

Safeguarding coral reefs from harmful chemicals in sunscreen

EMPHASISING that coral-reef ecosystems play a fundamental role in ecological, social and economic well-being;

AWARE that over 60% of the world's coral reefs are at risk from factors including climate change, pollution and overfishing;

RECOGNISING that sunscreen is a source of coral-reef pollution and scientists have found that certain chemicals in sunscreen contribute to coral-reef bleaching and pose a threat to healthy coral-reef ecosystems, even at extremely low concentrations;

CONCERNED that 6,000 to 14,000 tons of sunscreen wash into the ocean every year;

RECOGNISING that sound coral-reef management and protection is integral to a strong and healthy marine ecosystem;

HIGHLIGHTING that Hawai'i, Palau, US Virgin Islands, and certain parts of Mexico and the Florida Keys have banned sunscreens containing chemicals harmful to coral reefs;

RECALLING the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, particularly Target 10, "By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning";

UNDERLINING that the Fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-4) found that Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 is not being met and that significantly accelerated actions are needed to reverse this trend;

RECOGNISING that the proposed IUCN Programme 2021–2024 identifies restoring the health of the world ocean as one of five priority areas;

ACKNOWLEDGING Goal (3) of the International Coral Reef Initiative Plan of Action 2016–2018 to "review issues related to the impact of sunscreens and other endocrine disruptors on coral reefs, and encourage the production of sunscreens that are proven not to damage coral reefs" and the ICRI study on 'Impacts of Sunscreens on Coral Reefs' that provides several recommendations; and

APPRECIATING IUCN's longstanding commitment to coral-reef protection;

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

1. URGES the Species Survival Commission (SSC) to conduct an assessment on best practices to inform and help State Members to protect coral reefs from the harmful chemicals found in sunscreen;
2. CALLS ON the World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) to:
 - a. compile examples of existing legislation or regulations adopted for the purpose of protecting coral reefs from harmful chemicals found in sunscreen, with analysis and recommendations concerning the various approaches; and
 - b. provide guidance to State Members to develop legislation or regulations to protect coral reefs from harmful chemicals found in sunscreen; and
3. REQUESTS Members, based on available guidance and/or model legislation and regulation, to encourage the adoption and implementation of model legislation to protect coral reefs from harmful chemicals found in sunscreen.