

059 Advancing actions to combat plastic pollution to protect human health, biodiversity and the natural 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, in our natural environment and the impacts across the life cycle of plastics on biodiversity including marine life, human health, people's livelihoods, climate and environmental and social justice;

AWARE OF studies confirming that over 1500 animal species across all environments ingest plastics, and that plastic pollution is a serious threat to marine life such as seabirds;

FURTHER NOTING that more than 4,200 chemicals in plastics are found to be of concern to human health and the environment, and the predominant throwaway model of single-use and short-lived plastic products significantly contributes to plastic-pollution rates;

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 the world cannot achieve the goals of ending plastic pollution and limiting the global average temperature rise to less than 1.5°C if the unsustainable production of primary plastics is not addressed;

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 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;

WELCOMING the 2022 United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 5/14, 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 national, regional and international levels, including through an international legally binding instrument, across the full life cycle of plastics that:

a. targets all sources of plastic pollution, including microplastics, takes due consideration of environmental and human health concerns, and ensures a just transition for impacted populations;

b. reduces production by at least 40% by 2040 compared to 2025 levels and, prioritises the phase-out of plastic products that are single-use and short-lived, or contain chemicals of concern, and pose comparatively greater risks to human health and the environment, including through legally binding global bans and phase-outs;

c. promotes a non-toxic circular economy, including through global criteria on plastic product design and restrictions on priority chemicals, and mainstreams extended producer responsibility;

d. leverages all available technical and financial sources, 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 mechanisms;

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

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, by scientific research;

b. raise public awareness to reduce single-use plastic through communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) activities; and

c. make policy recommendations to governments to set legally binding measures to reduce single-use plastics.