

World Seagrass Day

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, committed to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, and committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner, building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which supports and complements the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has as its goal the achievement of sustainable development in its three dimensions through promoting inclusive economic growth, protecting the environment and promoting social inclusion,

Reaffirming further its resolutions 53/199 of 15 December 1998 and 61/185 of 20 December 2006 on the proclamation of international years, and Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries, in particular paragraphs 1 to 10 of the annex thereto on the agreed criteria for the proclamation of international years, as well as paragraphs 13 and 14, in which it is stated that an international day or year should not be proclaimed before the basic arrangements for its organization and financing have been made,

Reaffirming the vital function of seagrasses in stabilizing the sea bottom, providing ecosystem support through food, shelter and essential nursery areas for commercial and recreational fish species, turtles, dugongs, manatees and a number of invertebrates living in seagrass communities, enhancing water quality and preventing coastal erosion,

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

Recalling also the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from 17 to 29 November 2018, and its decision 14/8 of 29 November 2018,¹ which suggests steps for enhancing and supporting the mainstreaming of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures across sectors, including, among others, to identify, map and prioritize areas important for essential ecosystem functions and services, including ecosystems that are important for food, for climate change mitigation and adaptation, for water availability, for poverty alleviation and for disaster risk reduction,

Welcoming the convening of the first part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in Kunming, China, from 11 to 15 October 2021, under the theme proposed by the host “Ecological civilization: building a shared future for all life on earth”, and looking forward to the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which will convene in Kunming in 2022, to adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that is intended to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Acknowledging the urgent need to raise awareness at all levels and to promote and facilitate actions for the conservation of seagrasses in order to contribute to their health and development, bearing in mind that enhancing ecosystem services and functions is important for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

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 with concern that the adverse impacts of climate change are a threat to marine biodiversity and ecosystem health, and recognizing that the conservation of seagrasses positively contributes to climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction while supporting food security, human well-being and livelihoods,

¹ See United Nations Environment Programme, document CBD/COP/14/14, sect. I.

Recognizing the carbon sequestration and storage potential of seagrass ecosystems, as a critical component of marine ecosystems, and that adopting measures to protect them can help to contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change² and the Paris Agreement,³

Recognizing also that seagrasses, as a part of the marine ecosystem, provide powerful nature-based solutions to tackle climate change impacts and store up to 18 per cent of the world's oceanic carbon,

Acknowledging that only 26 per cent of recorded seagrass meadows fall within marine protected areas,

Noting with concern that seagrasses have been declining globally since the 1930s, with the most recent census estimating that 7 per cent of this key marine habitat is being lost worldwide per year, which is equivalent to a football field of seagrass lost every 30 minutes,

Further noting with concern that 21 per cent of seagrass species are categorized as Near Threatened, Vulnerable and Endangered Species under the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species,

Noting that the combined pressures of coastal development, pollution, including land-based run-off, climate change, dredging and unregulated fishing and boating activities are key drivers of the degradation of seagrasses and their associated ecosystems,

Emphasizing the urgent need to address the key cumulative drivers of seagrass degradation through integrated policies and cross-sectoral management measures,

Recognizing that seagrass-associated small-scale fisheries and local sustainable fisheries contribute to the economic empowerment and financial inclusion of local communities, especially women living in coastal areas,

Taking into account the fact that seagrass ecosystems have a greater capacity to sequester carbon than terrestrial ecosystems,

1. *Decides* to proclaim 1 March as World Seagrass Day, to be observed annually;
2. *Invites* all Member States, organizations and agencies of the United Nations systems, other international and regional organizations and civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations, as well as academic institutions, the private sector, individuals and other relevant stakeholders to observe World Seagrass Day, in an appropriate manner and in accordance with global and national priorities, through education and activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of seagrasses as a core component of marine biodiversity, the threats that they face and their contribution to sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation;
3. *Invites* all relevant stakeholders to continue to give due consideration to enhancing international cooperation in support of the effort to conserve seagrasses, given their vital function in supporting and maintaining ecosystem services and functions;
4. *Invites* the United Nations Environment Programme to facilitate the observance of World Seagrass Day, mindful of the provisions contained in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67;
5. *Stresses* that the cost of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the present resolution should be met from voluntary contributions;
6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, for appropriate observance.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

³ See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.