UNFCCC, available at –

www.conbio.org/activities/policy/docs/SCB_30Nov2009_ClimatePrinciples.pdf.