



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

“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

Changwon, Republic of Korea,
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Agenda item XV

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Wetlands and urbanization

Submitted by the Standing Committee

1. RECALLING the commitments made by Contracting Parties to achieving the wise use, as far as possible, of all wetlands in their territory and to maintaining the ecological character of designated Ramsar sites;
2. AWARE that the world is becoming increasingly urbanized and that over 50% of the global population now lives in urban environments;
3. NOTING that “urban wetlands” are those wetlands lying within the boundaries of cities, towns and other conurbations and that “peri-urban wetlands” are those wetlands located adjacent to an urban area between the suburbs and rural areas;
4. RECOGNIZING that wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments can deliver many important ecosystem services to people, such as wastewater treatment, and ALSO RECOGNIZING that urban green space is increasingly known to contribute to people’s physical and mental health and well-being;
5. FURTHER RECOGNIZING the important role that urban and peri-urban wetlands can play in communication, education, participation and awareness for urban communities about wetlands, as well as the value of establishing education and visitor centres in such places;
6. CONCERNED that many wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments are or are becoming degraded through encroachment of surrounding populations, pollution, poorly managed waste and infilling or other developments, often driven by misguided public health motives that fail to recognize the balance of human health advantages of wetlands as expressed in Resolution [COP10 DR 23] on *Wetlands and human health and well-being*, and that these activities have diminished both the ecosystem services that urban wetlands can provide and the recognition of their value and importance by both decision-makers and urban communities;

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7. ALSO CONCERNED that the spread of urbanization is leading to wetlands, including Ramsar sites, that were formerly in rural areas becoming increasingly urbanized, with consequent increased risk of their degradation;
8. AWARE that much of the increasing urbanization is occurring in coastal and downstream parts of river catchments and that the demand for water for human use in these areas is increasing, and CONCERNED that many river basins are already water-stressed because of the levels of upstream abstractions;
9. ALSO CONCERNED about the increasingly adverse impacts on wetlands of the consumption patterns of urban populations and the increasing demand from cities on the Earth's wetland ecosystems for water and other natural resources and services provided by wetlands; and
10. AWARE of the Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity, adopted in 2007 by a meeting of mayors and other senior representatives of host cities of meetings of the COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), host cities of UN chapters, and cities that have specific strategies with regard to biodiversity, through which commitments to integrate biodiversity concerns into urban planning have been reaffirmed; and ALSO AWARE of Decision [9/17] of CBD COP9 (2008) on "Cities, local authorities and biodiversity";

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. URGES all Contracting Parties to pay due attention to the importance of their wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments;
12. ALSO URGES all Contracting Parties to review the state of their urban and peri-urban wetlands and, where needed, to put in place schemes for their restoration and rehabilitation so that they can deliver their full range of ecosystem services to people and biodiversity;
13. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties to formulate and implement their land-use planning and management so as to minimize further future impacts on urban wetlands and on those currently in peri-urban or rural situations that are vulnerable to urban encroachment;
14. EMPHASIZES the value of Ramsar site designations in the vicinity of urban centres as a key contribution to safeguarding important ecosystems against inappropriate urban encroachment;
15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and others to establish wetland education and visitor facilities on urban and peri-urban wetlands, and particularly Ramsar sites in such locations, as a means of increasing urban community public awareness under the Convention's CEPA Programme 2009-[2014] and, in view of the recreational, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions of wetlands, as a means of supporting the health and well-being of people by facilitating access to such wetlands;
16. REQUESTS Contracting Parties and others that have established such education and visitor facilities to report to the Secretariat on their experiences and achievements so that

they can be shared with other Parties that are developing such facilities, including through the Wetland Link International (WLI) mechanism;

17. ENCOURAGES the mayors of cities, particularly those that have hosted meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention and that have urban and peri-urban wetlands, to connect with the CBD initiative on cities and biodiversity;
18. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to involve municipalities in their planning processes and operational actions on wetland conservation and wise use in order to seek contributions from municipalities, including their physical planning departments, a) to assess the ecological footprints of urban areas on wetlands and b) to offset the negative impacts of the increasing urban consumption of wetland products and ecosystem services;
19. INVITES the Ramsar Secretariat to explore ways and means of establishing collaborative links with the UN human settlements programme (UN-HABITAT) concerning the promotion of social and environmental sustainability of towns and cities in relation to wetlands and water;
20. REQUESTS Contracting Parties, through their appointed Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) National Focal Points, to advise the STRP on issues concerning urban and peri-urban wetlands that would benefit from additional scientific and technical guidance; and
21. INSTRUCTS the STRP, in the light of this advice, to consider the preparation of guidance for Contracting Parties on issues specific to urban and peri-urban wetlands.