

129 Global conservation strategy for the high seas based on area-based management tools, including marine protected areas

RECALLING that the high seas represent 64% of the world's ocean surface, that oceans produce approximately 50% of the world's oxygen and absorb 30% of annual CO₂ emissions;

KNOWING that 50% of the global economy depends on the oceans for food resources, transport, energy, genetic resources and tourism, among other things;

RECALLING that the text of the Paris Agreement on climate change adopted in 2015 notes the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity as part of measures to combat climate change;

IN THE SPIRIT OF the 2023 Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement);

CONSIDERING the adoption of the Global Framework for Biodiversity in 2022 during COP15 of the CBD (known as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework) Target 3 of which is to protect and conserve 30% of the planet's land and inland waters, as well as marine and coastal areas;

CONSIDERING that only 8% of the world's Ocean is currently designated as marine protected areas, and that less than 1% of the high seas are fully or highly protected;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the recommendations on the protection of the marine environment, particularly in relation to the establishment of marine protected areas adopted at previous IUCN World Conservation Congresses, notably Resolution 5.076 *Accelerating the global pace of establishing marine protected areas and the certification of their effective management* (Jeju, 2012) and Resolution 7.055 *Guidance to identify industrial fishing incompatible with protected areas* (Marseille, 2020) and also Resolution 6.041 *Identifying Key Biodiversity Areas for safeguarding biodiversity*, (Hawai'i, 2016) and

CONSIDERING that IUCN is a relevant stakeholder for the purposes of Article 19.2 of the BBNJ Agreement, which facilitates consultations on proposals for marine protected areas in the high seas;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. ASKS the Director General to implement the necessary conditions within IUCN to define and propose a global conservation strategy for the high seas, incorporating, where appropriate, technical and expert contributions from other international organisations, with the following objectives:

a. to map the areas of the high seas that should benefit from protective measures, giving priority to Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) that can be assessed using the KBA Standard, and conduct a diagnosis of socio-economic activities in these areas;

b. to assess the environmental impact of the activities carried out on the high seas;

c. to promote marine protected areas (MPAs) in categories I, II and III of the IUCN protected area categories as area-based management tools;

d. to provide recommendations on what is meant by the concept of area-based management tools;

e. to identify marine areas of the high seas that are ecologically coherent with Exclusive Economic Zones of coastal States and that would require coordinated management measures;

f. to propose area-based management tools incorporating MPAs, and operational management and governance modes; and

g. to study the identification and implementation of other effective conservation measures by area in the high seas; and

2. URGES the Director General to create a BBNJ Task Force to:

a. contribute to the development of proposals for MPAs under Article 19.2 of the BBNJ Agreement, and promote their submission for consideration and adoption by the Conference of the Parties to that Agreement, in accordance with the relevant provisions of that instrument;

b. examine and evaluate the MPA proposals and submit their comments, pursuant to paragraph 21(2)(c) of this Agreement; and

c. define the emergency measures to be taken under the conditions defined by Article 24 of the BBNJ Agreement, and to propose them to the Parties or to the Technical and Scientific Body of the Agreement.