

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS  
59th Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Resumed session  
Gland, Switzerland, 23-27 May 2022

SC59/2022 Doc.24.1

**Proposed draft resolution on  
Protection, management and restoration of wetlands as Nature-based  
solutions to address the climate crisis**

*Submitted by Spain*

*Secretariat cover note:*

The DR recalls Resolutions relevant for the Mediterranean region including Resolutions XI.14 on climate change and XIII.14 on Blue Carbon, and refers to other relevant multilateral environmental processes. The Secretariat invited the STRP to review the technical annex on Mediterranean wetlands (knowledge, extent, pressures, roles related to carbon, management and restoration), and to inform the Standing Committee.

**Actions requested:**

Standing Committee is invited to:

- Review, approve and then forward the attached draft resolution “Protection, management and restoration of wetlands as Nature-based solutions to address the climate crisis”

**Introduction**

*Information for Standing Committee*

1. The effects of global warming are now widely known and include sea level rise, periods of intense drought and flooding, and increase in number and intensity of storms and hurricanes. Climate change is accelerating and recognized as a serious threat to ecosystem and biodiversity. It is associated with alterations in the physical environment of the planet Earth. Climate impacts plants and animals, with consequences for the survival of the species. Climate change creates water and food insecurity, increased morbidity/mortality, and population movement. Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected.

2. Personalized adaptation to the consequences of climate change and preventive measures are key challenges for society and ecosystems. Today there are several opportunities to reinforce adaptation in the face of the climate crisis. By shifting our attention to practice, there are more effective adaptation measures for the future, nature-based solutions (NbS) and among them “wetland-based solutions”.
3. Protection, management and restoration of wetlands represent effective nature-based solutions to maintain and enhance crucial functions of the crucial services provided by wetlands such as ensuring carbon sequestration, sound water resources management, disaster risk reduction, food security and biodiversity conservation.
4. Along with the polar regions, the Mediterranean basin is one of the locations in the world most impacted by the effects of climate change. Temperatures are rising 20% faster than elsewhere; already 1.5°C higher than pre-industrial temperatures.
5. In the last years, the Mediterranean Contracting Parties through their Ramsar Regional Initiative, MedWet, have progressed on defining priorities for wetlands restoration and, with the support of their partners, have defined a knowledge-based platform on wetland conservation, management and restoration.
6. The draft resolution urges all Contracting Parties to introduce and adopt appropriate policies and measures to conserve, sustainably manage and restore wetlands as long term and cost-effective nature based solutions.
7. Moreover, the resolution recommends the Mediterranean Contracting Parties and the MedWet Initiative to support the Secretariat to create the Wetland-based Solution Community of Practice to support climate mitigation and adaptation. The Community is meant to be paving the way for more exchanges on wetlands restoration for climate mitigation and adaptation solutions across the region and will capitalise on lessons learnt from existing successful wetland restoration projects as NbS. The Community of Practice aims to better engage stakeholders by providing learning stories on how restoration projects help to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Community is open to all actors identified as stakeholders for wetland restoration.
8. The draft resolution includes a Technical Annex on Mediterranean wetlands and acquired knowledge on wetland restoration
9. The draft resolution is written in a way that may fit outcome of the COP14, but changes might be needed accordingly to the total outcome, for example the names of other resolutions.

*Financial implications of implementation*

<b>Paragraph (number and key part of text)</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Cost (CHF)</b>
7. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat [in collaboration with MedWet] to establish a Community of Practice on wetland protection, management and restoration as NbS for cooperation among regional initiatives and other stakeholders aiming at providing scientific and technical support as well as easing the access to financial resources for interested Contracting Parties.	the Ramsar Secretariat to promote an appropriate Community of Practice by involving regional initiatives on wetland protection, management and restoration as NbS with the support of MedWet	15,000
10. INSTRUMENTS the Ramsar Secretariat to liaise with relevant international conventions and organizations including UNFCCC bodies, within their respective mandates, to promote wetland protection, management and restoration as NbS for climate change mitigation and adaptation	the Ramsar Secretariat to liaise with relevant international conventions and organizations as appropriate, including exploring the development of formal links to promote wetland protection, management restoration as NbS for climate change adaptation	0,0
13. REQUESTS that the STRP, if resources are available, consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas for 2022-2025, consider continuing its work on climate change and wetlands, focusing on wetland restoration as NbS for climate mitigation and adaptation, as a high priority.	The STRP to work in collaboration with MedWet on the following activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. undertaking a desktop study of success stories of wetland as NbS for climate change of the Ramsar Sites of those Contracting Parties that express their interest in participating;</li> <li>2. developing a technical handbook on protection, management and restoration of Wetlands as NbS to provide accurate, detailed information on the full range of potentially applicable wetlandbased solutions (WBS) for climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits; the Handbook is built on the desktop study and on the success stories of Ramsar sites.</li> </ol>	60,000

## Annex 1. Draft Resolution XIV.xx

*Submitted by Spain*

### 3. RECALLING

- a. Resolution XI.14 on Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which urges Contracting Parties to maintain or improve the ecological character of wetlands to promote the ability of wetlands to contribute to nature-based climate change adaptation;
- b. Resolution XIII.14 on Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems, highlighting the value of wetlands as natural carbon sinks
- c. Resolution XII.13 on Wetlands and disaster risk reduction which welcomes initiatives that support the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands and encourages engagement in such activities;
- d. the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 highlighting the important ecosystem services that wetlands provide, to contribute to food security, healthy living, water quality and supply, water security, disasters risk reduction, adaptation to climate change and biodiversity;
- e. Resolution 031 adopted at the World Conservation Congress in September 2021, in Marseille, on the Implementation of nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean Basin.

### 4. RECOGNISING

- a. the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as the outcome of the 25th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties;
- b. the final agreement of COP26 of the UNFCCC, known as the Glasgow Climate Pact, which recognized the importance of “protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystem, (...) acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases.”
- c. the framework for defining Nature-based Solutions (NbS) adopted at the World Conservation Congress in 2016 by Resolution 6.069 and the IUCN Global Nature based Solutions adopted in 2020 (WCC-2020-Res-060);
- d. the entry into force of the UN Decade for the restoration of ecosystems 2021-2030;
- e. the process for the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework adopted by the conference of the parties to the convention on biological diversity (CBD/COP/DEC/14/34);
- f. that the EU Green Deal and its post 2020 Biodiversity strategy, includes a strong EU restoration plan to reverse the degradation of land and sea ecosystems and thereby increase nature resilience to climate change, and that substantial financial support will be dedicated to restoration actions, both within the EU and for neighbouring countries including the Mediterranean Basin;

### 5. AWARE that

- a. climate change is already affecting every inhabited region across the globe, with human influence contributing to many observed changes in weather and climate extremes and that global temperature will continue to increase until at least mid-century under all emission scenarios considered by IPCC;
- b. progress in adaptation planning and implementation has been observed across all sectors and regions, generating multiple benefits. However, adaptation progress is unevenly distributed with observed adaptation gaps;

- a) according to IPCC, adaptation to water-related risks and impacts make up the majority of all documented adaptation;
- b) enhancing natural water retention such as by restoring wetlands can reduce flood risk by storing water and slowing water flow, in most circumstances;
- c) coastal wetlands protect against coastal erosion and flooding associated with storms and sea level rise;
- d) by protecting and restoring wetlands, we are safeguarding crucial carbon sinks which can support countries in reaching mitigation targets and that wetlands are a cross-cutting tool for achieving their National determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement;
- e) the Mediterranean Basin is warming 20% faster than the rest of the world with a drop of 15% in the availability of freshwater by 2040 as well as an increase in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events like floods, heatwaves and droughts;
- f) the societal challenges Wetland-based Solutions aim to address (food security, climate change, water security, human health, disaster risks, economic and social development) are particularly acute in the Mediterranean Basin due to recent strong demographic developments, tremendous pressure on scarce water resources, and the concentration of economic activities and urban development in coastal regions;
- g) due to the Mediterranean peculiarity, the Mediterranean Contracting Parties and their Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet) with its partners have acquired a valuable knowledge and know-how on wetland protection, management and restoration as presented in the Technical Annex;

6. NOTING that

- a. well-preserved and restored wetlands are a prerequisite for biodiversity to thrive in the coming decades and adapt to and mitigate the new conditions imposed by climate change as it has been demonstrated for Mediterranean water bird populations;
- b. the key role played by wetlands in providing crucial ecosystem services and their potential role as NbS, and aware of the need to protect and restore wetlands;

THE CONFERENCE OF CONTRACTING PARTIES

7. AFFIRMS the significant value of wetlands restoration as NbS, the “wetland-based solution”, for facing societal challenges, especially climate-change mitigation and adaptation, water and food security, risk reduction and health;

8. URGES the Contracting Parties to

- a. address simultaneously biodiversity loss, wetland degradation, water abstraction and scarcity and risks associated to climate change as urgent and to pursue policies and projects to conserve and restore wetlands in the coming years;
- b. consider the conservation, sustainable management of wetlands and the restoration of degraded wetlands as long term and most cost-effective NbS when contemplating measures to regulate carbon emissions, to mitigate climate impacts, to secure sound water resources management as well as sustainable food production;
- c. favour the conservation and the restoration of wetlands by promoting ambitious, ecosystem-based and integrated sustainable water management and hydromorphological restoration measures of the whole connected watersheds;
- d. put in place financial incentives to support the efforts of local stakeholders and their full involvement to sustainably manage, conserve and restore wetlands;

- e. take NbS into account under the Ramsar convention to include them in their NDCs under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, but also in all relevant sectoral policies as approved by the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 (WCC-2020-Res-031);
9. RECOMMENDS Mediterranean Contracting Parties to support the MedWet initiative in promoting and implementing the following activities:
  - a) developing a Mediterranean-wide knowledge base on the wetland extent, based on a watershed and river basin approach, and their conservation status in the region as a regional reference base to assess progress and prioritize restoration actions;
  - b) calling for more research to provide a knowledge base on carbon fluxes in wetlands including blue carbon and on targeted restoration efforts that would co-benefit biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation;
  - c) identifying, upscaling and replicating existing successful wetland restoration projects based on a NbS approach in the Mediterranean to other sites designated as priority for restoration and organise exchanges of good practices and lessons learnt;
  - d) promoting wetlands restoration capacity building for wetland managers, practitioners, and civil society;
10. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat, in collaboration with MedWet, to establish a Community of Practice on wetland protection, management and restoration as NbS for cooperation among regional initiatives and other stakeholders aiming at providing scientific and technical support as well as easing the access to financial resources for interested Contracting Parties;
11. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to liaise with relevant international conventions and organizations including UNFCCC bodies, within their respective mandates, to promote wetland protection, management and restoration as NbS for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
12. URGES the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention to explore and mobilize, together with other international institutions promoting ecosystem restoration and other NbS, such as the European Union with the forthcoming restoration law, the UNFCCC, the Barcelona Convention, the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) or the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), to identify a range of financial schemes (i.e. public-private partnerships, payments for ecosystem services, dedicated grants, private sector investments in carbon financing, etc.) to support the urgent largescale wetland restoration efforts across landscapes that are required to tackle climate change in priority regions such as the Mediterranean;
13. REQUESTS that the STRP, if resources are available, consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas for 2022-2025, consider continuing its work on climate change and wetlands, focusing on wetland restoration as NbS for climate mitigation and adaptation, as a high priority, inter alia by:
  - a. undertaking a desktop study of success stories of wetland as NbS for climate change of the Ramsar Sites of those Contracting Parties that express their interest in participating
  - b. developing a technical handbook of Wetland protection, management and restoration as nature-based solutions to provide accurate, detailed information on the full range of potentially applicable wetland-based solutions (WBS) for climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits; the handbook being built on the desktop study and on the success stories of Ramsar sites.