

Protection of herbivorous fish for improved coral community

CONSIDERING the importance of coral communities for marine life, the conservation of which is a great responsibility for humanity, and aware of their essential role for the socio-economic and cultural well-being of more than half a billion people in the world;

NOTING that the health of coral communities continues to decline due to direct (fishing, illegal fishing, tourism, maritime traffic, etc.) and indirect (land-based pollution, etc.) pressures, and that this ecosystem is one of those most immediately threatened by the impacts of climate change;

ALARMED by the findings of the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which predicts a 70–90% decline in coral reefs under a scenario of a 1.5°C temperature increase, and a more than 99% decline with a 2°C increase;

EMPHASISING that healthy coral communities – more resilient to the impacts of climate change – involve an ecological balance between corals and algae, within which herbivory, and particularly that of herbivorous fish, is one of the keys;

NOTING that overfishing of herbivorous fish affects the resilience of coral communities, particularly in the Caribbean region due to the use of certain fishing techniques and historic decline of other keystone herbivores, namely the urchin *Diadema antillarum*;

RECALLING the Recommendation of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) on *addressing the decline in coral reef health throughout the wider Caribbean: the taking of parrotfish and similar herbivores* adopted at the 28th ICRI General Meeting (Belize, 2013); and

COMMENDING those countries that have already taken regulatory measures to protect herbivorous populations (parrotfish in the Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda (UK), Bonaire (Netherlands), Colombia, St-Barthélemy (France), Turks and Caicos (UK), and the United States), and regulation of herbivorous fish fisheries and coastal protection in French Polynesia;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. URGES governments to adopt conservation and sustainable fisheries management strategies that allow the recovery of populations of herbivorous fish to restore the balance between algae and corals, including through a range of measures such as prohibition of some fishing techniques, minimum catch sizes, fishing quotas and managed areas, as well as management of other human activities that impact on herbivorous fish populations;
2. REQUESTS that these management strategies be accompanied by necessary resources for outreach, compliance and enforcement, and by the development of alternative livelihoods for fishers affected by catch restrictions;
3. ENCOURAGES coastal states to work cooperatively, including through relevant regional fisheries forums to address the problem of unsustainable fishing of herbivorous fishes on coral reefs;
4. REQUESTS the assessment of relevant species for inclusion in the Appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES); and
5. REQUESTS, for the Caribbean region, the assessment of the parrotfish species *Scarus coeruleus*, *S. coelestinus* and *S. guacamaia* for inclusion in Appendix 2 of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol to the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region, and of all other herbivorous Scaridae and Acanthuridae fish species in Appendix 3 of the Protocol.