Mayors and officials of 16 Wetland Cities from seven (7) countries formally convened for the first time on 23-25 October 2019 in Suncheon City, Republic of Korea for the “Inaugural Roundtable of Wetland City Mayors” organized by the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia (RRC-EA) and hosted by the Ministry of Environment, and Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, and the Suncheon City Government. More than 130 representatives from government and non-government organizations, local communities and the academe participated in the event.

The meeting aimed to provide a platform for Wetland Cities to establish and strengthen communication channels between cities, share and exchange information about experiences in managing urban wetlands with respect to local policies and regulations, and facilitate dialogues to promote and develop socio-economic and environmental cooperation between model cities. The roundtable also facilitated the successful establishment of the Wetland City Network as agreed by Mayors and city representatives. Membership, composition, and other preliminary operational information have been defined by the network members, while the RRC-EA has been requested to serve as the Secretariat of the Wetland City Network. Amiens City in France and Dongying City in China offered to host future meetings.

During the opening program, messages were conveyed by representatives from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and the Independent Advisory Committee for the Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention. Keynote and special presentations were delivered by officials from the East Asia and Africa Secretariats of ICLEI, and Suncheon National University.

The inaugural group of 18 Wetland Cities include Changde, Changshu, Dongying, Haikou, Harbin, and Yinchuan in China; Amiens, Pont-Audemer, Saint-Omer, and Courteranges in France; Tata in Hungary; Changnyeong, Inje, Jeju, and Suncheon in the Republic of Korea; Mitsinjo in Madagascar; Colombo in Sri Lanka; and Ghar El Melh in Tunisia.

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