

18TH WORLD LAKE CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 9-11, 2021

GUANAJUATO DECLARATION

The 18th World Lake Conference (WLC18), was convened virtually at the University of Guanajuato, Mexico during 9-11 November, 2021, recognizing that freshwater is essential for all life and socioeconomic development on our planet, and that many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be difficult to achieve without sustainable supplies of freshwater. With more than 90 percent of all the liquid freshwater on the surface of our planet being contained in lakes and wetlands, it is now imperative to acknowledge their extremely important role in the global water agenda. Because the health of people is directly related to the health of the ecosystems upon which they depend, lakes represent windows that inform us of the state of our global environment, thereby reflecting the way we live and providing clues as to whether or not our world is sustainable. Since ancient times, lakes have provided food and multiple other ecosystem services for humans and other life forms that have subsisted on them. This man-nature relationship involving lakes has transcended over numerous generations, having resulted in unique and ubiquitous interdependencies. Such an interdependency relationship is consistent with the concept of sustainability, most notable today within the SDGs.

Therefore;

- Noting millions of lakes exist on our planet, being present on every continent and providing a wide range of life-supporting ecosystem services, as well as being aquatic habitats for a variety of important flora and fauna biodiversity, and recognizing that lakes receive stresses from all directions, thereby being sensitive integrators and mirrors of the impacts of human activities in and even outside their drainage basins;
- Appreciating their unique defining features also give them an important potential mitigation role in addressing predicted changes in global precipitation patterns attributable to climate change, including storing scarce water during droughts and excessive water during floods, therefore also being relevant in regard to the implementation of decisions arising from the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP26);
- Recognizing that although United Nations (UN) and other international organizations exist to address rivers, groundwater, large marine ecosystems, regional seas and open oceans, there is no comparable global-scale entity with a specific focus on lakes and their management challenges, making them a significant missing link in the global water agenda;

we, the participants at WLC18, make the following recommendations:

- ❖ *In close collaboration at the local, national and international level with research and educational institutions, NGOs, lake practitioners and stakeholders, and relevant UN agencies and other international organizations, all governments share*

this serious concern by jointly declaring the need for mainstreaming lakes, wetlands and other lentic water systems as a key missing component of the global water agenda and SDGs, with due emphasis in relation to the situation facing the Latin American region;

- ❖ *The concept of Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM) be transfused to deal with the interlinked water systems comprising lakes, rivers and coastal basins, otherwise referred to as lentic-lotic basins, which have yet to be addressed fully within the frameworks only of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM), as exemplified with the Lerma River – Lake Chapala – Santiago River Basin case in Mexico, and as noted similarly in other cases in Latin America and on other continents;*
- ❖ *Make maximum effort to compile and cross-fertilize existing knowledge and information, and that generated in the future, at the local, national and international levels, including development of a protocol for ILBM research and relevant knowledge base, as well as establishing training institutions and developing university curricula, with knowledge and information encompassing the six ILBM Pillars of Governance with its focus on policies, institutions, stakeholder participation, technology, information and funding;*
- ❖ *Existing centers be strengthened, and new centers be established, to enhance cross-fertilization of knowledge, experience and lessons learned in promoting ILBM at every level of critical interaction in lake basin management, including trans-jurisdictional and international transboundary cases, ensuring they also include consist of disciplinary experts and appropriate representation of the public at large, including Indigenous Peoples;*
- ❖ *Regional lake networks be established within and across continents, with specific recognition of that need in Latin America, to facilitate synergistic collaboration for sharing knowledge and experiences promoting governance efforts effectively linking the themes of the SDGs, human water security and ecosystem integrity, including improving understanding of these and related lake issues;*
- ❖ *Recognize that the public at large, including Indigenous Peoples and their multi-generational experiences with lakes and their ecosystem services in Latin America and elsewhere, are important social actors in fostering integrated lake management, and ensure that they can actively participate in the management process, including formulation of policies, strategies and regulations, development of plans, and implementation of programs as key elements for achieving successful management of lakes and their basins;*
- ❖ *Recognize also the important role played by the Youth as actors helping to facilitate sustainable development and environmental protection at local, national and international levels, ensuring their inclusion by facilitating their interactions in the sharing of knowledge, in building national and transboundary relationships, and in collaborating on scientific and management pursuits related to achieving and maintaining healthy global lakes;*
- ❖ *Promote citizen science and build capacity among citizens to facilitate their being co-creators and managers of guidelines and activities relevant to sustainable management of lakes and their basins, including the mitigation role played by lakes*

in regard to climate change impacts, their potential role in facilitating economic recovery in the post COVID-19 phase, and the development and use of meaningful social, economic and environmental indicators;

- ❖ *Facilitate improvement in the technical capacities of decisionmakers and managers to address health, pollution and eutrophication challenges facing lakes and their interlinked systems, as well as the ability of scientists, engineers and other technical practitioners to communicate relevant information and data in understandable terms for enhancing science-based management decisions and programs for effective lake basin management; and*
- ❖ *Ensure specific and continuing recognition of the crucial roles played by lakes in regard to human health, well-being and economic development, and in addressing climate change impacts, by increasing their visibility in the global arena with such efforts as establishment by the United Nations of a World Lake Day or similar popular recognition activity on a global scale.*