



12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Resolution XII.13

Wetlands and disaster risk reduction

1. RECALLING Resolution VIII.35 on *The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems* and Resolution IX.9 on *The role of the Ramsar Convention in the prevention and mitigation of impacts associated with natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities* which, respectively, recognized the role of wetlands in providing water during times of drought and in preventing and mitigating the impacts from natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities, but RECOGNIZING that there exists no specific framework to operationalize this urgent role;
2. RECALLING Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, that affirmed the role of healthy wetlands in increasing resilience to climate change and extreme weather events, as well as ensuring climate change responses that would not lead to serious damage to the ecological character of wetlands;
3. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution X.3 on *The Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands* and Resolution X.23 on *Wetlands and human health and well-being* emphasized the importance of sustainable wetland management and the restoration of wetlands to ensure future human well-being;
4. ALSO RECALLING Decision X/28 of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that encourages recognition of the role of healthy ecosystems, and in particular wetlands, in protecting human communities from some natural disasters and to integrate these considerations into relevant policies;
5. AWARE of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and RECALLING Resolution VII.8 on *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands* that recognized the contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities in the management and wise use of wetlands;
6. ACKNOWLEDGING the vital role of wetland ecosystems, most especially healthy and well-managed wetlands, in reducing disaster risk, by acting as natural buffers or protective barriers, for instance through mitigating land erosion, the impact from dust and sand storms, floods, tidal surges, tsunamis and landslides, and by storing large volumes of water, thereby reducing peak flood flow during the wet season, while maximizing water storage during the dry season; and FURTHER RECOGNIZING that fully functioning wetland ecosystems enhance local resilience against disasters by providing fresh water and important products and by sustaining the lives and livelihoods of local populations and biodiversity;
7. AWARE that the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment recognized the significant services that ecosystems, including wetlands, provide to human communities in regulating the frequency and

magnitude of hazard events such as floods, fires and droughts, and in providing natural barriers that can mitigate the adverse impacts of hazards and protect communities, but also recognized that there was a continuing and accelerated loss of these vital ecosystem functions and services in wetlands;

8. AWARE that the 2011 *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, the 2012 RIO+20 Declaration “The Future We Want”, and similar UN and global coordinating bodies call for addressing disaster risk reduction in the context of sustainable development, and for increased coordination at national, regional and international levels to enable a robust response to environmental emergencies and improved forecasting and early warning systems;
9. CONSIDERING that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 acknowledges declining ecosystems as an underlying disaster risk driver, and recognizes the importance of strengthened sustainable use and management of ecosystems and the implementation of integrated environmental and natural resource management approaches that incorporate disaster risk reduction;
10. CONCERNED that the devastating impacts of disasters on the delivery of ecosystem services, and thus on the maintenance of the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and other wetlands in affected countries, have had serious effects on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people and on biodiversity, and have caused major environmental, social and economic impacts;
11. AWARE that disaster risk reduction requires the reduction of exposure and vulnerabilities through enhancing the capacity of people to prepare for, withstand and cope or recover from disasters and through sustainable management and use of land and water resources to reduce, buffer and in certain circumstances to mitigate disaster risk; and
12. RECOGNIZING that wetlands in all parts of the world play an important role in disaster risk reduction if the wetlands are effectively managed and restored where necessary;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

13. AFFIRMS the need to develop and implement management plans for wetlands or adapt them in instruments designed for the management of existing natural resources, especially Ramsar Sites, that integrate the principles of ecosystem-based management and adaptation against natural hazards such as dust and sand storms, floods, droughts, fires, landslides, coastal erosion, tsunamis, hurricanes, storms, and storm surges, and also against accelerated sea level rise, and STRONGLY ENCOURAGES the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction measures in these management plans and into all relevant policies, action plans and programmes;
14. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as appropriate, to integrate wetland-based disaster risk reduction and management into national strategic plans and all relevant policies and planning and environmental and water management at all levels of government, including in vulnerability analysis, poverty reduction strategies, emergencies committee and natural resource management plans, land-use and water-use plans and sectors, and in multi-sector policies and plans;
15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to ensure disaster risk planning does not compromise the internationally important values and ecological character of Ramsar Sites;

16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to integrate wetland management plans, or other broader water and landscape management plans, into land-use and development plans, and FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to integrate ecosystem management related considerations, in particular relating to wetland and water management, in their national disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to assess disaster risk to wetland ecosystems at the appropriate social and spatial scale to enable the designing of effective disaster risk reduction interventions including ecosystem-based solutions and approaches to reduce the vulnerability and exposure of people and ecosystems;
18. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to ensure that necessary development activities in and adjacent to wetlands are sustainable and will maintain and conserve ecosystem services including the role of wetlands in reducing impacts of disasters;
19. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to incorporate financial and other resource requirements, as appropriate, for wetland conservation, restoration and management activities related to disaster risk reduction into long-term investment programming, while ensuring the inclusion of measures to prevent adverse environmental or social impacts;
20. INVITES Contracting Parties and partners to ensure that the implementation of wetland ecosystem-based management and restoration projects and programmes are conducted appropriately to ensure ecological integrity and original functioning of specific ecosystems;
21. RECALLING CBD Decision XII/19 on *Ecosystem conservation and restoration* which emphasizes the critical importance of coastal wetlands for ecosystem services including those for disaster risk reduction and biodiversity conservation, WELCOMES initiatives that support the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, including options to build a “Caring for Coasts” initiative as part of a global movement to restore coastal wetlands and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider engaging in the development and implementation of the proposed initiative;
22. RECOGNIZING the references to disaster risk reduction contained in the proposals of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, ENCOURAGES the Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Secretariat to emphasize the importance of conserving, restoring and wise use of wetlands for disaster risk reduction in these discussions;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to understand the predicament of, and recognize the roles and challenges of the indigenous peoples and local communities and, where applicable, their experience, knowledge, ancestral rights, methods and approaches in wetland management and disaster risk reduction, making possible their participation through the effective use of different strategies, such as councils, meetings and all the plans and programmes which are at the disposal of national governments;
24. ALSO URGES the Contracting Parties to adopt approaches to disaster risk reduction to ensure the rights of wetland-dependent displaced persons;
25. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to consider reviewing and compiling existing guidance on wetland ecosystem-based adaptation concerning disaster risk reduction in the development of their programme of work in line with the 4th Strategic Plan in order to

present a set of practical policies and guidance which can be initiated by governments, for the management and wise use of wetlands to build resilience to natural hazards, especially dust and sand storms, floods, drought, fire, landslides, coastal erosion, tsunamis and storm surges, as well as to accelerated sea level rise, and which include the use of risk-based approaches in line with the *Wetland Risk Assessment Framework* approved through Resolution VII.10, and to develop appropriate indicators and baseline information for demonstrating progress towards the integration of wetland management in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies in such a way that the aforementioned guidelines are incorporated in existing national strategic spatial planning instruments;

26. URGES the Secretariat to build a strategic partnership with related international bodies and conventions, namely the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), to establish an appropriate platform for cooperation aiming at providing scientific and technical support as well as easing the access to financial resources for affected countries;
27. FURTHER REQUESTS the STRP to consider the role of wetland conservation, restoration and wise use in disaster risk reduction and in addressing the impacts of climate change in coordination with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as well as identify economic valuation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the development of their programme of work in line with the 4th Strategic Plan;
28. REQUESTS the STRP to consider monitoring the discussions, developments and trends in international fora on the role of wetland conservation, restoration and wise use in disaster risk reduction and in climate change adaptation in the development of their work in line with the 4th Strategic Plan;
29. FURTHER REQUESTS the STRP, if this work is approved by the Standing Committee, to keep Contracting Parties informed of these discussions, developments and trends through the STRP report at future Standing Committees;
30. FURTHER REQUESTS the STRP to consider supporting the capacity-building activities of wetland managers on disaster risk reduction in the development of their programme of work in line with the 4th Strategic Plan;
31. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, especially their Ramsar CEPA National Focal Points, to establish or strengthen CEPA programmes and increase awareness of the role of wise use, management, conservation and restoration of wetlands in disaster risk reduction and on the role of wetlands in contributing to reducing vulnerabilities and mitigating disasters;
32. ENCOURAGES governments to integrate ecosystem-based approaches with traditional approaches, to take into consideration biodiversity safeguard measures to disaster risk reduction so as to address the underlying drivers of water related risks in the landscape alongside measures for preparedness and early warning;
33. ENCOURAGES national disaster management agencies and river basin authorities to collaborate or other ways of managing wetlands, as appropriate, with coastal managers and other authorities responsible for natural resource management and national and, as appropriate, international humanitarian organizations, when developing and implementing laws, policies and plans, including contingency plans, to integrate ecosystem-based approaches, including sustainable infrastructure, in disaster risk reduction, and that the product of those

investigations be incorporated in the structure of different existing strategic tools in accordance with national laws and legislations;

34. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to collaborate with universities and research institutions to carry out long-term research on wetlands and disaster risk management;
35. REQUESTS that the Ramsar Secretariat liaise with the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction of the United Nations, in highlighting the importance of wetlands in climate change adaptation, especially for countries identified as vulnerable to climate change; and ALSO REQUESTS that the Ramsar Secretariat establish strategic partnerships to ensure collaboration and access to global trust funds; and
36. REQUESTS multilateral and bilateral donors and private sector sponsors to support the implementation of necessary and appropriate actions related to wetlands and disaster risk reduction particularly for developing countries.