

Updating of the legislation to stop the pollution of oceans caused by the discharging of wastewater by ships

OBSERVING that one of the greatest problems facing humanity is ocean pollution, and that the cause of this pollution is not just marine litter, thousands of kilos of which are removed each year, but also pollution that leads to the biodiversity loss of both marine organisms and the ecosystem services they provide; and that in particular, the input of fertilisers and organic pollution has an increasing effect on the phenomena of eutrophication and the occurrence of red tides along our coasts;

CONSIDERING that the ships that sail around our oceans include an increasingly large number of tourist cruise ships, authentic floating cities, which sail around the coasts of the world; that two types of wastewater are discharged into the ocean by these cruise ships: black water and grey water; that the black water coming mainly from toilets and medical facilities on board contains harmful bacteria, pathogenic organisms, viruses, intestinal parasites and detrimental nutrients, which, if not treated properly, can cause viral or bacterial pollution in marine organisms and eventually affect human health; that the grey water, which comes from kitchens, sinks, showers, baths, washing machines and swimming pools contains fats, oils, chemicals and bleach and therefore it is necessary to carry out a quantitative assessment of the effects of grey water discharged by ships into the marine environment; and

INDICATING that the legislation that establishes rules to prevent ocean pollution being caused by sewage being discharged by ships is contained in Annex IV of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), which was drawn up in 1973, a time when maritime transport was carried out by merchant vessels, and when there were only a few transatlantic ships that sailed between Europe and America, when the cruise ship tourist industry did not exist, and thus the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) agreed to add the amendment to Annex IV of MARPOL and the corresponding guidelines in order to introduce provisions on the keeping of records and measures aimed at confirming the proper functioning of wastewater treatment plants across their entire life cycle, as an item in the 2020-2021 agenda;

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

1. URGES the Member States to take initiatives to take part in the IMO discussions to ensure the effective protection of the oceans through:

a. the consideration of the need for a change in the current legislation on ocean pollution (Annex IV of the MARPOL Convention), which includes the updating of Annex IV of the MARPOL Convention and its guidelines to introduce provisions on the keeping of records and measures aimed at confirming the proper functioning of wastewater treatment plants across their entire life cycle; and

b. awareness-raising campaigns on the need to protect our seas from the enormous environmental impact caused by the wastewater from ships and to preserve the marine environment;

2. ENCOURAGES all IUCN Members, regional, national and European administrations with competences in the conservation of the marine environment and international legislation to cooperate and increase their efforts to launch this process, and also to collaborate in the transfer of the information on the objectives to be fulfilled to the land managers and the scientific community; and

3. ASKS the Director General and all Members and Commissions, and in particular the World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), to strive to achieve the objectives contained in this motion.