**IUCN**

**Maria Tereza Jorge-Pádua comments on the occasion of receiving**

**the 2016 John C. Phillips Medal**

Good evening!

First of all let me thank you for such a great honor. Especially, because it is offered by the IUCN, an organization that is so remarkable for its enormous work to assist nations to save nature.

If i had the opportunity to contribute to save some samples of the Brazilian biomes it was due to many coincidences and much help:

First: When I started to work in the Forest Service, in 1968, my country had only 14 national parks and biological reserves covering less than 0.3% of its extension. There was not a single one in its vast Amazon region or in its long marine area.

It was a gift for us to have the opportunity to be firsts to propose protected areas in the Amazon and in the seas of our country.

Second: We were lucky enough to have an excellent support provided by a group of top scientists that identified the Amazon centers of endemism and the Pleistocene refuges.

Third: We obtained political support to establish almost every protected area we proposed.

We initially proposed thirteen (13) new protected areas. Eleven (11) were established in one unique ceremony in 1979, covering 8 million hectares!

Fourth: We had neither helicopters nor satellites at our service nor computers and even less GPS or e-phones. The work was simple and pure very hard and risky field work, with all its limitations.

When I left the public service, 18 years after, we had multiplied by five the size of the protected area of Brazil. And, also, we initiated the protection of marine ecosystems.

Our work was not limited to protected areas. Wildlife management and conservation was almost inexistent at the Brazilian federal level. We launched the first programs of marine and river turtle protection, the first center for golden tamarind and other endangered primates, the first migratory birds research center, the first manatee management project, and so on.

I also have to thank the IUCN for inspiring me and our team. It was because of IUCN that I met so many marvelous friends that helped us to achieve our task. Our efforts in the Amazon came some years after Marc Dourojeanni, my husband, did a very similar work in Peru and Mario Boza and Alvaro Ugalde developed the pioneer Costa Rican system of protected areas. We also maintained close collaboration with the “Mono” Hernandez and Heliodoro Sanchez of Colombia, Rafael Garcia of Venezuela and other Amazon countries colleagues.

In this occasion I must also remember the support of my dear friends Gerardo Budowski and Kenton Miller, former IUCN Director Generals, which opened the doors of IUCN to Latin America.

I had a wonderful and happy life serving my country and its nature.

I am, of course, much concerned about how much nature is still being damaged today.

I always considered and I still strongly believe that to protect nature is the best way to serve mankind.

Thank you all