More than 150 participants from 63 countries attend the 57th Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention

25 June 2019

The 57th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention takes place this week in Gland, Switzerland. More than 150 participants from 63 countries gathered on Tuesday morning to listen to opening statements.

Chair of the Standing Committee, Mohamed Saif Al Afkham, opened the first plenary session saying, “This meeting is about setting the groundwork for 2019-2021 triennium and build a solid road map to deliver on COP13 resolutions. Last year The Global Wetland Outlook informed us that we are losing wetlands three times faster than forests; up to 87% of the global wetland resource has been lost since 1700. These statistics need to be constantly remembered while we are taking next steps and decisions for wetlands and thus for our own future and the future of our children.”

Grethel Aguilar, Acting Director General of IUCN, welcomed participants and remarked “Since we last welcomed you here, you have been through an amazing CoP on Dubai. COP13 stands out for us, as an institution, as a pivotal change in the Convention. We were very glad to see the strong support for the Secretariat, the productive and collegial discussions taking place, and the re-invigorated discussions on the one reason we are all here in this room: wetlands. There are three key areas where action is most needed: information for sectors that use and have an impact on water, better understanding of the value of wetlands and using this knowledge to better improve their management, and finally improving our communications on why wetlands are important and how the Convention is the primary freshwater management tool.”

Richard Holland, Director Operations and Network Development of Wetlands International delivered a statement on behalf of Ramsar’s six International Organisation Partners (IOPs). “Next year will be an important year for biodiversity. Along with the Convention on Biological Diversity COP in China, it is a critical year for international efforts to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and it will signal the official start of the Paris Agreement on Climate. We must demonstrate the central importance of wetlands to many of the key targets that will be in the global spotlight in 2020. Swamps, bogs, marshes and
mangroves may not be as famous or photo-friendly as cloud forests and coral reefs, but we can't survive without them and as climate change becomes an inescapable reality, wetlands offer us opportunities to build resilience, mitigate some of its effects and adapt to others.”

Secretary General, Martha Rojas Urrego stated in her speech “I listened attentively to the opening statements, and once again, they emphasize the important role of wetlands and the commitment of Contracting Parties and partners for their conservation. This is the key moment for our Convention – we have lots of work to do to ensure that COP13 decisions are implemented efficiently. Last year at COP13 we received the wakeup call about the state of wetlands – they are the most threatened ecosystems in the world and yet the most productive. There are opportunities, which we need to size: integrating wetlands into the global environmental agenda, into the development of post 2020-biodiversity framework, SDGs, new cycle of Nationally Determined Contributions and while reviewing the Strategic Plan and making it relevant to these global processes. The Secretariat is committed to serve you, to support, and to ensure a successful Standing Committee.”

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