

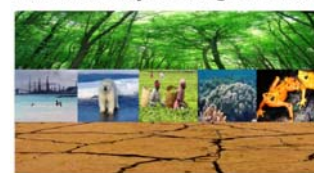


CBD

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

STATEMENT

22 May 2007
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

by

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Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

on the occasion of
World Wetlands Day - 02 February 2007

“Fish for tomorrow?”

World Wetlands Day, celebrated on 2 February every year, was initiated ten years ago by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. It provides a platform for governments, NGO, and citizen groups at all levels of the community to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. The Ramsar Convention is the lead partner for wetlands under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Ongoing cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the CBD is recognised as a model upon which multi-lateral agreements can work together towards achieving common goals.

This year’s theme is especially pertinent – will there indeed be fish for tomorrow?

Both the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and our second Global Biodiversity Outlook report confirm that the rate of loss of biodiversity from inland and coastal wetland ecosystems is one of the fastest of all major biomes – for example, freshwater dependent species are under the most threat amongst fishes. This is not surprising. The usual drivers of biodiversity loss are to blame – but for wetlands these are accelerated by the stresses imposed by the unsustainable and increasing demands we place on water and our activities on the surrounding land. Our mismanagement of land and water is reflected in the decline we see today in the extent and quality of wetlands and the important biodiversity they support. This is an opportunity for us to address these problems effectively and make a significant contribution towards the 2010 Biodiversity Target.

How can fisheries contribute to this?

The public perception of “fisheries” is generally negative, and, in many cases, justifiably so. But today is an opportunity to think more broadly. The appalling state of many marine fisheries is driven primarily, if not exclusively, by unsustainable exploitation of stocks, even in defiance of economic logic – for most wetland dependent fisheries the primary driver of loss is arguably environmental degradation. Wetland dependent fisheries also



tend, overall, to operate through smaller scale activities, which translates into increased socio-economic benefits relative to the amount of fish produced.

In many developing countries wetland fisheries underpin local, and often regional, food security and livelihoods, particularly for the rural poor. The value provided by wetlands cannot be expressed in weight of produce alone. Wetlands also provide fisheries for sport and recreation. Values placed on this service provided by wetlands vary greatly. The MA, for example, notes that in the United States alone 35–45 million people take part in recreational fishing (the majority wetland based) spending a total of US\$24–37 billion each year on their hobby – similar to, or in excess of, the global net economic benefits of coral reefs. I highlight this because recreational fisheries interests have driven the clean-up of rivers and wetlands in North America and Europe, and elsewhere. Likewise, there are many local examples where wetland fisheries for food, when coupled with good governance and environmental foresight, have already driven improvements in the overall benefits of wetlands, and biodiversity has profited alongside this. Therefore, while the news from fisheries is sometimes good, it is a sad reflection that globally, poverty and livelihood considerations still lag behind as drivers of policy change.

These examples serve to illustrate that with public lobbying political will can be influenced and translated into action. Fisheries, although not without their negative impacts, are in general an ally of wetlands and the biodiversity they support. They provide a strong argument to manage wetlands and biodiversity better and, in turn, the wider water and land management practices that impact upon them. Recognising these linkages is an important step in promoting policies that will achieve both human development and biodiversity targets.

This year's theme, "Fish for Tomorrow?", will help to raise awareness specifically of the importance of wetland fisheries. Despite the complexities of their problems, wetlands can be managed in such a way as to guarantee the sustainability of inland and coastal fisheries well into the future.

I wish all those involved a happy and productive World Wetlands Day.

Information for Journalists:

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 153 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1634 wetland sites, totaling 145.6 million

hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance

<http://www.ramsar.org/>

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992, it currently has 189 Parties—188 States and the European Community—who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal, Canada.

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