

8.031 Protecting the Gulf of California World Heritage Sites of Mexico from industrialisation for liquefied natural gas development

RECALLING the many resolutions addressing the impacts of environmentally damaging oil and gas activities and infrastructure development projects in, on or otherwise affecting protected areas;

RECALLING that the International Energy Agency stated that “[e]xisting LNG [liquefied natural gas] export capacity and new capacity under construction is sufficient to meet projected demand ... no further projects are required in the near term to satisfy demand for LNG”;

RECOGNISING that LNG is not going to assist in decarbonising shipping, given that this fuel is just as harmful to the climate as heavy fuel oil, given the associated methane leakage;

RECOGNISING that the islands and protected areas of the Gulf of California (GC) have been globally recognised as a World Heritage Site since 2005, due to their unique ecological value;

CONSIDERING the scientific studies demonstrating the uniquely important ecological processes of the GC, which provides habitat for 39% of all marine mammal species, and 11 whale, 891 fish, 154 land bird, 695 vascular plant and 115 reptile species;

RECOGNISING that Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) have many traditions deeply rooted in the marine ecosystem, surrounding desert, and islands of the GC, thus its health and robust biodiversity are integral to the culture, survival and support of sustainable economic sectors, including fishing, tourism and recreation of all communities;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee has expressed concern about approvals of LNG facilities and that environmentally damaging industrialisation is incompatible with World Heritage status;

COMMENDING the Government of Mexico for protecting the iconic biodiversity of the GC by preventing its use as a channel for harmful industrial shipping; and

TROUBLED that three LNG export projects and related infrastructure planned in the GC, using fracked methane gas piped from the United States of America, would result in increased commercial and LNG vessel traffic with significant adverse impacts, including, but not limited to, pollution, species disturbance and ship strikes;

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

1. URGES the Government of Mexico to maintain its active role in the protection, conservation and restoration of the GC;

2. CALLS ON the Governments of Mexico and the United States of America to ensure the implementation of the precautionary principle, to oppose and, where necessary, reconsider actions permitting LNG industrialisation of the GC, and to prohibit such activities in order to protect the region's unique species diversity, sensitive ecosystem and the IPLCs that depend on it;

3. ENCOURAGES the Director General, Commissions and Members to support, as appropriate, through facilitative dialogue, administrative, scientific and financial assistance, the IPLCs and non-governmental organisations working to protect the GC from proposed LNG industrialisation and related infrastructure;

4. ASKS the Director General and Commissions to be prepared to assist in providing technical advice on this matter upon request of the Governments of Mexico and the United States of America;

5. REQUESTS that IUCN explore opportunities to serve as a neutral platform to support dialogue among the Government of Mexico, IPLCs, and civil society organisations, ensuring meaningful participation and protection of civic space in the conservation of the Gulf of California; and

6. URGES companies, public sector bodies, financial institutions, certification bodies and industry groups to:

a. respect all categories of protected areas and those areas known to be of high biodiversity importance, such as Key Biodiversity Areas, as areas where environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development should be avoided;

b. deny or withdraw funding from activities that negatively impact areas of recognised importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services; and

c. avoid conducting damaging activities in such areas.

Disclaimer: The adoption of this decision by IUCN's Members shall be without prejudice to IUCN's role to provide independent technical advice to the World Heritage Committee.