



13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

“Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 21-29 October 2018

Ramsar COP13 Doc.18.14

Draft resolution on restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity

Submitted by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Note from the Secretariat

The Standing Committee at its 54th meeting instructed the STRP Chair to work with the Secretariat to prepare a revised text reflecting the amendments proposed during the meeting, and forward this for consideration at COP13.

1. RECALLING Recommendations 4.1 on *Wetland Restoration* and 6.15 on *Restoration of wetlands*, which highlighted the important need for wetland restoration, Resolution VII.17 on *Restoration as an element of national planning for wetland conservation and wise use*, and Resolution VIII.16 on *Principles and guidelines for wetland restoration*;
2. RECALLING Resolution VIII.3 on *Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation, and mitigation* and Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, regarding the need to minimize degradation, promote restoration, and improve practices for managing peatlands and other wetland types that are significant carbon stores or have the ability to sequester carbon, and to encourage the expansion of demonstration sites on peatland restoration and wise use management in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation;
3. RECALLING Resolution VIII.17 on *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands*, establishing a comprehensive framework for peatland conservation and wise use by Contracting Parties, including peatland restoration as part of it;
4. NOTING that rewetting of peatlands means restoring the water table or hydrologic regime toward original condition with the aim of partial or total reversal of the effects of drainage;
5. ALSO NOTING paragraph 17 of Resolution X.25, on *Wetlands and “biofuels”*, encouraging Contracting Parties “to consider the cultivation of biomass on rewetted peatlands (paludiculture)” as an alternative to drained peatland use; and AWARE that since the adoption of this Resolution, the rewetting of peatlands while maintaining their productive use has been recognized as a promising option to enhance climate change mitigation;
6. RECALLING paragraph 24 (d) of Resolution XII.11 on *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention*, requesting the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

(STRP) to advise “the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on practical methods for rewetting and restoring peatlands”, as well as paragraph 28 of the same Resolution requesting the Secretariat, in collaboration with the STRP, International Organization Partners (IOPs) and “other stakeholders, to compile best practices in peatland restoration techniques to support the work of wetland managers and share [this compilation] through the official website of the Ramsar Convention”; and FURTHER RECALLING paragraph 29 of the same Resolution, encouraging “Ramsar bodies to collaborate with relevant international conventions and organizations, including bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), within their respective mandates, on the relationship between peatlands and climate change”;

7. RECOGNIZING that peatland restoration can contribute to the fulfilment of multiple obligations under different multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including, as appropriate, on climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, better water regulation, mitigation of water runoff, and support to the Sustainable Development Goals and that, accordingly, it could be promoted as a cost-effective tool with cross-cutting benefits; and that, as part of responsible management, the requirement for restoration, reclamation and rehabilitation of peatlands should be recognized as a requirement for wise use; and that no peatland should be developed without an approved management plan that includes the commitment to restore, reclaim or rehabilitate the peatland following use;
8. ALSO RECALLING the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, its mission, goals and targets to address the drivers of wetland loss and degradation and the need for restoration, and particularly target 12: “Restoration is in progress in degraded wetlands, with priority to wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation”, through “restoration initiatives taken, projects, and programmes implemented”;
9. FURTHER NOTING Decision X/2 on *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020* of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and in particular its 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”;
10. RECALLING that the UNFCCC is the primary multilateral forum on addressing climate change and that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the scientific assessment of climate change;
11. NOTING that the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by holding the increase in global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; and ALSO OBSERVING that emissions reductions and removals resulting from peatland restoration could contribute to the achievement of this temperature goal;
12. ACKNOWLEDGING the *2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands*;
13. NOTING also the large number of international studies on the link between greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and wetland restoration, and the wealth of experience that has been

accumulated on the restoration of degraded peatlands, especially for biodiversity conservation and increasingly for reducing GHG emissions;

14. NOTING the significant and recent international recognition of the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation, as expressed by the increased profile given to peatlands in the outcomes of the following international conferences and workshops:
 - a. The *Changshu Declaration on Wetlands* of the 10th INTECOL International Wetlands Conference held in Changshu, China, in September 2016, and specifically target 3 of the Declaration: “to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in line with obligations under international agreements”;
 - b. The international workshop held on Vilm, Germany, in September 2016 on “Peatland Conservation and Wise Use in the Context of Climate Change” as a direct follow-up to Resolution XII.11, which highlights the close links between research, education and communication, and implementation of and policy on peatland conservation and wise use¹, and which, more specifically in the context of rewetting activities, stressed the need to consider local stakeholder involvement and agreement, landowner compensation and the adaptation of policy frameworks (for example, to avoid perverse incentives);
 - c. The second international conference on “Renewable resources from wet and rewetted peatlands”² held in Greifswald, Germany, in September 2017, where progress in the development and use of paludiculture in mitigating and adapting to climate change by rewetting drained organic peatland soils was demonstrated;
 - d. The substantial number of side events at the 23rd Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the UNFCCC in November 2017, which addressed the role of peatlands in climate change mitigation, and the proposal by relevant MEAs at that meeting to manifest further cooperation on peatland restoration in a joint declaration to encourage greater synergies and cooperation between MEAs, which is currently being followed up by relevant conventions, Contracting Parties and international organizations;
15. ALSO NOTING that the Global Peatlands Initiative, which was supported by a number of international organizations and national governments, co-founded by the Ramsar Convention, and launched at UNFCCC COP22, is a global effort by leading experts and institutions to save peatlands as the world’s largest terrestrial organic carbon stock; and FURTHER NOTING the presentation at UNFCCC COP23 of the Initiative’s first assessment, entitled *Smoke on Water – Countering global threats from peatland loss and degradation*;
16. NOTING that peatland restoration contributes to the implementation of obligations under different MEAs (Ramsar Convention, CBD, UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification); but also REAFFIRMING that the Ramsar Convention is the primary multilateral forum on addressing wetland issues;

¹ The discussions of the workshop are summarized in a report available at:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/report_peatlands_vilm_workshop_sept_2016.pdf and a Briefing Note produced by Greifswald Mire Center available at:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/briefing_note_peatlands_vilm_workshop_sept_2016.pdf.

² The proceedings of the event can be downloaded at:

<http://www.rrr2017.com/doc/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/rrr2017/downloads/RRR2017%20-%20proceedings%20-%20web.pdf>.

17. ALSO NOTING that peatland restoration should not occur in isolation but, as appropriate, as part of wider consideration of water management at landscape scales, as highlighted during the Global Landscapes Forum convened by the UN in December 2017;
18. WELCOMING the efforts of Contracting Parties reporting on peatland restoration projects and on the international and national organizations funding and implementing such projects; and
19. ACKNOWLEDGING the 2018 thematic assessment report on *Land Degradation and Restoration* of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which states that land degradation is worsening worldwide and is now at a critical level, undermining the wellbeing of 3.2 billion people;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

20. URGES Contracting Parties to report on progress with Resolutions VIII.7 and XII.11;
21. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to conserve existing mires (Resolution VIII.17, *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands*) and other peatland habitats and to restore degraded peatlands in their territory, as one means to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to restore biodiversity values;
22. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to note and use, as appropriate, the compilation of experiences on peatland restoration and rewetting methods, mainly from acid bogs of Northern countries, prepared by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and provided as a Ramsar Technical Report, to learn from and adapt to local or national contexts as appropriate and to give the STRP a mandate to continue the work for the remaining zones to support peatland restoration worldwide;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider stimulating the shift from drainage-based peatland agriculture and forestry to paludiculture or rewetting and away from other non-sustainable uses of peatlands, such as overgrazing and construction, among others, especially in arid, semiarid and permafrost areas;
24. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to seek to ensure that rewetting and paludiculture can take place where paludiculture is the best land use for climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as for biodiversity conservation and where biodiversity values are not compromised, taking into account the peatland type, the site's ecological status and the ecological potential after rewetting;
25. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to engage in the Global Peatlands Initiative;
26. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and the Secretariat to foster collaboration and synergies among MEAs with respect to peatland conservation and restoration, thereby safeguarding the multiple benefits of peatlands including restored peatlands, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals;
27. [ENCOURAGES] [RECOMMENDS] [URGES] Contracting Parties, as appropriate within their national circumstances, to [include peatland restoration as part of] [pursue peatland conservation and/or restoration measures that reduce anthropogenic emissions and increase removals, with the aim of achieving] their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris

Agreement, as appropriate; and URGES the STRP to develop appropriate guidance on integrating peatland restoration projects into Nationally Determined Contributions, including on carrying out national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories in line with the *2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands*;

28. REQUESTS the STRP, with respect to its Work Plan, related to the 4th Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024, to further elaborate on practical experiences of restoration methods for peatland types not yet covered by Ramsar guidance using, for example, the experience with tropical peatlands gained by the Indonesian Peatland Restoration Agency (BRG), Canada's experience of restoration gained through the work of Laval University's Peatland Ecology Research Group (PERG) and other relevant experiences around the world;
29. ALSO REQUESTS the STRP:
 - to make an assessment of the status of implementation of Resolution VIII.17;
 - to elaborate on the practical experiences of restoration methods based on the integrated approach to ecosystem restoration;
 - to develop guidance for the cost-benefit analysis of peatland restoration projects; and
 - to develop templates for [Contracting Parties] reporting on peatland restoration [which are in synergy with reporting obligations under other MEAs];
30. FURTHER INVITES Contracting Parties to provide peat-related information and case studies for inclusion in such guidance, and to disseminate outputs and to report progress at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and
31. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider options for incentives to foster peatland restoration and conservation.