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**THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES (ICOMOS) DECLARES AMAZONIA A “MONUMENT OF NATURE”**

**Manaus (Brazil), 19 November, 2007** – In concluding a year of world-wide activities around the theme of "Cultural Landscapes and Monuments of Nature", members of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) met in Manaus, Brazil, and declared Amazonia as the First International Monument of Nature. ICOMOS, a world-wide non-governmental organization devoted to the protection and conservation of monuments and sites, is adviser of UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee.

"Over 200 years ago, Amazonia inspired the first use of the expression Monument of Nature by the famous explorer Alexander von Humboldt. Today, in a world concerned over global climate change or the loss of cultural diversity, Amazonia deserves the international recognition. The current interest observed worldwide for the cultural heritage, even in sites seen as exclusively natural, is bringing us to pay a very special homage to Amazonia, a vast area so essential to the World and its identity” said Prof. Dr Michael Petzet, the President of this international professional organisation.

Amazonia encompasses a large territory. It includes lands belonging to Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname and French Guyana. In Brazil, nine states constitute the Legal Amazonia (Amazonas, Pará, Amapá, Maranhao, Tocantins, Mato Grosso, Acre, Rondonia and Roraimá).

The meeting in Manaus was attended by experts from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, and Germany and its discussions took into consideration a vast array of experiences and perspectives, including the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO, signed by 184 countries.

This recognition of Amazonia by ICOMOS is a powerful symbol of the commitment of the professional and scientific networks involved in the conservation and protection of cultural heritage to encourage multidisciplinary and international cooperation. "Amazonia is opening a new perspective on heritage and international activities. We look forward to its inspiration in helping ICOMOS pursue its mission to bring experts together to identify and conserve heritage in all its forms, including monuments of nature”, added Prof. Dr Petzet.

ICOMOS will follow up from the Manaus meeting with activities to identify other Monuments of Nature (rivers, forests, mountains, sacred rocks or trees, geological formations, waterfalls, etc.) with its 150 National and International Committees. The conclusion of the Manaus meeting and the text of the Declaration of Amazonia will be made available on www.icomos.org along with other documents of the organisation such as the international charters of conservation and the Heritage at Risk reports.

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TEXT OF THE ICOMOS DECLARATION OF AMAZONIA AS A MONUMENT OF NATURE

Being aware of the ecological threat to our planet and taking into account the protective measures already implemented or planned by the peoples and governments of the concerned countries;

Appealing to the responsibility of all people and countries benefiting directly or indirectly from the largest continuous forest area on earth;

Especially in honour of the traditional populations that interact with the rainforests resources on the basis of a sustainable development since thousands of years;

ICOMOS declares MONUMENT OF NATURE the tropical rainforests of the Amazon region in its natural boundaries and in its integrity.


Information on ICOMOS, International Council on Monuments and Sites

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was founded in 1965 at Warsaw (Poland), one year after the signature of the International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, known as the “Venice Charter”. ICOMOS is an association of almost 9000 cultural heritage professionals present in over 120 countries throughout the world, working for the conservation and protection of monuments and sites – the only global non-government organization of its kind. It benefits from the cross-disciplinary exchange of its members – architects, archaeologists, art historians, engineers, historians, planners, who foster improved heritage conservation standards and techniques for all forms of cultural properties: buildings, historic towns, cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, etc. ICOMOS is officially recognized as an advisory body to UNESCO, actively contributing to the World Heritage Committee and taking part in the implementation of the Convention. It also runs 28 specialized International Scientific Committees on a variety of subjects.

www.icomos.org