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About the Underwater Environment

About the CMAS Scientific & Sustainability Committee

The main task of the CMAS Scientific & Sustainability Committee (SC) is to bring into focus the important issues related to the freshwater and marine underwater world.

Respect for Environment and Cultural Heritage

Diving and snorkelling must be practiced in such a way that none of the sites where diving takes place are affected. The environmental and cultural resources, such as for instance animals, plants, geological formations, and underwater cultural heritage sites, have to be preserved. Commercial or personal interests do not justify negatively affecting the environment or the underwater cultural heritage sites.

Quality Training

Training must ensure that divers acquire sufficient level of theoretical knowledge and practical experience for that purpose. It shall also ensure that the natural environment and underwater cultural heritage sites will not be affected by the diver. For this purpose, instructors shall be fully aware of the ethics of sustainable diving and be a role model.

Respecting Rules

To make sure that the environment and underwater cultural heritage sites are not disturbed during diving and snorkelling, divers must inform themselves about local Marine Protected Areas, environmental rules and regulations and abide by all local, regional, national and international environmental legislations, regulations and customs.

Encouraging Sustainable Dive Tourism

Divers shall ensure that they do not have a negative effect on the environment, for instance by causing noise, disturbing the behaviour of animals, damaging reef structures or underwater cultural heritage sites (wrecks, finds) or pollution, like sun cream or plastic debris. Divers should encourage sustainable tourism that provides economic benefits to local communities, respects cultural values, and minimizes environmental degradation for the long-term benefit of present and future generations.

Commitment to Active Protection

Divers are encouraged to create or participate in underwater monitoring projects, in order to detect and point out changes of a natural habitat or of underwater cultural heritage sites. Divers should participate in clean-up activities to collect polluting materials, such as plastics or abandoned fishing nets. Divers shall refrain from collecting or selling protected marine materials, such as corals, shells, or cultural heritage objects, such as amphorae or coins. Divers shall practice a no-contact policy. They shall not feed and disturb wild animals and avoid touching them.

Being prepared not to dive at all

In case of the risk of lasting damage to nature or underwater cultural heritage sites, divers

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must – without being asked and on their own initiative – abstain from exercising their sport.

Responsibility for Others

Divers shall encourage their buddies, as well as dive and tour operators to behave in a responsible and sustainable way. They shall use their influence to prevent violations of sustainable diving rules and destructions of the natural environment or underwater cultural heritage sites by others.

Organisation:

- The President is part of the CMAS Steering Committee and Board of Directors. He leads and guides the Scientific & Sustainability Committee members and is the representative in several organisations like the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) and UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, 2001.
- The Secretary ensures the smooth running of the Scientific & Sustainability Committee, organise meetings, issues agendas and minutes.
- The Directors of the sections „Biology & Conservation“, „Underwater Cultural Heritage“ and „Scientific Diving“ are responsible for their section and scientific topics in the Scientific & Sustainability Committee.
- The Members assist their President and Directors within their sections in the Scientific & Sustainability Committee.

If you have any comments or questions please contact the President of the Scientific & Sustainability Committee, Prof. Dr. Ralph O. Schill by email:

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