

WCC-2012-Rec-154-EN

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area of Australia

NOTING that the Great Barrier Reef is one of the most iconic World Heritage areas on Earth and one of the premier marine protected areas in the world;

CONCERNED that the human population of the Great Barrier Reef coastal catchments is projected to increase by 40% in the next 25 years, which will increase pressures on the Reef, including coastal development and catchment runoff;

CONCERNED that there are immediate direct and indirect threats from current and projected coal mining, gas extraction and related port developments and shipping;

CONCERNED by a projected increase in commercial vessel traffic of unprecedented scale within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA);

NOTING Decisions WHC 35 COM 7B.10 and WHC 36 COM 7B.8 from the World Heritage Committee meetings in 2011 and 2012 respectively;

COMMENDING the Australia National Committee of IUCN Members' submission *Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*, February 2012;

NOTING the comprehensive report of the World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission and the 14 detailed recommendations contained in that report;

DRAWING ATTENTION to Recommendation 11 of the Mission Report to, "Commission an independent review, undertaken by internationally recognized and widely respected scientific experts, of the overall institutional and legal mechanisms that provide coordinated planning, protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas as a whole";

WELCOMING the Australian and Queensland Governments' work in progressing the Strategic Assessment requested by the World Heritage Committee;

CONCERNED that the cumulative impacts of the range of threats faced by the GBRWHA have the potential to cause significant damage to one of the most iconic protected areas on earth;

CONCERNED that coral reef ecosystems are amongst the most vulnerable natural systems to the impacts of climate change, and that the GBRWHA has previously experienced mass coral mortality from extreme climate events; and

NOTING recent findings of Australian Government-funded research that:

- the estimated size of the Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) population in the Southern Great Barrier Reef Region in November 2011 was the lowest since surveys began in 1986;
- coral cover along the Reef has declined some 20–30% since the 1960s; and
- confirmed, through parentage analysis and biophysical modelling for coral trout (*Plectropomus* spp.), that there are strong positive spill-over effects of systematically-developed representative networks of no-take zones;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:

1. CONGRATULATES the Australian and Queensland Governments for their support for the World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission in March 2012 that considered the issues around developments on Curtis Island and other potential threats to the integrity of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage property; and
2. CALLS upon the Australian and Queensland Governments to:
 - a. fully implement the 11 recommendations within the World Heritage Committee's decision 36 COM 7B.8 and address all 14 related recommendations of the World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission report;
 - b. ensure that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority-led Strategic Assessment and the Queensland Government-led Strategic Assessment are effectively coordinated and integrated to deliver the comprehensive Strategic Assessment requested by the World Heritage Committee in its decision 35 COM 7B.10;
 - c. release in a timely manner details of the work to be undertaken including time-frames and consultation strategy for both Strategic Assessments;
 - d. ensure stakeholders are engaged during the development of the Strategic Assessments to provide rigour and transparency to the process; and
 - e. deliver on funding commitments to the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, ensure that current improvements in water quality are enhanced to meet water quality targets, and remain committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef from the impacts of poor water quality.