Today, ministers and ambassadors from Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands adopted the Wuhan Declaration.

During the High-Level Ministerial Segment of the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP14) on 6 November 2022, ministers and ambassadors of Contracting Parties adopted the Wuhan Declaration – a statement of political will reaffirming the principles of the Convention on Wetlands to conserve, restore and ensure wise use of wetlands.

Initiated by the People’s Republic of China, the host of COP14, the Declaration considers scientific assessments which document the accelerating loss of wetlands, including the Global Wetland Outlook 2021; the sixth Global Environment Outlook (UNEP); the fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook (CBD); the WGII Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC); and the Global and Regional Assessments of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Referencing these studies, the Declaration emphasizes the urgency for Contracting Parties to implement the Convention on Wetlands in collaboration with other multilateral environmental agreements: to halt and reverse biodiversity loss; to mitigate, adapt and build resilience to climate change; and to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Adopted on the opening of the UNFCCC COP27, the Declaration includes key themes presented in resolutions that will be negotiated during COP.

Wetland actions for climate mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction

The Declaration emphasizes the importance of healthy wetland ecosystems as nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches to key planetary challenges. The text references services that wetlands provide to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, preserve water, reduce erosion, prevent flooding and storm surges - thereby sustaining biodiversity, managing disaster risk and sequestering carbon.

Integrating wetland actions into national policy

The Declaration recognizes the importance of ecosystem services of wetlands for a broad range of policy areas. The provisions encourage countries to include wetland
conservation, restoration and wise use in national sustainable-development plans, among other national plans, to realize the full benefits that wetlands offer to national and local economies.

Championing multi-stakeholder participation as critical to implementing the Convention

Ministers and ambassadors who adopted the Declaration recognize the important knowledge and practices of indigenous people in improving the conservation, restoration and wise use of wetlands. The Declaration asserts the importance of indigenous people’s full and effective participation, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Further recognizing the importance of multi-stakeholder participation, the Declaration emphasizes the important role played by civil society and non-governmental groups, including women, youth and local communities in implementing the Convention.

In light of the urgency to reverse wetland loss and safeguard their vital services, the Declaration sets a common intention to advance will and practical actions for key priorities, including the following:

- Take appropriate and urgent measures to halt and reverse wetland loss globally;
- Mobilize resources from all sources to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands’ Strategic Plan;
- Incorporate conservation, restoration, management, wise and sustainable use of wetlands into actions to contribute to the domestic legislation, plans and implementation of SDGs and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements;
- Define strategic goals and priority areas for conservation, restoration, management, wise and sustainable use of wetlands in partnership with civil society stakeholders, academia and the private sector while ensuring their social and environmental safeguards;
- Support legislation and implementation of wetland conservation, restoration, management, wise and sustainable use in harmony with the Convention, and make efforts to assess and maintain wetland ecosystem services; and
- Undertake assessment and accounting of wetlands and their ecosystem services, integrating their value into financial frameworks.

Following the adoption of the Wuhan Declaration, the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, Dr Musonda Mumba said, “The Wuhan Declaration asserts the importance of healthy wetlands to achieving a climate-safe, nature-positive and sustainable future. As we begin a cascade of environmental COPs and processes in the coming weeks, this Declaration sets
out key principles for integrating wetland ecosystems into all frameworks and initiatives for people and nature."

The Wuhan Declaration can be read in full here.

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