

CGR4.MOT039

Conservation and sustainable use of fish in the River Plate Basin

RECALLING that with more than 3,200,000 km² (1,236,000 square miles) the River Plate Basin is the second largest in South America and the fourth largest in the world; that it covers the territory of Paraguay and borders on considerable parts of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay, including within its central plain the most extensive corridor of fluvial wetlands on the planet, nearly 4,000 km (2485 miles) from the Mato Grosso marshlands to the Plate River;

TAKING into account that the Basin offers water resources and environmental services to more than 100 million inhabitants; that it constitutes a region of great economic and ecological importance, including a high level of biodiversity, a wide variety of climates, soils, forests and wetlands, and a unique cultural heritage; and that fishing in the Basin is essential for the food security of its populations;

EMPHASISING that the rich ichthyic biodiversity in the Plate River Basin, including more than 300 species of fish in the Parana River alone, is due to the extraordinary complexity and diversity of its water systems, particularly its wetlands, and to the convergence of species from different ecosystems such as Amazonia, the Cerrado, the Grand Chaco, the Mata Atlantica, the Pampa and the Pantanal;

RECOGNIZING that the fresh water biodiversity in the Plate River Basin is being impacted by the overexploitation of fish resources, the fragmentation of natural ecosystems, the expansion of the agricultural frontier, large infrastructural public works projects, urban development, pollution, inadequate watershed management, among other factors, affecting not only wetlands and populations of aquatic species but also local communities that depend upon these resources;

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the riverine communities of the Paraguay-Parana wetlands system, particularly fishermen, being an essential part of the Plate River Basin, face serious threats due to the decline in and loss of access to natural resources and that the role of fresh water biodiversity and its economic and social benefits have not been sufficiently studied and recognized by environmental and social policy makers;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that there exists a lack of standardized information that would allow us, on a regional scale, to know the status of the threat to fish species, and to use this information to contribute to sustainable biodiversity management;

RECOGNIZING that training programs are necessary for artisanal fishermen to strengthen themselves institutionally, to develop appropriate and sustainable business management skills, and to add value to their fishery products and thus contribute to reducing poverty;

AWARE of the need to promote efforts that upgrade current information and its application to sustainable management practices, which contribute to the maintenance of fish populations and improvement in the quality of life of local communities that depend upon these resources; to support examples of good sustainable fishery management practices that include the participation of the communities and local governments, coordinating with all sectors; and to develop the capabilities of the actors on the ground and the authorities to manage in a sustainable manner the fisheries of the River Plate Basin;

RECALLING Rec 2.85 (*Conservation of Middle and Lower Parana River*) adopted by the 2nd Session of the World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000) and Rec 3.097 (*Conservation of the Wetland Corridor of the Fluvial Littoral, Argentina*) adopted by the 3rd Session of the

World Conservation Congress (Bangkok, 2004), and recalling that the area under consideration represents a paradigmatic case offering important advances; it being necessary to deepen the coordinated work of all the actors in the application of the rational use criterion of the Ramsar Convention and of the Ecosystem Approach adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity;

RECOGNIZING regional advances such as the Pocone Accord (2005), the Paraguay-Parana System Alliance initiative, and the Regional Strategy initiative presented to the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention, and the Merida Accord (2007) as important precedents; and

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that it is necessary to contribute to reducing poverty, to sustainable development, to adopting appropriate public policies, to environmental security, and to the governability of the Plate River Basin, in continual coordination with other initiatives seeking to achieve the sustainability of water ecosystems and their resources, particularly fisheries;

The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5–14 October 2008:

1. RECOGNIZES governmental and non-governmental initiatives in the countries of the Plate River Basin that encourage conservation and the rational use of the region's aquatic resources, with special emphasis on fishery resources, of vital importance for the region's economies, for food security and health, and for maintaining the work, culture and quality of life of the riverine communities;
2. CALLS on the governments as well as state, academic and technical-scientific organizations of the five countries to give the highest priority to implementing conservation and rational use measures for the wetlands and their resources and to maintaining the essential ecological conditions and processes of the water systems of the Basin, and to the sustainable management of its fisheries, in coordination with the Ramsar Convention;
3. URGES the States of the Basin to support cooperative conservation programmes, participatory management-administration and sustainable use of the fisheries, promoting fishery resources through community-based fair trade; and that they support access to information and participation in decision making on the part of the local communities, including support to model replicable experiences in sustainable fishery resource management;
4. CALLS on IUCN's members in the region to support the Governments and the NGOs in this mission, deepening the processes of coordination, consensus and competence building with the riverine communities, grassroots groups, NGOs, local governments and academic-scientific institutions; and
5. RECOMMENDS that international organizations support the Governments and IUCN members working in the region in implementing public policies and obtaining resources for the conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries of the River Plate Basin;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5–14 October 2008, provides the following guidance in the implementation of the Programme 2009–2012:

6. CALLS on the Director General to support the Governments and NGOs to:

- a. Conserve and rationally use the region's aquatic resources, with special emphasis on fisheries, and
- b. Enhance coordination, consensus and competence building with the riverine communities, grassroots groups, NGOs, local governments and academic-scientific institutions.

Sponsors:

Fundacion PROTEGER
Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales
Secretaría de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable

Comment:

The activities provided for in this motion are in accordance with the Programme but would require significant new resources. This motion is referred to a Programme Hearing for consideration.

COSTS: Core resources on the order of CHF 100,000 would be required to undertake the actions called for as presented.