

#### 4.065 Freshwater biodiversity conservation, protected areas, and management of transboundary waters

UNDERSCORING that the decline in freshwater biodiversity and the conversion of wetlands, reported by the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, the *GEO 4*, the *IUCN Red List Index*, and the *WWF Living Planet Report*, will continue and accelerate if a 'business as usual' scenario is followed for increases in water demand and water infrastructure;

RECOGNIZING the links between availability of water and the food crisis, and the urgent need for significant additional investments towards widespread access to affordable food, energy, and water and sanitation services;

NOTING that many transboundary water systems, including 263 river basins draining 45% of the Earth's surface and crossing the territories of 145 countries, are not subject to adequate management agreements;

ALARMED at the impacts of climate change on freshwater ecosystems and at the predicted security implications from water disputes within and between countries and from demographic change triggered by environmental or conflict-related disasters;

CONCERNED that societal responses to climate change may fail to incorporate water-management concerns (e.g. increased hydropower and biofuel production, cloud seeding, water storage and inter-basin transfers, desalination);

DETERMINED to reduce significantly the rate of freshwater biodiversity loss and to implement integrated river basin management - a key form of the Ecosystem Approach - for promoting the sustainable use, management and protection of freshwater ecosystems;

RECOGNIZING the scientific advances in assessing and applying 'environmental flows' toward partly attenuating the environmental impacts of water-management infrastructure;

WELCOMING the freshwater-conservation targets adopted by international instruments, including:

- (a) commitments under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, including representation of the diversity of wetlands, and the 2010 target of at least 2,500 designated Wetlands of International Importance ('Ramsar sites') covering 250 million hectares;
- (b) the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*, which includes the protection of "critical habitats"; and
- (c) the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) call to rectify the under-representation of inland water ecosystems in protected areas, through:
  - (i) conserving at least 10% of inland water ecosystems by area under integrated river/lake basin management by 2010;
  - (ii) protecting 275 million hectares of wetlands in representative protected areas by 2010; and
  - (iii) Decision VIII/27, reiterated by COP9, urging parties to ratify and implement the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses ('UN Watercourses Convention');

FURTHER WELCOMING the Joint Work Plan between the CBD and the Ramsar Convention, the establishment of the Inland Waters Taskforce of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, the 2007 *Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Tracking-Tool* (developed by the World Bank and WWF), embracing freshwater ecosystem management in protected areas, and the *Freshwater Ecoregions of the World* (FEOW, prepared by The Nature Conservancy and WWF);

RECALLING the water-related international commitments under the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*, the *Millennium Development Goals*, and the *2005 World Summit Outcome*; and

ALSO RECALLING Resolution 19.1 *The Strategy of IUCN - The World Conservation Union* adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994), Resolutions 3.006 *Protecting the Earth's waters for public and ecological benefit*, 3.045 *Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers Commission*, 3.051 *Freshwater protected areas*, and Recommendation 3.087 *Financial institutions and the World Commission on Dams* adopted by the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Bangkok, 2004) and Recommendation V.31 *Protected Areas, Freshwater and Integrated River Basin Management Frameworks* endorsed by the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003);

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

1. URGES governments to;
  - (a) ratify/accede to and implement the UN Watercourses Convention; and
  - (b) fulfil relevant commitments under international instruments, towards achieving global goals and targets on water, environment and development;
2. ENTREATS governments to:
  - (a) establish and manage new protected areas and networks to conserve representative, intact and outstanding freshwater ecosystems, in order, *inter alia*, to maintain their resilience and to sustain ecosystem services;
  - (b) modify the boundaries of existing protected areas (e.g. to include headwaters), as feasible and necessary, to protect adequately freshwater ecosystems and sustain ecological services;
  - (c) integrate freshwater considerations into the management plans of existing protected areas, including marine protected areas, where appropriate;
  - (d) maximize resilience to climate change in the design of freshwater protected areas; and
  - (e) extend the equivalent protection to freshwater biodiversity that terrestrial biodiversity receives within protected areas, e.g. by controlling water infrastructure development, preventing stocking of exotic species, and managing fishing;
3. ENCOURAGES governments and relevant institutions planning freshwater protected areas to apply available relevant tools, including:
  - (a) *Freshwater Ecoregions of the World* as a global freshwater bioregionalization framework;
  - (b) the *Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type* and the *Global Freshwater Biodiversity Assessment* (prepared by UNEP WCMC), which enable identification of key freshwater areas for biodiversity and FEOW to support gap analysis; and
  - (c) the Revised *IUCN Protected Area Category Guidelines* and the 2007 World Bank/WWF *Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool*;
4. RECOMMENDS that governments and stakeholders identify and apply environmental flow requirements for relevant freshwater ecosystems, including floodplains, and conserve remaining free-flowing rivers wherever possible, taking into account useful precedents;
5. CALLS ON governments and other institutions to ensure that climate-change mitigation strategies minimize impacts on freshwater ecosystems and give due regard to the integrated management of land and water, and to consideration of climate-change adaptation in freshwater and associated floodplain protection and management;
6. CALLS ON civil society, governments and development agencies to promote the cooperative, equitable and sustainable use, management and protection of international watercourses, and to engage in the process for entry into force and implementation of the UN Watercourses Convention; and

7. CALLS ON IUCN's Council and members to advance the ecologically, socially and economically sustainable use and management of freshwater ecosystems by:
- (a) promoting integrated river basin management, including in national policies and strategies, considering lessons from around the world and supporting sustainable solutions for improving access to affordable food, energy, water and sanitation, especially for the poorest communities;
  - (b) contributing to strengthening the governance of transboundary waters, particularly by disseminating the role of the UN Watercourses Convention to improve global freshwater governance, clarifying its applicability in different regions and transboundary watersheds, and supporting its implementation;
  - (c) providing advice on the design and effective management of freshwater protected areas; and
  - (d) advancing environmental flows-related training for professionals, and proposing tools and methods for ecosystem functions and service valuation;

**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 2009-12*:**

8. CALLS ON the Director General and IUCN's Commissions to advance the ecologically, socially and economically sustainable use and management of freshwater ecosystems, including through the IUCN component programme and Commissions, as appropriate, by contributing to the actions called for in sub-paragraphs 7(a) to 7(c) above and in addition by:
- (a) advancing environmental flows-related training for professionals, and proposing tools and methods for ecosystem functions and service valuation;
  - (b) developing guidance on climate-change adaptation and mitigation through the sustainable management of water, associated floodplains and related ecosystem services, for protecting vulnerable ecosystems and people; and
  - (c) prioritizing the completion of the *Global Freshwater Biodiversity Assessment* according to the *IUCN Red List* categories and criteria.

State and agency members of the United States abstained during the vote on this motion.