

RES 3.051 Freshwater protected areas

RECALLING Recommendation 19.38 *Targets for Protected Areas Systems*, of the 19th IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994), as well as Recommendation 16 of the IVth IUCN World Parks Congress (Caracas, 1992), which urged governments to ensure that protected areas should cover a minimum of 10 percent of each biome by the year 2000;

RECALLING that Recommendation 17.38 *Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment*, adopted by the 17th IUCN General Assembly (San Jose, 1988), Recommendation 1.37 *Marine Protected Areas*, adopted by the 1st World Conservation Congress (Montreal, 1996), and Resolution 2.20 *Conservation of marine biodiversity*, adopted by the 2nd World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000), support the establishment of protected areas in marine aquatic environments;

RECALLING that Resolution 2.47 *Conservation of the last wild rivers of Europe*, adopted by the 2nd World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000), urges IUCN to review and promote development of an international classification of river categories according to their degree of naturalness;

RECALLING that Recommendation V.31 *Protected Areas, Freshwater and Integrated River Basin Management Frameworks*, noted by the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003), supports the establishment and implementation of integrated river basin management in which networks of protected areas and regimes of protection are a key development strategy;

RECALLING that Decision VII/4 of the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity – CBD (Kuala Lumpur, 2004) adopts a goal of establishing and maintaining comprehensive, adequate and representative systems of protected inland water ecosystems within the framework of integrated catchment/watershed/river basin management;

CONCERNED that the use of freshwater resources and the rate of degradation of freshwater habitats are increasing;

ALSO CONCERNED that the World Wide Fund For Nature's *Living Planet Index* indicates that freshwater biodiversity has fallen at a greater rate than in either the forest or marine biomes, declining by 55 percent from 1970–2000;

FURTHER CONCERNED that an estimated 17 percent of freshwater fish species in the 20 countries for which assessments were most complete are classified by the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* as threatened with extinction;

COMMITTED to the adoption of integrated river basin management as an essential means of achieving sustainable use of freshwater ecosystems and of maintaining aquatic biological diversity;

ACKNOWLEDGING there is an urgent need to ensure that a substantial portion of all ecosystems is conserved to act as reference, replenishment and refuge areas;

CONVINCED that freshwater protected areas represent an important method for conserving biodiversity and contributing to the sustainable use of freshwater resources;

NOTING that the *IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories* identify a range of protected area types and that systems of protected areas in freshwater environments should be complemented by systems of integrated river basin management; and

NOTING further that wetlands may be specifically protected through listing under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, a treaty focused on conservation and wise use of a particular biome and encompassing the world's largest protected areas network for wetlands;

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

1. RECOMMENDS that all states:

(a) establish protected areas representative of all freshwater ecosystems, including but not limited to riverine, lacustrine, wetland, estuarine and groundwater-dependent ecosystems, in cooperation with local communities and resource users, so as to safeguard the biodiversity of each of their freshwater ecosystems, and set targets for protection where useful and appropriate;

(b) establish their systems of freshwater protected areas within an integrated river basin management approach taking advantage of the full range of governance types;

(c) as part of their overall programmes, establish viable freshwater protected areas, to ensure the inclusion of areas which meet the protection criteria for IUCN Management Categories I and II;

(d) that are Parties to the CBD implement the targets adopted in the CBD *Programme of Work on Protected Areas* in relation to freshwater habitat, including enhanced implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; and

(e) develop and implement national action plans on these issues;

2. RECOMMENDS that the World Commission on Protected Areas develop guidance on the application of the IUCN *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories* in freshwater environments; and

3. FURTHER RECOMMENDS that IUCN strengthens its work with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in order to facilitate better management and assessment, monitoring and reporting on freshwater protected areas, including through application of IUCN's *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories*.