

059 Advancing actions to end plastic pollution to protect human health, biodiversity and the environment

ALARMED by the increasing rate of plastic production that, without action, will lead to a doubling of plastics in rivers and oceans, from 152 million tons (Mt) in 2020 to 300 Mt in 2040, and a doubling of plastic waste to nearly 600 Mt by 2040;

NOTING the ubiquity of plastics, including microplastics and nanoplastics, in our natural environment, including Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, the impacts of plastic pollution across the full life cycle of plastics on biodiversity including marine life, human health, livelihoods, climate, environmental and social justice;

AWARE OF studies confirming that over 1,500 animal species across all environments ingest plastics, and that plastic pollution is a serious threat to marine life such as seabirds;

FURTHER AWARE OF studies indicating that more than 4,200 chemicals used or found in plastics are of concern to human health and/or the environment;

CONCERNED about the chemical impacts of ingestion of plastics on wild animals, that studies have suggested the evidence of seabird exposure to plastic additives, and emphasise the role of marine debris ingestion as a source of chemical pollution in marine organisms;

HIGHLIGHTING that reducing the production and consumption of primary plastics and promoting sustainable production and consumption contributes to a global goal of ending plastic pollution and limiting the global average temperature rise to less than 1.5°C;

AWARE that the predominant throwaway model of single-use and short-lived plastic products significantly contributes to plastic-pollution rates;

EMPHASISING that many of the solutions to ending plastic leakage to the environment already exist today, but legally binding and harmonised global measures across the full life cycle of plastics are needed to level the playing field and drive implementation among private and public entities;

RECALLING IUCN Resolution 7.019 *Stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030* (Marseille, 2020), urging members to take action to stop the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030;

RECALLING ALSO the 2022 United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 5/14, requesting the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic; and

CONCERNED ALSO that the intergovernmental negotiating committee failed to complete its work within the expected timeline by the end of 2024, delaying global actions that are urgently needed ;

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

1. ASKS the Director General, Commissions and all Members to take immediate action at the national, regional and/or international levels, as appropriate, across the full life cycle of plastics that:

a. targets all sources of plastic pollution, including sources of microplastics pollution, takes due consideration of environmental and human health concerns, promotes a just transition for impacted populations and affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples as well as those of Local communities;

b. reduces and restrains primary production and consumption of plastics to sustainable levels, promotes sustainable production and consumption of plastics, and phases out or restricts problematic plastic products that are single-use and short-lived, or contain chemicals of concern, and that pose comparatively greater risks to human health and/or the environment;

c. promotes a safe circular sustainable economy, including through improved plastic product design and by addressing chemicals of concern in plastics, and promotes extended producer responsibility for plastic products;

d. leverages all available technical and financial sources, including public, private, domestic and international, aligning both public and private financial flows with the goal of ending plastic pollution; and

e. continues to be further strengthened through emerging knowledge, scientific evidence and effective decision-making and enforcement mechanisms;

2. URGES Member governments to expeditiously conclude, sign, ratify, implement and continue to strengthen over time, the anticipated international legally binding instrument across the full life cycle to end plastic pollution and, thereby, its effects on human health and biodiversity;

3. ASKS non-governmental organisations to take action to stop plastic pollution in order to:

a. improve knowledge of the impact of plastic pollution on wildlife, including seabirds, through scientific research;

b. raise public awareness to reduce and eliminate the use of problematic and single-use plastic products through communication, education, participation and awareness-raising (CEPA) activities; and

c. advocate for measures to be taken across the full lifecycle of plastic by industry, government and consumers to avoid plastic becoming pollution;

4. ENCOURAGES regional cooperation, particularly for semi-enclosed and vulnerable seas, to support tailored implementation of plastic pollution measures; and

5. ENCOURAGES investments in innovative, safe and sustainable alternatives or substitutes to plastics, scalable and environmentally sound waste management systems, and private sector engagement in circular economy transitions.