Bioprospecting Marine Resources

(Agenda item 18.2)

IUCN strongly supports the draft decision on marine and coastal biodiversity and its elaborated programme of work (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/1/Add.2, B) as well as the basic principles that have a central role in guiding activities under the work programme: the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach. In particular, we welcome the programme operational objective of making available to Parties information on marine and coastal genetic resources, including bioprospecting.

On the issue of bioprospecting marine resources, with reference to paras. 14, 47 and 49 of the draft decision, IUCN is concerned that certain collection activities aimed at the development of marine bioproducts may adversely impact populations of target species and highly diverse and little studied ecosystems, including rare and endemic species.

IUCN urges that sustainable management practices be developed for marine bioprospecting both within and beyond national jurisdiction, and urges that Parties and other Governments, in collaboration with industry, include the following in the activities called for under paras. 14, 47 and 49:

- Evaluating collection methods used in marine bioprospecting.
- Determining criteria for sustainable use of marine resources in bioprospecting, both in initial sample collection and subsequent harvesting.
- Developing good practices for marine bioprospecting in accordance with the principles of the work programme.
Considering the need for improved harmonization and coordination in the development of national and international approaches to marine bioprospecting.

Within national jurisdiction, para. 14 of the draft decision, supported by operational objective 3.1.a, urges Parties and other Governments, as a matter of high priority:

- To establish an effective marine and coastal biodiversity management framework covering all areas subject to national jurisdiction, and that such a framework comprise sustainable management practices and actions to protect biodiversity over the wider marine and coastal environment.

For the deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction, paras. 47 and 49 of the draft decision, supported by operational objective 2.2 call, respectively, to:

- Compile and synthesize information on methods to identify, assess and monitor genetic resources of this area, including identification of threats to such resources and the means for their protection, with a view to addressing processes and activities under Article 4 (b) of the Convention.

- Invite Parties and other States to identify activities and processes under their jurisdiction or control which may have significant adverse impact on deep seabed ecosystems and species beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, in order to comply with Article 3 of the Convention.

Better information and guidance can help Parties and other Governments ensure that marine bioprospecting activities are sustainable, both within and beyond national jurisdiction.

For more information, please see the Information Paper “Bioprospecting marine resources: Conservation concerns and management implications” included in IUCN’s documentation for COP7.