

Draft Resolution on Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention

Submitted by Denmark and supported by Finland

Action requested:

- 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

Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention

1. RECOGNIZING that the ecosystem services performed by peatlands, which contribute to human well-being, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, can be seriously degraded if the ecosystem is not managed wisely and AWARE that increased attention of the Ramsar Convention, including a revision of criteria for designating Wetlands of International Importance, may be required to address this threat;
2. RECALLING that Resolution XI.14 on *Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2012) inter alia* recognized that the continuing degradation and loss of peatlands cause the release of large amounts of stored carbon and thus exacerbate climate change, and that the designation and effective management of Ramsar Sites can, in some regions, play a vital role in carbon sequestration and storage and therefore in the mitigation of climate change; and ALSO RECALLING that Resolution XI.14 encouraged Contracting Parties and their representatives to reach out to their counterparts in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its relevant subsidiary bodies, to initiate and foster information exchange on the roles of wetland conservation, management, and restoration activities in implementing relevant strategies, as appropriate, in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing carbon sequestration and storage in wetlands;
3. ALSO RECALLING that Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands* called *inter alia* on Ramsar Administrative Authorities to provide expert guidance and support to national UNFCCC focal points on policies and measures to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from peatlands, and urged relevant Contracting Parties to reduce the degradation, promote restoration, and improve management practices of peatlands and other wetland types that are significant greenhouse gas sinks, and to encourage expansion of demonstration sites on peatland restoration and wise use management in relation to climate change; and encouraged Contracting Parties to utilize peatlands to showcase the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness activities for implementation of the Convention in the context of

efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change;

4. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution VIII.17 on *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands* stressed the importance of peatlands for global biodiversity and for the storage of the water and carbon that is vital to the world's climate system, and remarked that the wise use management of peatlands, including their restoration and rehabilitation, should be treated as a priority by all Contracting Parties that have peatland resources within their territory;
5. RECALLING that Resolution VIII.3 on *Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation, and mitigation*, expressed concern about the recent degradation of peatlands through drainage and fire in many parts of the world and the associated impacts on greenhouse gas emissions as well as the impact on biodiversity and local people of this degradation, and welcomed the invitation of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC at its eighth session to share information;
6. NOTING that Resolution X.25 on *Wetlands and "biofuels"* encouraged Contracting Parties to consider the cultivation of biomass on rewetted peatlands (paludiculture), and AWARE that since this Resolution the rewetting of peatlands, while maintaining their productive use, has been widely recognized as a promising option to enhance the climate change mitigation option of peatlands;
7. ALSO NOTING that in its Fifth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that most global estimates do not include emissions from peat burning or decomposition after a land use change; and that particularly, the decomposition of carbon in wetlands and peatlands is missing in models despite the large amount of carbon stored in these ecosystems and their vulnerability to warming and land use change; and
8. AWARE that the IPCC has completed the *2013 Supplement to the IPCC 2006 Guidelines on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands* and the *2013 Revised Supplementary Methods and Good Practice Guidance Arising from the Kyoto Protocol*, providing detailed guidance for reporting and accounting for greenhouse gas emission reductions by rewetting of drained peatlands; and ALSO AWARE that the IPCC refers to the Ramsar Convention as a global and regional resource for data for developing an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from wetlands and organic soils;
9. AWARE of the adoption by the UNFCCC through Decision 2/CMP.7 of a new activity "*Wetland Drainage and Rewetting*" for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, which enables Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to account for reductions in anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the rewetting of drained peatlands;
10. NOTING Decision 12CP.17 of the UNFCCC that in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+) "significant pools" including peat soils in peat swamp forests "should not be excluded";
11. NOTING that the disproportionately large emissions from drained peatlands require special attention when including the land sector in "a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties" (UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.17), which the UNFCCC is currently developing;

12. AWARE that the Verified Carbon Standard has approved Wetland Rewetting and Conservation (WRC) under the Verified Carbon Standard Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (VCS-AFOLU) programme for crediting climate benefits from all wetland areas, including peatlands;
13. FURTHER NOTING Target 15¹ of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through Decision X/2 that: “By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks have been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification”;
14. RECOGNIZING that peatlands drainage may lead to rapid soil degradation and the loss of productive land;
15. ACKNOWLEDGING that drained peatlands contribute disproportionately to global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions from land use and land use change and that rewetting of drained peatlands may contribute substantially to reducing these emissions; and AWARE that the climate effect of these emissions is independent of where emissions or emission reductions take place due to the fast mixing of gases in the atmosphere; and
16. FURTHER AWARE that the acknowledgement of peatlands’ “capacity to regulate local and regional climates” in Paragraph 10 of the Ramsar *Guidance for identifying and designating peatlands, wet grasslands, mangroves and coral reefs as Wetlands of International Importance* (Resolution VIII.11), see also Paragraph 139, Ramsar Handbook 17: *Designating Ramsar Sites* (Ramsar Handbooks 4th edition 2010) refers to the hydrologic role of wet peatlands in regulating the local and regional climate via evapo-transpiration cooling; and ALSO AWARE that in light of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and in line with Article 3 of the Ramsar Convention, the wise use of all peatlands in the world has to be implemented;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

17. ACKNOWLEDGES the distinct mandates and independent legal status of Conventions and AFFIRMS that the UNFCCC and IPCC are the key references for the terms *mitigation, adaptation, carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage* used in this Resolution, as they pertain to climate change;
18. CALLS ON the Contracting Parties to designate as Wetlands of International Importance at least one peatland area that has a special suitability for communication, education and public awareness raising with respect to the climate impact of peatlands and their necessary conservation and wise use, using the guidance in the annex to this Resolution to be elaborated and attached for designating such areas, and ENCOURAGES Parties, the Secretariat and other organizations to facilitate information exchange and cooperation among these sites;
19. REQUESTS that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), in conjunction with interested Contracting Parties and international organizations, evaluate the progress made with the implementation of the “Guidelines for Global Action for Peatlands” and advise the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on further steps to be taken to enhance the role of

¹ “By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.”

peatland conservation and rewetting in climate change mitigation and adaptation including water resource implications;

20. URGES the STRP National Focal Points to engage in and contribute to this work of the STRP in order to provide national and regional perspectives and contribute expertise from their in-country networks of peatland scientists and other experts;
21. FURTHER REQUESTS that the Ramsar Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Initiatives collaborate with relevant international conventions and organizations, within their respective mandates, to further investigate the potential contribution of peatland ecosystems to climate change mitigation and adaptation;
22. RECOGNIZES the role of the Ramsar Convention as the lead implementation convention for wetlands and the expertise of the Ramsar Convention in aspects of climate change and peatlands, and URGES the Ramsar Secretariat, the STRP, and the Ramsar Administrative Authorities to provide expert guidance and support to the relevant UNFCCC bodies with a view to develop and implement joint policies and measures that are aimed to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from peatlands; and
23. INVITES the Ramsar Administrative Authorities to bring this Resolution to the attention of the national focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to promote collaborative work among the national focal points of these MEAs in support of its implementation.