

## FAREWELL ADDRESS OF PETER KRAMER TO THE COUNCIL OF THE CHARLES DARWIN FOUNDATION

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I take leave of you with a little sadness and also a little relief: sadness because I am going away (but only a little way) from you, from this kindly country and from the Galapagos Islands which have played such a large role in my life; relief because I no longer have the principal responsibility for what happens to the Foundation and the Research Station.

But my chief feeling is one of confidence: confidence in my successor who is my friend and a man with the heart and mind needed for this responsibility, confidence in all of you, who as individuals or institutions have contributed, are contributing and will continue to contribute to the conservation of these irreplaceable islands, the patrimony of both Ecuador and Humanity.

I take advantage of this meeting to offer two basic recommendations:

I introduce the first with a bit of personal history. On my first visit, 22 years ago, I came by ship; it took me three weeks to Guayaquil where I had to wait another month for a boat to Galapagos. In those days the trip in the legendary "Cristobal Carrier" took four days. Altogether two months to reach Galapagos, while today one can do it in two days!

The difference between then and now is that the isolation of the islands has been reduced. These islands, like any others, owe their specific character entirely to their historic isolation and, as a former resident of the islands who has experienced the social reality of island life, I want to mention that human life too owes its character to the isolation of island communities.

In all the future master plans, action plans and operational plans for Galapagos that indubitably will be elaborated and, one may hope, implemented, please remember:

- a) The uncontrolled introduction of alien plants, animals and micro-organisms means the destruction of the unique, endemic biotic communities and at the same time threatens the healthy development of agriculture, animal husbandry and the human communities.
- b) In the matter of social isolation, I consider it absolutely essential to maintain a living standard, which, as at present, is clearly on average higher in the islands than in continental Ecuador. Nevertheless, it must be added that isolation is not just something to be endured but is also something to be enjoyed, a specific quality of island life.

The second recommendation that I want to leave with you is that you should maintain international collaboration for the conservation of the Galapagos. You, the Ecuadoreans, are the ones who are responsible for these islands and no-one can deny you this responsibility that for a century and a half you have discharged so admirably. We, the foreigners, who come from countries which not only have their own environmental problems but also are the cause of environmental problems in the third world, must understand and recognize that there are good historical reasons for the suspicions that sometimes exist in this country that we want to meddle and intervene in national matters. You, Ecuadoreans, I beg you to recognize that even if we are impatient and sometimes even rude (as indeed we are in our own countries) we are never trying to interfere but simply fighting as internationalists in the cause of future generations of all the peoples of this earth.

I repeat and reaffirm with satisfaction that the international conservationist community unanimously recognizes the positive results of the efforts, past and present, of this country in favour of Galapagos conservation.

Let us continue to work together. Our movement was relatively feeble when it had only minority support from Ecuadoreans; if international collaboration were lost, that too would lead to weakness. Together we are strong.