

Emergency Declared at Ecuador's Galapagos Islands after Ship Runs Aground



Quito, February 6 (RHC-EFE) -- Ecuadorian authorities declared a state of emergency at the Galapagos archipelago on Thursday, a week after a cargo ship ran aground off the coast of San Cristobal Island.

The ministers of the environment, Lorena Tapia; transportation, Paola Carvajal; and non-renewable natural resources, Pedro Merizalde, signed the agreement aimed at "carrying out necessary and timely measures" to protect the archipelago's fragile ecosystem.

The Floreana was carrying food, fuel and other products when it ran aground on January 28th in Bahia Naufragio (Shipwreck Bay) near Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of Galapagos province.

The state of emergency will last 180 days and calls on the Galapagos National Park to provide "technical and logistical assistance and execute action plans and measures necessary to reduce the direct environmental impact" of the marine accident.

Ecuadorian authorities plan to remove the ship from the spot where it is currently stranded and tow it away from the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

Located roughly 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) off the coast of continental Ecuador, the Galapagos archipelago comprises a marine and land reserve covering 132,000 sq. kilometers (50,965 sq. miles).

The islands, which were declared a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 1978, were made famous by 19th-century British naturalist Charles Darwin, whose observations of life on the islands contributed greatly to his theory of evolution and natural selection.

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