

### **034 Promotion of collaborative marine spatial planning and sensitivity maps for sustainable offshore wind energy development**

RECOGNISING that offshore wind energy is a key technology to accelerate the energy transition towards decarbonised economies, with significant potential to mitigate the impacts of climate change;

CONCERNED that seabirds are known to face risks of habitat loss, foraging and feeding change, migration disturbance, collisions, and barrier and displacements effects as a result of the expansion of offshore wind farms, and associated increase in vessel traffic;

HIGHLIGHTING the constructive "Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea area" by HELCOM-VASAB, and the urgent need for similar tools and further regulation of marine spatial planning (MSP) across other ocean basins;

NOTING the available tools such as the Seabirds Tracking Database, AVISTEP and IBAT to guide governments, private sector and other stakeholders towards ecosystem-based MSP;

RECALLING IUCN Resolutions such as Resolution 7.112 *Planning of maritime areas and biodiversity and geodiversity conservation* (Marseille, 2020) and Resolution 5.075 *Strengthening policies relating to the sea and oceans* (Jeju, 2012), which advocate for ecosystem-based marine spatial planning and biodiversity protection in maritime areas;

CONFIRMING the interest in the effective implementation of IUCN guidelines and technical documents and initiatives such as the Global Initiative for Nature, Grids and Renewables for the development of renewable energies that are respectful of biodiversity conservation;

INSPIRED by initiatives such as BirdLife International's sensitivity maps, which provide key information to guide the installation of wind farms away from areas of high ecological vulnerability and can serve as a foundation for national and regional marine spatial planning strategies; and

UNDERLINING that the development of scientifically developed and rigorous data-based sensitivity maps requires detailed information on the distribution and use of marine areas by seabirds and other sensitive species (e.g. marine mammals), which must be collected and financed in collaboration with public and private sectors, and adapted to national contexts and marine ecological characteristics;

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

1. REQUESTS IUCN and its Members to work alongside relevant agencies and organisations to promote the creation of marine biodiversity sensitivity maps, using peer-reviewed, ecosystem-based and regionally appropriate methodologies such as AVISTEP and IBAT, which guide spatial planning to avoid and minimise risks to sensitive marine ecosystems;

2. REQUESTS governments to:

a. prioritise marine spatial planning frameworks within jurisdictional waters with respect to offshore wind energy and associated vessel traffic, applying an ecosystem-based approach that identifies and minimises impacts to highly sensitive areas and areas of importance for marine biodiversity;

b. coordinate with other countries to create regional sensitivity maps, including the identification of ecologically important areas, migratory corridors, and the use of appropriate buffer zones, ensuring coherent and effective planning in international and transboundary waters based on ecological carrying capacity, considering the migratory nature of many marine species; and

c. avoid overlapping Marine Protected Areas and other areas known to be of high value to seabirds with offshore wind farms and routes for associated vessel traffic, and consider establishing ecologically appropriate buffer zones between these areas of conflicting interest;

3. CALLS ON public and private stakeholders to:

a. fund and collaborate on studies that add and improve knowledge on the distribution and patterns of marine use by marine biodiversity to inform site selection for offshore wind projects and avoid the most vulnerable areas; and

b. apply sensitivity mapping methodologies, based on scientific principles, to minimise biodiversity risks during preconstruction, construction and operation of offshore wind projects;

4. URGES international marine governance fora to promote cooperation among countries to develop regional sensitivity maps at sea-basin level, and ensure these maps guide the sustainable development of marine renewable energy; and

5. ENCOURAGES regional knowledge exchange and south-south cooperation on MSP and sensitivity mapping, particularly in emerging offshore energy markets.