

Aquatic biodiversity conservation of shallow marine and freshwater systems

RECALLING that the global population is forecast to reach nine billion by 2050 and that currently about 40% of the global population lives within 100 km of the coast;

RECOGNISING that biodiversity in aquatic ecosystems is richest in shallow waters, and that human pressures, including overfishing, eutrophication and climate change, are most severely impacting coastal, estuarine and freshwater systems, where human populations are mostly densely situated;

CONCERNED that synergistic human pressures in addition to overfishing, such as global warming and soluble and solid pollution, are occurring at both local and broad scales;

FURTHER CONCERNED for both the negative impact on the ecological status and loss of social and economic services that the degradation of biodiversity within these shallow-water systems is having;

NOTING the latest special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on oceans and cryosphere (SROCC), which indicates that some shallow marine ecosystems will experience a moderate or high risk, and very high in the case of coral reefs, as a consequence of climate change;

NOTING that fisheries impacts are unequal across the globe, with many resources that were once over-fished having been, or are in the process of being, rebuilt, while in other areas overfishing continues;

ACCEPTING that transformative change for biodiversity requires the engagement and active participation of a wider constituency of groups, especially those that engage directly in the use of biodiversity;

MINDFUL that management of the different sectors impacting shallow waters is most often done independently – with limited coordination between government agencies and commercial sectors; and

NOTING the initiative of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on mainstreaming of biodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 11;

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

1. ENCOURAGES IUCN to:

a. prioritise biodiversity conservation actions for shallow-water aquatic (freshwater, brackish waters and marine) systems – rich in biodiversity and experiencing high levels of synergistic human pressures – where governance is struggling to address current and increasing threats;

b. improve coordination of management approaches within and across freshwater, wetland and ocean sectors to ensure ecosystem-based and precautionary, coordinated contributions to biodiversity conservation, and to ensure that any use is ecologically sustainable and well within the assimilative capacity of the environment to ensure that future social and economic needs can be met; and

c. establish biodiversity conservation plans for freshwater, estuarine and coastal systems with multiple communities-of-practice partners by 2030; and

2. ENCOURAGES states to support targets and strategies for shallow-water aquatic conservation at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and promote uptake of such a focus in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and beyond.