

El Salvador Recognises Forests as Living Entities

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El Salvador has, in a historic move, recognised forests as living entities. Its citizens, will now be required to preserve forests. El Salvador has lost about 85 per cent of its native forests since the 1960s, while Earth has lost about 80 per cent of its native forests.

The pronouncement was made on World Environment Day, which is celebrated on June 5 every year, by the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador.

It states that each person must commit to caring for, preserving, and respecting forests. People should also promote concrete actions that expand forests in the country, it added.

“Recognising forests as living entities sets the stage for a new paradigm in El Salvador in which humans live in harmony with forests and respect them as more than just property,” Eneas Wilfredo Martínez Santos, a lawyer.

“Without thriving natural forests, our planet cannot support humans nor millions of other species that rely upon healthy ecosystems,” Santos added. In recent years, the central American country has made strong commitments to restoring its native landscapes.

Over the last year, a coalition of environmental and social leaders — including lawyers, engineers, and university students — called for recognising rights of nature in the country.

The coalition, “Yes for the Rights of Nature” (*Sí por los Derechos de la Naturaleza*), has focused on a campaign to recognise forests as living entities.

The “pronouncement shows El Salvador’s commitment to new forms of governance that consider the needs of ecosystems”, said Grant Wilson, Directing Attorney at Earth Law Centre, which has provided legal support on the Rights of Nature in El Salvador.

“We hope that El Salvador can inspire many other countries to take similar actions,” he added.

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