

026 Conservation of the environmental integrity of the San Matías Gulf in Argentina

RECALLING Principle 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and IUCN Resolutions 1.45 *The Precautionary Principle* (Montreal, 1996) and Resolution 3.075 *Applying the Precautionary Principle in environmental decision-making and management* (Bangkok, 2004); Resolution 6.074 *Reinforcing the principle of non-regression in environmental law and policy* (Hawai'i, 2016); Resolution 7.051 *Regional agreement on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Marseille, 2020) on the implementation of the Escazú Agreement; Recommendation 7.112 *Planning of maritime areas and biodiversity and geodiversity conservation* (Marseille, 2020) on cumulative impacts in the planning of maritime areas; and Resolution 4.091 *Strategic environmental assessment of public policies, plans and programmes as an instrument for conserving biodiversity* (Barcelona, 2008);

NOTING that the expansion of the fossil fuel frontier in the oceans and seas puts marine biodiversity at critical risk and generates greenhouse gas emissions that warm the atmosphere and the marine environment, thereby deepening the climate, species and pollution crises;

RECOGNISING the importance of the creation and conservation in perpetuity of natural protected areas as a way to protect marine ecosystems;

RECALLING that Target 1 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets out the need to ensure that all areas are under participatory, integrated and biodiversity inclusive spatial planning, and/or effective management processes addressing land- and sea-use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030; and

NOTING that Law 3308 of the Argentinian province of Río Negro, which provided protection to the jurisdictional waters from the impacts of petroleum activity such as potential hydrocarbon pollution, but was amended in a non-consulted, rushed and regressive manner in 2022, putting the environmental integrity of the San Matías Gulf at risk due to projects seeking to become established there;

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

1. CALLS ON the Argentine Republic and the province of Río Negro to repeal all regulations that lower the protection threshold of the San Matías Gulf, including the reestablishment of the protection provided by Law 3308, and to guarantee the conservation of biodiversity by cancelling all projects that could jeopardise it;

2. CALLS ON the Director General to:

a. send a letter urgently to the Governor of Río Negro and the President of the Argentine Republic, informing them of the request in paragraph 1, on the importance of complying with legal mandates on high environmental impact projects, and to forward material developed by IUCN on the principle of non-regression, the in dubio pro natura principle, the precautionary principle, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and relevant related issues; and

b. provide, as far as possible, technical support to Argentinian non-governmental organisation Members of IUCN in relation to these projects and their environmental impact;

3. ASKS the World Commission on Protected Areas for technical assistance for drawing up a governance plan to protect the marine ecosystems of the San Matías Gulf and the Nuevo and San José gulfs in the Valdés Península from projects that could cause significant ecosystem damage; and

4. ASKS the Species Survival Commission to send a letter urgently to the President of the Argentine Republic with all the information available on the conservation status of the species inhabiting the San Matías Gulf and the risks to them from petroleum activity.