

## CHARTER FOR MANGROVES

The International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems (ISME) has adopted a Charter for Mangroves that complements a World Charter for Nature that the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed on 28th October 1982 affirming that nature shall be respected, genetic viability on earth shall not be compromised, conservation shall be practised, sustainable management shall be utilised by man, and nature shall be secured against degradation.

### **ISME being aware that:**

- a) Mangrove forests are unique intertidal ecosystems that occur primarily in tropical regions of the world;
- b) The total world-wide mangrove area is estimated at not less than 170,000 km<sup>2</sup> and that there are some sixty species of trees and shrubs that are exclusive to the mangrove habitat;
- c) Mangroves support genetically diverse communities of terrestrial and aquatic fauna and flora that are of direct and indirect environmental, economic and social value to human societies throughout the world;
- d) Sustainable development of mangrove ecosystems implies the maintenance and rational use of the natural resource to ensure ecological resilience and economic opportunities for present and future generations;
- e) Mangroves must be conserved in various parts of the world to prevent the occurrence of degraded coastal lands;

### **Convinced that:**

- a) Destruction and degradation of mangrove forests are world-wide phenomena, as a result of activities related to the non-sustainable use and over-exploitation;
- b) The value of mangrove lands is consistently underestimated when the areas are converted for non-sustainable purposes;
- c) The sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems would provide a better use of the resource;
- d) There is an urgent need to restore degraded mangrove ecosystems for economic, social and conservation reasons;

### **Persuaded that:**

- a) Mangroves are a valuable natural resource with distinctive genetic diversity, high intrinsic natural productivity and unique habitat value;
- b) Mangroves sustain important economic and ecological values in adjacent terrestrial and marine systems;
- c) Mangroves play an important role in the economic and social resources available to subsistence coastal dwellers in the tropics;
- d) Mangroves play an important role in coastal protection and in the reduction of coastal erosion;

- e) Mangroves buffer coastal waters from undesirable land-based influences, such as sediment, contaminant or nutrient runoff;

**Reaffirming** that people must acquire the knowledge to use natural resources in a manner which ensures the protection and enhancement of species and ecosystems for their intrinsic values and for the benefit of present and future generations.

**Convinced** of the need for appropriate measures at individual, collective and national levels to manage, conserve and promote understanding of the mangrove ecosystem.

**Convinced** also of the need to foster the sharing of information and understanding at an international level, and co-operation in all aspects of management and study of mangrove ecosystems.

**Adopts**, to these ends, a Charter which proclaims the following principles for the utilisation of mangrove ecosystems by which all human conduct affecting mangrove ecosystems is to be judged.

## **I GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. Mangrove ecosystems shall be respected and their intrinsic characteristics shall be preserved wherever possible.
2. The genetic diversity inherent in mangrove ecosystems shall be safeguarded to this end the necessary habitats must be preserved.
3. Mangrove ecosystems that are utilised by people shall be managed to achieve and maintain sustainable productivity without degrading the integrity of other ecosystems with which they coexist.
4. Mangrove ecosystems shall be secured against indiscriminate destruction, natural hazards, pollution and damage resulting from disturbance of surrounding areas.
5. The sustainable utilisation of mangrove ecosystems by traditional users shall be recognised and provided for to improve the welfare of the indigenous people.
6. The acquisition and dissemination of knowledge with respect to structure, function and management of pristine and disturbed mangrove ecosystems shall be encouraged by all possible means, including international research and technical cooperation.

## **II FUNCTIONS**

7. The decisions affecting the management of mangrove ecosystems shall be made only in the light of best existing knowledge and an understanding of the specific location.
8. Decisions on how to manage a mangrove ecosystem shall be informed by definition of the following parameters:
  - (i) the biological components and the physical characteristics of the area under consideration, by means of inventories, maps and the collection of physical and biological data;
  - (ii) the needs of people in relation to sustainable uses of the resource while ensuring adequate reserves for preservation purposes;
  - (iii) the national and international significance of the resource as habitat and as a genetic reservoir;

- (iv) the national and international significance of the site for coastal stability and fisheries production;
  - (v) the local requirements for education, recreation and aesthetic values;
  - (vi) the requirements that must be satisfied for non-sustainable uses of the resource;
  - (vii) the extent to which rehabilitation and compensation mechanisms can be used to mitigate the impact of non-sustainable use.
9. The information collected in (8) shall be used to define the areas necessary for preservation, to define strategies for the management, restoration and preservation of the resource, or to define areas necessary for sustainable use.
10. Decisions on the use of mangrove ecosystems shall include consideration of the need:
- (i) to utilise the mangrove resources so that their natural productivity is preserved;
  - (ii) to avoid degradation of the mangrove ecosystems;
  - (iii) to rehabilitate degraded mangrove areas;
  - (iv) to avoid over exploitation of the natural resources produced by the mangrove ecosystems;
  - (v) to avoid negative impacts on neighbouring ecosystems;
  - (vi) to recognise the social and economic welfare of indigenous mangrove dwellers;
  - (vii) to control and restrict non-sustainable uses so that long term productivity and benefits of the mangrove ecosystems are not lost;
  - (viii) to introduce regulatory measures for the wise use of mangrove ecosystems.
11. Activities which might impact on mangrove ecosystems shall be controlled by appropriate national, regional and international laws and agreements.
12. Activities which are likely to pose a risk to a mangrove ecosystem shall be subjected to an exhaustive examination prior to decisions being made. Only after it has been publicly demonstrated that the potential advantages outweigh the potential damage should the activity be allowed to commence.
13. Mangrove ecosystems degraded by human activities shall be rehabilitated for purposes in accord with their natural potential and compatible with the well-being of the affected people.

### **III IMPLEMENTATION**

14. The principles set forth in the present Charter should where possible be reflected in the law and practice of each state, as well as at the international level.
15. Knowledge of the structure, function and importance of mangrove ecosystems should be communicated by all possible means at local, national and international levels.
16. Knowledge of the structure, function and management of pristine and disturbed mangrove ecosystems should be enhanced.

17. Educational programmes and regional centres should be provided to train scientists, planners, managers and the general public and to encourage an awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems.
18. All planning should include the establishment of biological, physical and socioeconomic inventories of the mangrove ecosystems under consideration and assessments of the effects on the systems and their surrounds of the proposed activities. All such considerations should be open to public scrutiny and comment prior to any decision.
19. Resources, programmes and administrative structures necessary to achieve the sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems should be provided.
20. The status of mangrove ecosystems should be monitored nationally and internationally to ensure evaluation of current practices and to enable early detection of adverse effects.
21. States should establish specific statutory provisions or regulations for the protection and management of mangroves and mangrove ecosystems.
22. States, other public authorities, international organisations, non-government organisations, individuals, groups and corporations, to the extent that they are able, should:
  - (i) co-operate in the task of managing mangrove ecosystems for sustainable purposes;
  - (ii) establish procedures and methodologies for assessing the status of mangrove ecosystems and for managing them;
  - (iii) ensure that activities within their jurisdiction do not cause unnecessary damage to mangrove ecosystems within or beyond their jurisdiction;
  - (iv) implement national and international legal provisions for the protection and conservation of mangrove ecosystems.
23. Each state should where possible give effect to the provisions of the present Charter through its competent organs and in cooperation with other states.
24. All persons, in accordance with their national legislation should have the opportunity to participate, individually or collectively, in the formation of decisions of direct concern to the conservation and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems.
25. Affected people should have means of redress when their mangrove ecosystems have suffered damage.
26. Each member of ISME has the duty to act in accordance with the provisions of the present Charter, acting individually, in association with others, or through participation in a political process. Each member shall strive to ensure that the objectives and requirements of the Charter are met.

International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems  
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