

WCC-2012-Res-080-EN

Mitigating the impacts of recreational diving on the marine environment

RECOGNIZING that recreational diving (including snorkelling, free diving, scuba diving and other related practices) can degrade marine habitats and have adverse effects on marine biodiversity ranging from disturbance to injury and even mortality;

CONCERNED that the volume of recreational diving, and thus the impacts of recreational diving on the marine environment, have increased significantly over the last thirty years, especially in sensitive and protected coastal areas;

RECOGNIZING the transboundary nature of marine environments;

CONCERNED that there are no international guidelines to ensure that the potential environmental impacts of recreational diving are effectively regulated and managed;

DISTURBED by various scientific reports demonstrating increased non-environmentally conscious practices in recreational diving, especially in marine protected areas and in habitats containing vulnerable species such as marine mammals, and by experimental evidence of physical and behavioural impacts of such recreational diving practices on marine ecosystems around the world;

AWARE that recreational diving is an important income generator for many countries, that it is a growing economic sector, and that it is therefore essential to ensure that the development of this sector progresses in a sustainable manner;

ALSO AWARE that recreational diving is an important activity to improve education and raise awareness about the marine environment;

ACKNOWLEDGING the important contribution of recreational diving towards conservation of the marine environment, through volunteer programmes, education and reporting;

WELCOMING preliminary steps taken by some governments to address the impacts of recreational diving on the marine environment, but noting that in most countries the environmental practices and impacts of this sector are not sufficiently regulated;

ALSO WELCOMING steps taken by non-governmental organizations and industry role players (especially diving operators and training companies) to develop more sustainable practices in the recreational diving sector;

RECOGNIZING that further research on the effects and mitigation of recreational diving impacts on the marine environment is urgently needed; and

RECALLING IUCN's strong commitment to the conservation of marine species and habitats, as reflected in IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations, for example Resolutions 4.031 *Achieving conservation of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction* and Resolution 4.045 *Accelerating progress to establish marine protected areas and creating marine protected area networks* adopted by the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 2008);

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

1. REQUESTS the Director General, with the assistance of IUCN Members, Commissions and Council, to identify appropriate measures and to promote their implementation

among world governments for the reduction of impacts from recreational diving on the marine environment, such as by drawing this resolution to the attention of the secretariats of, and meetings of Contracting Parties to, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programmes, UNEP Governing Council, and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, particularly those with whom IUCN enjoys observer status, and by keeping Union Members informed of progress on this issue;

2. ALSO REQUESTS the Director General to encourage IUCN Members and Commissions to support and conduct further research on the effects and mitigation of recreational diving impacts on the marine environment and use these results to assist in the development of an international environmental code of conduct for recreational diving to reduce its impacts on the marine environment with the long-term aim of consolidating this code into a broader code of conduct for sustainable recreational diving;
3. CALLS ON the relevant IUCN Commissions to mainstream this issue in their relevant scope of work, especially the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) which should consider recreational diving in its work on the social and environmental accountability of the private sector, assisting the development of methods and tools to strengthen the capacity of relevant role players in the recreational diving industry to become more environmentally and socially accountable;
4. ASKS IUCN Member governments, through the mechanisms available to them under domestic and international law, including the development of legal or voluntary instruments, to:
 - a. monitor and investigate the impacts on the marine environment that are associated with recreational diving;
 - b. encourage the development and implementation of best practices for reducing impacts from recreational diving on the marine environment, especially in:
 - i. marine protected areas;
 - ii. habitats containing vulnerable species;
 - iii. special events such as migrations and mass spawning; and
 - iv. in areas where marine mammals or threatened species may be concentrated;
 - c. consider the regulation of recreational diving in management guidelines for all marine protected areas;
 - d. encourage established diver training organizations to increase their basic training requirements with a focus on conservation and protection; and
 - e. work together with national and international non-governmental organizations, with the scientific community, with the relevant industry role-players, and with representatives from the diving community to accomplish these goals;
5. URGES IUCN Member governments:
 - a. to collaborate on the development of an international code of conduct for recreational diving which should guide the development of similar national and local environmental codes (customized to specific local circumstances, needs and interests) for recreational diving;

- b. to assist in the implementation of specific national and local environmental codes of conduct for recreational diving; and
 - c. to ensure that such codes are implemented by all commercial/private recreational diving operators and other relevant industry stakeholders; and
6. URGES Parties to UNEP's Regional Seas Agreements, and to other regional marine agreements and conventions, to include the regulation of recreational diving in their strategies, action plans and measures for the preservation of habitats and the conservation of marine biological diversity, including, once it is developed, adoption of the international code of conduct.

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.