

Draft resolution on wetlands in West Asia

Submitted by Iraq

Action requested:

- The Standing Committee is invited to review the attached draft resolution for consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Draft Resolution XIII.xx

Wetlands in West Asia

1. GREATLY APPRECIATING the generosity of the United Arab Emirates to host the 13th Conference of Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands which is being held for the first time in West Asia and which can be used as an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of the wetlands in the region, their status as well as the issues and opportunities that they face;
2. RECOGNIZING the range of unique wetland types in West Asia, such as *sabkha* (salt-flats), *khor*(tidal inlets), *oasis* (desert spring or water source), *wadi*(dry riverbed that contains water only during times of heavy rain);
3. RECALLING the importance for Contracting Parties to integrate wetland conservation and wise use into the management of their national as well as transboundary river basins, and the maintenance of environmental flows (Res VII.18), as well as to ensure and protect the water requirements of wetlands for present and future generations (Res XII.12);
4. APPRECIATING the increasing cooperation between the I.R. Iran and Iraq to conserve and ensure the wise use of the Hawizeh Marsh and the Haur Al-Azim that forms part of the Mesopotamian Marshes;
5. CONCERNED over the degradation and drying of many wetlands, especially those that are shared, due to decreasing rainfall from a changing climate, over-extraction of water (including aquifers) and to the construction of water control structures;
6. RECOGNIZES AND REITERATES that the lack of water in wetlands is a far-reaching global problem with serious consequences for ecosystems and people's livelihoods, in particular in vulnerable communities that depend on wetlands, and NOTES that this problem will tend to be aggravated in the future due to the growing demand for water and other natural resources, the effects of climate change (Res XII.12) and upstream water control and extraction projects;

7. ALSO CONCERNED over the increasing frequency and severity of sand and dust storms across the region that is impacting social and economic life;
8. ALERTED to the increasing pressure on urban wetlands due to rapid development as well as the loss of natural coastal wetlands from reclamation projects;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. STRONGLY ENCOURAGE Contracting Parties that share the basins of rivers that flow through West Asia, especially the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, to cooperate to maintain the environmental flow along the river so that downstream users are not adversely affected by upstream activities such as the construction and operation of dams and other water control structures;
10. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider using existing regional initiatives and commitments within the context of sustainable development to provide water for the environment and thus to strengthen wetland management;
11. AWARE of the high cost of conflicts on people and the environment, CALL for international support from Contracting Parties, IOPs and relevant organizations, to review the status of the wetlands in countries after conflict and to carry out restoration of their ecosystem services as necessary so that wetlands can continue to benefit the affected people during recovery and into the future;
12. ENCOURAGE greater cooperation amongst Contracting Parties, IOPs and related organizations to promote awareness of the importance of the region's wetlands and make practical efforts for their conservation and wise use, including but not limited to the exchange of experience and expertise, training, survey and monitoring.