

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF REDUCING VISA RESTRICTIONS FOR VISITING SCIENTISTS TO THE U.S.A.

WHEREAS the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) is the world's largest international scientific organization devoted to the study and wise management of earth's tropical ecosystems; and

WHEREAS the continued functioning of the ATBC depends critically upon its capacity to foster active intellectual exchanges and meetings among scientists working in tropical nations throughout the world; and

WHEREAS recent visa restrictions and related measures employed by the U.S. Government have greatly hindered efforts by foreign scientists, researchers, and students to obtain permission to visit the United States for scientific conferences and other intellectual endeavors; and

WHEREAS these new restrictions seriously reduced attendance at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the ATBC in Miami, Florida, particularly by scientists from Latin America and other tropical regions, to the extent that attendance was only about half of that at other recent annual meetings; and

WHEREAS future reductions in attendance of this nature will gravely compromise the scientific and conservation mission of the ATBC, as well as the ability of U.S.-based scientists to play an active role in tropical biology; and

WHEREAS reciprocal visa restrictions enacted by many tropical nations, in direct response to the recent U.S. restrictions, will seriously impede the efforts of U.S. scientists to conduct fieldwork, educational, and conservation-related activities in the tropics;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation urges the Government of the United States to implement measures to simplify and facilitate visa applications for foreign scientists, particularly for the purpose of attending future scientific conferences in the U.S.A.