

WCC-2016-Res-049-EN

Promoting regional approaches to tackle the global problem of marine debris (litter)

RECOGNISING the contribution of IUCN's Global Marine and Polar Programme, and many IUCN Members, to understanding of marine plastics and their environmental impacts;

NOTING that plastic debris has become a very serious problem affecting the marine environment, not only for coastal areas of developing countries that lack appropriate waste management infrastructure, but also for the world's oceans as a whole due to slowly degrading large plastic items generating microplastic particles that spread over long distances by wind- driven ocean surface layer circulation;

RECALLING Resolution 5.136 *Effective strategy and actions to address the worsening problem of petrochemical plastic and other solid wastes* (Jeju, 2012);

REAFFIRMING the commitment of United Nations Member States in 'The Future We Want' and 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources;

RECALLING United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/235 *Oceans and the law of the sea*, which notes with concern that a range of human-related threats, including marine debris, may severely impact marine life and calls upon states and competent international organisations to cooperate and coordinate their research efforts to reduce these impacts and preserve the integrity of the whole marine ecosystem while fully respecting the mandates of relevant international organisations;

FURTHER RECALLING the ongoing work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to better understand and reduce marine debris, including the adoption of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 1/6 *Marine plastic debris and microplastics* (2014), which called on the Executive Director of UNEP, in consultation with other relevant institutions and stakeholders, to undertake a study on marine plastic debris and marine microplastics, as well as UNEA 2 Resolution UNEP/EA.2/L.11/Rev.1 *Oceans and Seas* (2016);

WELCOMING the Global Partnership on Marine Litter's work to support this study;

EMPHASISING the importance of reducing the use of petrochemical plastics, especially related to the production of disposable items, and preventing their leakage into the environment, and of capturing the economic value of plastic wastes in order to incentivise plastic waste treatments and provide socio-economic benefits to local communities through processes such as conversion to materials or energy;

NOTING that scientific studies and the report of the first World Ocean Assessment underline the emerging problem of microplastic particles and express concern about the impact on the environment and potential impacts on human health from microplastics entering waterways and marine food chains; and

FURTHER NOTING that Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs), estimated at more than 100,000 in number, are set adrift in tropical oceans each year, with impacts on threatened marine species, including sharks, and that many of these FADs sink in the ocean or wash up on reefs;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:

1. CALLS ON the Director General to:

- a. foster intersectoral cooperation to prevent, reduce and manage debris, including from land- based sources, at local and regional levels; and
- b. promote and support the exchange of information, technology, capacity building and best practice among Members, Commissions, industry, academia and governments on socio- economically viable innovations in recovery and treatment of plastic waste;

2. ENCOURAGES State Members to reduce existing marine debris by:

- a. developing effective methods to locate marine debris accumulations;
 - b. developing effective systems for reporting marine debris accumulations; and
 - c. developing capacity, coordination and research to provide biologically sensitive mechanisms for marine debris removal;
3. ENCOURAGES Members to progress the solutions and recommendations of the UNEP Executive Director's assessment on the environmental impacts of marine plastics;
 4. URGES all Members to follow up on the recommended actions, as appropriate, of the UNEP Executive Director's report on marine plastic debris and microplastics;
 5. CALLS ON the international community to accelerate the development of:
 - a. waste collection infrastructure and plugging of post-collection leakage;
 - b. commercially viable treatment options to convert plastic waste to material or energy;
 - c. innovations in recovery and treatment technologies for waste; and
 - d. prevention measures to reduce or eliminate the use of microbeads in products;
 6. ALSO CALLS ON the international community to find ways to prevent, reduce and manage debris from land-based and marine-based sources, including those associated with lost or abandoned fishing gear, such as Fish Aggregation Devices, and to remove accumulated marine debris from the coastal and marine environment;
 7. ENCOURAGES relevant organisations and their member states to provide leadership in developing regional approaches to tackling waste generation, management and disposal; and
 8. ALSO CALLS ON IUCN Members to increase their efforts to change behaviour – of individuals, communities, businesses and other stakeholders – leading to prevention of marine debris at local, national, and regional scales.