

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

48th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 26-30 January 2015

SC48-28

Draft Resolution on Wetlands and disaster risk reduction

Submitted by the Philippines

Action requested:

- The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached Draft Resolution for consideration by the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Draft Resolution XII.xx

Wetlands and disaster risk reduction

1. RECALLING Resolution VIII.35 on *The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems* and 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* which, respectively, recognized the role of wetlands in providing water during times of drought and in preventing and mitigating the impacts from natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities, but RECOGNIZING that there exists no specific framework to operationalize this urgent role;
2. RECALLING Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, that affirmed the role of healthy wetlands in increasing resilience to climate change and extreme weather events, as well as ensuring climate change responses that would not lead to serious damage to the ecological character of wetlands;
3. FURTHER RECALLING that 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* emphasized the importance of sustainable wetland management and the restoration of wetlands to ensure future human well-being and security;
4. AWARE of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and RECALLING Resolution VII.8 on *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation on the management of wetlands* that recognized the contributions of indigenous people and local communities in the management and wise use of wetlands;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING the vital role of healthy and well-managed wetland ecosystems in reducing disaster risk, by acting as natural buffers or protective barriers, for instance through mitigating, for example, the impact of floods, tidal surges, tsunamis and landslides, and by storing large volumes of water, thereby reducing peak flood flow during the wet season, while maximizing water storage during the dry season; and FURTHER RECOGNIZING that fully functioning wetland

ecosystems enhance local resilience against disasters by providing water supply and important products and by sustaining the lives and livelihoods of local populations and biodiversity;

6. AWARE that the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment recognizes the significant services that ecosystems, including wetlands, provide to human communities in regulating the frequency and magnitude of hazard events such as floods, fires and droughts, and in providing natural barriers that can mitigate the adverse impacts of hazards and protect communities, but also recognizes that there is accelerated loss of these vital ecosystem functions and services, including in wetlands;
7. AWARE that the 2011 *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, the 2012 RIO+20 Declaration "The Future We Want", and similar UN and global coordinating bodies call for addressing disaster risk reduction in the context of sustainable development and for increased coordination at national, regional and international levels to enable a robust response to environmental emergencies and improved forecasting and early warning systems;
8. NOTING that the post-2015 Hyogo Framework of Action strongly emphasizes that ecosystem degradation amplifies disaster risk and that greater focus needs to be placed on anticipating long-term risk scenarios and implementing concrete measures to prevent the creation of new risk, such as investing in strengthening the sustainable use and management of ecosystems;
9. CONCERNED that the devastating impacts of natural and human-related disasters on the delivery of ecosystem benefits and services, and thus on the maintenance of the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and other wetlands in affected countries, have had serious effects on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people and on biodiversity, and have caused major environmental, social and economic impacts;
10. AWARE that disaster risk reduction requires reducing exposure and vulnerabilities through enhancing the capacities of people to cope or recover from disasters and through sustainable management and use of land and water resources to reduce, buffer and in certain circumstances to mitigate disaster risk; and
11. RECOGNIZING that the global network of Ramsar Sites can play an important role in disaster risk reduction if the Sites are effectively managed and restored where necessary;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

12. AFFIRMS the need to develop and implement management plans for wetlands, especially Ramsar Sites, that integrate the principles of ecosystem-based management and adaptation against natural hazards such as floods, droughts, fires, landslides, tsunamis, and storm surges, and also against accelerated sea level rise, and STRONGLY ENCOURAGES the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction measures in these management plans and other such policies, action plans and programmes;
13. REQUESTS that the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) review Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands* and Resolution XI.14 on *Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* for possible amendments on the inclusion of disaster risk reduction;
14. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to integrate wetland-based disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into development policies and planning at all levels of government, including in vulnerability analysis, poverty reduction strategies and natural resource

management plans (including land-use and water-use plans) and sectors, and in multi-sector policies and plans;

15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to integrate wetland management plans, or other broader water and landscape management plans, into land-use and development plans, and FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to integrate ecosystem management related considerations, in particular relating to wetland and water management, in their national disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies;
16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to assess disaster risk at the appropriate landscape scale (for example, within a river basin or along a coastal zone) to enable the designing of effective disaster risk reduction interventions to reduce the vulnerability and exposure of communities;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to avoid, as far as possible, activities in and adjacent to wetlands, such as in-filling, reclamation and the construction of seawalls and dikes, which might reduce the role that the wetlands play in reducing the impact of disasters;
18. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to incorporate financial and other resource requirements for wetland conservation, restoration and management activities related to disaster risk reduction into long-term investment programming, while ensuring the inclusion of measures to prevent adverse environmental or social impacts;
19. INVITES Contracting Parties and partners to ensure that the implementation of wetland ecosystem-based management and restoration projects and programmes, such as the planting of mangroves on tidal flats, does not compromise the functioning of the ecosystems;
20. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Secretariat to engage in implementation of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, in coordination with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in order to emphasize the importance of conserving and restoring wetlands for disaster risk reduction;
21. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties to recognize the role of local communities and indigenous peoples and their experience, knowledge, methods and approaches in wetland management and disaster risk reduction;
22. ALSO URGES the Contracting Parties to adopt the human-rights-based approach to disaster risk reduction in order to ensure the protection of the rights of wetlands-dependent displaced persons in this era of climate disruption;
23. REQUESTS that the STRP review and compile existing guidance on wetland ecosystem-based adaptation concerning disaster risk reduction in order to present a set of practical policies and guidance which can be initiated by governments and others, for the management and wise use of wetlands to build resilience to natural hazards, especially floods, drought, fire, landslides, tsunamis and storm surges, as well as to accelerated sea level rise, and which include the use of risk-based approaches in line with the *Wetland Risk Assessment Framework* approved through Resolution VII.10, and to develop appropriate indicators and baseline information for demonstrating progress towards the integration of wetland management in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies;
24. FURTHER REQUESTS that the STRP, in particular, investigate the role of wetland conservation and rehabilitation in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as well as identify economic valuation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

25. REQUESTS that the STRP monitor the discussions, developments and trends in international fora on the role of wetland conservation and restoration in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and keep Contracting Parties informed of these through technical reports, and support to the capacity-building activities of wetland managers on disaster risk reduction;
26. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, especially their Ramsar CEPA National Focal Points, to establish or strengthen CEPA programmes and increase awareness on the role of wise use, management, conservation and restoration of wetlands in disaster risk reduction and on the role of wetlands in contributing to reducing vulnerabilities and mitigating disasters;
27. CALLS ON humanitarian organizations to enhance their engagement in wetland management and restoration as means of disaster risk reduction alongside other risk reduction measures;
28. ENCOURAGES collaboration between national disaster management agencies and river basin authorities, coastal managers and other authorities responsible for natural resource management and humanitarian organizations, to develop and implement laws, policies and plans, including contingency plans, to integrate ecosystem-based approaches, including green infrastructure, in disaster risk reduction;
29. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to collaborate with universities and research institutions to carry out long-term research on wetlands and disaster risk management in the face of climate change; and
30. REQUESTS that the Ramsar Secretariat liaise with the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in highlighting the importance of wetlands in climate change adaptation, especially for countries identified as most vulnerable to climate change; and ALSO REQUESTS that the Ramsar Secretariat and/or STRP establish strategic partnerships to ensure collaboration and access to global trust funds.