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Planning of maritime areas and biodiversity and geodiversity conservation

RECALLING that the health of marine or coastal ecosystems is today seriously threatened by the impacts of human land-based and marine-based activities, including climate and global change, and that the pressure from these activities jeopardises their integrity;

RECALLING that the sea and the coasts are historically places used for human activities and the development of new uses and that the intensification and diversification of these activities lead to an increased risk of land-use conflict and biodiversity and geodiversity loss;

CONSIDERING therefore that it is necessary to organise these activities in a consistent, sustainable manner in order to reduce these conflicts and this biodiversity and geodiversity loss;

RECALLING that these maritime activities may indeed be associated with indirect, direct and sometimes irreversible impacts, on the natural capital, and that these individual impacts are added to so-called “cumulative impacts”, resulting from the sum and the combination of these individual impacts, particularly in the context of climate change;

ALSO RECALLING that these cumulative impacts very often exceed the simple addition of the individual impacts and that there may be impacts well beyond the maritime and coastal territories where these activities are carried out;

ALSO RECALLING that, although marine space is divided up into areas under national and international jurisdiction, it is also a space where all states have common interests;

FURTHER RECALLING that, whilst territories with maritime and coastal areas can legitimately develop in a sustainable manner the riches associated with these ecosystems, they have an important responsibility for their protection;

FINALLY RECALLING that the states are committed to the integrated management of coastal zones and the planning of maritime areas through the establishment of adapted governance and strategies, including spatial planning, in line with the recommendations of the Rio Summit and in view of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the one on aquatic life, as well as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

RECOGNISING the work and conclusions of international bodies (UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)) and regional bodies regarding the planning of maritime areas;

CONSIDERING the need to apply an ecosystem approach on the scale of marine regions, together with the distribution area of migratory species, in order to establish adapted governance and strategies, including spatial planning, that are efficient for the sustainable development of marine and coastal activities; and to fully understand the cumulative impacts of all current and future activities whether or not they are subject to authorisations, declarations or environmental assessments; and

FURTHER CONSIDERING that the planning of marine areas is a tool that allows for the reinforcement of the necessary protection of marine and coastal ecosystems through the a priori assessment of impacts, including cumulative impacts, and for the anticipation of the needs for compensation areas, for restoration or protection in order to achieve no net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity;

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

1. URGES the states to adopt a forward-looking approach to planning their maritime areas, which guarantees the preservation and long-term protection of marine and coastal ecosystems and the maintenance or restoration of their natural connectivity by:

- a. associating indigenous peoples and all stakeholders for its preparation, the assessment of both singular and cumulative impacts, and its review;
- b. developing a strategic, nested approach at local, national and regional levels in which the cumulative impacts of all activities will be assessed, notably in studies of the impacts or incidences of any projects, plans or programmes affecting the marine environment at a relevant level; and
- c. seeking coherence, organisation and continuity between different maritime, coastal and terrestrial plans, as well as with the neighbouring states;

2. ASKS the states, on the basis of the best information available, to base this approach on:

- a. a systematic diagnosis of knowledge on the biodiversity and geodiversity of marine and coastal ecosystems, and a constant effort to fill knowledge gaps;
- b. the characterisation of all types of pressure on these ecosystems and their biodiversity and geodiversity;
- c. the implementation of the precautionary and preventive principles, as well as ecosystem-based management;
- d. the definition and effective management of networks of marine protected areas;
- e. assessment shared with the public:
 - i. of the cumulative impacts on all offshore and onshore usages;
 - ii. of the potential for development of all kinds of current and future maritime and coastal activities;
 - iii. of the evolution of the pressure linked to the exploitation of this potential in terms of the resilience of the ecosystems; and
 - iv. of the compatibility of these different usages with the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems;
- f. the measurement of the consequences on species (life cycles, migration, etc.) and on the functioning of marine and coastal ecosystems;
- g. the avoidance of the identified impacts by searching for the solution with the slightest environmental impact, and by reducing those that cannot be avoided, in order to guarantee the good ecological status of ecosystems and species in an approach aimed at achieving no net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and even, where possible, to increase biodiversity and geodiversity; and
- h. the anticipation of the evolution of cumulative impacts and the need for ecological compensation zones at sea, for strong protection or areas that need to be restored in view of their importance in the ecosystem; and

3. INVITES states to:

- a. guarantee the necessary funding for the definition and implementation of this planning as well as for the open publication of the assessments, if possible; and
- b. ensure regular monitoring with the states and the regional organisations concerned.