

021 For an international framework for the preservation of watershed heads and the strengthening of their resilience in a changing climate

ACKNOWLEDGING Goal A and Targets 3, 7, 8, 14, 21 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, aiming to restore 30% of land and inland waters by 2030;

RECALLING the Ramsar Convention and IUCN Resolution 7.008 *Protecting rivers and their associated ecosystems as corridors in a changing climate* (Marseille, 2020) to protect watercourses as corridors in a changing climate;

CONCERNED about the loss of 84% of freshwater vertebrates (1970–2016), the increasing demand for water, energy, food, and the lack of funds for freshwater ecosystems (Synchronicity Earth, 2018), as well as water conflicts linked to the climate crisis (6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change);

CONSIDERING the watershed heads as the basins of the Strahler ranges 1 and 2 watercourses at a scale of 1:25,000;

WISHING to include as a priority the wetlands of the identified territories and the forest/agricultural areas in relation to the main watercourse;

RECALLING the importance of watersheds that are resilient to climate fluctuations, ensuring retention, filtration and availability of water, the genesis of hydrological, sedimentary and biological flows while constituting reservoirs of biodiversity;

KNOWING that the connectivity (ecological and sedimentary) of the basin headwaters is crucial for their role as refuge and reservoir of biodiversity;

APPRECIATING that these environments are extremely sensitive to disturbances (degradation, pollution);

CONCERNED about the increasing damage to aquatic ecosystems at the headwaters of basins, impacting their hydrology, water quality, hydromorphology and biodiversity, as well as their connectivity with the basin; and

AWARE of the vital role of basin headwaters for food production and human survival;

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

1. CALLS ON the Director General and IUCN Members to:

- a. support the exchange of experiences and best practices to preserve aquatic ecosystems at the heads of watersheds;
- b. encourage all action to understand, protect and enhance these ecosystems and their financing; and
- c. encourage States to allocate adequate public budgets; and

2. INVITES States and subnational governments to:

- a. include in public policies frameworks and regulations for the protection and restoration of watershed heads;
- b. assess and improve mechanisms for protecting the natural functions and dynamics of these ecosystems;
- c. take an inventory of developments hindering hydromorphological dynamics and assess their maintenance, modification or removal;

- d. set improvement targets based on international and national indicators (biodiversity, hydrology, ecosystems, groundwater, etc.);
- e. extend financial support for the management and protection of watershed heads;
- f. encourage good practices in the use of natural resources (agriculture, forestry, fishing, etc.); and
- g. include in public policies the identification, protection and monitoring of these ecosystems with appropriate funding.