

129 Global conservation strategy for the high seas based on area-based management tools, including marine protected areas

RECALLING that the high seas represent 65% of the planet's surface, that the oceans produce 50% of the world's oxygen and absorb 30% of CO₂ emissions;

KNOWING that 50% of the global economy depends on the oceans for food resources, transport, energy, genetic resources and tourism, among other things;

RECALLING that the text of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change adopted in 2015 notes the importance of ocean preservation due to the existing interactions between ocean, climate and biodiversity;

AWARE of the delay in implementing international commitments to protect the oceans, such as Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on marine protected areas (MPAs), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 14;

IN THE SPIRIT OF the 2023 Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement);

CONSIDERING the adoption of the Global Framework for Biodiversity in 2022 during COP15 of the CBD (known as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework) whose Target 3 is to protect and conserve 30% of the planet's ecosystems;

CONSIDERING that only 8% of the world's Ocean is currently designated as marine protected areas, and that less than 1% of the high seas are fully or highly protected;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the recommendations on marine protected areas adopted at previous IUCN World Conservation Congresses, notably Resolution 5.076 *Accelerating the global pace of establishing marine protected areas and the certification of their effective management* (Jeju, 2012) and Resolution 7.055 *Guidance to identify industrial fishing incompatible with protected areas* (Marseille, 2020); and

CONSIDERING articles 19.2 and 19.4 of the BBNJ Agreement, which provide for proposals for marine protected areas in the high seas, to come from civil society, and that IUCN is the relevant organisation for responding to the provisions of these articles;

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

1. ASKS the Director General to implement the necessary conditions within IUCN to define and propose a global conservation strategy for the high seas, with the following objectives:

- a. to map the areas to be protected on the high seas and carry out a diagnosis of socio-economic activities in these areas;
- b. to assess the environmental impact of the activities carried out on the high seas;
- c. to promote MPAs falling under IUCN Protected Area categories I, II and III among the area-based management tools;
- d. to define precisely what is meant by the concept of area-based management tools;
- e. to identify marine areas of the high seas that are ecologically coherent with Exclusive Economic Zones and require coordinated management measures;
- f. to propose area-based management tools incorporating MPAs, and operational management and governance modes; and

g. to study the identification and implementation of other effective conservation measures by area in the high seas; and

2. URGES the Director General to create a BBNJ Task Force to:

a. examine and evaluate the MPA proposals and submit them to the Scientific and Technical Body of the BBNJ Agreement;

b. define the emergency measures to be taken under the conditions defined by Article 24 of the BBNJ Agreement, and to report them to the Parties or to the Technical and Scientific Body of the Agreement; and

c. encourage the designation of high seas MPAs as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage properties.