

Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention

Actions requested:

Standing Committee is invited to take note of urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention during the coming triennium, as identified by the Secretariat.

Introduction

1. Resolution XIII.4 on *Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention* requests that the Standing Committee, at its first full meeting following each meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, identify, with the support of the Secretariat, a limited set of urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands, in the framework of the Ramsar Strategic Plan and the broader environmental agenda, to receive enhanced attention during the coming triennium.
2. In order to respond to this request the Secretariat has identified a set of issues through an examination and analysis of:
 - a. document COP13 Doc.11.1, *Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention: Global implementation*, reviewing National Reports to COP13;
 - b. the *Global Wetland Outlook; State of the world's wetlands and their services to people*; and
 - c. the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR)*; and
 - d. the World Economic Forum *Global Risks Report 2018*.
3. Table 1 provides to the Standing Committee a list of urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands within the scope of the Ramsar Strategic Plan (2016 – 2024), organized as thematic categories, that should receive enhanced attention during this triennium and which could inform various strategic areas of work of the Standing Committee and positively impact the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Table 1 Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands

Thematic categories	Ramsar National Reports	Global Wetland Outlook	UN Assessments / Reports ¹	WEF Global Risks Report
Linkages with and inclusion within national sustainable development strategies, plans and investments are lacking	Incorporation of wetland benefits into national sustainable development strategies and planning processes is progressing slowly.	Wetlands are not integrated into sustainable development strategies.	Incorporation of wetland benefits in plans relating to agriculture, fisheries, water, energy and mining is lacking.	Nature-based solutions are not well integrated into national strategies. Wetland management typically functions in isolation from other development strategies and processes. Understanding of the quantifiable benefits of ecosystem services is lacking. High levels of cross-sectoral and institutional cooperation are lacking. An enabling policy environment can go a long way to promote sustainable development.
	Progress in the assessment of wetland functions, services and benefits is slow, and implementing wetland programmes that contribute to poverty alleviation or to food and water security remains a challenge.	Wetland policy makers often do not recognize the full range of values of wetlands, limiting their ability to effectively advocate for inclusion in national strategies and plans.		
More effective planning and management of wetlands needed	No real progress in the effective planning and integrated management of Ramsar sites. Threats to Ramsar Sites continue to increase.	Ramsar Sites and other wetlands lack management plans and where management plans exist, implementation is weak.	Increasing water stress and water scarcity. Operational plans, transboundary arrangements, and water governance and management mechanisms lacking.	40% global water deficit by 2030 under business-as-usual scenario. Better management of water resources is required.
				Effective use of new technologies to improve decision making tied to water management and climate change mitigation and adaptation are needed.

¹ Includes the UN World Water Development Report and Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction.

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Diverse and inclusive participation in wetland planning and management is limited	The application of guidelines to strengthen local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands appears limited.	More diverse and inclusive stakeholder participation in wetland management and decision making is needed.		
Information on wetland inventories and extent lacking	Wetland inventories at present are limited. More complete inventories are fundamental for monitoring progress against SDGs.	Lack of reliable information on wetland inventories and tracking wetland extent.		Effective use of new technologies to detect and quantify water-related risks is needed.
Wetlands loss is not being mitigated by restoration	Progress on wetland restoration is declining.	While a two-fold increase in human-made wetland areas has occurred since 1970, overall areas are small compared to natural wetlands.		
Policy and legal frameworks are not resulting in effective wetland conservation and use	The continuing loss of wetlands requires that all Contracting Parties take urgent actions to develop and implement a wetland policy/strategy that recognizes wetland problems and includes targeted action to deal with these.	Legal and policy arrangements lacking at the national level. National wetland policies needed by all countries.	Management of wetlands as natural infrastructure integral to water resource management at the river basin scale is declining.	Enabling policy environment to promote nature-based solutions adoption is lacking. For example, in agriculture, subsidies and incentives provided to farmers often need to be realigned to support the wise use of wetlands.