

Agenda item 10.2

**Promotion and utilization of the “Changwon Declaration”
(Resolution X.3)**

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to advise on ways of further promoting and utilizing the “Changwon Declaration”

Introduction

1. The “Changwon Declaration on human-well being and wetlands” was adopted by Parties at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP10) as Resolution X.3 (attached to this paper as Annex 1).
2. The Declaration was written in the form of key messages for decision-makers in other sectors, those whose business both affects wetland conservation and wise use and depends on the maintenance of healthy wetlands, but in recognition that this does not as yet appear to be widely understood. The Declaration was designed to be accessible for everyone to take out and use, at all scales, from local to international.
3. The Declaration includes key messages for five major sectors, covering:
 - *Water and wetlands*
 - *Climate change and wetlands*
 - *People’s livelihoods and wetlands*
 - *People’s health and wetlands*
 - *Land use change, biodiversity and wetlands*

and also includes key messages on two types of cross-cutting mechanism which are helpful in delivering response to these key messages, on:

- *Planning, decision-making, finance and economics*
 - *Sharing knowledge and experience*
4. The Resolution thanks the government of the Republic of Korea for its declared intention to champion the dissemination and uptake of this Declaration in future, and it sets out a range of actions by Contracting Parties, Convention bodies and others to make use of and promote the Declaration, including:
 - i) Contracting Parties and other governments to bring the “Changwon Declaration” to the attention of their heads of state, parliaments, private sector, and civil society, and

to encourage them and all government sectors and agencies responsible for activities affecting wetlands (paragraph 12);

- ii) Contracting Parties and other governments to utilise the “Changwon Declaration” to inform their national policies and decision-making, including in the positions of their national delegations to other external processes, and through specific opportunities at local, national and international levels where the Ramsar Convention and other processes have good potential for mutual assistance and collaboration, including *inter alia* the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UN agencies, multilateral environmental agreements, and the World Water Forum (paragraph 13);
 - iii) the Standing Committee, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Ramsar Secretariat, CEPA National Focal Points, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, the International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others to utilise the “Changwon Declaration” in their future work and establishment of priorities, and also to use their own means and all other relevant opportunities actively to promote the Declaration (paragraph 14);
 - iv) other organizations, bodies, institutions, and initiatives whose activities are relevant to wetland conservation and wise use to promote to their constituencies the messages in the Changwon Declaration (paragraph 15); and
 - v) Contracting Parties and others to find the resources to translate the “Changwon Declaration” into local languages and to facilitate its dissemination and understanding as widely as possible (paragraph 16);
5. Resolution X.3 also instructed the Ramsar Secretariat and Standing Committee to consider development and inclusion of indicators in the National Report Format for COP11, where feasible, concerning the dissemination and uptake of the “Changwon Declaration” (paragraph 17), and it requested the Standing Committee, the STRP, CEPA National Focal Points, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, the International Organization Partners (IOPs), and other interested parties to advise the Secretariat on their experiences of the uptake of the Declaration in order to inform the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Actions to date in the use and communication of the “Changwon Declaration”

6. Concerning Resolution X.3 paragraph 16 on translations into local languages, following COP10 the government of the Republic of Korea arranged for the translation of the Declaration text itself into a number of other widely used languages, and the text of the Declaration is now available in 13 languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish). These language versions are available for download from the Ramsar Web site COP10 page, and they have also been included in the CD-ROM of COP10 results sent to all Contracting Parties and others.
7. In relation to the specific request in Resolution X.3 paragraph 13 to utilize the Declaration by bringing it to the attention of other processes including the World Water Forum, during the recent 5th World Water Forum (Istanbul, 16-22 March 2009), at the request of the

government of the Netherlands, the Ramsar Secretariat and Wetlands International convened a topic session under the Forum theme 3.3 Preserving Natural Ecosystems – Ecosystems for Water and Life on “Acting Locally, Thinking Globally: What actions help preserve ecosystems?”. During this session, the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Korea and Ramsar Secretariat introduced the Changwon Declaration, and its key messages on water, climate change and wetlands formed part of the topic session discussions.

8. The key messages/recommendations from this topic session are provided in Annex 2 to this paper. The Changwon Declaration’s key messages on water, climate change and wetlands were agreed, in a somewhat elaborated form, as some of the key messages/recommendations (key messages 4 and 5 in Annex 2) from the topic session which have been transmitted into the outcomes of the 5th World Water Forum.
9. The Ramsar Secretary General has also conveyed the key messages of the Changwon Declaration through the following actions: a press conference organized by the IUCN Communication Unit in Istanbul, Turkey, during the 5th World Water Forum; a discussion with Ministers of Water during the Ministerial Roundtable on Freshwaters and Coastal Waters in Istanbul; several dialogs with Ministers of Environment and Executives of UN agencies, including UN-Habitat in Nairobi, Kenya, during the UNEP 25th Session of the Governing Council; and a discussion with the President of the Republic of Seychelles and senior officials, including the Minister of Environment.
10. The Standing Committee may wish to invite comment from its members and observers as to other actions being taken to take forward the Declaration in line with the terms of Resolution X.3. The Committee may also wish to consider whether it should urge that the Declaration be published in the form of an attractive brochure, and if so in what languages and consider whether funds can be identified for such a purpose.
11. In considering such matters it should also be noted that the Changwon Declaration was prepared in such a manner as to permit the extraction of just the emboldened text from each key message to form a more succinct “Summary for Decision-makers”.

Annex 1



10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

Changwon, Republic of Korea,
28 October-4 November 2008

Resolution X.3

The Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands

1. CONCERNED that as reported by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) the many pressures from land use change and over-use of water, exacerbated by a warming and increasingly variable climate, mean that wetlands continue to be lost and degraded in many parts of the world and at rates faster than other ecosystems, and that this is jeopardising the future provision of their services and thus the foundation they provide for human well-being;
2. AWARE of the many efforts by Ramsar Contracting Parties and others at local, national and international levels to address this situation in recognition of the vital contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, as well as to biodiversity, that can be delivered through maintaining and restoring their ecological character, but RECOGNIZING that these efforts need to be redoubled if present declines are to be halted or reversed and if the 2010 biodiversity target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals environment targets are to be achieved;
3. AWARE that the theme of this Conference is “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”;
4. WELCOMING the message of the Secretary General of the United Nations, delivered to this Conference on 28 October 2008, and NOTING the emphasis in that message on the vital link between wetlands, livelihoods, and the well-being of people around the world, as well as the importance of the Ramsar Convention in providing the guidance and mechanisms for underpinning this vital link and the valuable contribution that wetland ecosystem services can make to achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
5. RECOGNIZING the urgent need for governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society to understand more fully the roles they can and should play in securing the future health of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character, in relation to the global commitments made under the Ramsar Convention, and the need to develop more effective cross-sectoral action to secure this;

6. EMPHASISING the importance of collaboration and partnerships between governments and local communities for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and HIGHLIGHTING the shared responsibility of both governments and local communities in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention;
7. INFORMED that the primary purpose of the “Changwon Declaration” is to transmit key messages concerning wetland-related issues to the many stakeholders and decision-makers beyond the Ramsar community who are relevant to the conservation and wise use of wetlands, to inform their actions and decision-making;
8. NOTING that the Declaration is designed to complement the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015, which provides the Convention and its bodies with their own future approach and priorities for implementation, and that a number of objectives in the Strategic Plan could be effectively progressed through implementation of the Changwon Declaration;
9. THANKING the government of the Republic of Korea for its initiative in preparing a “Changwon Declaration” to provide an overarching agenda for future action on wetlands for the people of the world, and for its support for the process of drafting this Declaration; and
10. RECOGNIZING that the “Changwon Declaration” has been prepared through a collaborative process drawing on the expertise of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the International Organization Partners (IOPs), the government of Korea as the COP10 host country, and the Ramsar Secretariat; and THANKING the government of Korea for its declared intention to champion the dissemination and uptake of this Declaration in future;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. WELCOMES the “Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands” annexed to this Resolution;
12. STRONGLY URGES Contracting Parties and other governments to bring the “Changwon Declaration” to the attention of their heads of state, parliaments, private sector, and civil society, and to encourage them and all government sectors (including *inter alia* water management, human health, climate change, poverty reduction, and spatial planning sectors) and agencies responsible for activities affecting wetlands, especially in order to respond to the call for action for wetlands embodied in the Declaration;
13. ALSO STRONGLY URGES Contracting Parties and other governments to utilise the “Changwon Declaration” to inform their national policies and decision-making, including in the positions of their national delegations to other external processes, and through specific opportunities at local, national and international levels where the Ramsar Convention and other processes have good potential for mutual assistance and collaboration, including *inter alia* the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UN agencies, multilateral environmental agreements, and the World Water Forum, and REQUESTS the Secretariat to prepare advice on relevant action opportunities in support of this;

14. FURTHER STRONGLY URGES the Standing Committee, the STRP, the Ramsar Secretariat, CEPA National Focal Points, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, the International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others to utilise the “Changwon Declaration” in their future work and establishment of priorities, and also to use their own means and all other relevant opportunities actively to promote the Declaration;
15. ENCOURAGES other organizations, bodies, institutions, and initiatives whose activities are relevant to wetland conservation and wise use to promote to their constituencies the messages in the Changwon Declaration;
16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and others to find the resources to translate the “Changwon Declaration” into local languages and to facilitate its dissemination and understanding as widely as possible;
17. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat and Standing Committee to consider development and inclusion of indicators in the National Report Format for COP11, where feasible, concerning the dissemination and uptake of the “Changwon Declaration” and to report on this to Contracting Parties and others, noting that in some cases, indicators related to the Strategic Plan may also be relevant as indicators for the Changwon Declaration;
18. REQUESTS the Standing Committee, the STRP, CEPA National Focal Points, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, the International Organization Partners (IOPs), and other interested parties to advise the Secretariat on their experiences of the uptake of the Declaration in order to inform the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and
19. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat to consolidate, as necessary, into this Resolution any text language adopted by this Conference of Parties, so as to achieve consistency of terminologies.

ANNEX

The Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands

WHY SHOULD YOU READ AND USE THIS DECLARATION?

Wetlands provide food, store carbon, regulate the water flows, store energy, and are crucial for biodiversity. Their benefits to people are essential for the future security of humankind. Conservation and the wise and use of wetlands are vital for people, especially the poor.

Human well-being depends on many benefits provided to people by ecosystems, some of which come from healthy wetlands. Policymaking, planning, decision-making and management action by a wide range of sectors, at all levels from international to local, can benefit from the global consensus input that the Ramsar Convention provides. This includes the identification of the relevance of wetlands, the importance of their conservation and wise use, and ensuring security of the benefits that wetlands provide in terms of water, carbon storage, food, energy, biodiversity and livelihoods. It also includes technical know-how, guidance, models and support networks to help in putting this knowledge to practical use.

The Changwon Declaration presents an overview of priority action steps that together show “how to” deliver some of the world’s most critical environmental sustainability goals.

The Changwon Declaration is a statement and call to action from the 10th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which was held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008

The Changwon Declaration is relevant to all of us, everywhere, who are concerned with the future of our environment.

If you are a planner, policymaker, decision-maker, elected representative or manager in any environmental, land or resource-use sector, or working in the fields of education and communication, human health, economics or livelihoods, then this Declaration is directed to you. Your actions influence the future of wetlands.

Where does this Declaration come from?

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the global intergovernmental agreement concerned with the conservation and wise use of all the world’s wetlands. It was established in the city of Ramsar in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 2 February 1971.

The mission of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)¹ is:

“the conservation and wise use² of all wetlands³ through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

As the Ramsar Convention approaches four decades of existence, it continues to grow and to focus its agenda on the critical priorities for the environment at global, national and local levels. The Conference of the Convention’s Contracting Parties held its 10th meeting in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008, on the theme of “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”⁴, focusing on the link between human well-being and the functions of wetlands and the identification of positive actions in this regard.

Who should use this Declaration?

The Conference addresses this Declaration to all stakeholders in environmental governance and management, particularly those in positions of leadership, both in relevant fora at global level, including heads of government, and equally in “hands-on” delivery at local and river basin levels.

Why is it not “just another Declaration”?

Declarations have been issued from many international environmental conferences. The Changwon Declaration aims not to cover “standard” ground, but to add value by:

- being directed primarily to audiences beyond the Ramsar Convention itself, and to opportunities for action;
- offering positive, practical action steps; and
- defining the ways in which the Declaration’s impact will be assured.

What is in this Declaration?

The Declaration highlights positive actions for ensuring human well-being and security outcomes in the future under five priority thematic headings below, followed by two key areas of cross-cutting delivery mechanisms.

What does this mean in practice?

Water and wetlands

The degradation and loss of wetlands is more rapid than that of other ecosystems, and this trend is accelerating, due to major changes in land use, water diversions, and infrastructure development. Access to freshwater is declining for 1-2 billion people worldwide, and this in turn negatively affects food production, human health, and economic development, and it can increase societal conflict.

There is an urgent need to improve water governance. Instead of being demand-driven, which promotes over-allocation of water, water governance should treat wetlands as our “*natural*

water infrastructure”, integral to water resource management at the scale of river basins.

Continuing with “business as usual” is not an option.

Our increasing demand for, and over-use of, water jeopardizes human well-being and the environment. Access to safe water, human health, food production, economic development and geopolitical stability are made less secure by the degradation of wetlands driven by the rapidly widening gap between water demand and supply.

There is often not enough water to meet our direct human needs and to maintain the wetlands we need. Even with current attempts to maintain water flows for ecosystems, the capacity of wetlands to continue to deliver benefits to people and biodiversity, including clean and reliable water supplies, is declining. Actions to support water allocation to ecosystems, such as environmental flows, placing upper limits on water allocations (water ‘caps’), and new water management legislation, must be strengthened.

To close this “water gap”, we need to:

- **use our available water more efficiently;**
- **stop our wetlands from becoming degraded or lost** – based on clearly recognizing that we all depend on healthy wetlands for our water security, and that wetland services are currently being lost at a faster rate than in any other ecosystem;
- **restore our wetlands that are already degraded** – this offers us an efficient and cost-effective means of increasing ground and surface water storage, improving water quality, sustaining agriculture and fisheries, and protecting biodiversity.
- **wisely manage and protect our wetlands** – by always ensuring that they have enough water for them to continue to be the source of the quantity and quality of the water we need for food production, drinking water and sanitation. Failure to do so makes our water problems worse, **since wetlands are the only source of water to which we have easy access.**

Climate change and wetlands

Many types of wetlands play an important role in sequestering and storing carbon. They are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, while human disturbances of the same wetland systems can cause huge carbon emissions.

Wetlands are vital parts of the natural infrastructure we need for addressing climate change. Degradation and loss of wetlands make climate change worse and leave people more vulnerable to climate change impacts such as floods, droughts and famine. Many climate change policy responses for more water storage and transfers, as well as energy generation, if poorly implemented, may deleteriously impact on wetlands.

Climate change is increasing uncertainty in water management and making it more difficult to close the gap between water demand and supply. We will increasingly feel the effects of climate change most directly through changes in the distribution and availability of water, increasing pressures on the health of wetlands. Restoring wetlands and maintaining hydrological cycles is of utmost importance in responses for addressing climate change, flood mitigation, water supply, food provision and biodiversity conservation.

Coastal wetlands will play a major part in strategies established to deal with problems in coastal areas created by sea level rise.

Governments need to include water and wetland management in effective strategies for addressing climate change at national level. Decision-makers need to recognize the natural infrastructure of wetlands as a major asset in combating and adapting to climate change.

Water and well-functioning wetlands play a key role in responding to climate change and in regulating natural climatic processes (through the water cycle, maintenance of biodiversity, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and buffering of impacts). Conservation and wise use of wetlands help to reduce the negative economic, social and ecological effects that may result.

Developing opportunities should be seized for collaboration among international technical bodies involved in climate change (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel), **to share understanding and harmonise analyses**, especially in relation to wetlands/water/climate linkages.

People's livelihoods and wetlands

When policies in different sectors are not harmonised, many major developments and infrastructure schemes aimed at poverty reduction can actually lead to the degradation of wetlands, thus undermining their ability to provide vital services for local communities and ultimately leading to further and deepening poverty.

Action is needed to maintain the benefits provided by wetlands for economic development and the livelihoods of people, especially the poor. Investment in maintenance of the services provided by wetlands should be integral to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and related policies and plans.

Wise use, management and restoration of wetlands should help to build opportunities for improving people's livelihoods, particularly for wetland-dependent, marginalised and vulnerable people. Wetland degradation affects livelihoods and exacerbates poverty, particularly in marginalised and vulnerable sections of society.

Wetland/livelihoods linkages need to be better analysed and documented. Capacity and partnerships should be promoted at multiple levels to support learning, collecting and sharing knowledge about these linkages.

Sustainable wetland management should be supported by indigenous and traditional knowledge, recognition of cultural identities associated with wetlands, stewardship promoted by economic incentives, and diversification of the support base for livelihoods.

People's health and wetlands

Wetlands are important for the health benefits they provide, and also as places that people can visit for education, recreation, ecotourism, spiritual and cultural experiences, or simply to enjoy their natural beauty.

Interrelationships between wetland ecosystems and human health should be a key component of national and international policies, plans and strategies.

Development sectors, including mining, other extractive industries, infrastructure development, water and sanitation, energy, agriculture, transport and others can have direct or indirect effects on wetlands. These lead to negative impacts on wetland ecosystem services, including those that support human health and well-being. Managers and decision-makers in such development sectors need to be more aware of this and take all possible measures to avoid these negative impacts.

The health and wetland sectors need to co-manage the links between wetland ecological character⁵ and human health. Wetland and water managers must identify and implement interventions that benefit both wetland ecosystem “health” and human health.

It is already clear that many of the continuing pressures on wetlands that are driving trends in human health are rooted in issues of water, as for example waterborne transmission of diseases and vectors and/or dwindling supplies of water of suitable quality for food production, sanitation, and drinking water.

Land use change, biodiversity and wetlands

Better knowledge and understanding of the costs and benefits of changes to wetland ecosystems lead to better decision-making. Decisions on land use change must integrate adequate knowledge of the range of benefits, and their values, that wetlands provide for people and biodiversity.

Decision-making should, wherever possible, give priority to safeguarding naturally-functioning wetlands and the benefits they provide, especially through ensuring the sustainability of ecosystem services, while recognizing that human-made wetland systems can also make a significant contribution to water and food security objectives.

More actions are required to address the root causes of the loss of biodiversity and to reverse these losses by reference to agreed recovery targets, including targets to be adopted in the follow-up to the “2010 target”⁶ concerning significant reduction in the rate of decline of biodiversity.

What types of cross-cutting mechanisms are most helpful in delivering all this?

Planning, decision-making, finance and economics

Policy development and decision-making in response to each of the issues addressed in this Declaration very often require tradeoffs across policy objectives from multiple sectors. Sound decision-making depends upon wise balancing of legitimate objectives that are interconnected, even if full and detailed information is not available.

Good use of rapid and practical decision-support tools (such as rapid assessment, conflict resolution, mediation, decision-trees, and cost-benefit analysis) can often be of critical assistance in identifying issues and policy options.

Full recognition should be given to the significance of wetlands in spatial planning, especially Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites⁷), so that the values they represent can properly inform land-use and investment priority-setting and the adoption of necessary safeguards.

Cost-benefit analyses should be sufficiently comprehensive to best reflect the economic value of wetlands, as well as the reality that investing in the maintenance of wetland ecological character is usually a much more cost-effective strategy than later remediation for the loss of wetland services.

Adequate and sustainable financing for wetland conservation and wise use is essential, and this can be helped by the use of innovative financial instruments and partnerships between those sectors and stakeholders outside the Ramsar Convention who might not have worked together on wetland issues in the past. Especially when resources are limited, activities relevant to wetland conservation and wise use should seek to maximise the efficiency of use of currently available resources.

Sharing knowledge and experience

Basic information on the global extent and characterisation of wetlands urgently needs to be enhanced. There are increasing opportunities to make good use of evolving earth observation techniques and other information technologies.

Organizations with shared interests in data and information and knowledge (including indigenous and traditional knowledge) relevant to the issues covered in this Declaration should intensify efforts to seek common, harmonised and accessible approaches, so that knowledge and experience (for example, concerning good practices) can be shared more effectively, including through appropriate information technology applications.

Your call to action

Each and every one of us has a stake in the outcomes that are supported by this Declaration.

Many groups around the world are already working towards the wise use of wetlands in just the way this Declaration calls for. There are valuable experiences and knowledge to be shared that can help us all to make real, tangible progress. Reach out, get connected, get wet!

Ensuring impact

Measures of the success of this Declaration will include:

- its existence becoming widely known, reported, translated and remembered;
- its messages being taken up in planning and decision-making in local and river basin level governance/management processes;

- its relevant elements being incorporated into national-level plans, decisions and action programmes;
- its elements being incorporated into international policy statements, decisions and action programmes, including through briefings for government delegations to relevant international meetings.

Notes:

¹The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is the lead intergovernmental authority on wetlands and strives to ensure that the contributions wetlands make to all aspects of human well-being are recognized and strengthened in all sectors and at all levels of society.

²“**Wise use**” of wetlands has been defined under the Convention as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. (The phrase “in the context of sustainable development” is intended to recognize that whilst some wetland development is inevitable and that many developments bring important benefits to society, developments can be facilitated in sustainable ways by approaches elaborated under the Convention, and it is not appropriate to imply that ‘development’ is an objective for every wetland.)

³“**Wetlands**” encompass a broader range of ecosystems than is often realised. Article 1.1 of the Ramsar Convention defines them as “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.

⁴ In recent years, Ramsar **Conferences of the Contracting Parties (COPs) have been given themed titles** to reflect priority issues of the moment in the Convention’s evolution. Previous themes have emphasised different aspects of the links between wetlands and people, and the theme for COP10, “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”, positions the Convention in relation to an emerging understanding about the critical links between wetlands and human health and sets the context for the adoption of new decisions in this area.

⁵ The “**ecological character**” of wetlands is a key concept of the Ramsar Convention, defined as “the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time”. (Within this context, ecosystem benefits are defined in accordance with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment definition of ecosystem services as “the benefits that people receive from ecosystems”).

⁶ The “**2010 Biodiversity target**”, adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and by Heads of State at the 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), is “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.”

⁷ “**Ramsar sites**” (Wetlands of International Importance) are recognized and designated by the governments of the world that are Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention. They form the largest global network of “protected areas”, currently (as of November 2008) covering over 168 million hectares in over 1,822 sites.

Annex 2

5th World Water Forum (Istanbul, 16-22 March 2009)

Topic 3.3: Preserving Natural Ecosystems

Ecosystems for Water and Life

Session 3.3.3

Acting Locally, Thinking Globally: What actions help preserve ecosystems?

Key messages/recommendations

This session considered what local actions work to maintain ecosystems for water and people, in the context of basin-scale and global ecosystem and water governance and decision-making, and prepared recommendations on five issues on how better to 'close the gap' between decision-making and actions at these different spatial scales and between sectors whose business depends on wetlands and the benefit they provide to people.

1: Skewed ecosystem services exploitation is a major driver of continuing ecosystem degradation and needs to be addressed.

1.1 Local institutions urgently need to be strengthened and have increased capacity to address the complexities of balancing the ecosystem services and their use by multiple sectors, particularly for:

- i) valuing full range of economic benefits of ecosystem services as a sound basis for decision-making.
- ii) negotiating regulatory, financial and managerial arrangements, with specific emphasis on linking public services to public benefits and beneficiaries; and
- iii) fostering innovations and diversification of provisioning services that are symbiotic with the natural resource use of public ecosystem services.

1.2 Based on ecosystem services valuation, functional prioritization of ecosystem services at the landscape scale should guide their maintenance and use in an integrated natural resources management framework.

1.3 National or global initiatives and arrangements can support and facilitate these local institutions and actions, but the detailed complexities of re-arranging ecosystem services and the benefits that are derived from them needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, and at the local level, in the context of landscape (basin) scales.

1.4 Planning measures should be evaluated on their multiple impacts across all ecosystem services, and not only the specific service targeted. Development decisions over different time periods should be led by considering the long-term benefits related to the maintenance of ecosystem services weighed against short-term development outcomes.

2: Lack of connectivity between water governance and decision-making at basin scales and water and ecosystem management at the local scale is limiting delivery of sustainable water and other ecosystem services.

2.1 Strengthened gender equitable community-led governance of water resources, enabled by local governments and assisted by NGOs and others, can create a robust approach to achieving better basin-scale water management and ecosystem maintenance for sustainable development.

2.2 Community-based traditional knowledge should be complemented by, and supported with, a science knowledgebase including on ecosystem services, to facilitate decision-making and management that improves the capacity of wetland ecosystems to support local-level adaptation and also resilience to the uncertainties induced by climate change. It is essential that the emerging knowledgebase is communicated in forms and language easily accessible to, and readily understood by, policy planners and decision-makers.

2.3 Improved interaction and harmonisation between actions and regulations at local, basin, national, and international levels, and between authorities and civil society, is needed to achieve better integrated management. Although the basin is a fundamental unit for water management, other scales (national, regional, ecoregional or global) are more relevant for maintaining some ecosystem services such as climate regulation and global biodiversity.

3: Poor integration between the wetland planning and management and the water resource management sectors hinders full understanding and incorporation of ecosystem-related benefits into integrated both site and basin scales of planning and management.

3.1 The continuing divide between wetland ecosystem knowledge and management and water management planning and decision-making needs to be bridged to ensure that ecosystem-related benefits for people and nature are taken into account in a more balanced and equitable way in water management.

3.2 Enhancing and sharing the knowledgebase on the inter-linkages between hydrological regimes and ecosystem functioning and services can promote better understanding and cooperation between wetland and water managers.

3.3 Planning and management through Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM) as an enhancement of IWRM, provides a strong approach to sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems, since lakes contain most of our surface freshwater, and have unique hydrological and socioeconomic characteristics.

4: It needs to be better recognised by all decision-making sectors that wetlands provide our natural water management infrastructure.

4.1 There is an urgent need to improve water governance - for both water-scarce and water-abundant systems. Demand-driven governance promotes over-allocation of water. Better governance considers wetlands as natural water infrastructure to be used as a solution

to meeting human needs and integral to sustainable water resource management at the scale of river basins. **Continuing with “business as usual” is not an option - and it is increasingly urgent that we change our governance approach rapidly: delaying further will make achieving sustainable water management ever harder.**

4.2 Actions to support water allocation to ecosystems for human needs must be strengthened and implemented more widely by, for example, integrating tools such environmental flows and water and ecosystem legislation, informed by enhanced knowledge of the values and benefits wetlands provide and assessment of the impacts of any planned developments.

4.3 To close the widening gap between available water and water use, we need to recognize that water security depends on healthy wetlands, including under water-scarce and abundant circumstances: investing in maintaining and restoring wetlands is a cost-effective contribution to water security. Wetlands need to be wisely managed and protected through allocating water in sufficient quantity, quality and timeliness to enable them to continue to function to provide the services people need.

4.4 Wetlands are the source of the quantity and quality of the water we need for food production, drinking water and sanitation. They are part of the solution. Failure to manage them wisely makes water problems worse since wetlands are the major source of water to which we have easy access.

4.5 To tackle our current global financial crisis we are maintaining and restoring banks with massive injections of public funds; to tack our water crisis, in the same way we must maintain and restore our wetlands so they continue to deliver our water interest, and commit the funds to maintain this natural water infrastructure.

5: Managing wetlands sustainably is essential for basin-wide water security in a changing climate.

5.1 The main impacts of climate change are expressed through water. Wetlands are therefore not only very vulnerable to climate change but provide solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

5.2 Decision-makers need to recognise that maintaining or enhancing the services provided by wetlands are critical responses to climate change. Restoring wetlands and maintaining hydrological cycles is of utmost importance in responding to climate change induced changes including changing flooding and drought patterns, water supply, reduced water quality, food provision and biodiversity loss. **Conservation and wise use of wetlands will help to reduce the negative economic, social and ecological effects that may result from our changing climate.**

5.3 Investments water related climate change responses should include consideration of the cost-effectiveness of the wise use of wetlands, including for water storage, flood mitigation and sustainable water supply infrastructure.

5.4 Governments need to include water and wetlands management in effective strategies for addressing climate change at national level.

5.5 Governments need to ensure that nature-based approaches to adaptation are well assessed, including consideration of their multiple benefits. Adaptation measures based on physical (hard) infrastructure should not undermine the infrastructure of wetlands and the many important services they provide. Adaptation approaches need to be fully integrated into overall approaches for integrated water resources management and other resources management arrangements.

5.6 Governments need to ensure that climate mitigation policies (e.g. for expanded hydropower and biofuels production, and carbon capture and storage systems) **do not significantly degrade other wetland ecosystem services**, including in their negotiations at UNFCCC CoP15.

5.7 Local communities need awareness, technical and financial support from regional, national and international institutions involved in adaptation planning. Local agencies need to be mandated and resourced to prepare communities to become involved in adaptation planning and implementation.

5.8 Considering uncertainties in relation to projected climate change as well as related risks, adaptation measures should be implemented urgently and based on best available knowledge.



Nick Davidson (Ramsar Convention Secretariat)
Ritesh Kumar (Wetlands International)
David Coates (Secretariat, Convention on Biological Diversity)

Conveners/moderators – WWF5 Session 3.3.3
21 March 2009