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Report on "Flora Macaronesica" Meeting

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Abstract

In April, 1973, an international meeting was held at Las Palmas (Canary Islands). Proposals and problems concerning flora and vegetation of the Azores, Madeira and the Salvages, the Canary and the Cape Verde Islands were presented and discussed. It was agreed to work towards a combined "Flora Macaronesica". Floristic relationships to adjacent Africa were also dealt with. Special attention was drawn to the urgent need for conservation of a large number of endemics on the Macaronesian Islands.

Résumé

Une rencontre internationale eut lieu en avril 1973 à Las Palmas (Iles Canaries). Des propositions et des problèmes concernant la flore et la végétation des Açores, de Madère et des Salvages, des Iles Canaries et du Cap-Vert furent, respectivement, soumis et discutés. Il fut décidé de coordonner les travaux vers une "Flora Macaronesica". Les rapports floristiques avec l'Afrique voisine furent aussi envisagés. La nécessité urgente de mesures pour la protection des nombreux endémiques des Iles de la Macaronésie fut soulignée.

During the Flora Macaronesica Meeting held in April, 1973, at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, the necessity of preparing a "Flora" of the region was discussed and approved. The future "Flora" will comprise all vascular plants both native and adventitious which are known from the Mid-Atlantic island region, now generally recognized as Macaronesia. This phytogeographical term embraces the archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira and the Salvages, the Canaries, and the Cape Verde Islands. The meeting was attended by some 70 scientists and observers from over 30 institutions.

The need for a "Flora" of the above mentioned area, which was the main concern of the meeting, becomes none the less apparent when it is noted that in "Flora Europaea", although the Azores are included, Madeira is only part-mentioned and the Canaries not at all. As to the latter, they are sometimes dealt with in North African floras, whereas the Cape Verde Islands are occasionally cited in connection with West Tropical Africa. The taxonomical and nomenclatural concepts of the three floristic regions mentioned vary in certain points, and citations are by no means complete. On the other hand, "Checklists" and so-called "descriptive floras" have been published for all the archipelagos mentioned, equally variable as to their scientific concepts. In order to co-ordinate all systematic work, to avoid errors as far as possible, and to clarify the phytogeographical position of the islands, it was agreed to prepare a first and complete "Flora" of Macaronesia.

Meanwhile, technical meetings have been held at Reading and Lisbon, and — according to notices received — the first monographs are under preparation. Publishers have been approached with a view to their publication. It is intended to produce the “Flora” in two volumes (approximately 2000 species must be dealt with). To minimise editorial difficulties due to delays in the delivery of manuscripts, it might prove convenient to publish monographic treatments in fascicles.

The “Flora Macaronesica” Committee hopes that their proposed publications will contribute not only to the knowledge of the plant world of the Atlantic Islands and to the elimination of taxonomical misinterpretations, but will bring African and European scientists working on similar or related problems together, under the sponsorship of AETFAT.

The Macaronesian region is rich in endemics. Protection of these elements has not yet become a conscious obligation. New species are still discovered each year, but every week the new and already known elements become more endangered. Therefore, a “Conservation Appeal” was presented to the respective governments concerned. The text of this “Appeal” was published in the Proceedings of the Las Palmas Meeting (*Monogr. Biol. Canar.* 4), and reprinted in the *IUCN Bulletin* (vol. 4, number 6). It is hoped that the publication of the planned “Flora” will contribute towards nature conservation in Macaronesia.