

Recommendation 7.1



"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"
7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999

A global action plan for the wise use and management of peatlands

1. RECALLING Recommendation 6.1, which encouraged further cooperation on wise use, sustainable development, and conservation of global peatlands;
2. CONGRATULATING many organizations for their positive response and initiative, including the publication of *Management Guidelines for Forested Tropical Peatlands, with Special Reference to Southeast Asia* by the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, the International Peat Society *Statement on the Wise Use of Peatlands*, the International Mire Conservation Group in their ongoing development of *Wise Use Guidelines for Peatlands*, and Wetlands International and other organizations for numerous new projects developed since the 6th Meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties in 1996 in support of national and regional peatland wise use and management guidelines, programs and policies;
3. RECALLING the Agenda 21 commitment for a well-considered balance between the economic and social development needs of nations in their use of natural resources, such as peatlands, and their goals for environmental conservation;
4. EXPRESSING CONCERN for the low level of global recognition of the implications of significant carbon loss due to peat fires and other human-induced factors throughout the world;
5. FULLY AWARE of the need to include all wetland carbon sinks and sequestration initiatives as key issues in the global discussion concerning the Kyoto Protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
6. WELCOMING the increase in the number of designated Ramsar sites in many nations that include, or are dominated by, peatland ecosystems, thus responding to the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which has identified peatlands as an under-represented wetland type in the List of Wetlands of International Importance; and
7. NOTING WITH SATISFACTION the significant ongoing international interest in the government, private and environmental non-government sectors for enhanced promotion of the sustainable development, wise use and conservation of peatland ecosystems and their associated natural resources;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. CALLS ON Contracting Parties to give further priority to supporting the inventory and evaluation of peatlands of all types and, where appropriate, to designate additional peatland

- ecosystems within their territories for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance;
9. URGES Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners, and other interested bodies to take immediate actions to improve awareness and understanding of the functions and values of the world's peatlands and to protect sites under particular risk, such as tropical and boreal peatlands;
 10. ENDORSES the *Draft Global Action Plan for the Wise Use and Management of Peatlands* as annexed to this Recommendation and RECOMMENDS the cooperation of Contracting Parties and other interested bodies in further refining the Draft and in establishing funding for appropriate projects and activities in support of its Implementation Strategy;
 11. INVITES the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel and Ramsar International Organization Partners to assist Contracting Parties in evaluating this *Action Plan*, once completed, with regard to development of:
 - i) additional guidelines for designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites;
 - ii) further national and regional sustainable development, wise use and management guidelines for peatlands;
 - iii) initiatives to transfer peatland development and restoration technology to developing nations and countries with economies in transition; and
 - iv) standardized and globally applicable classification of peatland types and their ecological characteristics;
 12. CALLS UPON partners in this *Draft Global Action Plan* to report on progress with its further development, in particular in the Implementation Strategy and in establishing a potential Global Peatland Partnership (GPP), at the Millennium Wetland Event in Quebec, Canada, in August 2000 and to submit a revised Global Action Plan at Ramsar COP8 in 2002 for its consideration and possible adoption.

Annex

Draft Global Action Plan for the Wise Use and Management of Peatlands

Introduction

1. In March of 1996, in advance of COP6 of the Ramsar Convention, a series of partner agencies cooperated in organizing an *International Workshop on Global Mire and Peatland Conservation* (Rubec 1996). This was one in a series of international working meetings focused on drawing global attention to the need for action on peatland and mire sustainable development, wise use, conservation and management. These meetings include the Sixth Meeting of the International Mire Conservation Group (Moen 1995) and the Peatland Convention (Parkyn, Stoneman and Ingram 1997). Peatlands were subsequently recognized as an under-represented wetland type in the global network reflected in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List). A variety of ongoing efforts by non-government organizations have identified potential elements of a Global Peatland Wise Use Action Plan, regional or national guidelines for the management of peatland ecosystems (such as Maltby 1995; Safford and Maltby 1998), and cooperation among potential partners.
2. At the 4th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (Buenos Aires, November 1998), it was apparent that carbon sequestration is emerging as an important mechanism to foster the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. This inherently must include the wise use of carbon resources found in peatlands and the potential implementation of a global trading mechanism for carbon credits. Peatlands have been identified as a potential component of the world's carbon sink and a valuable economic resource. International discussions in many sectors are underway to promote recognition of peatland types as a component linking the economic and environmental issues inherent in the Conventions on Climate Change, Wetlands, and Biological Diversity, and international trade issues.
3. Thus, it was proposed that issues such as climate change, carbon sinks, wise use, and sustainable management of peatlands form the elements of the 13th Global Biodiversity Forum Workshop on Peatlands held on 7-9 May 1999 in San José, Costa Rica. This Workshop was organized under the sponsorship of IUCN and numerous partner organizations. The Workshop reviewed the *Draft Global Action Plan for the Wise Use and Management of Peatlands*.
4. The proposed elements of this *Draft Global Action Plan for the Wise Use and Management of Peatlands* are based upon the recommendations for initiatives developed in previous international fora including:

1994	The <i>Trondheim Declaration</i> from the Sixth IMCG Symposium, Trondheim, Norway (Moen 1995).
1995	The <i>Edinburgh Declaration</i> developed at the International Peatlands Convention, Edinburgh, Scotland (Parkyn et al. 1997).
1996	A <i>Global Action Plan on Mire and Peatland Conservation</i> (Lindsay 1996) proposed during the International Workshop on Peatlands and Mire Conservation, Brisbane, Australia (Rubec 1996).

- 1996 Ramsar COP6 Recommendation 6.9 and Strategic Plan 1997-2002, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
- 1997 Recommendations of the Joint IPS/IMCG Working Meeting, Surwold, Germany (Rubec 1997).
- 1998 The IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management report entitled *Management Guidelines for Forested Tropical Peatlands, with Special Reference to Southeast Asia* (Safford and Maltby 1998).

1999 Workshop Objectives

- 5. The objectives of the 7-9 May 1999 GBF13 Peatland Workshop were:
 - i) to review the status of initiatives promoting cooperation and development of a global peatland sustainable development, wise use and conservation strategy;
 - ii) to foster a global partnership of government, private sector and non-government agencies to implement such a strategy; and
 - iii) to explore mechanisms to support international cooperation on issues such as carbon sinks and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol under the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Action Plan Partners

- 6. The partners in a Global Peatland Action Plan may include (this is not a comprehensive list) many networks and organizations such as:
 - i) IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (IUCN/CEM);
 - ii) Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and its Contracting Parties;
 - iii) International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG);
 - iv) Wetlands International;
 - v) International Peat Society (IPS);
 - vi) Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS);
 - vii) Global Environment Network; and
 - viii) Institute for Wetland Science and Policy Research (USA).

Key Questions and Opportunities

- 7. There have been various efforts to define peatland or mire action plans. Paraphrasing questions originally suggested by Lindsay (1995), the following six questions seem to serve the current situation globally:
 - i) What is the status of the global peatland and mire resource?
 - ii) How is this resource properly characterized ecologically and economically?
 - iii) How and why are peatlands currently used?
 - iv) Why should we use peatlands and mires sustainably?
 - v) How should peatlands and mires be conserved and managed wisely?
 - vi) What monitoring tools would we need to learn whether we are succeeding?
- 8. The *Global Peatland Action Plan* envisaged would focus on a series of “opportunities”, under each of which are now organized several recommendations for discussion purposes below. These recommendations are in general derived from those posed in the previous international

fora and publications listed in a previous section. This listing synthesizes some of the existing recommendations from many sources, presented in a series of eight opportunity themes below.

9. The Draft Action Plan thus has eight opportunities that could be addressed:
 1. Understanding peatland terminology;
 2. Global peatland and mire data base;
 3. Global peatland monitoring and awareness program;
 4. Understanding and standardizing wise use concepts;
 5. Using policy and legislative instruments;
 6. National and regional peatland management guidelines;
 7. Research and cooperative networks and centres of excellence; and
 8. Establishing program and research priorities.

Opportunity No. 1: Understanding peatland terminology

10. Develop a global understanding and standardization of peatland and mire terminology and classification consistent through several languages such as English, French, Spanish, Russian, Finnish and German.

Actions:

- 1.1 A series of informative publications should be produced for international distribution on the status of regional uses, inventory, and management of peatlands and mires throughout the world.
- 1.2 With the help of partner organizations such as IPS, IUCN, Wetlands International, IMCG, and other organizations and Ramsar Contracting Parties:
 - i) establish an effective communication network;
 - ii) establish targeted publications on peatland classification and terminology;
 - iii) establish an electronic bibliography of literature relevant to peatland wise use, sustainable development, management and conservation; and
 - iv) publish an up-to-date Peatland Glossary of Terms, ideally in several languages, providing the latest agreed upon definitions of terms which are relevant to peatland conservation.
- 1.3 IMCG, IPS and interested Partners should establish a Joint Working Group to bring together peatland, mire and peat terminology and work towards a joint publication on terminology.
- 1.4 The Joint Working Group should organize small international workshops or symposia on this theme at appropriate dates.
- 1.5 Partners should organize printing of publications such as a Glossary on Peat and Peatlands as special issues of existing sources including the *International Peat Journal*.
- 1.6 Partner should prepare a report on global mire types and mire regions.

- 1.7 Partners in a Global Peatland Action Plan should cooperate in organizing a workshop on peatland/mire evaluation models and systems with case studies for presentation at the Quebec Millennium Wetland Event in August 2000.

Opportunity No. 2: Global peatland and mire database

11. Establishment of a global data base on the ecological characteristics and distribution of peatlands and mires, including carbon storage, is essential.
12. Extensive information on global peatland distribution is outlined in several regional and global surveys. These include Lappalainen (1996) in *Global Peat Resources* produced by the International Peat Society and Lofröth and Moen (in prep.) in *European Mires: Distribution and Conservation Situation* by the International Mire Conservation Group and University of Trondheim, Norway. Wetlands International and the Ramsar Convention are also currently developing a global survey of wetland resources in cooperation with groups such as the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. Global databases on carbon storage have evolved in several climate change projects but remain rudimentary and often incomplete.
13. The Ramsar Sites Database maintained by Wetlands International has descriptive information on almost 1000 Ramsar Sites globally. This is projected to increase to 2000 sites in the next decade. Many of these sites are peatlands. A gap analysis of the nature of peatlands identified in this database and possible future directions is needed.

Actions:

- 2.1 Those nations that have not yet identified biogeographic regions should consider initiating a program designed to generate such information, involving consultation with adjoining nations where appropriate. This is essential to allow data integration and synthesis in a standardized framework.
- 2.2 Ramsar Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Ramsar Bureau, IPS and IMCG and other interested Partners should review the extent and quality of peatland survey around the world and identify those areas in need of further inventory.

Opportunity No. 3: Global peatland monitoring and awareness programme

14. Integration of global statistics and establishment of a Global Status and Trends Survey on peatland resource use, changes in ecological character, restoration and rehabilitation are needed. Such information is fundamental to reporting on and promoting awareness of peatland functions and values.

Actions:

- 3.1 A review of existing peatland ecosystem understanding should be carried out, with the specific objective of identifying priority areas for further research designed to assist in the maintenance of the ecological character of peatlands, including Ramsar sites.
- 3.2 A series of specific, peatland-related education and interpretation initiatives should be established, both internationally and nationally. Feasibility studies for peatland

ecosystems should be carried out by each Ramsar Contracting Party, with the support of expert non-government organizations on possible options and information available for:

- i) links to existing education programs and curricula;
- ii) educational and exhibition proposals which can bring greater understanding and appreciation of the benefits and value of local or regional peatland systems to local communities; and
- iii) the importance of peatland resources to national and global economic systems.

Opportunity No. 4: Understanding and standardizing wise use concepts

15. Synthesis of current understanding and consensus on wise use concepts for peatlands is needed, consistent with definitions and principles established under the Ramsar Convention. It is noteworthy that the IPS and IMCG are working on this issue. IPS has recently published a Statement on Wise Use in an article in its magazine *Peatlands International* (January 1999).

Actions:

- 4.1 Ramsar Contracting Parties should ensure that international mire and peatland sustainable development, wise use, management and conservation issues are included in discussions at, and the resolutions prepared for meetings of the Ramsar Convention and other international environmental treaties such as the Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Desertification.
- 4.2 International conventions, agreements and regulations should be used effectively to support wise use and management of global peatland resources consistent with the United Nations Agenda 21 principles for sustainable development at the national level.

Opportunity No. 5: Using policy and legislative instruments

16. Development of national peatland policies consistent with sustainable development, wise use and conservation objectives are needed, defining clear goals and objectives and strategies for wise use. In addition, reviews at a national and international level of laws and institutions that could enhance sustainable peatland management and conservation measures should be considered.

Actions:

- 5.1 Review the present framework of national policies and regulations designed to ensure that peatland sustainable use and management are operating effectively and enhance these measures where there is national consensus that an insufficient network of protected peatland sites is present.
- 5.2 Partner agencies and organizations should proceed with development of global and national Peatland Sustainable Development, Wise Use and Management Action Plans and Guidelines. The overall objectives of such Action Plans should include:
 - i) promoting the sustainability of peatland and mire functions and values through the implementation of national objectives; and

- ii) facilitating peatland and mire commitments made by these nations through their implementation of international conventions, treaties, sustainable development assistance agreements and regulations.

Opportunity No. 6: National and regional peatland management guidelines

17. Development of peatland management systems, guidelines and models for implementation of a national or regional Action Plans is needed. The Commission on Ecosystem Management of IUCN has recently published a booklet on *Guidelines for Management of Tropical Forested Peatlands* (Safford and Maltby 1998). These Guidelines could serve as an example for application to other peatland types, nationally or regionally.

Actions:

- 6.1 Partners should prepare proposals for development assistance agencies to create and implement national and regional Peatland Action Plans, including Guidelines for Peatland Management. This should apply to all nations in which peatlands form a significant component of the landscape, including boreal bogs, coastal mangrove systems and tropical peat swamp forests. The *IUCN Guidelines for Management of Tropical Forested Peatlands* could be an example in this regard.

Opportunity No. 7: Research and cooperative networks and centres of excellence

18. Creation of peatland networks for research and program cooperation and Centres of Excellence are needed to foster joint project ventures and integration of effort among agencies, thus fostering a common sense of purpose.

Actions:

- 7.1 An international coordination office and function should be established to facilitate peatland sustainability, wise use of resources, management and conservation measures, to be housed with a major international agency. This should be funded and undertaken in cooperation with partner agencies and organizations and Contracting Parties to the Wetlands and Biodiversity Conventions that have significant peatland landscapes.
- 7.2 Further strengthening of international cooperation and information exchange between those organizations involved in peatland sustainable development, conservation and resource use issues should be actively supported.
- 7.3 Improved understanding and study of the biodiversity and ecological character of the world's peatlands and mires is needed through enhancement of the research capacity of university, industry and inter-governmental networks. This should include establishment of Centres of Excellence on Peatlands and significant expansion of training in peatland ecology, science and technology.

- 7.4 The Ramsar Convention should take a far more active leadership role in global peatland issues, in cooperation with stakeholder and expert organizations and networks such as the IPS, IMCG, IUCN and Wetlands International.
- 7.5 With the help of partner organizations such as IPS, IMCG, and other organizations and Ramsar Contracting Parties, a more effective global peatland communication network should be established, by:
 - i) establishment of e-mail and Internet networks on peatlands; and
 - ii) identification of enhanced networks of peatland specialists who can provide guidance and advice about best practices to client agencies and governments on a project basis.
- 7.6 All agencies with interests in peatlands should actively participate in the Millennium Wetland Event, 6-12 August 2000, in cooperation with INTECOL, the Society of Wetland Scientists, IPS and IMCG to promote the wise use of global peatland resources.
- 7.7 An International Working Group should prepare a Discussion Paper and Guidelines for Sustainable Wise Use of Global Peatlands and Mires. Specialists such as the IPS and IMCG organizations should draft a proposed Table of Contents for this paper. Each organization should then take the lead on this mutually-agreed set of topics and write sections of the paper. These contributions should be edited into a joint paper to be published and distributed globally in cooperation with the Ramsar Convention and other partners.
- 7.8 Peatland organizations should have at least one joint meeting of invited participants and board members each year to focus on key issues of mutual interest. This would build upon the positive example and experience of the November 1997 IPS/IMCG Joint Workshop.
- 7.9 The IPS and IMCG should develop stronger information linkages with the Ramsar Convention, Wetlands International, IUCN Wetlands Program, Society of Wetland Scientists, INTECOL and other appropriate agencies or groups. This should be done through such means as exchange of newsletters on a regular basis.

Opportunity No. 8: Establishing programme and research priorities

19. Establishment of priorities for sustainable development, conservation, management, and wise use plans of peatlands at risk through cooperative scientific and management studies is needed. This will assist in future and advance planning to identify such sites on a global basis. In addition, partner agencies must promote and support research and technologies for topics such as peatland restoration, avoiding duplication of effort and maximization of available resources.
20. In November 1997, 59 peatland topics were identified in a Joint IPS/IMCG Meeting (see Rubec 1997) as key issues in global peatland management or for wise use or scientific research needs. Participants in that meeting ranked these topics in terms of relative priority for discussion. Of these 59 topics, twelve were chosen for discussion and recommendations development:

1. Peatland terminology;
2. Actions to protect peatlands and mires;
3. Climate impacts of greenhouses gases from utilized peatlands;
4. Wise use concept;
5. Why use mires?;
6. Tropical peatlands;
7. Recognizing variation in use/conservation and protection with respect to differences in biogeographical regions;
8. Information exchange, data acquisition and networking;
9. Peatland inventory and statistics;
10. Defining choices and values for peatland use;
11. Ecological processes and scientific information; and
12. Socio-economic effects and benefits of peat harvesting in rural areas.

Actions:

- 8.1 Take the necessary action to secure the long-term conservation of globally important peatlands and representative networks of peatland types that are recognized as threatened.
- 8.2 Take effective steps to accelerate the research, development and marketing of all natural growing media, including peat, through the provision of significant levels of funding for research.
- 8.3 Develop global mechanisms for the transfer of peatland sustainable development and restoration technology and expertise to developing nations and countries with economies in transition.
- 8.4 Develop effective national management guidelines for peatlands based on the research and expertise in countries with peatland forestry, energy, and horticultural industries have been in place for extended periods, as experience and examples for other nations considering peatland resource use programs at a national level.
- 8.5 Develop international and national consensus for peatland and mire research programmes applicable to agreed-upon priorities through the cooperation of government, academia, industry and non-government organizations.

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