

BIO-LEGISLATION AS A SOLUTION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN SOUTH AMERICA

Dr. L.E. Ruelas Lierena

United Nations Association Institute for Green Areas

Universidad Catolico de Santa Maria

Peru

It is important to consider that environmental problems cause hardship, are difficult to control and severely compromise our quality of life. The most important aspects of these problems are financial, medical and moral.

This paper focuses on the effects of deforestation, during the last decade. The problem is particularly serious in South America, where 6,800 ha have been felled, rendering the continent the most heavily deforested region in the world.

It is essential to develop International Regulation and Legislation in order to protect natural resources and areas of special importance. In addition, research has revealed that legal norms adopted have to be in accordance with the political, social, financial and cultural identity of the region. For this reason, environmental legislation developed in Europe, in different cultural and social conditions, has not been as effective in South America and has not been able to solve local environmental problems.

Environmental Problems

Humankind has perpetually benefited from the natural environment. Therefore, the only rational and intelligent option is to safeguard our planet from human-induced alterations to the environment and to take every possible action against the "cancer" of environmental pollution.

In this effort, it is necessary to take advantage of the existence of "positive" technology. Satellites have enabled us to observe and examine the earth from a distance and record important data on the Amazon Jungle, such as natural phenomena and volcanic eruptions. These events influence the entire planet and are of particular importance to the inhabitants of South America.

According to Dr. Proe Taylor, the world community has to realise that international legislation has not been effective in countering the lack of awareness of environmental problems in the population at large. And he concludes: "Nobody can protect nature alone. It is humanity as a whole that has to change, both at the individual and the collective level."

Drawing from Dr. Taylor's statement, we can stress that the world population needs to radically change its attitude toward the environment. And as far as legislation is concerned, it has to be in accordance with the social, cultural, political, religious and financial circumstances of specific regions and ecosystems.

Environmental Politics

In an attempt to find solutions to the environmental problems of South America, a conference was held in Quito, Ecuador, February 21 to 24, 1994, with the participation of delegations from Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Surinam, Venezuela and Peru. Parliamentarians and other specialists searched for the best ways of protecting biodiversity in the Amazon Jungle. They concluded that the only concrete and realistic plan was to join forces and co-operate on the conservation and protection of biological resources. Within this framework, the following outline and recommendations were developed:

- An Environmental Economy will guarantee the rights of future generations, so that they will not have to compensate for the environmental damage brought on by current polluters. Developed countries abusing natural resources, as well as countries pursuing economic development at the expense of others, are the major contributors to the environmental crisis. In order to attain an equilibrium with nature, it is essential to utilise renewable resources, at controllable rates, and to replace non-renewable resources with renewable ones.
- Environmental Education is becoming an essential element for sustainable development. In order for future generations to fully benefit from environmental education, it has to be directed at primary educational levels.
- A rational exploitation of natural resources is another element that can help achieve an environmental equilibrium.
- The implementation of an administrative plan for the introduction of taxation on natural resources can promote their preservation and

conservation.

- Violating international environmental legislation constitutes a detrimental action.
- Media and communications should broadcast information on environmental protection.
- In order to guarantee a better quality of life for the people of South America, ecological processes, preservation of genetic diversity and a sustainable utilisation of natural resources have to be maintained.

All of the above measures can help avoid future catastrophes, as well as imminent dangers, and can guarantee the survival of the human race.

Solving Environmental Problems in the Amazon Region

In order to solve environmental problems in the Amazon region, it is essential to put together a South American Commission, made up of two representatives from every country in the region. This Commission will be responsible for:

- environmental planning and/or systematisation
- determining consumption patterns in the Amazon Jungle and its outskirts
- evaluating and supervising the application of technology, in order to ensure compatibility with the region's profile and needs
- scientific projects for the protection of the Amazon region
- technological applications
- the rational exploitation of resources
- the protection South America's natural and cultural heritage
- the protection of biodiversity (the principal activity of the Commission)
- the utilisation and cost-assignment of non-renewable resources
- the valuation of non-quantifiable environmental goods
- environmental planning for the avoidance of natural disasters
- sanctions
- violations and offences