

WCC-2020-Res-121-EN

Reducing the impacts of the mining industry on biodiversity

REAFFIRMING Resolution 053 *Protecting coastal and marine environments from mining waste* (Hawai'i, 2016);

CONCERNED by the considerable increase in demand for mineral resources worldwide, principally from industries such as construction, transport and defence, but also the energy production, information and communication technologies and agri-food sectors, threatening terrestrial, freshwater, marine and coastal ecosystems with increasing pressure for exploration of the seabed, the ecology of which is still largely unknown;

NOTING that the mineral and metal industry represents 30% of international maritime traffic, and 8–10% of the world's energy consumption, in a context of dramatic global warming and that the burning of fossil fuels is a major contributor to the rise of greenhouse gas emissions;

AWARE that the mining industry is considered to be one of the most impactful on nature due to the major damage it causes to ecosystems, and that rehabilitation of exploited sites must be improved and systematically conducted;

NOTING the progressive scarcity of rich and easily exploitable deposits and, consequently, the steady decline in mining sequence grades, which pushes back the physical (geographic area, depth) and technological (e.g. leaching, mountaintop removal) boundaries of projects and increases the threats to and impacts on socio-ecosystems;

NOTING that the market for many mining commodities also includes industries, such as renewable energy, that can reduce anthropogenic impact on climate and that resource recovery, new organic and other technologies and substitution can reduce these demands;

NOTING the serious negative impacts linked with some practices such as seismic surveys, the disposal of mine waste in riverine, lake and marine environments, or the storage of waste in tailing dams, and recalling that more than 50 dam failures have occurred since 2000, with major and lasting consequences on humans and the environment; and

CONSIDERING that the exploitation of mineral resources, on which humankind currently depends, can generate seriously damaging effects to the environment, workers and local communities;

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

1. CHARGES the IUCN Environmental Law Programme with developing guidance on legislation and regulations for the phasing out of fossil fuel mining and decreasing the impact of mining including minerals mining activities including exploration, extraction and processing, which can be adopted by authorities;
2. CALLS ON states to effectively regulate such exploration, extraction and processing activities within their territories through international regulation and through the effective implementation of national and/or local regulations;
3. RECOMMENDS a reduced consumption of primary resources;
4. REQUESTS that governments and industries prioritise and adopt alternatives to exploring for and mining virgin raw materials and prioritising resource recovery, reuse and recycling of minerals as sources of supply, as well as substitution with renewable materials, and to improve the efficiency of associated techniques;
5. CALLS ON states to apply the precautionary approach to the management of risks to terrestrial, fresh water and benthic ecosystems and to the water column from the exploration, extraction and processing phases of mining;

6. URGES the ending of practices that do not guarantee human safety and nature protection in the long term from the disposal of mine waste into terrestrial, freshwater, marine and coastal ecosystems, such as the use of harmful chemicals in order to protect humans and nature;

7. INVITES states and other competent authorities to develop and implement transition plans to reduce demand for virgin raw materials and to phase down and progressively phase out the production of virgin raw materials and instead to supply recovered, reused and recycled materials and to find renewable substitutes; and

8. ENCOURAGES governments to cooperate in creating medium- and long-term mineral supply and substitution plans, taking biodiversity and human well-being issues into account, including through strategic environmental and social assessments.