

Ecosystem conservation, restoration and remediation in the ocean

REALISING that healthy marine ecosystems provide vital services that include biodiversity support, food and other resources, transport, and carbon regulation and sequestration;

RECOGNISING that the growing number and extent of anthropogenic activities in the marine environment are degrading and destroying marine habitats, and that the decline of marine habitats and ecosystems has devastating impacts on people and livelihoods;

NOTING that marine ecosystems differ from terrestrial ecosystems in being strongly connected in three dimensions, functioning on a larger spatial scale and longer time scale, and largely based on small (often mobile) primary producers;

AWARE that conservation, restoration and remediation of the oceans is made more difficult by a dearth of mapping and knowledge, and a vast area without clear governance;

FURTHER NOTING that ecosystem and habitat restoration are still in their infancy in marine environments, with a dearth of experience and expertise;

ALSO NOTING that restoration and remediation of degraded marine environments have generally been uncoordinated, costly and often unsuccessful;

CONCERNED that there are no globally-accepted mechanisms or frameworks to assess the impacts of anthropogenic or restoration activities on sensitive marine habitats and ecosystems in a multidisciplinary and systematic manner;

ACKNOWLEDGING that Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.2 is, by 2020, to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the forthcoming UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 aims to accelerate existing global restoration goals through political support, scientific research and increased financing; and

APPRECIATING that IUCN is developing a new tool – the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems – to assess the status of marine ecosystems and habitats;

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

1. REQUESTS the Director General and the whole of IUCN to:

a. promote ecosystem conservation, restoration and remediation for all marine environments, including those beyond the coastal zone and below the photic zone; and

b. provide extensive support for the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems;

2. ASKS the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) to:

a. encourage the productions of maps of all marine ecosystems and their status;

b. develop, where possible in conjunction with existing regional seas conventions, a framework for marine ecosystem restoration that (i) includes ecological, economic, social and cultural considerations, (ii) uses best available scientific and technical practices, (iii) includes clear objectives, metrics and indicators, and (iv) considers short- and long-term prospects; and

c. catalyse creation of a global database on restoration projects, their progress and long-term success;

3. ENTREATS all Members to:

a. embark on any ecosystem remediation or restoration in a transparent, technically sound manner;

b. consult meaningfully with stakeholders and experts (including holders of local/traditional knowledge);

c. develop long-term objectives, avoiding quick fixes that harm biodiversity, ecosystem function or society;

d. be transparent and precautionary, and analyse risk effectively;

e. include clear metrics and evaluation; and

f. guard against allowing restoration to excuse destruction of natural ecosystems; and

4. URGES State and Government Agency Members to include underrepresented marine habitats in implementing Resolution 6.050 *Increasing marine protected area coverage for effective marine biodiversity conservation* (Hawai'i, 2016), which called for at least 30% of marine habitats to be included in Marine Protected Areas by 2030.