

056 Advancing an ethical human-ocean relationship

AFFIRMING that humanity is dependent upon the health, integrity and ecological processes of the ocean;

AWARE that the effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14) requires a change in how humanity uses, manages and views the ocean;

RECOGNISING that fostering an ethical relationship between humans and oceans is essential to achieving SDG14, and achieving this necessitates the implementation of comprehensive measures across legal, political, educational, economic, trade and community-based domains;

ACKNOWLEDGING that legal instruments, such as the Rights of Nature, provide a powerful framework to drive the shift towards an ethical human-ocean relationship – transitioning from exploitation and detachment to stewardship, care and respect;

RECALLING IUCN Resolution 4.099 *Recognition of the diversity of concepts and values of nature* (Barcelona, 2008) asks IUCN to incorporate different ways of understanding the human relationship with nature and to recognise different ideas and values of nature in conservation;

AWARE ALSO that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) establishes that diverse value systems, including Rights of Nature (for those countries that recognise them), as integral to the successful implementation of the KMGBF, and calls for States to ensure the full integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes;

ALSO RECALLING IUCN Resolution 5.100 *Incorporation of the Rights of Nature as the organisational focal point in IUCN's decision making* (Jeju, 2012);

FURTHER RECALLING IUCN Resolution 6.081 *Humanity's right to a healthy environment* (Hawai'i 2016), which proclaims that all living beings have the right to the conservation, protection and restoration of the health and integrity of ecosystems;

NOTING that the principles of ecological sustainable development are foundational to the IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law; and

WELCOMING the UNESCO Venice Declaration for Ocean Literacy Action, calling for an ocean-literate society that advocates for policies that respect the ocean's inherent rights;

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

1. REQUESTS the World Commission on Environmental Law and the World Commission on Protected Areas to coordinate and establish best practices and guidelines for the integration and respect for the ocean's rights and intrinsic values in ocean governance, including for protected areas; and

2. URGES IUCN Members and Governments to:

a. promote and adopt national laws, policies, strategies, action plans and practices that integrate, and ensure the conservation of, the intrinsic values of the ocean, including by recognising the ocean's inherent rights and the respective duties of States to safeguard them;

b. engage in dialogue with States, Indigenous peoples and Local communities and other stakeholders, to create and adopt an international framework for an ethical human-ocean relationship;

c. promote and respect Indigenous peoples rights, worldviews and traditional knowledge in ocean governance, ensuring their approval and involvement without co-optation;

d. strengthen the implementation of the environmental rule of law by establishing the principle of

ecological sustainability in ocean governance, ensuring that human use respects marine biodiversity, ecological integrity, and the ocean's capacity to regenerate; and

e. support the criminalisation of ecocide, and define minimum thresholds to identify when severe or irreversible harms occur, in accordance with the best available science and international standards.