



## 12<sup>th</sup> 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.11

#### **Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention**

1. RECOGNIZING that the ecological functions and ecosystem services performed by wetlands, including peatlands in all geographical regions, which contribute to human well-being, including of indigenous peoples and local communities, can be seriously degraded if the ecosystem is not managed wisely and AWARE that increased attention of the Ramsar Convention may be required to address this threat;
2. RECALLING that paragraph 13 of Resolution XI.14 recognized that scientific reports indicate that degradation and loss of many types of wetlands is occurring more rapidly than in other ecosystems and that climate change is likely to exacerbate this trend, which will further reduce the mitigation and adaptation capacity of wetlands and since the conservation and wise use of wetlands have the potential to halt this degradation, the designation of Ramsar Sites together with their effective management, as well as that of other wetlands, can, in some regions, play a vital role in carbon sequestration and storage and therefore in the mitigation of climate change;
3. RECALLING that paragraph 29 of Resolution XI.14 encouraged Contracting Parties and their representatives to reach out to their counterparts in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its relevant subsidiary bodies, in order to initiate and foster greater information exchange on the actual and potential roles of wetland conservation, management, and restoration activities in implementing relevant strategies, as appropriate, in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing carbon sequestration and storage in wetlands;
4. ALSO RECALLING paragraphs 32, 35 and 38 of Resolution X.24, which urged relevant Contracting Parties to take urgent action as far as possible and within national capacity, to reduce degradation, promote restoration, improve management practices of peatlands and other wetland types that are significant greenhouse gas sinks, and to encourage expansion of demonstration sites on peatland restoration and wise use management in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation activities; called on Ramsar Administrative Authorities to provide expert guidance and support, where appropriate, to the respective UNFCCC focal point, within the context of UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.13 on the joint policies and measures that are aimed to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from wetlands, such as peatlands where practical; and encouraged Contracting Parties to utilize peatlands to showcase the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness activities for implementation of the Convention in the context of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
5. FURTHER RECALLING that paragraph 4 of Resolution VIII.17 recognized the importance of peatlands for global biodiversity and for the storage of the water and carbon that is vital to the

world's climate system, and that paragraph 3 of the Annex to Resolution VIII.17 states that peatlands are recognized throughout the world as a vital economic and ecological resource;

6. NOTING that paragraph 17 of Resolution X.25 encouraged Contracting Parties to consider the cultivation of biomass on rewetted peatlands (paludiculture), and AWARE that the sustainable rewetting and restoration of peatlands, while maintaining their sustainable productive use, is a promising option to enhance the climate change mitigation potential of peatlands;
7. ALSO NOTING that in its Fifth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that most global estimates do not include emissions from peat burning or decomposition after a land use change; and that particularly, the decomposition of carbon in wetlands and peatlands is not reflected in models despite the large amount of carbon stored in these ecosystems and their vulnerability to warming and land use change;
8. AWARE that the IPCC has completed the *2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands* (Wetlands Supplement) and the *2013 Revised Supplementary Methods and Good Practice Guidance Arising from the Kyoto Protocol*, providing detailed guidance on methods for estimating anthropogenic emissions and removals of greenhouse gases from wetlands and drained soils including by rewetting and restoration of drained peatlands; and ALSO AWARE that the IPCC refers to the Ramsar Convention as a global and regional online resource providing for metadata sets for developing an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from wetlands and organic soils;
9. AWARE of the adoption by the UNFCCC through Decision 2/CMP.7 of a new activity "*Wetland Drainage and Rewetting*" for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, which enables Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol that have joined the second Commitment Period to account for anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks resulting from wetland drainage and rewetting;
10. NOTING the summary of the findings of the global *Assessment on Peatlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change* as referred to in part D of Decision IX/16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity on *Biodiversity and Climate Change*;
11. FURTHER NOTING Decision X/2 adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD – Aichi Target 15): "*By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks have been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification*";
12. AWARE of Resolution 1/8 adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on ecosystem based adaptation;
13. RECOGNIZING that peatland drainage may lead to rapid soil degradation and the loss of productive land and AWARE of the role that wetlands, including peatlands, play in reducing the impacts of natural disasters;
14. RECOGNIZING the efforts and successes of many Contracting Parties in rewetting and restoring degraded peatlands, the benefits of sharing practical methods and experiences and of having knowledge-based best-practice guidance;

15. ACKNOWLEDGING the Wetlands Supplement, which provides methods for estimating anthropogenic emissions and removals of greenhouse gases from lands with wet and drained soils and constructed wetlands for wastewater treatment, and that Box 1.1 of the Wetlands Supplement recognizes that rewetting can also restore wetlands to a state where net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are greatly reduced or even become negative, causing the wetlands to function as a net remover of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere;
16. FURTHER AWARE that Paragraph 10 of Resolution VIII.11 *Guidance for identifying and designating peatlands, wet grasslands, mangroves and coral reefs as Wetlands of International Importance* acknowledges the capacity of peatlands to regulate local and regional climates and that Paragraph 139 of Ramsar Handbook 17: *Designating Ramsar Sites* (Ramsar Handbooks 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2010) refers to the hydrologic role of wet peatlands in regulating the local and regional climate via evapo-transpiration cooling;
17. ACKNOWLEDGING the distinct mandates and independent legal status of conventions and AFFIRMING that the UNFCCC and IPCC are the key references for the terms *mitigation, adaptation, carbon sequestration, emissions reductions, greenhouse gas emissions* and *carbon storage* used in this Resolution, as they pertain to climate change;
18. RECOGNIZING the UNFCCC as the primary multilateral forum on addressing climate change and the IPCC as the leading international body for the scientific assessment of climate change;
19. REAFFIRMING that the Ramsar Convention is the primary multilateral forum on addressing wetland issues; and
20. NOTING the Policy Brief on *Peatlands, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation* and the report *Peatlands and Climate Change in a Ramsar context – a Nordic Baltic Perspective* developed under the Ramsar regional initiative NorBalWet as inspiration for other Ramsar regional initiatives and Parties, as appropriate;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

21. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as appropriate, to consider limiting activities that lead to drainage of peatlands and may cause subsidence, flooding and the emission of greenhouse gases and URGES greater international cooperation, technical assistance and capacity building to address this;
22. FURTHER ENCOURAGES the Contracting Parties as appropriate to designate as Wetlands of International Importance at least one peatland area that is also suitable for communication, education and awareness raising about the conservation, restoration and wise use of peatlands and the services they provide, such as their role in relation to climate change, the protection of habitats for rare and threatened species and the provision of water supplies;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, the Secretariat and other organizations to facilitate information exchange and cooperation among the administrative or managing bodies of these sites;
24. REQUESTS that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) with respect to its Work Plan related to the 4<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan, consider in conjunction with interested Contracting Parties and Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs):

- a. developing guidelines for inventories of peatlands for their designation as Wetlands of International Importance;
  - b. developing guidelines for the further application, as regards peatlands, of Criterion 1 for the selection of Wetlands of International Importance and in particular paragraph 121 of Annex 2 to Resolution XI.8 as pertinent to this Resolution;
  - c. evaluating the progress made with the implementation of the “Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands”; and
  - d. advising the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on practical methods for rewetting and restoring peatlands;
25. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as appropriate, to utilize their national and regional inventories to map the distribution of their peatlands with a view to determining the extent to which they sequester carbon;
  26. REQUESTS the Secretariat to facilitate national and regional capacity building to enable Contracting Party experts to create inventories of peatlands;
  27. INVITES the STRP National Focal Points to contribute to this work of the STRP in order to provide national and regional perspectives and contribute expertise from their in-country networks of peatland scientists and other experts;
  28. REQUESTS the Secretariat, working with the STRP, IOPs and other stakeholders, to compile best practices in peatland restoration techniques to support the work of wetland managers and share them through the official Ramsar Convention website;
  29. ENCOURAGES Ramsar bodies to collaborate with relevant international conventions and organizations including UNFCCC bodies, within their respective mandates, on the relationship between peatlands and climate change; and
  30. INVITES the Ramsar Administrative Authorities to bring this Resolution to the attention of the national focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to promote collaborative work among the national focal points of these MEAs in support of its implementation.