WCC-2020-Rec-029-EN
For the urgent global management of marine and coastal sand resources

CONSIDERING that sand is an essential element of coastal and marine ecosystems (turtle spawning grounds, habitat for benthic species, and mitigation against extreme marine weather hazards) and shelters microorganisms and cyanobacteria that are the basis of marine food webs;

RECALLING that sand is the second-most used resource in the world due to its many uses, including non-residential construction, roads, glass, agriculture, cosmetics, etc.;

NOTING that sediments are essential for coastal dynamics, and their entry into coastal waters has been decreased considerably due to river regulation, dams, and sand extraction from riverbeds;

NOTING that the excessive extraction of sand prevents the reconstitution of stocks in rivers and streams, which are often already modified by humans; and that sand mining exacerbates shoreline erosion phenomena, which increases vulnerability to natural disasters and can affect the integrity of lagoon substrates particularly around coral islets;

NOTING that 75% of the world's beaches have already been depleted as a result of marine sand overexploitation, that beach modifications through sand depletion also alter coastal habitats, and that this trend will increase due to the diversification of extraction areas;

ALARMED that the easy extraction, combined with the profitability in exploiting this scarce resource, fuels the rise of illegal extraction by organised groups, particularly in India, Morocco, Cambodia and the Caribbean, thus posing threats to people and damaging beaches;

EMPHASISING that increasing demand and uncontrolled extraction are the basis for a foreseen global shortage of sand resources;

UNDERLINING that the adverse consequences of sand extraction principally affect the poorest regions in the world, e.g. Indonesia, where several islands have already disappeared due to sand mining; and

WELCOMING positive initiatives such as the recycling of building materials or aggregates for road construction in countries such as France and the United Kingdom;

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

1. RECOMMENDS that states and other relevant authorities should:

a. support the implementation of strategic plans for the management of terrestrial and marine sand at a regional, island or geomorphological unit level, based on the study of sediment flows upstream to downstream, and taking the effects of climate change (sea-level rise, intensification of cyclones, etc.) into account, so as to ensure sustainable use of sand; and

b. ensure that the management and regulation of sand extraction activities is carried out in a sustainable way, making use, for example, of the framework of Regional Seas Conventions and their protocols;

2. URGES the private sector and other stakeholders to voluntarily start using alternative solutions to sand where possible;

3. INVITES public research to contribute to the identification of sand alternatives to facilitate their widespread uptake; and

4. CALLS ON communities, civil society organisations and government agencies to report and take drastic measures to stop all illegal sand-mining activities, and take appropriate measures for restoration of this resource and to systematically request impact assessments (for legal sand-mining projects) which address not only biodiversity impacts but also erosion impacts.