

Transboundary conservation emerges as an essential mechanism in tropical forests

A message from participants at the International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests, convened in Quito, Ecuador

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Introduction

Ecosystems do not recognize political boundaries. The rise of potentially devastating global problems such as climate change, water shortages and biodiversity loss means that transboundary cooperation in landscape and ecosystem management has become a necessary imperative.

Nowhere is such cooperation more important than in tropical forest ecosystems: they contain, inter alia, a large proportion of the carbon stored in terrestrial ecosystems, an estimated 80% of the world's terrestrial species and provide essential ecosystem services.

Increasingly, nations in Latin America, Africa and Asia are working together to establish new transboundary conservation areas (TBCAs). There are now dozens of examples of transboundary conservation initiatives in tropical forests covering more than 50 million hectares.

The Cordillera del Condor transboundary conservation initiative between Ecuador and Peru, for example, has helped to improve relationships between governments and Indigenous communities empowered local Indigenous communities to strengthen their cultural identity, renew cross-border family ties and seek new livelihood opportunities. It has also greatly improved the management of the area's important ecosystems.

Transboundary conservation can act as a catalyst for new approaches to governance in border areas, addressing power imbalances between national and subnational governments and local stakeholders. It can also increase peaceful cooperation in combating global and regional problems such as climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

In addition, TBCAs in tropical forests can help to:

- ☒ ensure the supply of drinking water and other critical ecosystem services
- ☒ reunite related communities separated by political borders
- ☒ strengthen the capacity of the main stakeholders, particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- ☒ control the illegal trade of forest products, including the smuggling of wildlife and timber
- ☒ resolve borderland political and cultural disputes
- ☒ provide opportunities for cross-border learning, information exchange and appreciate and recognition of the efforts of many Indigenous People and local communities.
- ☒ Resolve conflicts between economic sectors
- ☒ reduce poverty and increase human wellbeing, especially in marginal areas far from markets and centres of economic development
- ☒ mitigate natural disasters and reduce risks to societies posed by extreme environmental events
- ☒ create synergies between management agencies across borders
- ☒ sustain gene pools and provide vital health services to communities through sustaining habitats for medicinal plants..

The International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests,

Key lessons

Governance

There is no single approach to the governance of

- ☒ actively promote synergies between the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the UN Convention on Combating Desertification at the national and international level..
- ☒ where appropriate, invite armed forces to participate in dialogues on the development and management of TBCAs with a view to encouraging them to perceive a role in defending the environmental and cultural values of TBCAs and to respect the landscape connectivity functions of military zones.
- ☒ showcase the value of biodiversity conservation in TBCAs in achieving developmental objectives (e.g. poverty alleviation and employment generation) and climate-change adaptation and mitigation in order to make an economic case for tapping funding from a variety of sources.
- ☒ strengthen intersectorial, participatory planning and management mechanisms of transboundary tropical forests and the articulation and harmonization of public policies, and their implementation in shared ecosystems, and/or independent ecosystem.
- ☒ increase the capacity of TBCA´s to adapt climate change by improving management; exchanging data; technology transfer; and restoration of natural systems.
- ☒ work to convince policymakers and stakeholders of the importance powerful role that TBCAs can play in biodiversity conservation, transboundary cooperation, sustainable development and many other issues.
- ☒ promote TBCA champions to ensure the global recognition of TBCAs as models for the implementation of the CBD POWPA and as instruments for the strengthening the technical regional networks of protected areas.
- ☒ promote awareness and environmental education among all stakeholders, including local communities, in order to enhance understanding of government policies on forest and ecosystem management.
- ☒ pursue ‘certification of origin’ approaches for the forest goods and services produced in TBCAs

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- ☒ encourage cooperation with relevant international organizations in order to promote transparency over the allocation and management of international funds for conservation.
- ☒ ensure that the role of ecosystems and particularly TBAs in climate-change adaptation and mitigation are effectively enabled in the global post-2012 climate-change regime.
- ☒ ensure that transboundary conservation is promoted in all the programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- ☒ create enabling institutional architectures for resolving TBA related conflicts and issues,