

WCC-2012-Res-059-EN

The importance of adaptation and disaster risk reduction in coastal areas

RECOGNIZING that nearly half of the human population lives in coastal areas, that coastlines contain more than two-thirds of the world's largest cities, and that these populations are growing more rapidly than global trends;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that many economic activities and critical infrastructure are concentrated in coastal areas and that the coastal zone is an important engine of national economies of most coastal countries;

AWARE that sea level rise is likely to become one of the major impacts of climate change over the coming century, causing gradual inundation of lowlands; increased rates of erosion in many areas, even of higher elevation shores; and the salinization of ground-water in many coastal and small island territories;

AWARE that in addition to sea level rise, coastal communities are threatened by a number of coastal hazards such as tropical storms and storm surges, and that these hazards are increasing in intensity as a result of climate change;

CONCERNED that many indigenous, local and poor communities live in low elevation coastal zones and small islands, often in substandard housing, and are therefore highly threatened by small rises in sea level, and other coastal hazards;

RECOGNIZING the important role that coastal ecosystems can play in reducing risks from coastal hazards to coastal communities, particularly through wave attenuation and shoreline stabilization, as well as the large body of information now available to provide information about the conditions under which ecosystems will provide such services;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that the same ecosystems offer multiple additional services that support resilience of human communities. Examples of such services are food, fuelwood and timber provision, and water and climate regulation. The full suite of these and other services that coastal ecosystems provide are an opportunity for development and job creation, if they are managed sustainably;

ALARMED that coastal ecosystems are experiencing some of the most rapid environmental change and are being lost at a higher rate than most other ecosystems;

FURTHER CONCERNED that most strategies to protect coastal communities and resources from coastal hazards and sea level rise involve hard engineering and artificial coastal defences. These may have an impact on the ecosystem services on which coastal communities depend, thereby potentially increasing social and economic vulnerability;

CONSIDERING that, in some cases, artificial structures accelerate rates of change and cause erosion of coastlines;

NOTING that ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and disaster risk reduction are the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services to help people to adapt to climate change and other hazards, and that effective adaptation requires attention to ecological, social and economic aspects of sustainability;

RECOGNIZING that ecosystem-based based approaches to adaptation and disaster risk reduction present tangible opportunities to address impacts of climate change and other hazards by aligning conservation, development and poverty alleviation interests;

ALSO NOTING that ecosystems can be used in combination with hard and soft engineering approaches to produce “hybrid” strategies for coastal risk reduction, where many ecosystem services remain or can be restored leading to a significant contribution to risk reduction; and

FURTHER CONSIDERING that management efforts are more effective when vulnerable indigenous peoples and local communities are respected partners and custodians;

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

1. CALLS on the Director General to dedicate further efforts and resources to promote and advance ecosystem-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction in coastal areas globally, including human and social aspects of adaptation as part of the IUCN Marine and Polar Programme under the *IUCN Programme 2013–2016*;
2. URGES IUCN coastal State and government agency Members, and other coastal States to:
 - a. pay special attention to nature-based adaptation in coastal areas in particular when developing their national adaptation plans;
 - b. integrate ecological, economic and social consideration when undertaking vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning, taking into account the critical role that coastal ecosystem play in both 1) reducing risks to human communities and their economic assets along the coast, and 2) in supporting social and economic development;
 - c. actively involve diverse stakeholders in strategy development and seek collaboration between governments, indigenous and local communities, environmental organizations, relevant private-sector stakeholders, development and humanitarian aid organizations;
 - d. encourage collaboration between industry and NGOs in developing and demonstrating ecosystem-based approaches for coastal risk reduction and encourage the corporate sector to take a leading role in promoting such approaches;
 - e. fully account for risks and all costs and benefits associated with development in vulnerable coastal areas, provide incentives for “climate smart” and integrated coastal development and discourage development in vulnerable and sensitive coastal habitats;
 - f. conserve and restore “natural coastal infrastructure”, coastal ecosystems and wetlands (and in particular mangroves, coral reefs, bivalve banks, saltmarshes, tidal flats and seagrasses) that help reduce vulnerability and increase resilience to climate change impacts;
 - g. undertake environmental impact assessment when planning and installing artificial coastal defences and consider the risks such structures pose to coastal ecosystems, including the risks for the ecosystem services they provide to society; and
 - h. where the use of hard engineering approaches is necessary, strongly encourage consideration of hybrid engineering approaches that combine ecosystem restoration and management with engineering techniques to enhance risk reduction and

improve efficiency of hard infrastructure while continuing to provide additional ecosystem services;

3. URGES multilateral development banks and agencies, national and local government and agencies in charge of coastal development to take into consideration the impacts of climate change in the coastal zone when planning new coastal development projects;
4. URGES donor agencies and multilateral development organizations to increase their support for developing and implementing nature-based approaches to reducing climate and disaster risks in coastal areas, in particular in vulnerable Small Island Developing States, low-lying countries, and deltaic areas;
5. URGES all private-sector actors that are active in coastal areas to consider their direct and indirect impacts and dependencies on coastal ecosystems and to embrace and develop best practice that will lead to a net positive impact for these ecosystems; and
6. ENCOURAGES private-sector actors that are active in coastal areas to collaborate with government agencies and NGOs in demonstrating ecosystem-based adaptation at scale.