

WCC-2012-Rec-174-EN
Offshore oil drilling in the Mediterranean

RECALLING that the Mediterranean Sea is one of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspots, and includes the Mediterranean Basin, as well as the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands;

STRESSING the ecological fragility and the socioeconomic importance of the marine and coastal natural environments of the Mediterranean;

RECALLING IN PARTICULAR the important role played by marine and coastal ecosystems in providing goods and services such as the regulation of the climate, water supply, the mitigation of the effects of natural disasters, and food safety;

FURTHER RECALLING that the Mediterranean Sea is particularly vulnerable due to its semi-closed configuration and its significant seismic activity;

CONSIDERING the considerable pressure that Mediterranean ecosystems are already under;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that the marine and coastal ecosystems are likely to suffer a major impact with regard to offshore fossil fuel exploration and exploitation activities due to oil slicks, disturbance of the seabed, drill cutting, pollution of air and water, and also noise pollution, affecting marine life and cetaceans in particular;

DEEPLY CONCERNED about the increase in offshore drilling in world oil and gas production and the numerous serious accidents that have occurred since 1976 on oil platforms in the Mediterranean;

ALSO DEEPLY CONCERNED about the offshore oil exploitation projects carried out by the firm Melrose Mediterranean Limited off the French coasts and those carried out by the petrol firm Repsol off the Canary Islands, which could have an impact on marine and coastal sites of global importance;

WELCOMING the announcement by the President of the French Republic on 6 April 2012 regarding the cancellation of Melrose's Rhône-Maritime offshore exploration permit; and

CONSIDERING the possible uncontrollable consequences of accidents caused by deep drilling in natural environments, marine resources and coastal populations, as in the case of the Deepwater Horizon accident;

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

ASKS the Mediterranean coastal States to:

- a. regulate strictly the development of offshore oil exploitation policies and projects, by:
 - i. applying the Precautionary Principle to these projects for remarkable and sensitive natural environments as well as protected areas;
 - ii. refusing to allow gas, oil or any other kind of exploration or exploitation permits for areas near natural sites which have an importance nationally or internationally – such as a National Park, a World Heritage site or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, marine protected area, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

(GFCM) Deep-sea sites of particular ecological interest – should potential impacts be identified;

- iii. demanding exemplary application of the regulation, with complete environmental impact studies on biodiversity, as well as respect of the 'avoid, reduce, compensate' principle, thus rejecting or suspending any project that does not adhere to the latter;
 - iv. reinforcing prior scientific studies on the study of coastal and marine environments;
 - v. refusing to allow gas, oil or any other kind of exploration or exploitation concession in seismic zones or in areas prone to known natural hazards;
 - vi. ensuring a long dialogue with all civil society actors about these projects, notably with nature conservation associations and the managers of natural areas;
 - vii. ratifying the Madrid Offshore Protocol of the Barcelona Convention; and
 - viii. enacting regulation adapted to projects developed outside of territorial waters, notably on the contents of environmental assessments and planned sanctions, to fill in the gaps in national regulations; and
- b. promote both the development of renewable energy sources, as an alternative to the exploitation of fossil fuels, and the conservation of natural environments in order to establish a sustainable and coherent plan for the future of the Mediterranean.

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.