

# IUCN position on SDG14 - Call for Action

**Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

**The Ocean Conference, New-York, 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

## Executive summary

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, envisions sustainable development as a path that leads to a just and prosperous world that values and conserves nature by ensuring, through effective and equitable governance, that its resources are used sustainably. Nature's amazingly constructed web of interdependencies provides our food, air and water as well many cultural and spiritual amenities; the very essence of life on earth. Coastal and marine genetic diversity, species, and ecosystems deliver our growing population with the very underpinning of human existence. IUCN strongly believes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through SDG 14, provides an important framework to address the challenges faced today by humanity.

IUCN WELCOMES the outcomes of the 45th session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC-45) and the adoption of the outline of the 'Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate,' that will present science relevant to achieving SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 14 (life below water) as its chapters will *inter alia* cover polar regions; sea level rise and implications for low lying islands, coasts and communities; and the changing ocean.

## **For the successful implementation of the Call for Action, and SDG 14, IUCN URGES all States to:**

1. CONSIDER nature-based solutions through the protection and restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems as a fundamental contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation, alongside their multiple social, economic and environmental benefits;
2. RECOGNIZE the inadequacy of the 10% marine target for protection versus the growing scientific and global consensus of what is actually needed for the global ocean;
3. ACCELERATE action to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds;
4. AGREE to convene in 2018 an intergovernmental conference to develop an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in ABNJ;
5. REDUCE direct injury or mortality from ship strikes, and sub-lethal behavioural effects of underwater noise pollution;
6. JOIN the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments;
7. AFFIRM the importance of promoting proactive, effective, inclusive, gender-responsive solutions and to ACCOUNT for the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, and their conservation, economic, social and cultural traditions and aspirations

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## At the Heart of Sustainable Development – key ocean facts

Oceans, seas, marine and coastal ecosystems are at the very heart of Sustainable Development. They are of critical importance for the implementation of the whole 2030 Agenda:

- 30 % of the anthropogenic emissions CO<sub>2</sub> and around 93 % of the added heat arising from human-driven changes to the atmosphere have been absorbed by the ocean;
- Many Island Countries and Territories are large oceanic entities and all are at the frontline of climate change;
- Mangroves provide ecosystem services worth up to US\$57,000 ha/year and are a key natural ally to mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- 12,7% of the waters under national jurisdiction and 5,1% of the global Ocean are managed as MPAs; but that's not enough;
- Ship strikes remain one of the major threats to the North Atlantic Right Whale.<sup>1</sup> From 1990 through 2012, more than half 39 of 73 of all dead right whales found stranded or floating at sea were attributable to ship collisions or entanglement;
- While the contribution of human activities to underwater noise varies across ocean basins, such noise has increased in some regions by 3 decibels per decade and continues to increase in many regions globally;
- Invasive alien species are the 2nd biggest driver of species extinctions globally, and the number of new introductions show no signs of slowing, with one new marine biological invasion being reported every nine weeks;

- By consensus, the UNGA agreed to develop an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction;
- In 2010, around 8 Million Metric tonnes of plastic entered the ocean, enough to place the equivalent of five grocery bags full of plastic trash every 30 cm of every nation's coastline around the globe;
- No less than 1,127 marine species face a high risk of extinction, based on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species<sup>2</sup>.

### General remarks: IUCN

APPLAUDS the dedication and importance given to SDG 14 by the world community;

WELCOMES all efforts made to develop a strong, concise and action-oriented Call for Action;

WELCOMES the recognition of the need to enhance the involvement of diverse stakeholders such as indigenous peoples, women and youth for local and national ownership; but

REMINDS Parties to ensure that SDG 14 as well as related implementation processes have clear, meaningful and complete stakeholder participation;

WELCOMES SDG 14.C and STRESSES the importance of international law for the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources; and

CALLS on Parties to ensure actions, including voluntary commitments as well as actions across SDGs are being monitored, reported and verified, for example by a Special Rapporteur, so to ensure a swift and meaningful transition towards a low carbon and sustainable coastal and marine economy.

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<sup>1</sup> Endangered in the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iucnredlist.org/> (as of 13 April 2017)

## **In the final *Call for Action* IUCN URGES Parties to**

REFERENCE explicitly the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. The world community has an agreed way forward on climate change, including addressing the interlinkages with the ocean, which needs to be highlighted and recognized;

HIGHLIGHT that the ocean and its biodiversity are impacted by multiple, and often cumulative stressors;

STRENGTHEN the reference to the importance of marine biodiversity for sustainable development;

MAINTAIN specific reference to “land-based pollution” and RETAIN a reference to “microplastics”;

SUPPORT language taking action to address increasing threats to whales and other marine species from ship strikes and ocean noise;

EMPHASIZE the prevention as the most effective means of addressing the threat to marine biodiversity posed by invasive alien species; and

APPOINT an UN Ocean Ombudsman or Special Rapporteur to provide the focus needed for reviewing progress and the voluntary commitments made across the many sectors, agencies and stakeholders involved in ocean issues.

### **Implementation of the Call for Action**

IUCN however STRONGLY REMINDS all States and other actors that without concrete follow-ups, as well as continuing targeted and coordinated efforts by all, ocean health is under significant threat of being irreversibly damaged. Now is the time to show strong leadership and action to preserve the coastal and marine environment for future generations and to ensure sustainable and inclusive development

IUCN therefore RECOMMENDS to all States to STRONGLY CONSIDER the below key items towards the implementation of the Call for Action, in relation to:

## **1. Climate Change**

FULLY and RAPIDLY IMPLEMENT the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and with a view to holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;

CONSIDER nature-based solutions through the protection and restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems (including as protected areas<sup>3</sup>) as a fundamental contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation, alongside their multiple social, economic and environmental benefits;

INCREASE the integration of coastal and marine ecosystems in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) as part of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs);

ENSURE increased and long-term financing with simplified access to climate finance for coastal and marine projects in order to support and mobilize all relevant stakeholders particularly at the local level.

SUPPORT, PROMOTE and COMMUNICATE climate science across borders and disciplines;

## **2. Marine Protected Areas and Marine Spatial Planning**

BE ENCOURAGED by the recently increased marine conservation efforts reaching a coverage of 12,7% of the waters under national jurisdiction and 5,1% of the global ocean under marine protected area<sup>4</sup>, but also;

RECOGNIZE the inadequacy of the 10% marine target for protection versus the growing scientific and global consensus of what is actually needed for the global ocean, including marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, and the global consensus from the Hawaii World Conservation Congress in 2016 of ‘at least 30%’, alongside firm implementation of frameworks to deliver sustainability of all practices across the whole ocean seascape,

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<sup>3</sup> IUCN WCC 2016 Resolution 39 Protected areas as natural solutions to climate change

<sup>4</sup> Protected Planet, update, December 2016

subject to the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities";

STRENGTHEN and REINFORCE international targets in the light of the pressing challenges and a changing ocean;

BE GUIDED by the CBD/IUCN definitions of a Marine Protected Area (MPA)<sup>5</sup> which are clear and unambiguous. There is need to ensure that CBD and IUCN standards around MPAs are recognized and attention drawn to concerns of misinterpretation of the IUCN protected areas definition and categories<sup>6</sup>. Experience has shown that better meeting of international standards delivers benefits; while misuse of standards misses opportunities to stem ecosystem decline and species loss;

BE AWARE that other effective area-based conservation measures – which may not have conservation as their primary objective – are a key component of an effective and well-connected networks of managed area, but they should not take the place of marine protected areas<sup>7</sup>;

COMBINE coastal and marine protected areas in the wider land/seascape with other area-based conservation measures and area based management tools including Marine Spatial Planning to ensure comprehensive decision-making;

IMPLEMENT community-based marine areas, such as Locally Managed Marine Areas, recognizing the important role of indigenous peoples and local communities in conserving marine areas and resources under their management;

APPLY the Mitigation Hierarchy<sup>8</sup> to all major infrastructure projects in the marine realm.

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<sup>5</sup> IUCN defines a protected area as a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

<sup>6</sup> [https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/uicn\\_categoriesamp\\_eng.pdf](https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/uicn_categoriesamp_eng.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.iucn.org/news/task-force-other-effective-area-based-conservation-measures>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/mitigation-hierarchy>

### 3. Ocean Shipping

RECOGNIZE both acute (ship-strike mortality) and chronic (elevation of marine ambient noise at a global scale) shipping impacts on marine species as inter-related threats whose cumulative impacts often combine in non-linear ways with other stressors;

REDUCE direct injury or mortality from ship strikes, and sub-lethal behavioural effects of underwater noise pollution;

DEVELOP ship-noise monitoring and mitigation efforts which involve shipping industry, port authority and government partnerships.

### 4. Invasive Alien Species

JOIN the Honolulu Challenge on IAS<sup>9</sup>, recently launched at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, which calls for the urgent development of bold, yet practical, measures to safeguard biodiversity and human wellbeing from the devastating impacts of IAS;

JOIN the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, as appropriate, which will enter into force on 8 September 2018, which aims to address one of the major pathways of introduction in the marine environment;

USE the IUCN IAS decision support tools<sup>10</sup> and develop measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of IAS in marine ecosystems, and control the priority species. Such measures will underpin work towards a number of SDG targets beyond SDG 14 and SDG 15.

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<sup>9</sup> Honolulu Challenge -

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/species/our-work/invasive-species/honolulu-challenge-invasive-alien-species>

<sup>10</sup> IUCN Global Invasive Species Database <http://www.iucngisd.org/> & Global Register of Introduced & Invasive Species [www.griis.org/](http://griis.org/)

## 5. Areas beyond National Jurisdiction<sup>11</sup>

REACH a consensus on the substantive recommendations to the UNGA on the elements of a draft text of an international legally-binding instrument under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of ABNJ<sup>12</sup>;

USE their existing powers to support science-based processes that allow for the establishment of an ecologically representative and well-connected system of MPAs including reserves as an element of the new agreement and to adopt ecosystem-based protection measures for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in ABNJ, including through MPAs, environmental assessments, Marine Spatial Planning and sector-based management tools;

CALL on the UNGA to decide to convene an intergovernmental conference to take place in 2018 on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS<sup>13</sup>.

## 6. International Law

ACCEPT, RATIFY, IMPLEMENT and ENFORCE instruments that implement international law that address ocean and marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

## 7. Ocean Pollution

ACCELERATE action to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, such as marine debris, nutrient pollution, wastewater, solid waste discharges particularly plastics in all forms and sizes, including microplastics and nanoplastics;

SUPPORT scientific research and harmonization of data collecting protocols - and enhancing cooperation in scientific research

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<sup>11</sup> WCC-2016-Res-0 47 Advancing conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction

<sup>12</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 69/292, adopted by consensus in June 2015

<sup>13</sup> WCC-2016-Res-047 Advancing conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction

and the sharing of data to better understand the relationship between climate and the health and productivity of the oceans;

EXPLORE the use of existing or developing potentially new international legally binding instruments, such as an International Convention on Plastics for tackling the issue of oceans plastics.

## 8. Gender<sup>14</sup> and Indigenous Peoples

AFFIRM the importance of promoting proactive, effective, inclusive, gender-responsive solutions in implementation activities;

EMBRACE the crucial role women and men alike play in the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;

ENSURE SDG 14 strategies and achievements complement and enhance action toward cross-cutting Goals such as SDG 5, focused on advancing gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, in an integrated manner;

SUPPORT and EMPOWER community-driven initiatives led by and benefitting women and men alike; such as sustainably managed marine areas, at local, national and regional scales, to ensure food, water and economic security while enhancing resilience to the differentiated impacts of climate change;

INTEGRATE gender responsive reforms and their implementation by equally considering the needs, priorities, knowledge and experiences of men and women alike in marine and coastal ecosystems;

ENSURE the means of implementation of the Call for Action account for the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, and their conservation, economic, social and cultural traditions and aspirations, including access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources.

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**IUCN stands ready to provide technical support to promote and support the actions described above.**

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<sup>14</sup> IUCN's 1998 Gender Policy