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Dark skies and nature conservation

GIVEN that species and ecosystems function night and day, and that artificial light can interfere with organism and ecosystem functions;

UNDERSTANDING that the appreciation of cultural heritage sites in their authentic state, the enjoyment of landscape aesthetics, and a true wilderness experience may be diminished by outdoor artificial light, glare and sky glow;

RECOGNIZING that astronomy, both scientific and amateur, and night sky viewing by the general public are essential contributions to understanding and enjoying our natural world;

BEING aware that cultural traditions, mythology and ceremony throughout the world bear a close relationship to night sky phenomena; and

NOTING that energy efficiency, human health and personal safety are all enhanced by the use of proper lighting and diminished by excess lighting;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:

1. CALLS UPON environmental and natural resource management agencies to recognize that outdoor artificial light should be subject to effective standards in order to help restore and/or maintain the ecological integrity of natural areas and the commemorative integrity of cultural sites, to respect traditional beliefs related to the night sky, and to protect species and ecosystems everywhere;
2. SUGGESTS that urban and non-urban infrastructure management authorities regulate and control outdoor lighting in the areas under their jurisdiction so as to achieve just the right amount, spectrum and timing of outdoor lighting necessary for public use and safety;
3. ENCOURAGES natural area managers and non-governmental organizations to promote awareness of dark sky values and the need for and methods of reducing outdoor artificial light;
4. RECOMMENDS that universities, science-funding agencies, and scientific institutions foster and support research into the nocturnal aspects of biological and ecological function;
5. URGES protected area management authorities to develop visitor activities that lead to public appreciation and understanding of nocturnal ecology and the night sky; and
6. RECOMMENDS that protected area and other conservation agencies seek out opportunities to cooperate with scientific and amateur astronomy organizations and aboriginal peoples on optimum outdoor lighting design, darkness monitoring, delivery of visitor activities, and outreach related to the night sky, the nocturnal aspects of ecosystems and the importance of the night sky to traditional cultures.

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