WCC-2012-RES-054-EN
Guaranteeing the protection of the Cabo Pulmo National Park

RECOGNIZING the ecological value of the Cabo Pulmo National Park on the Baja California Peninsula in Mexico, including its 20,000-year-old system of coral reefs, one of the oldest and most significant in the eastern Pacific;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that this reef, comprising 25 species of coral, sustains a rich marine ecosystem that includes 154 species of marine invertebrate; five of the world's seven species of sea turtle; three species of dolphin; three species of whale; sea lions; and 226 species of fish in the Gulf of California;

BEARING IN MIND that the area was declared a Protected Natural Area in 1995 and reclassified as a National Park in 2000;

RECOGNIZING that Cabo Pulmo was designated a World Heritage Site in 2005 and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention in 2008;

NOTING that overfishing had reduced fish populations in the zone but that a recovery of more than 400% has been noted in the zone's biomass levels since the National Park was established, representing one of the best examples of the positive effect of marine protected areas in Mexico;

OBSERVING WITH CONCERN that the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* indicates that 12% of the marine species of the tropical eastern Pacific are under threat and that the area around the mouth of the Gulf of California is a priority conservation zone;

AWARE that the Government of Mexico invited a joint IUCN-UNESCO-Ramsar research mission to evaluate the status of Cabo Pulmo National Park in November 2011, and to draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding the potential impact of tourism infrastructures near this site;

THANKING the Government of Mexico for the decision made by the Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to deny authorization, due to potential environmental impact, for the tourism and real-estate development proposal known as Cabo Cortés, on 3,814 hectares of adjacent land directly to the north of Cabo Pulmo National Park, "due to the absence of elements that enable it to comply with the aim of protecting the environment and preserving and restoring the ecosystems, in order to avoid the negative impacts on the environment or keep them to a minimum";

RECOGNIZING that despite the cancellation of the Cabo Cortés project, there is still a need to protect Cabo Cortés National Park, its biodiversity and its fragile marine and coastal ecosystems, from other projects, including large-scale tourism and real-estate developments;

AWARE that tourist activity in coastal areas is one of the most important economic activities in Mexico, but noting, however, that the increase in the operation and construction of real-estate and tourism infrastructure may have social and environmental repercussions that threaten ecosystems and communities;

RECALLING the Bariloche Declaration (2007), which established that "coastal and marine areas are under increasing pressure from fishing, tourism and urban development";

RECALLING Resolution 12.2 *Marine Parks*, approved by the 12th IUCN General Assembly (Kinshasa, 1975), which recognizes that "marine ecosystems are not easily protected by national parks or reserves covering limited areas,... such protection requires attention to

conservation practices over extensive areas of land and sea" and urges governments to "take measures to control, and where necessary ban, activities which are damaging ... to marine habitats ... particularly ... where such activities can be damaging to marine parks or reserves"; and

ALSO RECALLING Resolution 12.3 *Conservation of Critical Coastal Marine Habitats* adopted by the 12th IUCN General Assembly (Kinshasa, 1975), which recognizes that "certain habitats of the coastal zone, such as ... coral reefs and mangroves, are of great importance" and urges "coastal States with such habitats ... to evolve policies to maintain their continued health and stability";

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

1. URGES the Mexican Government, and specifically its Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), to:

    a. guarantee the protection of Cabo Pulmo from projects that may constitute a risk for its conservation, including large-scale tourism and real-estate developments, as it is a priority conservation site and one which, moreover, represents a model of success for the rest of the region; this is particularly important given that the Government of Mexico, non-governmental organizations and other interested actors are stepping up the scale, scope and rate of marine conservation efforts;

    b. guarantee that Mexican legislation on environmental protection is applied impartially and strictly to all projects carried out in federal, state and municipal Protected Natural Areas and other priority conservation areas and their buffer zones, which have a direct or indirect impact on the health of surrounding ecosystems;

    c. efficiently implement the Marine Environment Management Plan for the Gulf of California;

    d. undertake to follow IUCN principles on biodiversity conservation as given in the document *Siting and Design of Hotels and Resorts: Principles and Case Studies for Biodiversity Conservation,* IUCN, 2012; and

    e. comply with the Los Cabos Municipality Environmental Management Plan;

2. RECOMMENDS that, as far as possible, IUCN conducts an analysis of the biodiversity threats in the Baja California peninsula linked to the location and design of large-scale tourism and real-estate developments similar to IUCN's 2011 analysis: *Impacts of hotel siting and design on biodiversity in the insular Caribbean: A situation analysis;* and

3. CALLS on all relevant and interested IUCN Members, as far as possible, to provide Mexico and especially SEMARNAT with all technical and scientific support to help ensure the long-term protection of the Cabo Pulmo National Park.

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.