

## **Opening Statement by Chair of the Standing Committee** **(42nd Meeting of the Standing Committee, Ramsar Convention)**

Distinguished members of Ramsar Standing Committee, Honorable Representatives of observer countries and IOPs, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Anada Tiega

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I'd like to thank all of you for warmly welcoming me as new chair of the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee.

It is indeed a great honor for me to take the role of chair of the Standing Committee. I'm also quite pleased that I can belong to Ramsar Family through chairmanship.

As not only a chair but also a member of Ramsar Family, I'll do everything possible on my part with passion and warm heart for developing the spirit of the Ramsar Convention because I do believe that the heart of the matter is the matter of heart.

As we all know, this year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention. I have been impressed by the wetland conservation activities made through the Ramsar Convention. It would have been impossible to celebrate this Anniversary without your passion, resolution, and devotion to conserve wetlands which are not only repository of nature but also function as suppliers of essential elements to the human beings. At this meaningful time, it is my great pleasure and honor to play a pivotal role as Chair of this committee. Once again, I'm most grateful to all of you for giving me this chance.

Since the convention on wetlands has been made in Ramsar, Iran in February, 1971, in total, 160 nations, 1929 sites, 188 million hectares of wetlands were included in the convention. We should be proud and deserve to be proud of the remarkable progress that has been made so far, because we have strived hard for the conservation, and the wise use of wetlands and its surrounding environment.

Yet, we still have far way to go. At this 42nd Meeting of the Standing Committee, many issues are to be discussed and addressed in order for the successful implementation of the convention. To name a few, Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform has not come up with the clear conclusion yet. Moreover, the implementation of the "Changwon Declaration" is making a gradual progress, but it is still at its early stage. We also have to check the preparations for the forthcoming COP 11. I hope this meeting will be a good opportunity to take another step forward in achieving our goal, "conservation and the wise use of wetlands" and addressing several challenges we are facing. I expect for your active participation in the course of our discussion which makes this meeting successful.

Lastly, I'm most thankful to those who made this meeting possible, including Secretary General & staffs of Secretariat, interpreters and other persons involved. You are indeed invisible but invaluable contributors to the Ramsar Convention.

Thank you