

055 Recognition of the rights of Antarctica

NOTING that Antarctica, including the Southern Ocean south of the Antarctic Convergence, consists of a unique environment and dependent and associated ecosystems that play indispensable roles in maintaining conditions conducive to the flourishing of life on Earth, including climate stability;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Antarctica Treaty system and the 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty's ("Madrid Protocol") and Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and their recognition and protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, the intrinsic value of Antarctica, its wilderness and aesthetic values, and the dedication of Antarctica to peace and science;

ACKNOWLEDGING the existence of global initiatives which aim to to recognise Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, as well as of the many Antarctic biota, to exist, to be wild, and to continue their regenerative cycles and processes free of human disruption or control, in order to enable them to fulfil their roles within the larger Earth community;

RECOGNISING that the international community has been addressing Antarctic governance through the Antarctic Treaty System, and through the work and recommendations of the IUCN Task Force on Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, and the 2025 IUCN Strategy, Policy and Programme on Antarctica and the Southern Ocean;

CONCERNED about current and projected deterioration of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems as a result of activities within and outside the area regulated by the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), including activities contributing to the degradation of ecosystems, such as climate change, plastic pollution, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing;

RECALLING IUCN's long-standing commitment to protecting Antarctic ecosystems, species and unique wilderness values, as expressed in, among others: Resolution 7.032 *Ocean impacts of climate change* (Marseille, 2020) (noting the accelerated melting of polar ice increasing sea level rise); Resolution 7.107 *Reducing the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity* (Marseille, 2020); Resolution 6.032 *Achieving representative systems of protected areas in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean* (Hawai'i, 2016); and Resolution 5.066 *Antarctica and the Southern Ocean* (Jeju, 2012);

ACKNOWLEDGING that, despite the efforts of States participating in the ATS, such adverse impacts are intensifying; and

RECOGNISING ALSO: that IUCN Resolution 5.100 *Incorporation of the Rights of Nature as the organisational focal point in IUCN's decision making* (Jeju, 2012) recommends that the Director General "initiate a process that considers the Rights of Nature as a fundamental and absolute key element for planning, action and assessment ... as well as in IUCN policy on rights"; that Resolution 6.081 *Humanity's right to a healthy environment* (Hawai'i, 2016) invites support for "the rights of humanity and all living beings to the environment and the rights of nature," entrusting the World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) to monitor and support related initiatives; and that the WCEL's 2016 World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law recognises Nature's "inherent right to exist, thrive, and evolve";

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

1. ASKS the Director General, IUCN Antarctic and Southern Ocean Task Force, IUCN Commissions and IUCN Members to thoroughly evaluate the concept of the fundamental rights of Antarctica and corresponding duties of humans;

2. RECOMMENDS that the Director General, in collaboration with WCEL, IUCN Antarctic and Southern Ocean Task Force, IUCN Commissions and IUCN Members, submit a report to IUCN Members on the evaluation progress by IUCN, IUCN Members and partner stakeholders to implement this Resolution; and

3. ENCOURAGES IUCN Members to advance cooperation under the Antarctic Treaty System to protect the intrinsic value of Antarctica and its dependent and associated ecosystems.