

4.029 Conservation and sustainable use of fish in Río de la Plata Basin

RECALLING that with a surface area of more than 3,200,000 km² the Río de la Plata Basin is the second largest river basin in South America and the fourth largest in the world, that it covers the territory of Paraguay and borders on considerable parts of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay, including within its central plain the most extensive corridor of fluvial wetlands on the planet, extending nearly 4,000 km from the Mato Grosso marshlands to the Río de la Plata River;

TAKING into account that the Basin provides water resources and environmental services to more than 100 million inhabitants, that it constitutes a region of great economic and ecological importance, including a high level of biodiversity, a wide variety of climates, soils, forests and wetlands, and a unique cultural heritage, and that fishing in the Basin is essential for the food security of its populations;

EMPHASIZING that the rich fish diversity in the Río de la Plata Basin, including more than 300 species of fish in the Parana River alone, is due to the extraordinary complexity and diversity of its aquatic ecosystems, particularly its wetlands, and to the convergence of species from different ecosystems such as Amazonia, the Cerrado, the Grand Chaco, the Mata Atlantica, the Pampa and the Pantanal;

RECOGNIZING that the freshwater biodiversity in the Río de la Plata Basin is being impacted by the overexploitation of fish resources, the fragmentation of natural ecosystems, the expansion of the agricultural frontier, large public-works infrastructure projects, urban development, pollution, inadequate watershed management, among other factors, affecting not only wetlands and populations of aquatic species but also local human communities that depend upon these resources;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that the riverine communities of the Paraguay-Parana wetlands system, particularly fishermen, themselves being an essential part of the Río de la Plata Basin, face serious threats due to the decline in and loss of access to natural resources, particularly fish, and that the role of freshwater biodiversity and its economic and social benefits have not been sufficiently studied and recognized by environmental and social policy makers;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the lack of standardized information needed to assess the status of threats to fish species at a regional stage, in order to contribute to sustainable biodiversity management;

RECOGNIZING that training programmes for artisanal fishermen are necessary for strengthening institutions, developing appropriate and sustainable business-management skills, and adding value to their fishery products thus contributing to reducing poverty;

AWARE of the need: (a) to promote efforts that upgrade current information and its application to sustainable management practices, thereby contributing to the maintenance of fish populations and improvement in the quality of life of local communities depending on these resources; (b) to support examples of good sustainable fishery management practices that include the participation of communities and local governments, in coordination with all sectors; and (c) to develop the capabilities of both actors on the ground and the relevant authorities to manage the fisheries of the Río de la Plata Basin in a sustainable manner;

RECALLING Recommendation 2.85 *Conservation of Middle and Lower Parana River* adopted by the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000) and Recommendation 3.097 *Conservation of the Wetland Corridor of the Fluvial Littoral, Argentina* adopted by the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Bangkok, 2004);

FURTHER RECALLING that the area under consideration represents a model case study demonstrating important achievements; and that it is necessary to deepen the coordinated work of all actors in the application of the wise use criterion of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and of the Ecosystem Approach adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity;

RECOGNIZING regional achievements such as the Pocone Accord (2005), the Paraguay-Parana System Alliance initiative, the *Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of Fluvial*

Wetlands in La Plata Basin presented as a Regional Initiative to the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention, and the Merida Accord (2007) as important precedents; and

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that it is necessary to contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable development, adoption of appropriate public policies, environmental security, and governance of the Río de la Plata Basin, in ongoing coordination with other initiatives that seek to achieve the sustainability of water ecosystems and their resources, particularly fisheries;

The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008:

1. RECOGNIZES governmental and non-governmental initiatives in the countries of the Río de la Plata Basin that encourage conservation and wise use of the region's aquatic resources, with special emphasis on fishery resources, of vital importance for the region's economies, for food security and health, and for maintaining the work, culture and quality of life of riverine communities;
2. CALLS ON governments as well as state agencies, academic and technical/scientific organizations of the five countries to give the highest priority to implementing conservation and wise use measures for wetlands and their resources and to maintaining the essential ecological conditions and processes of the freshwater ecosystems of the Basin, and to the sustainable management of its fisheries, in coordination with the Ramsar Convention;
3. URGES the Basin States to support cooperative conservation programmes and the participatory management/ administration and sustainable use of fisheries, promoting fishery resources through communitybased fair trade, and access to information and participation in decision making on the part of the local communities, including support to replicable model experiences in sustainable fishery resource management;
4. CALLS ON IUCN's members in the region to support governments and NGOs in this mission, deepening the processes of coordination, consensus and capacity building with riverine communities, grassroots groups, NGOs, local governments and academic/scientific institutions; and
5. RECOMMENDS that international organizations support governments and IUCN members working in the region in implementing public policies and obtaining resources for the conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries of the Río de la Plata Basin;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN Programme 2009-2012:

6. CALLS ON the Director General to support governments and NGOs to:
 - (a) conserve and make wise use of the region's aquatic resources, with special emphasis on fisheries; and
 - (b) enhance coordination, consensus and capacity building with the riverine communities, grassroots groups, NGOs, local governments and academic/scientific institutions.

State and agency members of the United States refrained from engaging in deliberations on this motion and took no national government position on the motion as adopted for reasons given in the U.S. General Statement on the IUCN Motions Process.