

BRAZIL

Amazonia, Monument of Nature

In the present worldwide discussion about the global climate change (see our special focus on GCC, p. 192 ff.), about melting glaciers, the causes of storms and disastrous fires the South American rainforest, which for decades has been a favourite topic for environmentalists, seems not to have received enough attention. But with its 4.1 million square kilometres the South American rainforest remains a decisive element for the global climate system. When the famous explorer Alexander von Humboldt travelled through the Amazonian forest about 200 years ago, everything reminded him of “the primordial state of the earth”. Nowadays, while each deforested and burnt area of the rainforest leads to the disappearance of countless animal and plant species, the question about the future of this unique ecological system has to be raised again and again and from new angles. In this context, the topic of the International Day for Monuments and Sites on 18 April 2007, *Cultural Landscapes and Monuments of Nature* could also open up new perspectives for the Amazonian rainforest: The largest imaginable “Monument of Nature” is not just a matter of natural heritage at risk (some parts of the Amazonian rainforest are already on the list of World Natural Heritage), it is also a matter of cultural heritage at risk.

Below is the text of an ICOMOS press release and our Amazonia Declaration published on the occasion of the ICOMOS conference in Manaus (16-19 November 2007):

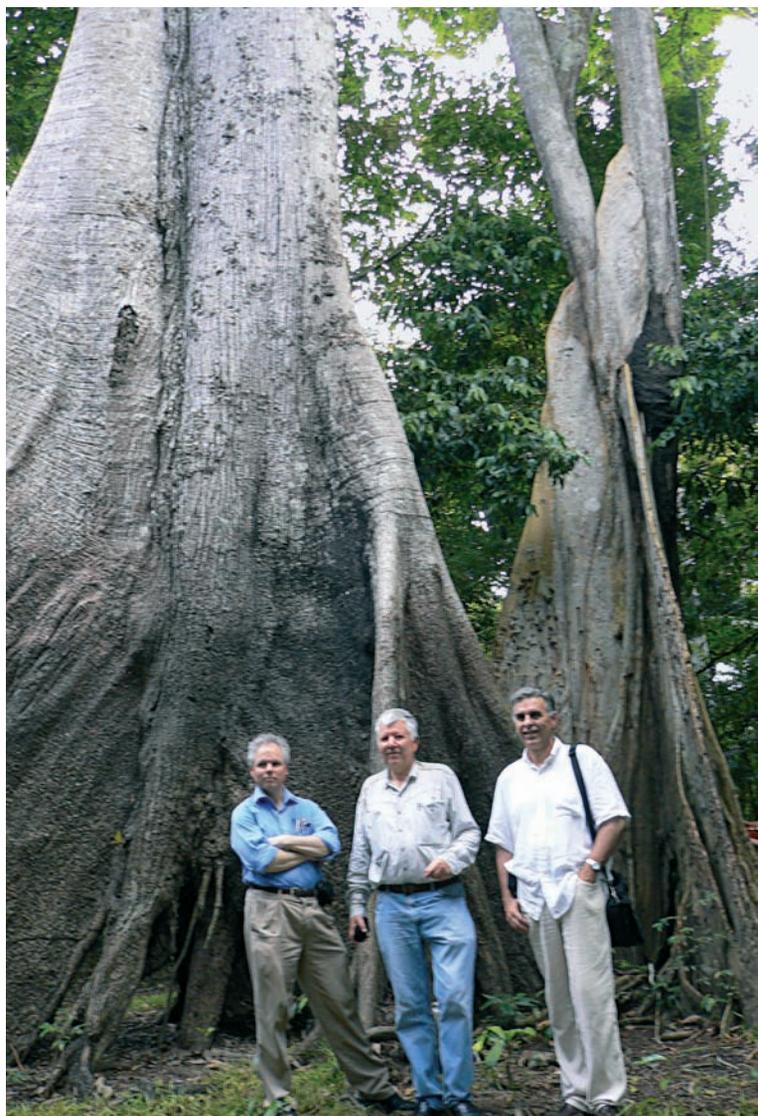
The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) declares Amazonia a “Monument of Nature”

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 world-wide for the cultural heritage, even in sites seen so far as exclusively natural, is bringing us to pay a very special homage to Amazonia, a vast area so essential to the Word 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 consid-



Declaration of Amazonia as Monument of Nature (Photo: M.Pz.)

eration 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.

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 rainforest of the Amazon region in its natural boundaries and in its integrity.

Manaus, 17 November 2007



Rainforest, river bank (Photo: M.Pz.)



Rainforest, aerial view (Photo: M.Pz.)

Manaus, dilapidated houses in the historic centre (Photo: M.Pz.)

