



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and its processes

Dr. Christopher Briggs

Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971)



What are these Wetlands?



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



Rivers, marshes
and lakes



Beaches and
Coastal areas



Mangroves
and coral reefs



Peatlands and
swamp forests



Paddies and
fish ponds

Wetlands give us our water – every day



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- All the water we collect and use comes from wetlands
- Wetlands deliver water and also clean and purify our dirty waters
- UN predicts a 40% shortfall in fresh water resources by 2030 for almost half the world
- Increasing risks to water and food security are risks to security of all
- Today, 1.1 Billion people live without access to the basic services of clean water
- Securing the future of our wetlands will secure supplies of clean water to all as a basic human right



Wetlands provide us with essential goods, services and benefits



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



Transport



Food



Fishing



Hunting



Leisure

Wetlands provide us with essential goods, services and benefits



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



Flood control



Coastal
protection



Carbon sink



Biodiversity



Sustainable
livelihoods

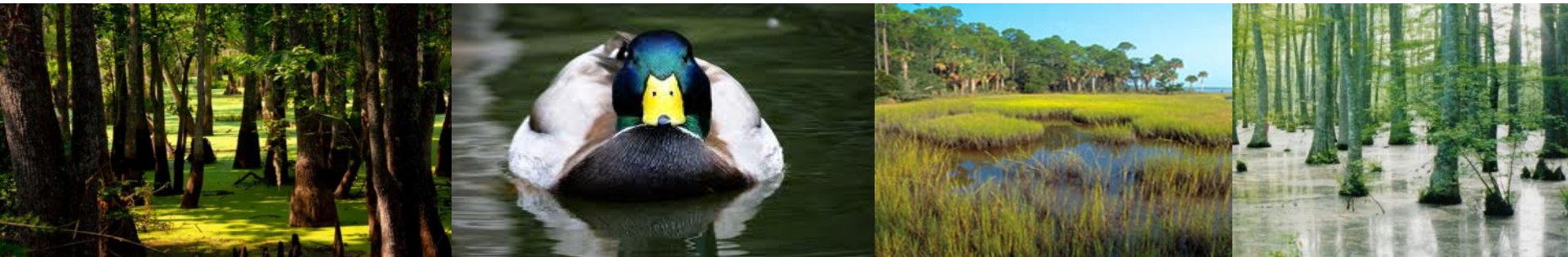
The Mission: Ramsar Convention



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.”



The Context: Sustainable Development



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Our new Strategic Plan was prepared while the world prepared the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- In the recently approved SDGs, wetlands are implicitly or explicitly mentioned under 7 Goals and 27 Targets
- Wetlands are the source of multiple benefits and services that underpin our future development
- Our Strategic Plan should inspire and bring the world to our side to fight for the future and for Wetlands



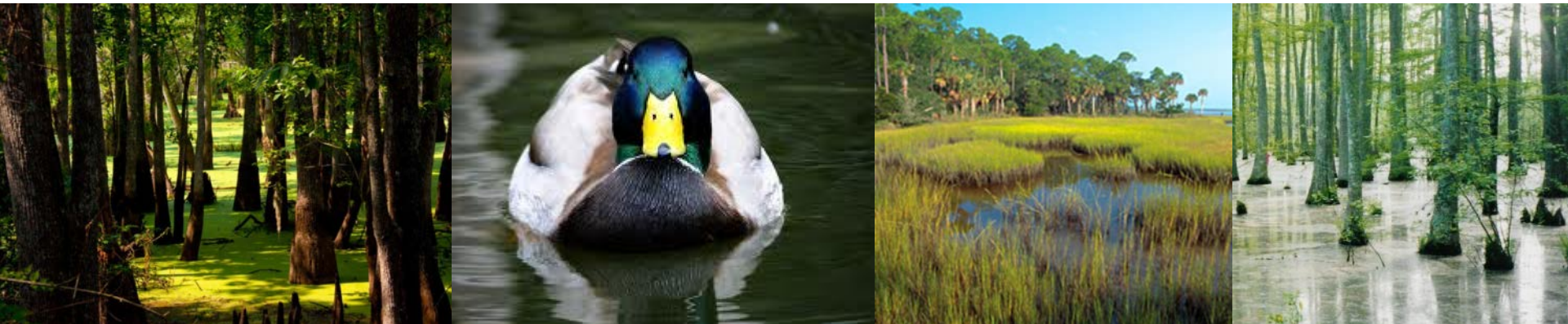
Overall Vision for 4th Strategic Plan



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Wetlands are conserved,
wisely used, restored and
their benefits are recognized
and valued by all



Goals of the fourth Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Addressing the drivers of Wetland loss and degradation

Goal 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Site Network

Goal 3: Wisely using all Wetlands

Goal 4: Enhancing implementation



Major drivers of wetland loss and degradation



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Conversion to agriculture and grazing
- Infrastructure development and urbanization
- Water diversion (dams, dykes, canalization)
- Water pollution and contamination due to dumping of waste, fertilizers and other chemicals
- Development pressures and impacts from climate change



How do we affect major drivers of wetland loss and degradation?



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Increase water productivity and efficiency in agriculture
- Incorporate natural infrastructure into all development
- Secure future water supplies with PES, Water Funds, etc.
- Work towards better water budget balance across sectors
- Support better water governance where risks are highest
- Restore wetlands for more resilience to climate change
- Explain multiple values of wetlands through all media



Ramsar Sites: How are we doing so far?



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Largest network of internationally designated areas has grown to over 200 M hectares (area larger than Mexico) in over 2,200 Ramsar Sites
- Parties work to effectively manage wetlands using wise use principles
- Cooperative relationships between Parties, IOPs, MEAs , Regional Initiatives, civil society, other partners, as well as the private sector
- Highly respected guidelines and scientific papers produced
- Hope for the future in the recognition of role of wetlands in the SDGs



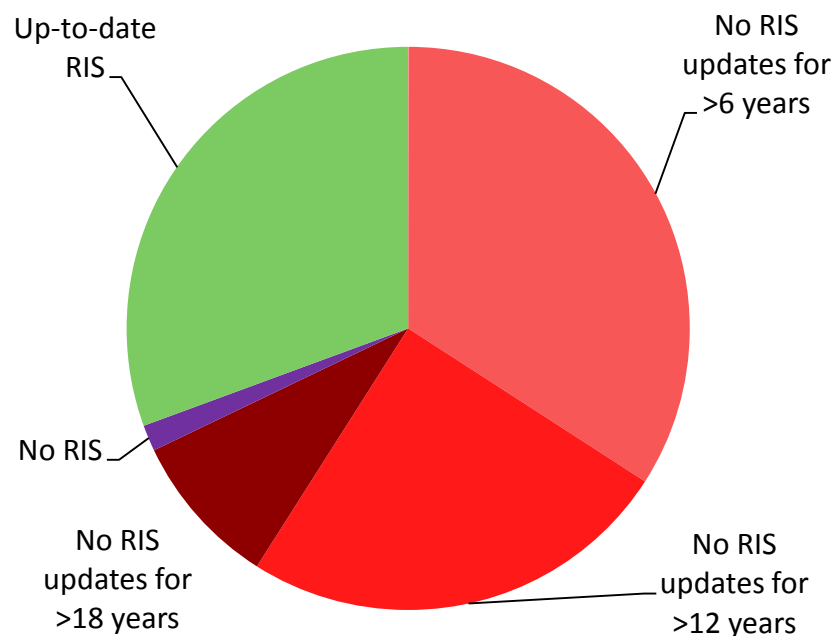
The state of most Ramsar Sites is unknown



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

2,208 Ramsar Sites covering 210 million hectares, but...



55% of Ramsar Sites have out-of-date information (older than 6 years)

11 Contracting Parties have designated 33 Sites without ever filling out the RIS

We believe the situation may be worse



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- 130 Ramsar sites out of a total of 2208 are currently described as being at risk of loss of ecological character by our Parties
- World Heritage's "Conservation Outlook" paper found that 30-40% of 220 World Heritage Sites (including 59 Ramsar sites) face significant threats to Globally Important Value
- If that ratio were applied to network of Ramsar sites, 660 or more Ramsar Sites could be at risk of serious loss of ecological character.



The bad news: Wetlands are in bad shape



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

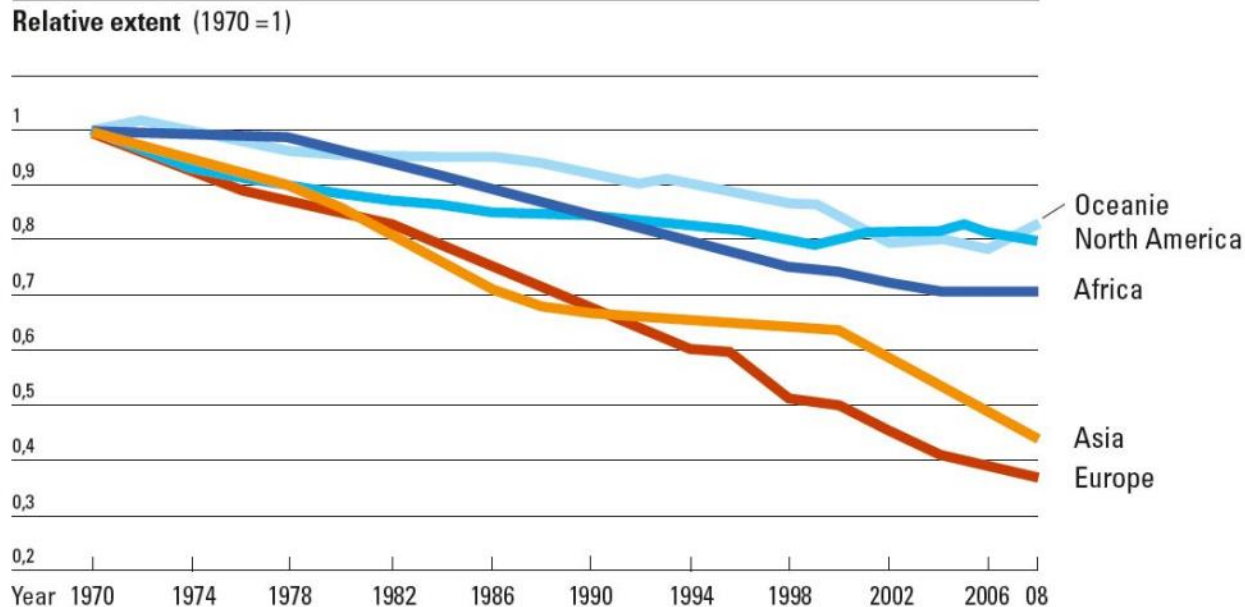
- 64% of the wetlands have disappeared since 1900
- 76% loss in wetland species populations over last 40 years against average 50% loss in all ecosystems (WWF Living Planet report 2014)
- Population growth and our raised expectations drive an increasing demand on wetlands and water
- Wetlands are equated with wasteland
- There is zero public knowledge of the benefits and services that wetlands bring



And it is actually worsening: Wetlands Extent Index 1970-2008



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



**40% of
wetlands lost
in the past 40
years**

- Loss of freshwater wetlands worldwide from 1997-2011 valued at US\$ 2.7 trillion per year



Parties: the drivers of the Convention



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- 169 Parties means the Convention is amongst the world's broadest constituencies
- Gives Ramsar a global presence around the world
- Each Party brings a unique perspective:
 - Parties have to analyze their practical priorities
 - Trade-offs set between development and environment
 - Wise Use to be practically applied in wetlands
- National Reports form basis of future success (Ivanova)



Bodies of the Convention



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Decision making body

The Conference of the Contracting Parties

the policy-making body of the Convention

Advisory Bodies

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Administrative body

The Secretariat
carrying out the day-to-day work of the Convention

The Standing Committee

overseeing implementation between meetings of the Conference of Parties

The Communications, Education, Participation and Awareness Oversight Panel



How do we work?: Special Partners



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



Other Partners include:



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



- New York Transboundary Watercourses Convention,
- Helsinki Transboundary Water Convention,

The "Biodiversity Liaison Group", a group of seven global conventions on biodiversity





CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Thank you!

Dr. Christopher Briggs

Secretary General of Ramsar Convention

