

## **WCC-2012-Rec-168-EN**

### **Conserving coastal ecosystems to reduce risks in coastal areas in Africa**

RECALLING the importance of coastal zones and coastal ecosystems for biodiversity and the production of ecosystem services (notably food and economic development), particularly in West Africa, where the coastal strip is where most of the population, resources and sectors of activity are concentrated;

BEARING IN MIND the events recorded over the last few decades along the coast of West Africa as well as other parts of the world, revealing an acceleration in coastal erosion phenomena, which cause the degradation of human settlements and lead to increasing risks for biodiversity, local populations and the potential for development;

RECALLING the perspectives linked to climate change, the rise in sea levels and the acceleration in the frequency of extreme weather events, whose effects combined with the energy of coastal waves, storm surges and storms, and coastal flooding certainly contribute to an increase in the erosion and degradation of coastal systems;

NOTING the recent study, *Regional Shoreline Monitoring Study and Drawing up of a Management Scheme for the West African Littoral Zone* carried out by IUCN at the request of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the results of which, fully validated in May 2011 by the eleven Ministers of the Environment of the West African coastal countries, from Mauritania to Benin, reveal:

- a. the sensitivity of the West African coasts, made up of low-lying zones and sediments that are easily re-mobilized;
- b. an increased risk of natural disasters linked to the degradation of certain natural infrastructures due to the extraction of wood and sediments and to coastal development;
- c. the responsibility of sediment extraction, coastal infrastructures and dams for the reduction in the amount of sediment being deposited on the coast and for the disruption to natural sediment transport;
- d. the prospect of the size of the population inhabiting urban coastal areas doubling by 2020, and doubling again between 2020 and 2050, giving rise to very dense human settlements and the concentration of vulnerable populations in high-risk zones;
- e. the almost generalized absence of any capacity for intervention to maintain the safety of local populations and to restore the environment in the event of a natural disaster; and
- f. the urgent need to strengthen coastal governance at local, national and regional levels, to improve the information available to stakeholders regarding the risks and challenges of development, conservation and the enhancement of the coastal zone, and to increase the number of green belt areas in the coastal land being developed;

AWARE that natural infrastructures such as mangroves, underwater seagrass beds, coastal lagoons, coastal sand dunes and other sediment reserves, due to their ability to evolve in accordance with climatic constraints, help reshape the coastline and delay the phenomena of erosion and coastal retreat; and

CONVINCED that the immediate and future costs of events linked to the mobility of the coastline and to coastal flooding can be reduced considerably by rethinking the development of coastal land, using natural solutions and enhancing natural infrastructure;

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

1. ENCOURAGES all stakeholders and institutions involved in the management of coastal zones to address issues regarding the governance of coastal land, the reduction of the risks of natural disasters in coastal zones, and the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and the environmental services they provide in an integrated manner, and to establish prospective analyses and long-term observation systems to monitor the effects of global changes and economic growth in coastal areas, favouring early decision making;
2. ENCOURAGES regional cooperation and economic integration organizations, like the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), to approach the issue of the governance and development of coastal zones at the appropriate level, in order to promote coherence in interventions and, along with their member States, to favour the establishment of local governance mechanisms allowing all coastal stakeholders to be involved in the joint enactment of enforceable coastal management legislation;
3. ENCOURAGES the States to make the appropriate legal and regulatory provisions to promote the recognition of the role of natural infrastructures in the sustainability of the development of coastal zones and in the reduction of risks to these areas, as well as their conservation through classification statutes and suitable management methods;
4. RECALLS the decision points contained in the Dakar Declaration of 18 May 2011, in which the representatives of the eleven coastal countries from Mauritania to Benin validated the results of the *Regional Shoreline Monitoring Study and Drawing up of a Management Scheme for the West African Littoral Zone*;
5. URGES UEMOA and its partners to support the prompt implementation, within the framework of UEMOA's Regional Coastal Erosion Control Programme, of the West African Coastal Observatory, under the responsibility of the Dakar Ecological Monitoring Centre (CSE), and with the technical support of the IUCN Secretariat, and the implementation of various elements of the action plan adopted by the Environment Ministers of the countries concerned; and
6. RECOMMENDS the implementation, in other parts of Africa, notably in Central and Eastern Africa, of procedures similar to those carried out in West Africa, in order to establish situational appraisals of prospective socio-economic and climate studies of the evolution of coastal zones and to create strategies for the adaptation and development of coastal zones giving priority to natural solutions.

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.