

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)  
51<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Gland, Switzerland, 23 – 27 November 2015

SC51-15

## World Wetlands Day themes

### Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to note the information on WWD 2016 and requested to take a decision on the themes proposed for WWD 2017 and 2018.

### World Wetlands Day theme for 2016

1. The Executive Committee has confirmed “Wetlands for Our Future: Sustainable livelihoods” as the theme for World Wetlands Day (WWD) in 2016. This theme has been selected to demonstrate the key role wetlands play in the future of humanity and sustainable development.
2. The Secretariat requested the Executive Committee in July 2015 to exceptionally approve the theme for 2016, as waiting until the 51<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (SC51) would have greatly delayed the preparation, production and dissemination of outreach material, which needs to start in September. It was not possible to present the theme for WWD 2016 at SC48 or SC50 for consideration, as the Secretariat was contemplating a new approach that would include maintaining “Wetlands for Our Future” as the umbrella theme for WWD and proposing new sub-themes each year, that would be aligned with relevant UN days or initiatives or theme days of relevant partners and International Organization Partners (IOPs).
3. Maintaining an umbrella theme has the advantage of delivering a consistent message, which over time creates clarity, facilitates recognition and helps to build awareness. Furthermore, linking the sub theme to our partners’ initiatives fosters collaboration and has the potential to reach and engage more audiences.
4. In 2013, the Secretariat contracted Futerra Sustainability Communications to undertake an evaluation of WWD outreach, including the materials developed and the channels used to generate awareness. The main objectives of this evaluation were to advise the Secretariat on how to improve messaging and develop materials that would generate awareness, interest and commitment to celebrate WWD around the world.
5. The findings from Futerra confirmed that WWD is an established global event, as evidenced by the scope and diversity of activities reported by countries. However it found that there was a lack of clarity about the primary target audience, which was found to be diverse and varied, therefore questioning as to whether the objectives of WWD were being achieved. Futerra recommended identifying a priority audience and developing specific activities to directly engage and connect them to wetlands
6. In 2015 the recommendations of Futerra were implemented with success. Youth were identified as the primary target audience and through a youth photo contest, they were

encouraged to visit a wetland and take a photo as inspired by the WWD 2015 theme of “Wetlands for Our Future”. The Secretariat received 2,200 photo entries from 80 countries.

7. It should be noted that by identifying youth as the primary target audience for WWD, the intention is not to disregard or exclude other audiences such as policy makers, wetland practitioners, children or the general public, but rather to focus and engage an audience that can act as global transmitters of ideas and thereby influence a far wider public.
8. “Wetlands for Our Future: Sustainable Livelihoods”, the theme for 2016 is consistent with ongoing global discussions to formulate the highly anticipated UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is a timely opportunity to demonstrate the specific role of wetlands to help in achieving the SDGs. The theme also reflects the stated vision for the new Ramsar Strategic Plan for 2016 to 2024, which affirms wetlands as essential for sustainable development. In other words, wetlands are the source of sustainable development.
9. The Secretariat confirms that WWD 2016 outreach materials will be developed and made available to all Parties, with due consideration for the needs of Parties. Additionally building on the success of WWD 2015, a new youth photo contest is planned.

#### **Themes proposed for World Wetlands Day in 2017 and 2018**

10. The Standing Committee is now invited to make a decision on a list of themes proposed by the Secretariat to celebrate WWD in 2017 and 2018. The list of themes provided is based on consultations with IOPs, and other partners and aligned with international themes as communicated by UN organizations. Further explanations will be made available during SC51 on the themes and how they will be tackled.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rationale / Justification</b>
Wetlands for Our Future: Wetlands and Waste Water	UN water theme 2017
Wetlands for Our Future: Nature-Based Solutions for Water	UN Water theme 2018
Wetlands for Our Future: Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction	Proposed by Wetlands International
Wetlands for Our Future: Caring for Urban Wetlands	Proposed by WWF