

8.020 Implementing an aquascape approach to conservation and management of fresh and saline water ecosystems

KNOWING that geodiversity is the sustenance of biodiversity and that it conditions the aquatic landscape, and that we have to know the geological processes, surface and subterranean, of aquatic areas in order to conserve them;

KNOWING ALSO that aquatic areas have a rich geological heritage that must be known, but also that there are places that have almost forgotten about traditional uses and knowledge of geodiversity and biodiversity (places with legends and spirituals, inland salt flats, spas, etc.) that urgently need to be preserved and valued, so that the memory of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is not lost;

AWARE that freshwater, transitional and marine waters are connected aquascapes with ecological, biochemical, geochemical, geological, physical, economic and social interdependencies that affect species and habitats, and thus must be conserved and managed through joined-up actions across these full aquascapes;

APPRECIATING that humans rely on ecosystem services provided by aquatic systems, such as provision of resources, livelihoods, transport routes, water filtration, hazard risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation;

CONCERNED about severe pressures on the aquatic environment and its biodiversity, outlined in *Thematic Assessment Report on Interlinkages Among Biodiversity, Water, Food and Health* of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the World Wide Fund for Nature's *Living Planet Report 2024*;

RECOGNISING that conservation, management and governance for aquatic systems tend to separate freshwater and marine, with estuarine and transitional areas often overlooked;

RECOGNISING ALSO the importance of work to date on specific instruments, including the Convention on Wetlands, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the Convention on Migratory Species, clarifying relevant decisions and gaps;

ACKNOWLEDGING that uninterrupted natural flow of water is essential for aquatic species and habitats, including many species that migrate between freshwater and marine, use coastal marine waters to disperse across river basins, and/or exist in transitional and estuarine habitats;

ALSO RECOGNISING arid-region aquatic systems (e.g. wadis, ephemeral wetlands, saline lagoons), which are ecologically critical but often overlooked;

MINDFUL that IUCN's Ridge to Reef (R2R): Managing Waters from Source to Sea links freshwater, transitional and marine systems, and that similar frameworks have been developed elsewhere;

RECALLING Resolutions 7.008 *Protecting rivers and their associated ecosystems as corridors in a changing climate*, 7.012 *Aquatic biodiversity conservation of shallow marine and freshwater systems*, 7.015 *Cooperation on transboundary fresh waters to ensure ecosystem conservation, climate resilience and sustainable development*, 7.017 *Protection of natural flows of water for the conservation of wetlands*, 7.027 *Seascapes working for biodiversity conservation* and 7.073 *Ecological connectivity conservation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework: from local to international levels* (all adopted in Marseille, 2020), which address concerns that would benefit from more integrated aquatic conservation and management schemes; and

FURTHER AWARE that treating aquatic systems as connected aquascapes improves conservation of species, habitats and ecosystems, supports ecosystem services for socio-economic well-being, and improves cohesive responses to climate change effects on ecosystems and human communities;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. URGES the Director General, Commissions, Members and States to:

a. implement conservation for aquascapes, including transitional habitats and for diadromous species that are exposed to both freshwater and marine threats;

b. support sectoral integration across aquascapes in national management and sustainable development; and

c. support regional and multilateral agreements and initiatives in achieving their goals across full aquascapes, through provision of data and advice on conservation priorities and practice;

2. REQUESTS the Commissions to set up an Inter-Commission Task Force on Aquascapes, to develop and provide guidance on:

a. including aquascape management in national policy plans, and integrated aquascape management for governments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector;

b. connecting conserved and protected areas and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and geodiversity across aquascapes to improve levels of protection, conservation status and management;

c. identifying KBAs in transitional waters with freshwater and marine conservation importance, or KBAs that form critical networks or corridors across an aquascape;

d. expanding current catchment maps to aquascapes, including ecological, biochemical, geochemical and geological, physical, economic and social linkages, for use in conservation planning, management and IUCN Red List of Ecosystems assessments;

e. knowledge of aquascape geodiversity and geological processes, in order to see its relationship with its biodiversity and with present and future environmental problems; and

f. identification of inventories of sites of geological interest and of traditional uses and knowledge of the geodiversity of these aquatic landscapes; and

3. REQUESTS the Commissions to support capacity-building and regional dialogues on applying aquascape approaches in arid and coastal ecosystems, including in West Asia and the Global South.