

## **WCC-2012-Rec-165-EN**

### **Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in the Bahía Blanca estuary in Argentina**

RECALLING the important natural and ecological heritage of coastal areas, together with all the benefits which they bring to populations, as noted in the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*;

RECALLING the ecosystems approach recommended by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which is defined as “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use”; the Convention was adopted by Argentina through Law 24.375;

RECOGNIZING the importance of estuaries, which are among the most productive coastal wetlands on the planet, occupying 5.2% of the Earth’s surface but nevertheless supporting a disproportionate human burden given that 60% of humanity lives on the coast;

NOTING the recent report of the World Bank and the IUCN *Mitigating climate change through restoration and management of coastal wetlands: challenges and opportunities*, in which there is emphasis on the role of wetlands as carbon sinks removing from the atmosphere half of the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted annually by the global transport sector;

EMPHASIZING the need to conserve wetlands, as the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar) states, through the “conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”; the Convention was adopted by Argentina through Law 23.919;

NOTING the need to include the conservation of these ecosystems on the IUCN global agenda, urging mutual cooperation among various relevant institutions such as the Ramsar Convention, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the IUCN;

HIGHLIGHTING that Argentina possesses one of the most extensive coastlines of Latin America (6,816 km), that the situation experienced by the inhabitants of Bahía Blanca is representative of the country and is the direct consequence of the lack of a coastal management programme providing strategic measures for the sustainable management of coasts and their resources;

CONCERNED by the negative consequences that the mega project in Puerto Cuatros, in the Bahía Blanca estuary, will have on the area at both environmental and socio-economic level;

APPRECIATING that the area has between 8,716 and 10,486 inhabitants who largely live, directly or indirectly, from fishing or from production activities dependent on the estuary;

EMPHASIZING that a study of the real environmental impact was conducted but that its results are blighted by significant errors and poor use, or lack of awareness, of current bibliographical resources, and that long-term, feasibility and cost-benefit studies have not been conducted;

HIGHLIGHTING that such a proposal would require an extensive estimation of the potential effect on the population of the area as the ecosystem value would be significantly degraded, negatively affecting fishing and all activities depending on the estuary;

CONSIDERING that the area in which it is proposed to extend the port and industrial complex is the inner part of the estuary with restricted circulation, adjoining a wetland environment declared an Area of Importance for the Conservation of Migratory Nearctic Birds of the Southern Cone of South America (species protected at national level by Law 23.918 concerning the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals in its highest category), a wetland environment which is also home to species in danger of extinction (Olrog's gull *Larus atlanticus*, bands of *Salicornia* vegetation) and which is highly vulnerable and fragile as it has very low water renewal rate;

RECALLING that the aforesaid ecosystem was considered for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, except that the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs abstained from making the formal request for listing; and

EMPHASIZING the interaction of Puerto Cuatrerros with protected natural areas (provincial nature reserves: "Bahía Blanca, Falsa y Verde" "Islote del Puerto o de la Cangrejera" and the "Municipal Coastal Reserve", which the municipal government is in the process of extending);

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

STRONGLY URGES the Argentine government to:

- a. adopt measures for the protection and conservation of water-producing ecosystems, designating areas of special protection and ensuring their appropriate maintenance;
- b. reconsider the option of including the Bahía Blanca estuary on the Ramsar List, on the basis of the information presented, and given the seriousness of the situation;
- c. conduct a thorough external environmental impact study of the mega project, as well as a cost-benefit analysis; and
- d. adopt the three pending draft laws on coastal management aiming at promoting strategies and methodologies for Integrated Participatory Coastal Management and improving the quality of life of communities in harmony with the environment surrounding them.

State and agency Members of the United States abstained during the vote on this Motion for reasons given in the US General Statement on the IUCN Resolutions Process.