

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL COMMENTS

(arising from ScC-SC8)

CONSERVING SEAMOUNT ECOSYSTEMS

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.3.3

(ScC-SC8 Agenda item 8.3.3)

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DOCUMENT

The Sessional Committee thanked the Governments of Monaco and Panama for drawing attention to this important subject. It found both the background information provided in the document and related information document and the draft Resolution and draft Decisions to be excellent, with only minor suggestions on the text as outlined below.

It was noted that prioritizing seamount habitats for conservation was justified given their very high importance for numerous migratory marine species, and the relatively higher impacts of fishing in these areas of aggregation. This was also in line with other resolutions focusing on important habitats, such as the one on seagrass.

It was noted that the proposed resolution aligns with IUCN recommendations and the recently adopted IUCN resolution on Seamounts, which calls for their protection. IUCN confirmed that they stood ready to provide support to Parties to implement this resolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COP15

The Scientific Council recommends to adopt the draft resolution and decisions with amendments as specified below.

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS/ INCLUDING POSSIBLE PROPOSALS FOR TEXT REVISION

The following amendments are proposed in preambular paragraphs (PP) of the draft Resolution:

- PP2: Quote provisions of the Convention directly, instead of paraphrasing
- PP10: Rephrase to clarify that Targets 3 and 4 of the KMGBF are not per se higher priority than other Targets, but that these are the most relevant in the context of this resolution

The following amendments are proposed in operative paragraphs (OP) of the draft Resolution:

- OP1: *Encourages* Parties to acknowledge the importance of seamount ecosystems as vital habitats and navigational landmarks for migratory marine species, including those listed in Appendices I and II of the Convention, such as whales, dolphins, sharks, ~~and~~ turtles and seabirds, and to recognize their significance for Indigenous ~~p~~Peoples and traditional knowledge holders;
- OP5: *Calls upon* Parties to actively engage, as appropriate, with Indigenous ~~p~~Peoples and traditional knowledge holders, scientists, civil society, and industry to enhance public awareness and understanding of the importance of seamount ecosystems to the health of migratory species populations; and

The following amendments are proposed to draft Decision 15.CC:

- a) collaborate with international experts to identify ~~and protect~~ essential seamount ecosystems, ~~ensuring that to protect~~ the ecological connections between these ecosystems and migratory species ~~are maintained and protected~~;
- b) report to the 910th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council on the progress in implementing this decision; and
- c) review any guidelines and management tools for the conservation, sustainable management, and research of seamount ecosystems developed as foreseen in Decision 15.DD.