

## **029 Establishing an international governance for the management of *Sargassum* seaweed in the Caribbean basin**

CONCERNED by the mass strandings of *Sargassum* seaweed (*Sargassum fluitans* and *S. natans*) in circulation in the Atlantic since 2011;

ALARMED by the negative impacts of these phenomena on coastal and marine biodiversity, in particular coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves and beaches;

NOTING that these algae become toxic when they are washed ashore and decompose, producing around thirty gases including ammonia and hydrogen sulphide, known for their neurotoxic and corrosive effects and their impact on public health;

FURTHER NOTING that during marine drifts, they incorporate other substances that are harmful to health, such as heavy metals, in particular inorganic arsenic, which they then release on the shoreline, constituting a source of soil and water resource contamination;

FINALLY NOTING that *Sargassum* constitutes a means of entry for invasive exotic species, which use the seaweed as rafts;

AWARE that the generalisation of the phenomenon in the French West Indies, and the acceleration in the stranding rate, are compromising the resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems;

OBSERVING that the possible causes of this phenomenon include changes in ocean currents, the effects of climate change, more abundant inputs of nutrients carried by Saharan dust into the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the impacts of deforestation in the Amazon and equatorial regions and those linked to intensive agriculture, which enrich the marine environment with nitrates and phosphates, creating favourable conditions for the mass proliferation of *Sargassum*;

EMPHASISING the urgent need for greater international cooperation to address this challenge, whether in the field of research or in the valorisation of stranded seaweed; and

APPLAUDING the initiatives already launched to this end, and in particular the international initiative to combat *Sargassum* announced at the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28);

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

1. URGES the governments concerned to adopt strategies for the sustainable management of *Sargassum*, whether to reduce its proliferation (e.g. reducing the use of chemical inputs around the Amazon and Congo rivers, combating the intensification of desertification in the Sahara, etc.) or to manage the mass strandings in the Caribbean region in the context of the One Health Approach;
2. CALLS ON the academic communities, governments and regional organisations concerned (CARICOM, CAR-SPAW, Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), etc.) to create an intergovernmental group of scientific and technical experts to assess the causes, consequences, and mitigation and management measures for *Sargassum*;
3. URGES these actors to work towards defining a biological and legal identity for *Sargassum*, enabling a regulatory framework for its management to be established;
4. ADVISES the States and competent authorities in the Caribbean basin to deploy economic resources proportional to the scale of the phenomenon, particularly for the decontamination of heavy metals, in order to strengthen the *Sargassum* valorisation sectors; and
5. CALLS FOR the establishment of effective intergovernmental governance by strengthening international and regional instruments in order to reduce and manage all aspects (health, scientific, economic, political) of these strandings, for example by adopting a new protocol on *Sargassum* within the framework of the Cartagena Convention.