

REC 3.100 Reef-fish spawning aggregations

RECALLING Resolution 2.21 *IUCN Marine Component Programme*, adopted by the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000);

AKNOWLEDGING Article 6.8, on the protection of spawning habitats, of the *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), text from the *Plan of Implementation* of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) calling for time/area closures for the protection of spawning areas and periods, and under the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote adequate protection of areas important for reproduction, such as spawning and nursery areas, as well as restoration of such areas and other important habitats for marine living resources;

NOTING that whenever substantial exploitation of reef-fish spawning aggregations¹ occurs, significant declines in associated reef-fish stocks have often been observed;

AWARE that many exploited aggregations are declining and that some may have disappeared completely;

CONCERNED by the increase in exploitation of reef-fish spawning aggregations in various parts of the world;

FURTHER CONCERNED by the dramatic ecological and socio-economic effects that such exploitation could lead to;

CONSIDERING that fish spawning aggregations support many reef-fish species, and may be critical for the persistence of stocks of these species, the fisheries they support, and the human communities that depend on them;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that spawning aggregations are considered critical sources of fish larvae and that their protection will build natural replenishment and resilience on a broader ecosystem scale; and

CONSCIOUS that many reef-fish spawning aggregations need urgent protective measures to persist;

The World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17–25 November 2004:

1. URGES governments to establish sustainable management programmes for sustaining and protecting reef fish and their spawning aggregations, including a range of spatial and seasonal measures that can be adapted to local needs and circumstances; and
2. REQUESTS international and regional fisheries management organizations as well as non-governmental organizations to take action to promote and facilitate the conservation and management of fish spawning aggregations, including by raising awareness of the long-term ecological, economical and societal values of spawning aggregations.

¹ Spawning aggregations are groupings or gatherings of reproductively active adults that form briefly for the sole purpose of reproduction (=spawning), often at highly predictable times and places each year, and that are hence particularly vulnerable to heavy fishing pressure; for many species these aggregations are the only annual opportunities for spawning and hence are likely to be critically important for population persistence.