



## 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.18.21

### Draft resolution on agriculture in wetlands

*Submitted by the Czech Republic*

#### Note from the Secretariat

Through Decision SC54-33, the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to edit, finalize and publish the draft resolution contained in document SC54-Com.14 for consideration at COP13, subject to inclusion of the additional amendments tabled by Canada and Brazil and the minor amendments previously submitted by the Russian Federation.

1. CONCERNED that 80% of wetlands have been lost in many areas of the world since 1700 (Davidson, 2014), and that the key driver in the loss and degradation of wetlands, as indicated by the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (2005), has been the conversion and drainage of land for agricultural production, groundwater depletion and abstraction of water for crop irrigation, as well as the use of agrochemicals, fertilizers and pesticides;
2. FURTHER CONCERNED that many wetland areas that were for centuries used for sustainable agricultural production have been drained in the past 150 years, either intentionally by drainage, which has increased sharply since the 1960s, or indirectly by groundwater depletion;
3. AWARE that, in Resolution VIII.34 on *Agriculture, wetlands and water resource management*, the Convention has recognized that wetlands can play important roles in relation to agriculture, such as abating the effects of storm and flood events, thus helping to protect both residential and agricultural land, and NOTING the high dependence of local communities on wetland resources, particularly in developing countries and notably in terms of small-scale subsistence agriculture, domestic water supply, and other uses that may contribute directly to poverty alleviation;
4. FURTHER AWARE that Resolution X.31 on *Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems* and Resolution XI.15 on *Agriculture-wetland interactions: rice paddy and pest control* stress the importance of sustainable rice paddy cultivation for local and global livelihoods;
5. RECALLING the recognition by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (“Rio+20”, Brazil, 2012), in paragraph 111 of the outcome document *The Future We Want*, of the need to promote more sustainable agriculture and to maintain natural ecological processes that support food production systems;

6. RECALLING the 2015 Paris Pact on water and adaptation to climate change in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers, which calls for the services of water-related ecosystems in adaptation to climate change to be enhanced, through *inter alia* protection and restoration of wetlands and coastlines, reforestation and other natural water retention measures;
7. RECALLING Resolution 3/2 on *Pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors* and Resolution 3/10 on *Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems* adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session;
8. ACKNOWLEDGING the 2016 assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on pollinators, pollination and food production, which shows that a number of features of current intensive agricultural practices threaten pollinators and pollination, and that moving towards more sustainable agriculture and reversing the simplification of agricultural landscapes offer key strategic responses to risks associated with pollinator decline;
9. ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING the 2018 BirdLife International report *State of the world's birds: Taking the pulse of the planet*, which reports that agriculture is a key driver in the decline of a number of bird species, impacting 1,091 (74%) of globally threatened bird species;
10. REALIZING that wetlands are often intricately connected to groundwater – either by the wetland replenishing groundwater or groundwater feeding the wetland, or by a combination of the two depending on time and space – and that human and climatic impact on one system will affect the other;
11. REALIZING that the increasing lack of water in landscapes and scarcity of natural vegetation cover have caused an increase in both the frequency and amplitude of temperature fluctuations, and that, in many parts of the world, summer maximum temperatures are becoming too high and water shortages too severe for either humans and livestock to live comfortably, or for optimum crop yields;
12. FURTHER REALIZING that severe shortages, and also surpluses, of water occur more and more frequently in many parts of the world and that the increasing frequency of persistent droughts (highlighted in Resolution VIII.35 on *The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems*) and extreme weather events, such as thunderstorms, hailstorms and also late frosts, leads to major losses of agricultural production and thus threatens food security and efforts to eradicate poverty;
- [13. CONCERNED that expanding agriculture with little consideration for local soil and climatic conditions and land surface configuration has an adverse impact on landscape and species diversity (including wetland biodiversity), leading to severe soil erosion and leaching of nutrients, and consequently to the loss of soil fertility for agriculture and also of wetland values and functions;]
14. RECALLING Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, which states that climate change and accelerated desertification will have major impacts on water availability and distribution, affecting wetland functions and values as well as agricultural production; and ALSO RECALLING the high primary and secondary production of some wetlands and their important role in nutrient and water retention as well as their contribution to the mitigation of climate change;

15. FURTHER CONCERNED that the continuing drainage of wetlands, and especially of peatlands, for agricultural production, forestry and natural resource exploitation further accelerates climate change (Resolution XII.11 on *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention*);
16. AWARE that wetlands may provide resources that can be used for human and animal nutrition, as building materials and for energy production; and
17. ACKNOWLEDGING that many examples from across the world show that agriculture and forestry have been conducted successfully while preserving wetlands, and that many wetlands worldwide still remain important sources for fisheries, crop production and animal husbandry;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

18. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties, instead of draining wetlands for agriculture, to use any opportunity to develop sustainable agriculture in and around wetlands to stop further land drainage and properly manage aquifers, enhancing water retention time in the landscape, recreating local atmospheric water cycles and contributing to climate change mitigation and the alleviation of adverse impacts of droughts, as well as reducing peak water discharges coupled with high nutrient and organic matter runoff;
19. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to identify and support traditional uses of wetlands and their biodiversity, ensuring sustainable and wise use of wetlands for fisheries, sustainable forms of crop cultivation, sustainable reed harvesting, wetland grazing or mowing, berry picking, and floodplain forestry, and to search for and promote novel uses of wetlands such as the use of integrated buffer zones and constructed wetlands for the treatment of agricultural runoff or use of degraded peatlands for sphagnum moss cultivation and other kinds of sustainable crop and animal farming;
20. REQUESTS that Contracting Parties support the co-management of wetlands, other surface water resources and groundwater resources, as wetland protection and management cannot be done in isolation and require active land use, surface and groundwater protection and groundwater management, and as each integrated system needs to be well understood in order to devise best management and adaptation strategies;
21. URGES Contracting Parties to strengthen the role of communication, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA) to enhance community understanding that wetlands and agriculture can co-exist and even benefit from each other, and notably:
  - a. that agriculture in certain wetlands can benefit from their high primary and secondary productivity;
  - b. that wisely used wetlands can continuously provide many beneficial products, such as biomass, building materials, food and fodder;
  - c. that enhancing water retention in the landscape by supporting and enhancing the natural retaining of floods and runoff in wetlands and groundwater, not uniquely but also for agriculture, will result in the re-creation of local atmospheric water cycles, increased groundwater buffer storage, reduced temperature amplitudes, increased air humidity and reduced frequency of spring frost events, and that if done on the landscape scale, it will

diminish air convection and the resulting long-distance atmospheric transport of pollutants, as well as the likelihoods of thunderstorms;

- d. that wise use of wetlands provides options for receiving multiple benefits, such as diverse production, water retention in the landscape, and prevention of floods, stable groundwater storage, reduced runoff of nutrients, preservation of biodiversity, and carbon storage as long as the water table is sufficiently high for a large part of the season;
  - e. that natural wetlands also function as refuges of crop wild relatives; and
  - f. that thanks to their multiple benefits wetlands can support human wellbeing;
22. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties: to work with research institutions, farmers and other stakeholders to identify and promote sustainable farming practices such as agroforestry, permaculture, grazing, aquaculture and extensive fisheries in and around wetlands; to seek to support basic and applied research and demonstration projects; and to examine the potential for traditional and novel wetland products and production systems in wetlands;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to review subsidies and government instruments in support of agricultural practices and assess their effect on wetlands and their sustainability, including the integrity of wetlands and long-term impact upon the sustainability of local livelihoods;
24. REQUESTS that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the International Organization Partners, in collaboration with Contracting Parties, compile and review information on the positive and negative impacts of agricultural practices on wetlands in terms of their biodiversity and ecosystem services, and document best practice examples of wetland use for agricultural production that preserves wetland integrity and is sustainable in the long-term and in the context of climate change;
25. REQUESTS that the STRP support the implementation of the present Resolution by providing data on and an overview of the extent of intact wetlands and those damaged and destroyed since the 1970s, and provide guidance for identifying wetlands suitable for restoration to provide ecosystem services, including the provisioning services, for the benefit of people and nature; and
26. REQUESTS that the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Contracting Parties, address appropriate decision-makers and policy-makers and advise on withdrawing subsidies that endanger wetlands.