

## **WCC-2012-Res-136-EN**

### **Effective strategy and actions to address the worsening problem of petrochemical plastic and other solid wastes**

OBSERVING that the increasing human population generates a large quantity of wastes, particularly of plastics, thus exerting greater pressure on ecosystems and especially on coastal marine ecosystems;

OBSERVING ALSO that other factors such as widespread production and consumption, urban expansion, and the economic model designed for consumption of rapid obsolescence and disposable products like single-use plastics which can remain in the environment for hundreds of years, thus adding to the unsustainable generation of solid wastes and residues causing environmental pollution, global warming, ecosystem degradation and adversely impacting human and animal health;

CONSIDERING that, despite actions at national and international level, problems connected with the disposal of solid wastes have not been addressed effectively, and that the impact of these wastes on ecosystems, especially on marine and freshwater ecosystems, has increased as a result of the increase in wastes and the inappropriate management of non-degradable, or slow to degrade, materials of terrestrial and marine origin (UNEP 2005A/ GEO4);

NOTING that despite the work to implement waste recovery programmes, plastic recycling is not a sustainable solution because recycling plastic results in products of lesser quality such as bags or clothing, which cannot be recycled;

EMPHASIZING that petrochemical plastic is a material that the Earth cannot digest, that it breaks into increasingly small particles, which absorb toxic chemicals, and that each piece of plastic ever manufactured is still here with us, except the small amount that is incinerated, releasing toxic gases and particulate pollutants;

STRESSING that these plastic particles can be ingested by both land and sea animals, with serious consequences in addition to polluting our food chain;

RECOGNIZING that global assessments such as the *Global Environment Outlook* by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) call for the minimization of waste products as well as efforts to ensure that, once products have come to the end of their useful life, they become part of the production chain as primary materials;

RECOGNIZING that Resolution 17.19 *Wastes*, adopted by the 17<sup>th</sup> IUCN General Assembly (San Jose, 1988) addresses the theme of waste management and its impacts on ecosystems;

CONCERNED that the data indicate that the wastes situation has worsened and that measures adopted to date, and actions at national and global level, have not been effective; and

CONCERNED that the discovery of 'trash vortices' in various seas indicates that the problem of solid wastes produced, fundamentally by the great quantity of plastic found in the water column, far from diminishing, continues to increase and that this has very worrying environmental consequences;

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

1. CALLS ON governments to implement laws and support initiatives to minimize the use of plastic in their respective countries and encourage alternatives;
2. CALLS ON all constituencies of IUCN to promote cooperation among the governmental and legislative institutions of each country, non-governmental organizations, universities and the private sector effectively to address the problems of production, consumption, unsustainable disposal and management of solid wastes, seeking solutions in the short, medium and long term;
3. CALLS ON the Director General to urge international organizations to invite countries to address the problems at all levels, considering the global impact that solid wastes have on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, especially in seas and international waters;
4. ALSO CALLS ON the Director General to:
  - a. promote and support the exchange of information, knowledge, technology and best practice among IUCN Members, Commissions, industry, academia and governments on best practices in the management of solid wastes for the transformation of the life cycle of products through 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' actions, with the aim of minimizing, as far as possible, the volumes of solid wastes and dangerous wastes produced by countries and by human activities;
  - b. urge governments to create and implement a legal framework which ensures shared responsibility throughout the life cycle of products, delegating responsibilities throughout the production chain in the management of solid wastes, and to address responsible consumption; and
  - c. foster cooperation among government institutions, the business sector and civil society in order to address the problems, and to promote formal and informal environmental education programmes in the various regions and countries in which IUCN is present, for the purpose of addressing the impact of solid wastes on ecosystems, and to demonstrate possible solutions at family, local, national and global level; and
5. URGES IUCN Members and Commissions to foster and facilitate the necessary actions at local, national and regional levels so that processes of production and consumption include concepts of sustainability, emphasizing the scarcity of the Earth's resources and the growing impact of solid wastes on ecosystems.