RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
54th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 23–27 April 2018

SC54-Com.3 Rev.1
(21.16, 21.15)

Draft resolution on wetlands, peace and security

Submitted by Senegal and Central African Republic (CAR)

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

Importance of ~~w~~Wetlands for~~,~~ (in the context of)peace and (human) security

1. NOTING that there is widespread recognition of the link between water insecurity and human insecurity, driven by anthropogenic and climatic factors, as reflected in the World Bank Group report *Turbulent Waters* on Pursuing Water Security in Fragile Contexts, 2017; *The Global Risks Report 2018* of the World Economic Forum; the report of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace *A Matter of Survival*, 2017; and the *The Hague Declaration on Planetary Security* of the Planetary Security Conference, The Hague, December 2017;

2. RECOGNISING that wetlands are critical infrastructure that regulate and provide water to society and are of direct relevance to achieving water security and sustaining livelihoods;

3. NOTING the increasing recognition that reversing wetland degradation and implementing wise use of wetlands is an important condition that helps maintain stable, peaceful and inclusive societies that can underpin measures for improving water security as a basis for sustainable development, as reflected in *The Global Land Outlook*, UNCCD, 2017; *Freshwater Strategy 2017 – 2021*, UNE, 2017; and *Water Shocks: Wetlands and Human Migration in the Sahel*, Wetlands International, 2017;

4. NOTING that human security highlights 'the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair… with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential', as reflected in the UN General Assembly, 66th Session "Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome" (A/RES/66/290). 25 October 2012, and that
many areas of growing human insecurity are centred around internationally important wetlands.~~, such as the Inner Niger Delta, Lake Chad, the Sudd, and the Hawizeh Marshes;~~

5.   RECALLING Resolution IX.14, *Wetlands and poverty reduction,* that recognises the importance of wetland ecosystems for human health and well-being, especially for people in less developed countries, and calls for action to contribute to poverty reduction through the sustainable use and restoration of wetlands;

6-1. RECALLING Resolution XI.12, *Wetlands and health: taking an ecosystem approach*, that affirms the dependency of human health and well-being upon ecosystems, stresses the key role of wetlands in determining human health and well-being and calls for an ecosystem approach to health in wetlands and their catchments in order to bring health benefits to all;

6-2. CONSIDERING the *Ramsar Changwon Declaration on human well--being and wetlands*, 2008, that notes that declining access to freshwater can increase societal conflict, that the degradation of wetlands makes geopolitical stability less secure, and that the benefits of wetlands are essential for the future security of human kind;
~~refers to the importance of wetlands for security of humankind and avoiding social conflict.~~

7.   RECALLING Resolution XII.13, *Wetlands and disaster risk reduction*, that points at the devastating impacts of disasters on the maintenance of healthy wetlands, the serious effects that disasters have had on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people and on biodiversity, the role of fully functioning wetland ecosystems in enhancing local resilience, and calls for the integration of wetland-based disaster risk reduction into national strategic plans and relevant policies and planning;

8-1. RECALLING Resolution IX.1 Annex C, *An Integrated Framework for the Ramsar Convention's water-related guidance*, that affirms the interdependency between water and wetlands and highlights the importance of effective governance for water resources management in relation to ecosystems;

8-2. RECALLING that the *4ᵗʰ Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024,* aim~sing~ for wetland benefits to be featured in national-policy strategies and plans relating to key sectors such as water, energy, agriculture, infrastructure and forestry; and that it wants to prioritize restoration of degraded wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conversation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation;

9.   RECOGNISING ~the need to integrate natural resource management into national security strategies and migration policy to stimulate development and reduce insecurity and conflict as evidenced by~ the Security, Stability and Sustainability initiative launched by African governments at the Climate Change Conference in Morocco on 16 November 2016;

(10. ACKNOWLEDGING that climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate potential conflict, in light of their impact on desertification, land degradation, and water and food scarcity, as noted in the EU Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy: *Shared Vision, Common Action: A stronger Europe*, 2016;)

ACKNOWLEDGING that armed conflict contributes to the degradation of the environment and natural resources and can exacerbate the emissions of green house gases impacting on climate change, as evidenced in dialogues in the Environment and Emergencies Forum, September 2017, Nairobi, Kenya, the *Planetary Security Conference*, The Hague, December 2017, and the United Nations Environment Assembly, December 2017: resolution on *Pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism* ;

Comment [y1]: Include Paragraph on UNEA

11. ACKNOWLEDGING the interdependency between SDG 6 on water, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities; SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 15 life on land and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and that the status of wetlands is relevant to targets under these goals; further NOTING that SDGs 13 and 16 will be reviewed in-depth during the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019;

12. AWARE that participants of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun, Mexico, 2017, recognised the priority needed to manage water risks and the need for nature-based solutions for successful disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation;

13. NOTING that the OECD multidimensional framework on fragility recognises environmental fragility as one of the five dimensions of fragility, next to economic, political, security and societal fragility, pointing *inter alia* at a strong rule of law and governance as mechanisms to effectively address environmental fragility;

14. NOTING that the Peace Promise launched at World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, 2016, contains five commitments to more effective synergies among peace, humanitarian and development actions in complex humanitarian situations, including the commitment to conduct context, risk or conflict analysis regularly, and the commitment to do no harm and ensure conflict sensitive programming[1];

15. RECOGNISING that, if managed well, freshwater ecosystems contribute to mitigating risks, promoting stability and trust-building measures, as reflected in the UNE Freshwater Strategy 2017 – 2021, and in the UNE Environmental peace building initiative;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

16. ~~INVITES Contracting Parties to identify and map the "wetland hotspots", where wetlands are contributing to holding the peace, through supporting livelihoods and sustainable development – and where loss of wetlands is contributing to insecurity;~~

16~~7~~. REQUESTS the STRP to develop guidance on "wetland security hotspot~~s~~" mapping and vulnerability assessment, drawing on the experience of major programmes ~~such as Partners for~~on Resilience;

17. INVITES Contracting Parties to identify and map the "wetland security hotspots", where wetlands are contributing to holding the peace, through supporting livelihoods and sustainable development – and where loss of wetlands is contributing to insecurity;

18. INVITES Contracting Parties to assess the current condition and vulnerability of "wetland security hotspots" to future changes in climate and natural resource management in the wider landscape and the related risks to peace;

---

[1] Interventions in conflict-affected areas can have both positive and negative impacts on conflict dynamics. "Do No Harm" is an approach that seeks to analyse how an intervention may be implemented in a way that addresses the underlying causes of conflict rather than exacerbating conflict. Conflict sensitivity is the ability of an organization to: i) understand the contexts it operates in, ii) understand the interaction between its intervention and the context and iii) act upon this understanding in order to minimize negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012: *How to guide to conflict sensitivity*)

19.# INVITES Contracting Parties in a position to do so as well as IOPs and other relevant organizations to assist Contracting Parties in post-conflict situations to review the status of their wetlands and to carry out restoration of their ecosystem services while involving local stakeholders, including displaced people;

19. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to prioritize safeguarding wetlands security hotspots critical wetland infrastructure by resolving natural resource use trade-offs using best practices such as integrated river basin management, integrated landscape approach while involving local stakeholders, establishing and respecting environmental flows, establishing and implementing wetland management plans and investing in the restoration of degraded sites;

20. ENCOURAGES relevant national and international organisations to gather and share information on the specific peace benefits that may be gained by managing wetland ecosystem services wisely and on the consequent impacts on conflict prevention, aiming to generate a wider commitment for the wise use of wetlands security hotspots;

21. INVITES Contracting Parties, and relevant national and international organisations as appropriate, to commit to doing no harm and to applying a conflict-sensitive approach in the development and implementation of wetland management and restoration projects and investments programmes, while involving local stakeholders;

22. URGES the Secretariat to nurture and establish partnerships between the wetland community and peace, humanitarian and development actors, to highlight the importance of wetlands for peace and security, and to create synergies and complementarities that are required to ensure that wetlands underpin peace and security;

23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to wisely use wetlands as part of strategies to maintain and restore peace, into national and key regional planning processes and financing mechanisms, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and national security plans;

24. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to integrate ecosystem management related considerations, in particular relating to water management and "wetland hotspots security " into regional security plans and strategies of Regional Economic Integration Organisations in relation to inter alia migration, security, climate action, land degradation and development assistance;

25. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to work with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBDrelevant conventions), the Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs), national and international NGOs and others to look for synergies, to integrate relevant issues into the strategies and plans of these conventions, and to drive commitments and action together such as working through existing Memoranda;

26. INVITES Contracting Parties to use the 2019 review process of SDG 16[2] to highlight the link between wetlands, peace and security and to underline the need for wise use of wetlands to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and to use the review process of SDG 13 to add the relevance of wetlands to strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters;

---

[2] In 2019 the HLP will review SDGs 4 on education, 8 on work, 10 on inequality, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace and 17 on partnerships.

27. URGES REQUESTS Contracting Parties together with the Ramsar Convention's, IOPs and other key partners to raise awareness of this resolution on wetlands, peace and security in dialogues and political processes at all levels, and take needed actions to conserve and sustainably use wetlands;

28. REQUESTS the STRP to -monitor the discussions, developments and trends in international fora on the role of wetland conservation, restoration and wise use in peacekeeping and in conflict prevention in the development of their work, and to develop guidance and facilitate knowledge sharing about this, drawing on the experience of other conventions such as CMS;

29. FURTHER REQUESTS the STRP , if this work is approved by the Standing Committee, to keep Contracting Parties informed of these discussions, developments and trends through the STRP report at future Standing Committees.

Annex 1

Concept for a Ramsar Convention Draft Resolution provisionally titled "Wetlands, peace and security"

1. Background

It is becoming increasingly recognized that the world faces increased water insecurity and that this is a factor, amongst others, underpinning instability leading to insecurity and heightened risk of conflict. The recent Planetary Security Conference, The Hague, December 2017 is evidence of this[3]. This is being driven by one or a combination of climate variability, change and inequitable water resource development. For many people, especially in the Sahel and many other arid and semi-arid regions of the world, wetlands often play a vital role supporting health, livelihoods, the local economy and even in some cases regional economies. When disasters such as drought strike these wetlands take on a disproportionately important role for communities and biodiversity, providing a haven and resources to survive. When these wetlands are placed under water stress and the resources and services they provide become degraded, communities can struggle to access sufficient resources creating tensions between different stakeholder groups, often with different ethnic backgrounds and beliefs. When this happens, the potential for instability and insecurity is raised. When this is combined with other factors such as poor natural resource governance, existing ethnic tensions and political discord then displacement and conflict can arise.

Many wetlands are therefore critical infrastructures that underpin peace and security for many millions of people. Their wise use ensures maintenance of their functioning and related provision of services and benefits.

2. Purpose and potential call for actions of the resolution

To call on Contracting Parties to recognize wetlands as critical infrastructure that help promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, urge them, together with the Ramsar Convention's IOPs and other key partners to raise awareness of this in dialogues and political processes at all levels, and take needed actions to conserve and sustainably use wetlands. Potential call for actions might include:
*   Identify the hotspots where wetlands are critical infrastructures supporting peace and sustainable development,
*   Wisely use wetlands as part of strategies to maintain and restore peace, by incorporating them into national and key regional planning processes and financing mechanisms, such as Strategies of Regional Economic Integration Organisations, NDCs and NAPs,
*   Implement best practices to support wise use such integrated river basin management and maintaining environmental flows,
*   Nurture and establish partnerships between the wetland community and humanitarian sectors,
*   Integrate relevant issues into the strategies and plans of other international conventions such as UNCCD, UNFCCC, CBD working through existing Memoranda.

3. Links with exiting Ramsar Resolutions, international commitments & processes

This resolution will link to Ramsar Resolutions on poverty, disaster risk reduction, human health, Ramsar guidance on river basin management, related SDGs, UN Environment peace building

---

[3] https://www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/The_Hague_Declaration.pdf

initiative, Planetary Security Conference (focused on Mali, Chad, Iraq), Cancun UNISDR, OECD state of fragility reports, Wetlands International Watershocks report, and others.