

## **2.72 Conservation of Dugong (*Dugong dugon*), Okinawa Woodpecker (*Sapheopipo noguchii*) and Okinawa Rail (*Gallirallus okinawae*) on and around Okinawa Island**

NOTING that the Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) is a globally threatened species (i.e. it is listed as 'vulnerable' under criterion A1 in the 2000 *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*);

FURTHER NOTING that a local population around Okinawa Island is also Endangered (under criteria CR D1 or CR C2b of the Mammalogical Society of Japan, 1997) and that this species has only been recorded along the coast of Okinawa Island in Japan over the past 30 years;

ALSO NOTING that the Dugong is listed under the US Endangered Species Act;

RECOGNIZING that year-round presence of Dugongs has so far only been confirmed on the east coast of middle and northern parts of Okinawa Island, thereby indicating the great importance of this small and isolated area of habitat for the conservation of Okinawa's Dugongs, whose numbers are also small;

UNDERSTANDING that options for a military airport for the US Marine Corps include a central part of the Dugong's habitat or an adjacent terrestrial area (a relocation site for the current Futenma Airport);

CONCERNED that if the construction of the airport is to be implemented in this area, it risks destruction of coral reefs and seagrass beds in the coastal area of Henoko, which are important resting and feeding areas for Dugongs, and may pose grave threats to the survival of the small, local population;

ENDORISING the recent decision of the Japanese Government to undertake voluntarily an Environmental Impact Assessment to determine the likely impact of construction on terrestrial and coastal habitats, including the coral reefs and seagrass beds on which the Dugong population depends for its survival;

NOTING that the subtropical forests of the Yambaru, in northern Okinawa, contain many endemic species and subspecies of international concern, such as Okinawa Woodpecker (*Sapheopipo noguchii*) (Critically Endangered, IUCN 2000) and Okinawa Rail (*Gallirallus okinawae*) (Endangered, IUCN 2000), and are therefore particularly important for conservation of biodiversity;

CONCERNED that the survival of many of these endemic species and subspecies in the Yambaru is threatened by dam building, construction of forestry roads, felling for timber, and introduced invasive species, all of which lead to habitat deterioration;

NOTING that a US military training site (US Marine Corps Jungle Warfare Training Centre), where developments and entry by civilians are banned, has acted as a wildlife refuge;

WELCOMING the decision that half of the US military training site will be returned to Japan in the near future and that there is a possibility of the Government of Japan designating this area as a Forest Ecosystems Protection Area and National Park;

CONCERNED that in the area remaining under US Marine Corps control, construction of seven military helipads and connecting roadways risks the deterioration of habitats of endemic species in the most important remaining area of natural forest; and

FURTHER CONCERNED that frequent military training in the area will cause disturbance to rare species such as the Okinawa Woodpecker and Okinawa Rail and increase the likelihood of their extinction;

The World Conservation Congress at its 2<sup>nd</sup> Session in Amman, Jordan, 4–11 October 2000:

1. URGES the Government of Japan to:
  - (a) complete as soon as possible the voluntary Environmental Impact Assessment relating to construction of military facilities in and around the habitat of the Dugong;
  - (b) implement as soon as possible Dugong conservation measures that will help stop further reduction of the population and help its recovery;
  - (c) prepare as soon as possible a biodiversity conservation plan for the endangered species of the Yambaru and Okinawa's Dugong population, and to conduct detailed studies of these species and their habitats; and
  - (d) consider nomination of the Yambaru as a World Heritage Site;
2. URGES the Government of the United States of America to cooperate with the voluntary Environmental Impact Assessment, as requested by the Government of Japan;
3. URGES the Governments of Japan and the United States of America to:
  - (a) take into account the findings of the voluntary Environmental Impact Assessment and on this basis to take appropriate measures to help ensure the survival of the Dugong population; and
  - (b) assess the environmental effects of the proposed construction of military facilities and training areas, taking into account the studies referred to in operative paragraph 1 (c) above, and on this basis take appropriate measures to help ensure the survival of the Okinawa Woodpecker and Okinawa Rail.

*This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. However, the delegation of the State member Japan did not associate itself with this adoption by consensus. State and Agency members United States abstained from the adoption by consensus of this Recommendation. The delegation of the State member Japan provided a formal Statement for the Record confirming that the Government of Japan had already set up policy guidance to avoid serious impacts on the natural environment as a result of the relocation of Futenma Airport. The Government of Japan had also initiated a preliminary assessment of the status of Dugong. The delegation of the United States made a formal Statement for the Record indicating support for a comprehensive and transparent environmental impact assessment*

*on the proposed Futenma relocation options, readiness to cooperate with the Government of Japan on such an assessment, and openness to dialogue with concerned NGOs. The Statements are reproduced in full in the Congress Proceedings.*