



10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

Changwon, Republic of Korea,
28 October-4 November 2008

Agenda item XV

Ramsar COP10 DR 25

Draft Resolution X.25

Wetlands and “biofuels”

Submitted by the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP)

1. RECOGNIZING that attempting to create new energy supplies and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from fossil fuels is an urgent global priority;
2. AWARE of the increasing global attention to the use of alternative and renewable sources of energy, including *inter alia* biofuel production, and EXPRESSING CONCERN that such changes in energy policy can have actual or potential detrimental effects upon wetlands and their ecosystem services to people;
3. ALSO AWARE that biofuel can be manufactured from many different food and non-food crops, such as sugar cane, corn, beets, wheat and sorghum (grown for conversion to bioethanol) and rapeseed, sunflower, soya, oil palm, coconut and jatropha (grown for conversion to biodiesel), each with different potential impacts on wetlands, including differences between genotypes of the same crop type;
4. FURTHER AWARE that many parts of the world are now water-stressed and that this demand for water is projected to grow, and CONCERNED that, with 70% of abstracted water already being used for irrigated agriculture, not only will replacement crops with a high water demand add to this pressure but, although not all biofuel crop systems require irrigation, in general global expansion of irrigated biofuel production systems could multiply this effect and potentially result in even more substantial impacts at local and regional levels;
5. FURTHER AWARE that the production of biofuels may have negative impacts on water quality in wetlands resulting from the associated use of pesticides and fertilizers;
6. RECOGNIZING that some biofuel crops have lower water demands, can be grown on degraded lands, and can in some cases assist in environmental rehabilitation with associated benefits for human populations;

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7. AWARE of the work of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and Wetlands International (WI), among others, on issues of water, wetlands, agriculture and biofuels;
8. TAKING NOTE of the Final Declaration of the “High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy” hosted by FAO in Rome in June 2008, which stresses, *inter alia*, that it is vital to combine medium- and long-term measures to address the challenges and opportunities posed by biofuels and to foster a coherent, effective and results-oriented international dialogue on biofuels;
9. EXPRESSING CONCERN that with global demand for food production projected to increase substantially as a consequence of efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goal on food security, potential competing demands upon agricultural land for food and biofuel production may lead to pressure for the conversion of wetlands and other threatened ecosystems, including sites previously the subject of restoration programmes; and
10. FURTHER CONCERNED that such conversion risks damaging the high carbon sequestration and storage capacity of such wetlands [as recognized by Resolution X.[DR 24] on climate change and wetlands] and could cause major releases of greenhouse gases from such wetlands, as is already reported for the conversion of peat swamp forests to palm oil production in southeast Asia, and that decisions concerning conversion of wetlands for agricultural biofuel production may not necessarily take into account the full range of ecosystem services, such as flood protection, food and fiber, and groundwater recharge, provided by such wetlands;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to assess carefully the potential impacts, benefits and trade-offs of proposed biofuel crop production schemes affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands, particularly the implications for surface and groundwater resources; to apply environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA), as appropriate and in line with Resolution VII.16 and [DR X.17]; and to seek to avoid negative impacts as far as possible;
12. STRONGLY URGES Contracting Parties to ensure that in any consideration of conversion of wetlands for biofuel crop production, the full range and value of ecosystem services provided to people by these wetlands is understood, so that negative impacts can be avoided as far as possible;
13. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, when seeking to increase their biofuel crop production, to prefer those crops that do not risk damage to wetlands either directly through drainage and conversion to agricultural land or indirectly through increased water abstraction demands or pollution;
14. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties growing biofuels to encourage sustainable forest management practices and agricultural practices that will aid both in mitigating adverse social impacts and in preserving biodiversity and valuable ecosystem services, including those provided by wetlands; and

15. INSTRUCTS the Scientific & Technical Review Panel to:
 - i) assess the global distribution of biofuel production in relation to impacts on wetlands;
 - ii) review existing best management practice guidance for growing biofuels;
 - iii) consider the preparation of further guidance for Contracting Parties on addressing biofuel issues in relation to wetlands and water; and
 - iv) advise the Standing Committee of its conclusions; and
16. INVITES the FAO and other interested organizations to contribute to this work.