Fifty billion migratory birds each year travel thousands of kilometres, stopping along the way at wetlands, which they use as “refuelling stations”; these sites provide them with food, water and a place to rest.

The linked network of healthy wetlands across the world is critical in supporting the natural movements of migratory birds and other migratory species.

Migrating birds, which transcend national borders and connect our world remind us of our own connection to the planet, the environment and each other. One of the lessons that we are learning from the recent pandemic is that human, animal and plant health are intricately connected and inter-dependent.

With a million species facing the risk of extinction connectivity of habitats has become a central topic for biodiversity. The most recent Global Biodiversity Outlook confirms that human pressure on wetlands is increasing worldwide. Today wetlands are disappearing faster than any other ecosystem. As wetlands vanish, the ecological connectivity is being lost and entire populations of birds and other migratory species are at risk.

Despite these negative trends, we can still conserve and restore nature.

The area of land and sea that is under protection needs to increase rapidly. Experts say that a third of our lands must be conserved. More effective conservation, restoration and management of networks of wetlands are needed.

The Convention on Wetlands make an essential contribution to the protection and restoration of wetlands. Of the current 2,400 Wetlands of International Importance, almost half are specifically designated as key sites for migratory birds. Most recently, China designated Tianjin Beidagang Wetlands and Henan Minquan Yellow River Gudao Wetlands because of their critical situation on the East Asian – Australasian Flyway migration route; these wetlands support 460,000 migratory birds.

We need to work together to address the loss of wetlands, and ensure an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework. There is strength in working together; it is critical that we increase cooperation and local to global action through multilateral environmental treaties.

The Convention on Wetlands looks forward to working with partners in the development and implementation of effective governance and management practices to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands to safeguard the survival of migratory birds and all the world’s species.