

**WCC-2020-Rec-133-EN**

**Call to withdraw draft-permit mining of fossil fuels underneath UNESCO World Heritage Site Wadden Sea**

NOTING that the Wadden Sea is a N2000 area as well as a transboundary UNESCO World Heritage site (WHS);

NOTING that the mining of fossil fuels underneath WHS Wadden Sea will lead to both short- and long-term subsidence of the seabed;

RECALLING that the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Wadden Sea are caused by and closely related to the exposure of the seabed at low tides;

MINDFUL that numerous protected native and migratory bird species depend on the exposure of the seabed during low tides to obtain their staple foods;

NOTING that the use of fossil fuels will lead to an increase of greenhouse gasses CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> in the global atmosphere which will lead to a rise in sea level both globally as well as in WHS Wadden Sea;

RECALLING that the updated IUCN World Heritage Outlook (2020) found that climate change is now the number one threat to all natural World Heritage properties, impacting one third of all sites;

RECALLING that the precautionary principle is a leading principle within both European and national legislation for the protection of nature;

RECOGNISING that a rise in sea level as well as subsidence of the seabed are strong interrelated factors in limiting the exposure of the seabed in both time and surface;

NOTING that the Wadden Sea is one of the shallowest coastal areas in the Netherlands and therefore extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change among which are rises in seawater temperature and sea level; and

CONCERNED that the Netherlands' Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Change issued a draft permit on 27 August 2021 for the mining of fossil fuel (natural gas) underneath World Heritage Wadden Sea;

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

REQUESTS the government of the Netherlands to withdraw the draft permit for fossil fuel mining in recognition of the global need to protect and preserve the Wadden Sea as a UNESCO World Heritage site, a critical stop-over in the East-Atlantic Flyway, as well as the global need to prevent damage to critical habitats from greenhouse gas emissions.

*Disclaimer: The adoption of this decision by IUCN's Members shall be without prejudice to IUCN's role to provide independent technical advice to the World Heritage Committee.*