

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)  
47<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Gland, Switzerland, 24-28 March 2014

**DOC. SC47-11**

**Draft resolution for COP12 on *Wetlands and disaster risk reduction* submitted  
by the Philippines**

**Actions requested:**

Standing Committee is invited to note this draft resolution to be transmitted for the consideration of COP12, and to provide advice as it considers necessary.

1. Under the COP Rules of Procedure (Rule 5) any Contracting Party or Parties may submit draft Resolutions to COP with a deadline for submission of proposals 60 calendar days prior to the opening of the Standing Committee meeting at which approvals are made for documents for consideration by Contracting Parties at the COP (i.e. for the 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee for COP12 proposals).
2. The attached draft resolution has been submitted to the Secretariat by the Philippines in accordance with this Rule of Procedure for the Conference of the Parties. The attached text is as submitted by the Philippines.
3. In its letter to the Secretariat, the Philippines draws attention to the impacts of recent natural disasters such as the devastation of the Yolada/Haiyan typhoon in the Central Philippines as a reminder of the importance of wetlands in disaster and climate change adaptation, and the vulnerability of the people depending on these wetlands, and calls for prioritization of this concern in the next triennium.
4. Since the draft resolution contains scientific and technical aspects, including a request for future work by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Secretariat has consulted with the STRP and its STRP National Focal Points on the contents of this text in relation to its current work and potential future work plan and priorities, and transmit the Panel's advice to the Philippines. The feedback received is summarized at Annex 1.
5. In the light of any advice and comments provided by the Standing Committee and the STRP, the Secretariat will work with the Philippines to prepare a final text of the draft resolution.

## Draft Resolution XII.xx

*Submitted by the Philippines*

### WETLANDS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

RECALLING that the Convention adopted Resolution IX.9 on *The role of the Ramsar Convention in the prevention and mitigation of impacts associated with natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities* and Resolution VIII.35 on *The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems*, but RECOGNIZING that there exists no specific framework to operationalize this urgent role;

RECALLING that Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands* (2008), which updated and superseded Resolution VIII.3 on *Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation and mitigation* (2002), affirms the relevance of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention to increasing resilience to climate change and extreme weather events and to ensuring climate change responses that would not lead to serious damage to the ecological character of wetlands, and RECOGNIZING the Ramsar Convention's role and mandate to address all issues affecting the maintenance of the ecological character of wetlands;

Further RECALLING that the Resolution X.3 on *The Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands* and Resolution X.23 on *Wetlands and human health and well-being* emphasizes the importance of sustainable wetland management and restoration of wetlands to ensure future human well-being and security;

CONCERNED that the adverse impacts of natural hazards and human-induced disasters are exacerbated by climate change;

ACKNOWLEDGING the important role of healthy and well-managed wetland ecosystems- such as coral reefs, mangroves, swamp forests, dunes and peatlands and other catchment wetlands or floodplains- to reduce disaster risk by acting as natural buffers or protective barriers, for instance through mitigating the impact of flood, tidal surge and landslide, and with the high water storage capacity of the wetland, through reducing peak flood flow during the wet season while minimising water shortage during the dry season; and further RECOGNIZING that fully-functioning wetland ecosystems build local resilience against disasters by sustaining livelihoods and providing water supply and important products to local populations;

AWARE that the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment recognizes the significant services that (wetland) ecosystems provide to human communities in regulating hazards such as floods and fires and that ecological conditions not only modify the frequency and magnitude of hazard events, but also affect natural barriers that can moderate the impacts of a disaster and protect communities;

AWARE that the 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, RIO+20 reports and similar UN and global coordinating bodies calls for addressing the disaster risk reduction in the context of sustainable development as well as for increased coordination among national, regional and international levels for a robust response to environmental emergencies and improved forecasting and early warning systems;

NOTING that with the rapid and accelerating rate of degradation and loss of wetlands due to threats such as overexploitation, conversion to inappropriate land use, water diversion, pollution and infrastructure development, intervention is required in ecosystems that lost or risk losing their function of providing services that help reduce the impacts of disasters;

CONCERNED that the devastating impacts of natural and human-related disasters on the delivery of ecosystem benefits/services, and thus on the maintenance of the ecological character of wetlands of international importance and other wetlands in affected countries, has brought serious effects on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people and cause major environmental, social and economic impacts;

AWARE that to reduce the risks from natural and human-induced disasters, there is a need to reduce exposure to hazards or mitigate the impact of unavoidable exposure to hazards by preventing natural hazards from becoming disasters and minimizing vulnerabilities by enhancing capacities to be able to cope or recover from the damaging effects of hazards;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTACTING PARTIES

AFFIRMS the need to develop management plans that ensures wise use and protection of wetland ecosystems and URGES the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction measures in these management plans and other such policies, action plans and programs;

URGES the Contracting Parties to integrate into a broader plan the wetland management plan such as Integrated River Basin Master Plan (IRBM) to rationalize effective planning and implementation of wetland plans and programs with associated disaster risk reduction and management plan;

CALLS UPON Parties to work together, invite different expertise and agencies, and take urgent substantive actions in developing a set of guidelines or a framework which emphasizes Disaster Risk Reduction through the wise use of wetlands in conjunction with the STRP;

REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to develop policy and practical guidance on a set of actions which can be initiated by governments and others, to ensure the use of wetlands to build resilience to natural and human-induced disasters;

ENCOURAGES the STRP to conduct an analysis of cross-cutting themes on wetlands and agriculture, energy, extractive industries, tourism and urbanization, to be able to provide guidance on how the management, wise use and restoration of wetlands can reduce risk;

INVITES the Ramsar Convention's Secretariat to further develop the points herein raised for further consideration and endorsement to raise the priority of disaster risk reduction in the Strategic Plan for the next Triennium.

## Annex 2

### Summary of feedback received from STRP members, observer organizations and STRP National Focal Points

1. Under its advisory role, and specifically task no. 8 (2013-2015), the STRP is tasked with reviewing and commenting on draft resolutions submitted by Contracting Parties which address scientific and technical matters.
2. Accordingly, on 2 February 2014, the STRP Chair requested feedback on this draft resolution from STRP members, observers and STRP National Focal Points through the STRP Workspace.
3. The comments received are summarized below:
  - It would be useful to clarify the type of events or disasters being addressed, specifying whether the draft resolution is referring only to human-induced events or disasters, whether there should be different categories or types of events (such as floods, droughts etc.), and whether the term 'natural disaster' is the most appropriate term.
  - It could be useful to use the phrase 'natural hazards' when talking about phenomena such as storms, and 'disasters' when talking about impacts, following the terminology used by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: *Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*.
  - It would be useful to take into account the difference between the concepts of risk and vulnerability, including social and biophysical resilience (referring to the Ramsar Technical Report No.5 on *A Framework for assessing the vulnerability of wetlands to climate change*).
  - It should take into account the Convention's responses to reports of change in ecological character for Ramsar Sites, in terms of having an adequate description of ecological character and responding to human-induced change.
  - It would be useful to clarify whether the draft resolution is calling for adequate reflection of wetlands in disaster risk reduction planning, which may be what the second paragraph seeks to do.
  - It could be useful to add a paragraph on the need to integrate wetland management (and wider water and landscape management) in disaster risk reduction policies, climate change adaptation strategies and local, regional and national land-use and development plans.
  - It would be useful to highlight that unsustainable resource use (including land and water use) and wetland degradation are major drivers of increased disaster risk. Integrated water resources management, ecosystem rehabilitation and wise use of wetlands are vital tools to reduce disaster risks and adapt to climate change, and this is increasingly recognised by the development and humanitarian sectors.

- It would be possible to have greater emphasis of the need for active conservation and restoration of wetlands in the Resolution.
- It would be useful to clarify whether the emphasis is on impacts on humans or on wetlands.
- It would be useful to consider in this draft resolution whether climate change should be treated together with other phenomena which might lead to disasters, both in terms of responses under the Convention and responses on the ground.
- This draft resolution could be linked to Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, by for example, revising that Resolution to include Disaster Risk Reduction.
- It expands upon the last Resolution on climate change (Resolution XI.14 on *Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*) and the request to develop guidance on ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) and cross-reference EBA with other integrated management mechanisms (integrated coastal zone management, integrated water resource management, CBD's ecosystem approach and the wise use of wetlands).
- It would be useful to encourage Ramsar Contracting Parties to engage in the process to review the Hyogo Framework for Action with a view to emphasising the importance of conserving and restoring wetlands for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.
- It would be useful to specify how the STRP could help translate the recommendations in the Draft Resolution into action.
- The final paragraph, which refers to the current Strategic Plan, could be redrafted to address the drafting of the new Plan in advance of COP12.
- The Ramsar Secretariat should explore how to further develop the points in the Resolution in order to raise the priority of disaster risk reduction in the next Strategic Plan.