

MEDIA RELEASE – 7th July 2008

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE CALLS FOR INCREASED PROTECTION OF TASMANIA'S WORLD CLASS FORESTS

Pressure is growing on the Federal and Tasmanian Governments to protect world-class forests threatened by logging on the edge of Tasmania's World Heritage Area (WHA), following a meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Quebec, Canada, yesterday.

World Heritage Committee members have called for Tasmania's World Heritage Area to be extended in line with IUCN advice, to properly protect tall eucalypt forests that are currently threatened by road construction and logging. The expert international conservation body, the IUCN, has also recommended a moratorium on logging in these forest areas.

The Wilderness Society sent three representatives to the meeting and welcomed the Committee's call. The Wilderness Society's Executive Director Alec Marr, World Heritage Consultant Peter Hitchcock and ex-Franklin River campaigner Lincoln Siliakus attended the meeting to argue the case for additional world heritage protection for Tasmania's forests.

"This is a great outcome that reinforces the call to permanently protect Tasmania's unique World Heritage forests for the benefit of all," said Vica Bayley, spokesperson for The Wilderness Society.

The resolution of the 21-country World Heritage Committee (including Australia) stated: *"Reiterates its request to the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate areas of tall eucalypt forest, having regard to the advice of IUCN"*.

The decision highlights the global significance of Tasmania's forests and should be seen as a call to action for Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett and new Tasmanian Premier David Bartlett to collaborate and work out an end to the dispute over logging in World Heritage-value forests, Mr Bayley said.

"This outcome refers to the outstanding values of Tasmania's forests and should be more than enough to convince Peter Garrett and David Bartlett that it is finally time to act to see these forests properly protected."

"The Wilderness Society fully supports a moratorium on logging. Logging should be halted while a proper process is enacted to ensure areas such as the Weld, Styx and Upper Florentine Valleys and the Great Western Tiers are protected and incorporated as part of the WHA."

"In addition to being of World Heritage-value, these forests are critical habitat for endangered species and massive stores of carbon," concluded Mr Bayley. "Protecting them has biodiversity and climate change benefits as positive spin-offs."

Further information: Vica Bayley 0400 644 939, (03) 6224 1550