**SEAGRASS ECOSYSTEMS**

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*(Prepared by the Aquatic WG and the COW)*

DRAFT RESOLUTION

**Conservation and sustainable management of seagrass ecosystems**

*Highlighting* the importance of seagrass ecosystems as important habitats for migratory marine species, including sirenians, cetaceans, marine turtles and elasmobranchs,

*Recalling* UN General Assembly Resolution 76/265 proclaiming 1 March as World Seagrass Day,

*Taking note* of the 2020 report of the United Nations Environment Programme entitled ‘Out of the Blue: The Value of Seagrasses to the Environment and to People’ and the recommendations for seagrass conservation contained therein,

*Recognizing* the vital ecosystem services that seagrass ecosystems provide, such as carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, food security, fisheries productivity, water quality enhancement and coastal protection,

*Noting* the carbon sequestration and storage potential of seagrass ecosystems and that adopting measures to protect and restore seagrasses can contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement,

*Acknowledging* the significant threats to seagrass ecosystems, including habitat degradation, pollution, including noise pollution, climate change, overfishing, bottom trawling, dredging and coastal development, which have resulted in the global decline of seagrass habitats and their associated biodiversity,

*Noting* the urgent need to raise awareness at all levels and to promote and facilitate actions for the conservation and restoration of seagrasses, bearing in mind that enhancing ecosystem services and functions is important for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

*Recognizing* the transboundary nature of many seagrass ecosystems around the world,

*Emphasizing* the need for collaborative and coordinated efforts among countries, regional organizations, international bodies and stakeholders to conserve and sustainably manage seagrass ecosystems,

*Recalling* the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030),

*Highlighting* the work under the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats throughout their Range in addressing seagrass ecosystems,

*Recalling* relevant international obligations, including those in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, especially Targets 2 and 3, the Paris Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals,

*Welcoming* the ambition of the global initiative, 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, announced at UNFCCC COP28 and aimed at establishing a collective framework of action by State and non-State actors for the sustainable financing of seagrass ecosystem protection, conservation, and restoration globally by 2030,

*The Conference of the Parties to the*

*Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Urges* Parties to recognize the importance of seagrass ecosystems as important habitats for migratory marine species such as sirenians, cetaceans, marine turtles and elasmobranchs;
2. *Urges* Parties to recognize the contribution of migratory species to the maintenance and functioning of seagrass ecosystems and as such enhance the ability of these ecosystems to provide nature-based solutions to climate change;
3. *Urges* Parties to strengthen conservation and restoration measures for seagrass ecosystems and associated migratory species, including implementing and enforcing effective legal and regulatory measures to conserve and manage seagrass ecosystems such as including seagrass ecosystems in marine protected areas, locally managed marine areas, or other effective area-based conservation measures, integrating seagrass and associated migratory species conservation into relevant coastal and marine spatial planning processes and in strategies to address climate change;
4. *Calls on* Parties to collaborate on the international conservation of seagrass ecosystems, engaging in bilateral, regional and global efforts;
5. *Encourages* Parties to conduct regular monitoring, research and data-collection on seagrass ecosystems to better understand their status, trends, economic value and ecological functions as well as their role in supporting migratory species and how those migratory species support healthy seagrass ecosystems, and to use this knowledge to inform decision-making and management actions for seagrass conservation and restoration;
6. *Recommends* Parties to provide financial support and resources for the conservation and restoration of seagrass ecosystems and the role they play in supporting migratory species;
7. *Calls upon* Parties to leverage funding from relevant international and regional mechanisms, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and other sources, to support seagrass conservation and management activities;
8. *Urges* Parties to raise public awareness of the importance of seagrass ecosystems and their role in supporting migratory species, and to engage stakeholders, including local communities, indigenous peoples, academia, industry and civil society, in seagrass conservation and management efforts through participatory processes and partnerships;
9. *Encourages* Parties to recognize the importance of seagrass ecosystems, including the associated migratory species, as carbon sinks and to include them in national climate change mitigation strategies, including Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement;
10. *Requests* the Secretariat to promote international cooperation and coordination on the conservation and sustainable management of seagrass ecosystems that have been identified as important habitats for marine migratory species, and to collaborate with other relevant international instruments and processes, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

DRAFT DECISIONS

**SEAGRASS ECOSYSTEMS**

***Directed to Parties***

14.AA Parties are requested to:

1. identify, at the national level, migratory species that use seagrass meadows, the most important seagrass ecosystems for migratory species, the most important ongoing threats to seagrass and drivers of seagrass loss, the main historical reasons that have resulted in the loss of seagrass beds, the most important activities that prevent their recovery, and the conservation actions necessary to reduce seagrass loss and restore it, including the conservation of migratory species that support healthy seagrass ecosystems;
2. include identified seagrass meadows in marine protected areas, locally managed marine areas, or other effective conservation measures, as well as in marine spatial plans;
3. report, through the national reports, to the Conference of Parties at its 15th meeting on the progress.

***Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations***

14.BB Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide technical support to conservation, sustainable management and research in seagrass ecosystems that are of particular importance to marine migratory species globally.

***Directed to the Scientific Council***

14.CC The Scientific Council is requested, subject to availability of resources, to:

1. provide technical support to Parties to identify an inventory of migratory species that use seagrass ecosystems and those that contribute to their functioning, the most important seagrass meadows for migratory species globally, the most important past and current threats to seagrass and drivers of seagrass degradation and loss, and the conservation actions necessary to reduce seagrass loss and restore it;
2. collaborate with the Dugong MOU and other intergovernmental organizations or initiatives such as UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the IUCN SSC Seagrass Specialist Group, to accelerate the process described in paragraph 14.CC a).

***Directed to the Secretariat***

14.DD Where appropriate, the Secretariat shall, in collaboration with Parties and subject to availability of resources:

1. provide technical support to Parties on conservation, sustainable management and research in seagrass ecosystems that are of particular importance to marine migratory species;
2. develop and disseminate guidelines and management tools for conservation, sustainable management and research in seagrass ecosystems that are of particular importance to marine migratory species;
3. report to the Conference of Parties at its 15th meeting on the progress in implementing this Decision.