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Intimately related and shaped by the Municipal Eco-touristic Districts and Zones, the initiative for the establishment of ecological corridors developed in 1995, as a strategy converted into the paradigm of the new trends for the conservation of our environment and the recovery of the ecological balance, the natural resources, biodiversity and its sustainable use. This constitutes a firm action against the phenomenon of climate changes through the production of oxygen and regulation of the climate, making our country one of the pioneers in the region.

The idea and concept of this achievement is part of the first and unique project for sustainable development in the Dominican Republic, designed, planned, and implemented by citizens, cooperative and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and public authorities, especially local governments. It has been promoted from its beginning by the Council for Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Dominican Republic, CONDESPI, through its subsidiaries, the Councils for Sustainable Development and Municipal Promotion, as well as the councils of the participating municipalities, called "Dominicana a national project for Sustainable Development.

The motivation for developing this initiative focused on the civic responsibility in taking concrete, effective actions, under the concept of sustainability and human development. Due to the effects of uncontrolled or unplanned human activities, such as agriculture, urban growth, and misuse of soils, among others, it has been produced the decline and fragmentation of our forest areas, deforestations, and the destruction of natural ecosystems, and, consequently, the reduction of biodiversity and natural resources, land degradation, pollution, and other environmental damages.

As new paradigm, the objective of this work consisted in defining the most suitable areas to make the Dominican Network of Ecological Corridors. This pretends secure the sustainable functionality and connectivity of natural areas, ecosystems, and rural areas of the main mountain systems of Dominicana. The delimitation of the areas they occupy, were selected taking into consideration the vegetation, soil, geomorphology, the weather, hydrograph, roads, urban zones, rural settlements, protected areas, and the biodiversity.

These are:

- Ecological Corridor of the Cordillera Central: Group of mountains of great ecological importance in the Hispaniola. It crosses its center in northwest-southeast direction, and has the highest elevation in the Antilleans. It is the birth of the longest rivers and streams in the island. With ecosystems ranging from 200 to 3098 mns, favors a great biodiversity whose protection is established in the Armando Bermudez, José Del Carmen Ramírez, Nalga de Maco, and Valle Nuevo National Parks, among other protected natural areas. It receives the human impact from agricultural and mining activities, as well as human settlements.
- Eastern Ecological Corridor: It is formed by the union of the mountains of Sierra Yamasa,

a system that stretches from west to east in the east side of the island, with a maximum altitude of approximately 900 meters, and the Eastern Cordillera or Sierra del Seibo, a little accident that stretches from west to east like the above, as it were its continuation, with a maximum height of approximately 750 meters. With human impact due to agricultural activities, mining, and settlements; it has no system of protected areas. It is connected to the region of Los Haitises, formed by massive lime stones alternated with small hills or mogotes, filled with exuberant biodiversity. The Eastern Ecological Corridor has the characteristic of high rainfalls for being directly impacted by the Elysian winds.

- Ecological Corridor of the Northern Mountain Range or Sierra de Montecristi: a mountain system with a maximum altitude of 1249 meters above sea level, presence of humid ecosystems in the East (Windward) and dry in the west (leeward); with agriculture and human settlements, where biodiversity is conserved with a few protected areas, such as the natural monuments of Diego de Ocampo and Loma Isabel de Torres, and the scientific reserve, Loma Quita Espuela, among others.

- Ecological Corridor of Sierra de Bahoruco: mountain system located southwest of the country (border with Haiti), with altitudes of over 2000 meters, with fragile dry, wet, and of altitude or mountainous ecosystems; with great biodiversity and the largest endemism in the whole island, which protection is established by the Sierra de Bahoruco and Bahoruco Oriental National Parks. With little effective management and widespread fires each year, it is subjected to a significant impact of non sustainable human activities and farmings, as well as exacerbated by the uncontrolled impacts of human activities in Haiti and by immigrants in the Dominican part.

- Ecological Corridor of Sierra de Neiba: mountainous system also located in the southwest part of the country (border with Haiti), with altitudes of over 2000 meters above sea level; dry, wet and altitude or mountainous ecosystems. It has the same human impact of the Sierra Bahoruco and only one protected area.

- Ecological Corridor of Sierra de Samaná: a mountainous system with altitudes of approximately 700 m, located in the extreme Northeast. It is placed on the same trajectory of the Elysian winds, making it a high level rainfall zone, with humid ecosystems, and great biological diversity. Also, it is subjected to intense human activities, such as agriculture and human settlements.

The creation of these zones or areas is based on the premise of simplifying the interaction among plants and animals, as well as making viable a sustainable productive function and the economic relationship among the communities involved. The corridors as territorial and manageable units have as primary objectives:

- To connect areas and nature reserves, as well as the protection of their landscapes.
- To ensure the free and safe migration or transit, distribution and genetic exchange of species. Increase the probabilities of development, proliferation, and long-term survival of biological communities, as well as ecological and evolutionary processes in natural, healthy and spacious environments.
- To protect hydrographic basins and fresh water reserves.
- To regulate, correct, and control the processes of fragmentation that natural habitats have undergone due to the construction of infrastructures and the development of unsustainable human activities.

- To protect and properly manage grounds, preventing erosion and desertification.
- To promote habits of production and of sustainable life.
- To offer the possibility to know the rural society and its culture, facilitating an experiential approach to history, geography, art, ecology, landscapes, and more.
- To anticipate the causes, effects and minimization of risks of natural disasters, as well as to be able to give a timely and optimal response.
- To provide a system or self-management model with optimal cost effectiveness.
- To organize and promote a model of sustainable tourism and its variables, in an orderly manner and emphasizing the development of ecotourism.
- To establish a general reference for developing awareness programs, environmental education, and communication, as well as for public usage and civic participation to favor an active integration of local populations and the Dominican society in general.
- To promote a true human development of the Dominican society.

The success of the Dominican Network of Ecological Corridors is subjected to an essential, inevitable, and vital coordination and cooperation of all sectors of the Dominican society, including local and central administrations, private institutions, non-governmental groups, and local communities. In this way, foster a territorial model of high ecological heterogeneity and connectivity, as well as grant the due importance to the systems of traditional uses and its conversion into sustainable activities to promote new economic and life alternatives.

The gradual recovery of natural processes, the promotion of natural and cultural heritage, livestock, and traditional economic activities, all emphasizing the local administration, should be turned into potential conservation programs of development and public usage. More than an administrative structure, it seeks to consolidate a network of natural or true ecological network.

The great achievement of the Dominican Network of Ecological Corridors is to consolidate a feature for protecting our environment and natural resources in a non-traumatic way, in which its actions eliminate or minimize the stress factors to ensure their viability and functionality in a sustainable manner.

The plans of territorial arrangement for the natural resources, the territorial and urban planning, environmental information systems, the obtaining and management of scientific and technical information, education and analysis establishments from a multidisciplinary perspective which integrate bio center management and functional models as well as other tools, all must provide the environmental indicators that allow a proper, timely monitoring, and guarantee the achievement of the objectives of the initiative.

Restoration methods, based on criteria of self-sustainability, passive, designed to remove barriers that prevent the recovery of ecosystems, and combined with active methods. Both, must meet the task in the structures and functioning of degraded or destroyed ecosystems, allowing the natural self-restoration and re-colonization of animals and plants, avoiding excessive manipulation of the natural environment and a maximum flexibility in the process of restoration.

A strategy framed in an agricultural rural development plan, as well as the technical and

financial support to the diversification of economic activities and to new ones that can be sustainable. They should be encouraged so that they will achieve and sustain similar or better benefits to current production and economic methods, with greater efficiency.



Unquestionably, the Network of Ecological Corridor provides an adaptable and flexible management model, so that during the development of the initiative can be satisfactorily met the demands that may arise in the environmental, social, and economic areas.

Currently, we are working in each of the participating municipalities for the integration of different entities and personalities that have traditionally been doing an outstanding environmental, social, and economic work, for the purpose of forming and structuring the agencies that will be responsible for the development of different aspects of the project.

The Dominican Organization of Sustainable Tourism, ODTS, from the creation of the Dominican Network of Ecological Corridors, has been the leading institution, as well as the support in terms of tourism development in these areas; so that, we are committed to success.