

Cordillera del Condor (Peru-Ecuador)

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1. Introduction

The mountain range of *Cordillera del Condor* is located in the border between Peru and Ecuador and has been an area in dispute for decades. The concept of using a peace park to help reduce conflict and build cooperation has been discussed since the 1980s and was the first driver for the initiative. Interest in conservation and a strong desire for peace amongst local inhabitants led to the signing of a **Presidential Act** in October of 1998, where both countries reached an agreement that ended hostilities and opened new avenues for bilateral cooperation on conservation issues. The consolidation of the peace process has been cemented by both the establishment and management of protected areas, as well as the promotion of sustainable development projects for local communities.



Figure 1: Cordillera del Condor location

2. Importance to biodiversity

The area contains dense cloud forests, with an exceptionally rich biodiversity including several endemic species. The remoteness and, particularly from the Peruvian side, inaccessibility means that species under threat in other areas of the Amazon are still plentiful here. Endangered species found in the region include a local subspecies of the long-haired spider monkey (*Ateles belzebuth belzebuth*) the spot-winged parrotlet (*Touit stictoptera*), white-chested swift (*Cypseloides lemosi*) and the golden-plumed conure (*Leptosittaca branickii*). The birds Orange-throated Tanager *Wetmorethraupis sterrhopteron* and Traylor's forest falcon (*Micrastur buckleyi*) are not only endangered but also endemic.

3. Parks for Peace

Recognizing the biological significance of the region and the potential of applying the parks for peace concept to foster further transboundary cooperation, the agreement of 1998 stated the need of establishing *Adjacent Zones of Ecological Protection* on both sides of the international border. Following the signing of the agreement, the Government of Ecuador created in 1999 the *El Condor Park* over 25.4 square kilometers, while Peru established across the border a *Zone of Ecological Protection* of 54.4 square kilometers. Complementarily, Peru established the *Santiago-Comaina Reserved Zone* over 8,632.8 square kilometers; in July 2000 the reserve was expanded to its current 16,425.7 square kilometers.

In *Cordillera del Condor*, the different elements described in the IUCN Draft Code for Transboundary Protected Areas are been addressed by the governments of Peru and Ecuador and the civil society basically through the implementation of three initiatives: the ITTO sponsored projects in *Cordillera del Condor*, the World Bank project to increase communal management of protected areas in the Peruvian Amazon, and the Bi-National Development Plan. Further, the main environmental agencies of Peru and Ecuador—the National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA) of Peru and the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador— signed in August 12, 1999, an agreement to foster bilateral cooperation in the fields of environmental management, nature conservation and sustainable development; more specifically, the agreement scope relates to:

- Protection of nature, including biodiversity conservation and sustainable management;
- Co-ordinated management of neighbouring protected areas with the participation of local communities;
- Joint management of shared river basins and integrated programs of reforestation and soils conservation;
- Conservation and sustainable management of forests, and valuation of their environmental services;
- Establishment of common criteria for natural resources management;
- Sharing of information and expertise on natural resources management as means of fostering horizontal co-operation; and
- Joint design and submission of project proposals to donor agencies.

4. The ITTO Projects

Overall, the projects—implemented through two national components: Ecuador and Peru— aim at assisting the consolidation of the peace process between Peru and Ecuador through the establishment and management of protected areas and the promotion of local communities sustainable development according to the protected areas and environmental strategies of Peru and Ecuador and the guidelines, criteria and indicators promoted by ITTO.

Each country has identified a set of specific objectives to be achieved during the period 2002-2003 that are been implemented in a coordinated manner:

4.1 Ecuador

- To draft an agreed Model of Regional Environmental Management that allows the conservation and sustainable management of the protected areas of Cordillera del Condor by the owners, with the participation of the State and other stakeholders.

- To foster sustainable economic alternatives; to re-direct non-sustainable practices; and prevent and control social and environmental impacts of mining and other development activities.
- To strengthen local stakeholders participation capacities.

4.2 Peru

- To establish an integrated sub-system of NPAs within a land planning framework, with different management categories in Cordillera del Condor and the Santiago, Cenepa and Comaina river basins, through a participatory rapid assessment process that guarantees the conservation of the biological diversity.
- To establish the grounds for the sustainable management of natural resources by the indigenous communities of the Santiago, Cenepa and Comaina river basins.

4.3 The WB Project

The development objective of the project is to increase indigenous peoples participation in benefits from biodiversity conservation in the Peruvian Amazon through communal management of protected areas. The global environmental objective is to conserve and sustainably manage globally important forest and freshwater ecosystems in the Peruvian Amazon through the establishment of protected areas to be co-managed by indigenous people. Project objectives will be achieved by: (a) establishing areas for communal reserves using participatory methods; (b) developing management plans and management agreements with the indigenous communities and federations; (c) building and strengthening institutional organizational and technical capacity to sustainably manage reserves; and (d) investing in pilot community development projects for sustainable use of biodiversity.

5. Bi-National Development Plan

The region currently suffers from precarious social and development infrastructure, limited technological and organizational capacities, and land tenure conflicts. The transboundary conservation initiative is built around a ten year Bi-National Development Plan, aiming to carry out activities and projects that will allow a greater regional economic integration, speeding up productive and social development, as well as the alleviation of poverty in 130 districts of Peru and 68 cantons of Ecuador. The ***Bi-National Development Plan*** provides a political umbrella for the design and implementation of basic infrastructure and social development projects, along with protection and sustainable use of natural resources, while preserving the identity of the *Jibaro* indigenous peoples. It gives special recognition to the services provided by the cloud forests of *Cordillera del Condor* in maintaining the water cycle of the region.

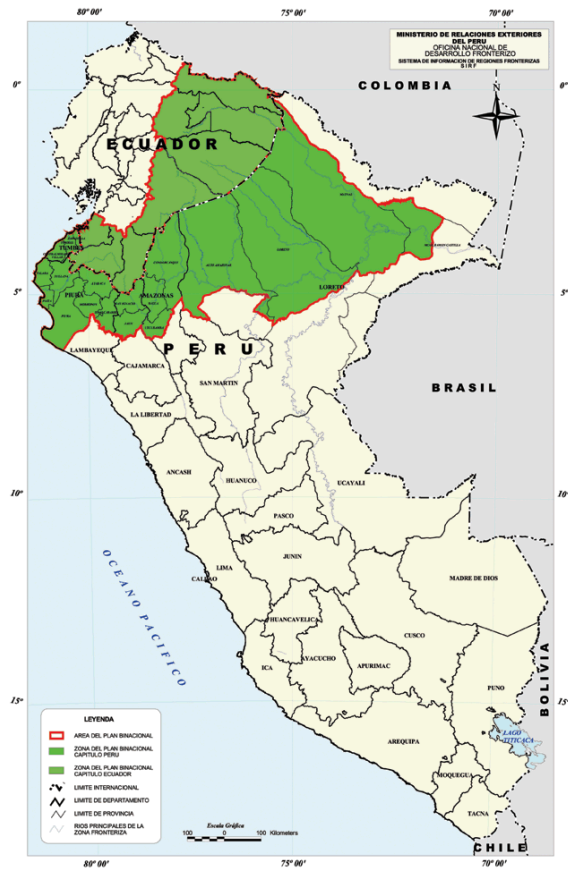


Figure 2: Bi-National Development Plan range

6. Institutional arrangements

The individual preserves of Cordillera del Condor are run by the respective national protected area agencies which receive the support from a **bi-national steering committee** appointed to foster effective transboundary coordination and cooperation. The individual countries have committed to certain time-limited actions, which in the case of Ecuador are aimed at designing and endorsing a *Model of Regional Environmental Management*, strengthening participatory mechanisms and fostering sustainable economic alternatives. In Peru, action are taken to establish a sub-system of protected areas fully embedded with the indigenous peoples territories that prevail in the region. The participatory land planning and titling exercises, as well as the efforts to increase the knowledge base and the understanding of cultural dynamics are helping to improve governance conditions while advancing sustainable development initiatives with local indigenous communities.

7. From Transboundary Protected Areas to Conservation Corridors

Due to the natural and social dynamics in and around the project area the implementing institutions are moving towards a new strategy for sustainability in this boundary region: the *El Condor-Kutuku Conservation Corridor*. *Conservation Corridors* are defined as a new planning

and management strategy that integrates portions of natural ecosystems, including natural protected areas, and other forms of land use to foster sustainable development practices and the maintenance of the biological diversity and ecological processes of a given territory.

In order to turn this concept into reality, a well coordinated empowerment and partnership development strategy is been implemented so that environmental authorities, land-development planners, governments, local communities, scientists, the private sector and NGOs can work on equal terms towards an agreed vision of sustainable development. This approach is particularly important when dealing with non-adjacent protected in highly-sensitive territories such as *Cordillera del Condor*.

The proposed *El Condor-Kutuku Conservation Corridor* includes not only the already established *Adjacent Zones of Ecological Protection* but additional ones such as the *Llangantales National Park* (IUCN category II, 219,707 ha), the *Chimborazo Fauna Reserve* (IUCN Category VI, 655,781 ha), *El Cajas National Park* (IUCN category V, 28,808 ha) and the *Podocarpus National Park* (IUCN category II, 146,280 ha) in the Ecuadorian side and the *Santiago-Comaina Reserved Zone* (1'642,570 ha), the *Tabaconas-Namballe National Sanctuary* (IUCN Category III, 29,500 ha) and the *Cutervo National Park* (IUCN Category II, 2,500 ha) in the Peruvian side. Additional areas in the mountains chains of *Kutuku* and *El Condor* in Ecuador are also considered to be linked based in their biological connectivity—they are part of the Tropical Andes Hotspot—and the articulation of other forms of land use and development strategies.

It is also expected that the strategy of *Conservation Corridors* promoted in *Cordillera del Condor* and nearby areas will be extended to incorporate other important ecosystems shared by these two countries: *mangroves* and *dry forest* on the Pacific coast, *lowland rain forests* in the Amazon region, as well as *Paramos* and coastal and marine ecosystems.

8. Conclusion

Thanks to recent years developments, the idea of establishing transboundary protected areas as a means for promoting peace between Peru and Ecuador that arose in the late 1980s in the civil society arena is now at the core of a more ambitious agenda for cooperation between these two countries. However, the contribution that protected areas can make to speed up or consolidate transboundary cooperation will not be sufficient if they are not coupled with a strong commitment to provide the development alternatives—and the financial resources— most needed by the inhabitants of the border region.

It is difficult to assess the long-term impact of the recent implementation of ITTO and WB projects for protected areas and the Peru-Ecuador Bi-National Development Plan but overall, the coordination, partnership and participatory planning mechanisms put in place, as well as the resources invested to improve protected area planning and management, enhance knowledge for biodiversity conservation and land planning to water sanitation systems to river basin management to health and education infrastructure to energy and communications networks to removal of land-mines to production and marketing systems to increase revenues for local communities are helping to create a better environment of trust and understanding most need to build a lasting peace.

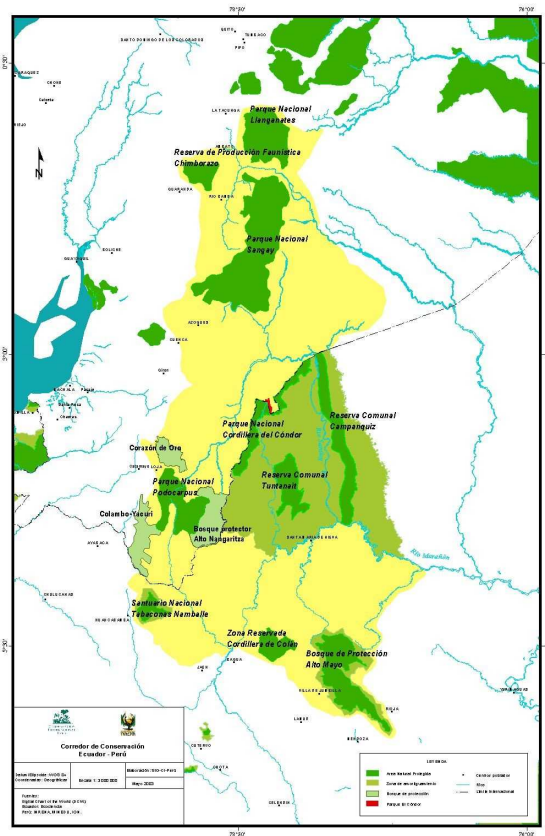


Figure 3: Proposed El Condor-Kutuku Conservation Corridor

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