



## 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

*“Wetlands: home and destination”*

Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012

**Agenda item XI**

**Ramsar COP11 DOC. 35**

### **Uptake of the “Changwon Declaration” (Resolution X.3) since COP10**

#### **Executive summary**

1. This report is provided as supporting information under item XI (Ramsar COP11 DOC. 7: “Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention at the global level”) of the Draft Agenda for the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971).
2. The ‘Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands’ (Annex 1) was adopted through Resolution X.3 of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties which was held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008.
3. The primary purpose for the adoption of the Declaration is to transmit key messages concerning the importance of wetlands to the many stakeholders and decision makers beyond the existing Ramsar community to inform their actions and decision-making so as to integrate wetlands into local, national and international priorities.
4. This assessment of the experiences of Contracting Parties in implementing the Declaration revealed that while some of its provisions are already being delivered through existing wetland conservation and wise use actions, there has been limited impact in terms of mobilizing stakeholders and decision makers beyond the existing Ramsar community and particularly at the national, local and river basin levels, to take concrete actions for wetland conservation and wise use.
5. The successful implementation of the Declaration is contingent on the Ramsar community being able to engage more effectively with a range of stakeholders across all sectors of development, and particularly at the national, local and river basin levels.
6. The onus is on the Ramsar National Focal Points – the Administrative Authorities and the STRP and CEPA Focal Points – to make this happen.

1) **Background**

7. As mentioned above, the Changwon Declaration was adopted by the Parties at COP10 in Changwon, in November 2008. It recognizes the urgent need for governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society to understand more fully the roles they can and should play in ensuring that the enormous value of wetlands is reflected in policy, planning and decision-making related to sustainable development, and to develop more effective cross-sectoral actions to secure mutual benefits.
8. Fundamental to this is the need to secure the future health of wetland ecosystems and ensure the maintenance of their ecological character in relation to the global commitments made under the Ramsar Convention.
9. The Declaration also emphasizes the importance of collaboration and partnerships between governments and local communities, and it highlights the shared responsibility of both in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
10. The primary purpose of the Changwon Declaration is to enhance communication with key stakeholders beyond the current Ramsar community and to persuade them to take collective and integrated actions for wetlands. It provides a tool to promote the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015, and particularly its Strategy 1.4 concerning “Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services”.
11. The Declaration highlights positive actions for ensuring human well-being and security outcomes in the future under five priority thematic headings and two key areas of cross-cutting delivery mechanisms:
  - ***Water and wetlands:*** Use available water more efficiently; stop wetlands from becoming degraded or lost; restore wetlands that are already degraded; wisely manage and protect wetlands.
  - ***Climate change and wetlands:*** Restore wetlands and maintain hydrological cycles; recognize the natural infrastructure of wetlands as a major asset in combating and adapting to climate change; seize opportunities to enhance collaboration among international technical bodies involved in climate change, especially in relation to wetlands/water/climate linkages.
  - ***People’s livelihoods and wetlands:*** Invest in the maintenance of the services provided by wetlands; analyze and document wetland/livelihoods linkages; support sustainable wetland management using scientific and technical tools and accumulated experience, including indigenous and traditional knowledge; promote stewardship using economic incentives; diversify the support base for livelihoods.
  - ***People’s health and wetlands:*** Recognize and reflect the interrelationships between wetland ecosystems and human health in national and international policies, plans and strategies; identify and implement interventions that benefit both wetland ecosystem “health” and human health.

- ***Land use change, biodiversity and wetlands:*** Integrate adequate knowledge of the range of benefits and the values that wetlands provide for people and biodiversity into decisions related to land use change; give priority to safeguarding naturally-functioning wetlands; take more actions to address the root causes of the loss of biodiversity and to reverse these losses.
12. Cross-cutting mechanisms to help deliver the above:
- ***Planning, decision-making, finance and economics:*** Use rapid and practical decision-support tools to identify issues and policy options; recognize the significance of wetlands in spatial planning; use comprehensive cost-benefit analyses to best reflect the economic value of all types of wetlands; provide adequate and sustainable financing for wetland conservation and wise use.
  - ***Sharing knowledge and experience:*** Enhance basic information on the global extent and characterization of wetlands, including by using evolving earth observation techniques and other information technologies; intensify efforts to seek common, harmonized and accessible approaches to sharing knowledge and experience more effectively, including through appropriate information technology applications.
13. The operative paragraphs of Resolution X.3 identified seven key actions that could be taken by parties within and outside the Ramsar family to implement the Changwon Declaration:
- Bring the Declaration to the attention of heads of state, parliaments, private sector, and civil society, and encourage them and all government sectors and agencies responsible for activities affecting wetlands.
  - Utilise the Declaration to inform national policies and decision-making, including in the positions of their national delegations to other external processes, and through specific opportunities at local, national and international levels where the Ramsar Convention and other processes have good potential for mutual assistance and collaboration.
  - Utilise the spirit of the Declaration in their future work and establishment of priorities, and also to use their own means and all other relevant opportunities actively to promote the Declaration.
  - Promote to their constituencies the messages in the Declaration.
  - Find the resources to translate the Changwon Declaration into local languages and facilitate its dissemination and understanding as widely as possible.
  - Consider the development and inclusion of indicators in the National Report Format for COP11, where feasible, concerning the dissemination and uptake of the Changwon Declaration and report on this to Contracting Parties and others.

- Advise the Secretariat on their experiences of the uptake of the Declaration in order to inform the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.
14. Unlike previous Ramsar COP declarations, the Changwon Declaration identifies indicators to measure its success. The four indicators are:
- its existence becoming widely known, reported, translated and remembered;
  - its messages being taken up in planning and decision-making in local and river basin level governance/management processes;
  - its relevant elements being incorporated into national-level plans, decisions and action programmes;
  - its elements being incorporated into international policy statements, decisions and action programmes, including through briefings for government delegations to relevant international meetings.
15. Against that background, this paper provides a report on actions taken by various parties to implement the Changwon Declaration and a brief assessment of the impact of these actions to date, identifies the successful strategies adopted in implementing the actions called for in the Declaration, and, from this, provides recommendations on how best to implement this Declaration in the future.

## **2) Implementing the Changwon Declaration**

16. The Ramsar Regional Centre - East Asia (RRC-EA) hosted three annual Changwon Declaration Network (CDN) meetings between 2009 and 2011 to gather information about the experience of Ramsar Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners (IOPs), Ramsar Regional Centres (RRCs), and other partners in the roll-out and uptake of the Changwon Declaration.
17. In total, 133 participants attended these meetings and 44 papers were presented. The final report of the three meetings is currently in production by the RRC-EA and will be available during the Ramsar COP11.
18. During the course of the three CDN meetings, it became apparent that there was a lack of clarity about the purpose and intent of the Changwon Declaration. Some participants thought of the Declaration as a new programme of activities for Ramsar Contracting Parties and partners to implement in parallel to their existing commitments under the Convention – rather than its intended purpose of supporting Ramsar Strategic Plan implementation.
19. The Declaration is intended to be a call for the Ramsar family to reach out to those other stakeholders whom the Convention has not engaged with but who also play an important role in the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands. It recognizes the need for the Ramsar family to be inclusive in its approach to achieving wetland conservation and wise use. Cooperation, after all, is one of the three ‘pillars’ of the Ramsar Convention.
20. For the purposes of the present paper, the outputs from the CDN meetings have been distilled into a summary of the key lessons learnt in implementing the Changwon Declaration. Examples are provided where available, to illustrate the lessons learnt:

**A. Look for common points of interest or concern to help bring the various stakeholders together.**

In the Volta River Basin in Ghana, the Wildlife Division (Ramsar Administrative Authority) engaged with the Volta River Authority (VRA) and other stakeholders to successfully dredge a 180-200 meter stretch of the river estuary to help maintain the ecosystem services that support livelihoods and ensure human health and safety for the local communities. This led to the establishment of a working protocol through which the key stakeholders and partners will manage and monitor the basin ecosystem.

In the Republic of Korea, the Community Advisory Council for Masan Bay, which serves as a platform for all stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process, is an exemplary model for resolving land and water use conflicts.

**B. Set up pilot projects to demonstrate the implementation of the actions in the Declaration. Set targets for these, monitor progress, evaluate the results and showcase the benefits. Set up funds to support these projects.**

Wetland restoration projects provide a good opportunity to demonstrate the benefits that can be derived from engaging with a range of stakeholders. At Thailand's Thale Noi Ramsar Site, the watershed areas were successfully restored and conserved with the participation of local stakeholders. Similarly, the restoration of 95,000 m<sup>2</sup> of wetlands in the Nakdong Estuary, Republic of Korea, was made possible through the active participation of volunteers from civil society, the private sector, local communities and universities.

Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs) have and continue to implement projects which demonstrate one or more of the actions in the Declaration. As an example, in the Upper Bay of Panama, BirdLife International partner the Panama Audobon Society (PAS) provides training in mangrove restoration and management to local conservation groups to reduce their vulnerability to climate change and contribute to poverty alleviation. In Lijiang, Yunan Province, P.R. of China, Wetlands International succeeded in getting local communities in a wetland nature reserve to adopt energy-saving practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RRC-EA) has set up a 'Wetlands Fund' to provide support to civil society organizations and other stakeholders to implement projects that demonstrate the actions called for in the Declaration.

**C. Seek opportunities to implement the spirit of the Declaration through existing policies, plans and regulatory frameworks, and to inform future revisions of these.**

In the Marshall Islands, the Changwon Declaration has been integrated at the local and national levels of government through ordinances, resolutions and regulations, and through traditional practices such as "Mo", where the community ban fishing in coastal areas for a period of time to allow natural re-stocking and so prevent over-fishing.

Wetland considerations have been included in the Environmental Impact Assessment processes in the Seychelles and Marshall Islands. In the P.R. of China, wetland conservation and wise use is considered in local government regulations and in laws related to the use and management of sea waters, environmental impact assessment, and water.

The Seychelles 'Sustainable Development Strategy 2011-2020' recognizes the importance of wetlands in delivering the nation's sustainable development targets.

**D. Work through existing subregional and regional mechanisms to enhance the implementation of the Declaration.**

The Implementation Strategy of East Asian –Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) includes expected outcomes about the integration of wetland biodiversity conservation and sustainable development that benefits local communities. At the national level it encourages formation of domestic partnerships for waterbird conservation, which include stakeholders from different sectors. The Partnership engages with the public health sector through its Working Group on Avian Influenza. The Working Group and specialist partners provide scientific advice on migratory waterbirds to ensure a balanced response on avian influenza issues.

The Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) is working to promote uptake of the Declaration through its involvement in local and regional networks and initiatives such as the High Andean Wetlands Strategy and the Americas Waterbird Conservation Council.

IUCN, through its Mekong Region Water Dialogues (MRWD), is working to establish strategic partnerships and alliances at the regional level to promote wetland governance policies that support livelihood security and human and ecosystem health in the Lower Mekong region.

**E. Include the Changwon Declaration in the plans of the National Wetland Committees. Use the Declaration to encourage networking between the private sector, civil society, and the NWCs.**

In Thailand, the Technical Working Committee of the National Wetland Committee has been tasked to review the Changwon Declaration and to identify actions that can be taken at the national and local level to support its implementation.

The Austrian National Ramsar Committee has taken the decision to include the actions identified in the Changwon Declaration in the Austrian Wetland Strategy 2011-2015.

**F. Invest in education and awareness programmes to increase understanding and uptake of the spirit of the Declaration.**

The 'Youth Model Ramsar Convention' implemented by the Ramsar Regional Centre - East Asia targets high school students, encouraging them to develop and adopt resolutions on wetlands and climate change, wetlands and culture, and wetlands in development and conservation. The Ramsar Centre Japan's 'Kodomo Regional Programme' brings together children and youth from East and Southeast Asia to share experiences and agree solutions for wetlands and sustainable development challenges.

In The Netherlands, the Program “Lekker Groen” (environmental education), which has its focus on health, food, nature and youth, is a good vehicle to promote understanding about the Declaration.

**G. Invest in research to better understand the linkages between wetlands and human well-being (water, health, climate change, and food security), and articulate these to the relevant policy and decision-makers in an appropriate format.**

There is increasing attention being paid to research on the potential impacts of climate change on wetland ecosystem services. As an example, the Wetland Unit of the Seychelles plans to study the impact of climate change on the endemic freshwater terrapin to inform policy and decision makers and to recommend conservation actions.

In Bangladesh, based on research into local and traditional knowledge and practices, adaptation strategies have been developed and implemented to mitigate the impacts of climate change on livelihoods and food and water security. These include floating vegetable gardens, saline-tolerant crops and reeds, and rainwater harvesting.

Research on a number of at-risk species in New Zealand continues to inform managers about impacts associated with water abstraction and wetland degradation, such as on the endangered Black-fronted Tern (*Sterna albostrata*). Research on the applicability of cryptic wetland birds as indicators of wetland health is also underway. In July 2010, the Foundation for Research Science & Technology approved NZ\$ 600,000 per annum for research that will examine key environmental drivers of wetland biodiversity and provide managers with new tools for restoring degraded systems.

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) continues to invest in research projects which contribute to better understanding of the linkages between wetlands and human well-being, such as projects of the Challenge Programme on Water and Food (CPWF) and the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture (in both Africa and Asia).

**H. Develop innovative tools and approaches that seek to incorporate the elements of the Changwon Declaration to aid wetland management, planning and decision-making.**

In New Zealand, under the ‘Arawai Kakariki Program’, novel economic tools are being developed to evaluate the ecosystem services of healthy wetlands and people’s willingness to pay for improvements in wetland values.

21. As illustrated by the examples above, the successful implementation of the Declaration is contingent on the Ramsar community being able to engage more effectively with a range of stakeholders across all sectors of development and at all levels, and particularly at the national, local and river basin levels. The onus is on the Ramsar National Focal Points – the Administrative Authority and the STRP and CEPA Focal Points – to make this happen.

### 3) The impact of the Changwon Declaration

22. Four measures of success were identified in the Changwon Declaration to enable an assessment of its effectiveness to be made. A report on progress against each of these measures, based on the actions taken by Ramsar Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Secretariat, is presented below:-

#### A. Its existence becoming widely known, reported, translated and remembered.

The Declaration is currently available on the Ramsar website in 14 languages. These translations were made possible with assistance from the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, the Ministry of Environment of Japan, WWF Turkey, and the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism of Mongolia.

At the international level, the Ramsar Secretariat staff have used the opportunity of their involvement in global processes and national debates to highlight the vital role of wetland ecosystems in the provision of basic needs – water, food, energy – with climate change adaptation and mitigation as a way to contribute to sustainable livelihoods. In this regard, actions have been taken through the following processes: preparations for Rio+20, UN-Water, the Environmental Management Group (EMG), the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Global Partnership for Oceans led by the World Bank, the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), the UN Environmental and Social Sustainability Report, and the Planet Workshops on sustainable development and environment, a network of organizations created by journalists that includes governments, parliaments, the business sector, NGOs, indigenous people and local communities, scientists and students. Presentations on the Changwon Declaration were made at more than seven global conferences, including at the World Water Week (Stockholm, 2009), the 5th World Water Forum (Istanbul, 2009), and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP15 (Copenhagen, 2009).

The Secretariat has also initiated collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact, which is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. This collaboration is carried out with regard to the core environmental principles of the UN Global Compact, with a focus on two of the most critical – and related – environmental issues of this century: climate change and water sustainability.

Based on a global analysis of the responses received from 127 Contracting Parties to the specific questions posed on the Changwon Declaration in the COP11 National Reports, 27% (averaged for the different target groups) reported that they have brought the Declaration to the attention of the various levels of government, with the main target audience being civil society; 10% have used the Declaration to inform the positions of their national delegations; and 13% have translated and disseminated the Declaration in local languages (see Annex 2a). However, between 40% and 67% of the respondents (depending on the question) indicated that no direct action had been taken to disseminate and/or promote uptake of the Changwon Declaration.

Further analysis of the National Reports has revealed, however, that actions have been taken by Contracting Parties which relate to the themes of the Changwon Declaration, e.g., on water, poverty alleviation, climate change, and engagement with the private sector, and on enhancing synergies in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (see Annex 2b).

An Internet search revealed that while the Changwon Declaration has been referenced in a number of documents, for example, the Ministerial Declaration on the preparation for the establishment of the “Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve” (Budapest, 2011), its mention has largely been limited to presentations, papers and reports by those within the Ramsar community.

**B. Its messages being taken up in planning and decision-making in local and river basin level governance/management processes.**

In the Volta River example referred to above, the adoption of the Changwon Declaration at COP10 served as an impetus for a Ramsar Administration Authority to engage with and secure the commitment of key stakeholders and partners to maintain and manage ecosystem services at the basin level, for the benefit of the local communities.

**C. Its relevant elements being incorporated into national-level plans, decisions and action programmes.**

The messages of the Declaration have been included in the Austrian Wetland Strategy 2011-2015, and the Ramsar Administrative Authority has plans to draft a Memorandum of Understanding with representatives of healthcare units to implement the actions which relate to wetlands and human health.

In the Volta River in Ghana, the success of the basin-level initiative has spurred the Administrative Authority to undertake a revision of its National Wetlands Conservation Strategy and Action Plan and as part of this process to seek to influence other national policies.

In June 2009, the New Zealand Government announced the ‘New Start for Fresh Water’, a new direction for water management in partnership with regional governments and all those with an interest in freshwater management. This document includes provisions that speak to the actions called for in the Changwon Declaration, such as to ensure that there are clear and enforced limits on water use and water quality change, and that any water use is technically efficient and appropriately allocated. It also addresses actions to improve the governance arrangements for water management.

In the Marshall Islands, the Changwon Declaration is being enforced through national policy and regulatory mechanisms and through the National Action Plan “Reimaanlok” (which translates to ‘looking to the future’).

At the national level, the Administrative Authorities in Mozambique and China report that they have used the Declaration to inform and initiate discussions with sectoral agencies.

**D. Its elements being incorporated into international policy statements, decisions and action programmes, including through briefings for government delegations to relevant international meetings.**

***Biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements:*** The Changwon Declaration advised the formulation of future priorities in the Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on inland waters biological diversity and key messages for the 3rd edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (2010).

***Briefings for government delegations to relevant international meetings:*** Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, China, Malaysia, Namibia and Norway report that the Changwon Declaration has been used to develop country positions for the meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), while Australia has used it to inform its country position for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP15 meeting.

**4) The way forward**

23. The spirit and intent of the Changwon Declaration is encapsulated in one sentence in the document – “Continuing with ‘business as usual’ is not an option.”
24. Over forty years after the establishment of the Ramsar Convention, we know that the degradation and loss of wetlands is occurring still more rapidly than that of other ecosystems, and this trend is accelerating due to major changes in land use, water diversions, and infrastructure development. Access to freshwater is declining for 1-2 billion people worldwide, and this in turn negatively affects food production, human health, and economic development – and it can increase societal conflict.
25. Clearly, we need a new and integrated approach to stem the loss and degradation and to improve the management of wetlands so that they can continue to serve the needs of people and ecosystems. The actions in the Changwon Declaration are intended to enable and empower the Ramsar community to reach out to other sectors in order to achieve this.
26. The target audience for the Declaration is defined as “all stakeholders in environmental governance and management, as well as in development activities, particularly those in positions of leadership, both in relevant fora at global level, including heads of government, and equally in ‘hands-on’ delivery at local and river basin levels.”
27. While dissemination of the Changwon Declaration is a crucial first step in the process, this must be followed by concrete action on the part of the Ramsar community to ensure its uptake. The onus is on the Ramsar community to explore options and seize opportunities to enhance the involvement of a wide range of sectors (such as those dealing with water resources; environment and biodiversity, climate change, forestry, agriculture, land use planning, health, tourism, and energy) in their work. One way to do this effectively is to identify and support national and regional priorities where wetland management can bring a real added value to addressing the complexities around water supply, food security and poverty reduction, biodiversity conservation and wise use, climate change adaptation and mitigation.
28. In this regard it is useful to bear in mind that many promising initiatives are taking place at the local level for wetland conservation and wise use, and that these provide an

opportunity to integrate and put into practice one or more of the actions in the Changwon Declaration. Enhancing the implementation of the Convention at local level is critical to recognizing the important role that local governments, regions, and cities can play in land use planning, including urban development and water and wetland management. Some states, regions or cities have already translated national policies into action. In the absence of national policies, some local governments and cities have taken the lead in developing local policies and plans that may provide models for future efforts at the national level. However, in many cases, these local policies lack provisions to support wetland conservation and wise use, and this is where the Ramsar community has a role to play.

29. It is important to take into account the fact that many wetlands, including Ramsar Sites, are under the direct or indirect influence of local governments and cities, and in fact, all wetlands are directly influenced by local stakeholders. Contracting Parties and Ramsar partners would do well to work with these stakeholders as well as with international organizations that are committed to supporting local actions. Global efforts that support integrated approaches to environmental protection and sustainability at the local level include the UN-HABITAT and ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) - Local Governments for Sustainability. ICLEI is an association of over 1,220 local government members who are committed to sustainable development. Their members represent 70 countries and more than 569,885,000 people.
30. The analysis of the responses in the COP11 National Reports revealed that, while only 13 Parties have used the Changwon Declaration to influence national processes, between 28% and 70% of the Parties are implementing actions which relate to the themes of the Declaration, e.g. water, climate change, poverty alleviation, and engagement with other sectors. This accords with comments made by some participants of the CDN meetings who noted that specific actions identified in the Declaration are already being implemented through their existing programmes, plans and policies.
31. Having said that, it is evident that much more needs to be done to mobilise the target audiences to take concrete actions for wetland conservation and wise use, especially at the national, local and river basin levels. The primary responsibility for this lies with Ramsar's National Focal Points – the Administrative Authorities and the STRP and CEPA Focal Points.
32. At the Ramsar Secretariat level, there is a proposal to work on a vision following the 40th Anniversary of the Convention that seeks to ensure that the vital services provided to human societies by wetlands through water are recognized, maintained, restored and sustainably used by global, national, and local governments, communities, industry, business, and other sectors. This vision is expected to shape the drafting of the future strategic plans by the Conferences of the Parties.
33. The Secretariat is also developing a 'Strategic Framework for Ramsar Partnerships' to help diversify the funding sources available to Parties to assist in their efforts to better integrate wetland considerations into the sustainable development agenda.
34. The following are some actions proposed by participants of the CDN meetings to advance implementation of the principles of the Changwon Declaration:

- A) Ensure the engagement of all relevant stakeholder when developing and implementing wetland conservation and wise use programmes and activities at the national, river basin and/or local level. Such programmes and activities should define the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and secure the commitment of all stakeholders to implementation.
- B) Secure commitment to implement the actions in the Declaration at the highest political level within the country.
- C) Support local initiatives that reflect the spirit of the Declaration, recognize and reward innovative approaches and provide incentives to encourage wider application. Establish an annual award to highlight examples of the successful implementation of the Declaration.
- D) Make information and case studies on the implementation of the Declaration available to the Contracting Parties, e.g., through an Internet portal.
- E) Use significant opportunities, including through the Ramsar Regional Initiatives and through the work of the Ramsar IOPs and other partners, to involve a wide range of stakeholders and expand the Ramsar community.

## Annex 1. The ‘Changwon Declaration on human wellbeing and wetlands’ (COP10 Resolution X.3)

### ***WHY SHOULD YOU READ AND USE THIS DECLARATION?***

Wetlands provide food, store carbon, regulate the water flows, store energy, and are crucial for biodiversity. Their benefits to people are essential for the future security of humankind. Conservation and the wise and use of wetlands are vital for people, especially the poor.

Human well-being depends on many benefits provided to people by ecosystems, some of which come from healthy wetlands. Policymaking, planning, decision-making and management action by a wide range of sectors, at all levels from international to local, can benefit from the global consensus input that the Ramsar Convention provides. This includes the identification of the relevance of wetlands, the importance of their conservation and wise use, and ensuring security of the benefits that wetlands provide in terms of water, carbon storage, food, energy, biodiversity and livelihoods. It also includes technical know-how, guidance, models and support networks to help in putting this knowledge to practical use.

The Changwon Declaration presents an overview of priority action steps that together show “how to” deliver some of the world’s most critical environmental sustainability goals.

The Changwon Declaration is a statement and call to action from the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which was held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008

The Changwon Declaration is relevant to all of us, everywhere, who are concerned with the future of our environment.

If you are a planner, policymaker, decision-maker, elected representative or manager in any environmental, land or resource-use sector, or working in the fields of education and communication, human health, economics or livelihoods, then this Declaration is directed to you. Your actions influence the future of wetlands.

### **Where does this Declaration come from?**

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the global intergovernmental agreement concerned with the conservation and wise use of all the world’s wetlands. It was established in the city of Ramsar in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 2 February 1971.

The mission of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)<sup>1</sup> is:

**“the conservation and wise use<sup>2</sup> of all wetlands<sup>3</sup> through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.**

As the Ramsar Convention approaches four decades of existence, it continues to grow and to focus its agenda on the critical priorities for the environment at global, national and local levels. The Conference of the Convention’s Contracting Parties held its 10<sup>th</sup> meeting in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008, on the theme of “Healthy wetlands,

healthy people”<sup>4</sup>, focusing on the link between human well-being and the functions of wetlands and the identification of positive actions in this regard.

## **Who should use this Declaration?**

The Conference addresses this Declaration to all stakeholders in environmental governance and management, particularly those in positions of leadership, both in relevant fora at global level, including heads of government, and equally in “hands-on” delivery at local and river basin levels.

## **Why is it not “just another Declaration”?**

Declarations have been issued from many international environmental conferences. The Changwon Declaration aims not to cover “standard” ground, but to add value by:

- being directed primarily to audiences beyond the Ramsar Convention itself, and to opportunities for action;
- offering positive, practical action steps; and
- defining the ways in which the Declaration’s impact will be assured.

## **What is in this Declaration?**

The Declaration highlights positive actions for ensuring human well-being and security outcomes in the future under five priority thematic headings below, followed by two key areas of cross-cutting delivery mechanisms.

## **What does this mean in practice?**

### ***Water and wetlands***

The degradation and loss of wetlands is more rapid than that of other ecosystems, and this trend is accelerating, due to major changes in land use, water diversions, and infrastructure development. Access to freshwater is declining for 1-2 billion people worldwide, and this in turn negatively affects food production, human health, and economic development, and it can increase societal conflict.

**There is an urgent need to improve water governance.** Instead of being demand-driven, which promotes over-allocation of water, water governance should treat wetlands as our “*natural water infrastructure*”, integral to water resource management at the scale of river basins.

**Continuing with “business as usual” is not an option.**

**Our increasing demand for, and over-use of, water jeopardizes human well-being and the environment.** Access to safe water, human health, food production, economic development and geopolitical stability are made less secure by the degradation of wetlands driven by the rapidly widening gap between water demand and supply.

**There is often not enough water to meet our direct human needs and to maintain the wetlands we need.** Even with current attempts to maintain water flows for ecosystems, the capacity of wetlands to continue to deliver benefits to people and

biodiversity, including clean and reliable water supplies, is declining. Actions to support water allocation to ecosystems, such as environmental flows, placing upper limits on water allocations (water ‘caps’), and new water management legislation, must be strengthened.

To close this “water gap”, we need to:

- **use our available water more efficiently;**
- **stop our wetlands from becoming degraded or lost** – based on clearly recognizing that we all depend on healthy wetlands for our water security, and that wetland services are currently being lost at a faster rate than in any other ecosystem;
- **restore our wetlands that are already degraded** – this offers us an efficient and cost-effective means of increasing ground and surface water storage, improving water quality, sustaining agriculture and fisheries, and protecting biodiversity.
- **wisely manage and protect our wetlands** – by always ensuring that they have enough water for them to continue to be the source of the quantity and quality of the water we need for food production, drinking water and sanitation. Failure to do so makes our water problems worse, **since wetlands are the only source of water to which we have easy access.**

### *Climate change and wetlands*

Many types of wetlands play an important role in sequestering and storing carbon. They are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, while human disturbances of the same wetland systems can cause huge carbon emissions.

**Wetlands are vital parts of the natural infrastructure we need for addressing climate change.** Degradation and loss of wetlands make climate change worse and leave people more vulnerable to climate change impacts such as floods, droughts and famine. Many climate change policy responses for more water storage and transfers, as well as energy generation, if poorly implemented, may deleteriously impact on wetlands.

**Climate change is increasing uncertainty in water management and making it more difficult to close the gap between water demand and supply.** We will increasingly feel the effects of climate change most directly through changes in the distribution and availability of water, increasing pressures on the health of wetlands. Restoring wetlands and maintaining hydrological cycles is of utmost importance in responses for addressing climate change, flood mitigation, water supply, food provision and biodiversity conservation.

Coastal wetlands will play a major part in strategies established to deal with problems in coastal areas created by sea level rise.

**Governments need to include water and wetland management in effective strategies for addressing climate change at national level.** Decision-makers need to recognize the natural infrastructure of wetlands as a major asset in combating and adapting to climate change.

**Water and well-functioning wetlands play a key role in responding to climate change and in regulating natural climatic processes** (through the water cycle, maintenance of biodiversity, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and buffering of impacts).

Conservation and wise use of wetlands help to reduce the negative economic, social and ecological effects that may result.

**Developing opportunities should be seized for collaboration** among international technical bodies involved in climate change (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel), **to share understanding and harmonise analyses**, especially in relation to wetlands/water/climate linkages.

### *People's livelihoods and wetlands*

When policies in different sectors are not harmonised, many major developments and infrastructure schemes aimed at poverty reduction can actually lead to the degradation of wetlands, thus undermining their ability to provide vital services for local communities and ultimately leading to further and deepening poverty.

**Action is needed to maintain the benefits provided by wetlands for economic development and the livelihoods of people, especially the poor.** Investment in maintenance of the services provided by wetlands should be integral to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and related policies and plans.

**Wise use, management and restoration of wetlands should help to build opportunities for improving people's livelihoods**, particularly for wetland-dependent, marginalised and vulnerable people. Wetland degradation affects livelihoods and exacerbates poverty, particularly in marginalised and vulnerable sections of society.

**Wetland/livelihoods linkages need to be better analysed and documented.** Capacity and partnerships should be promoted at multiple levels to support learning, collecting and sharing knowledge about these linkages.

**Sustainable wetland management should be supported by indigenous and traditional knowledge, recognition of cultural identities associated with wetlands, stewardship promoted by economic incentives, and diversification of the support base for livelihoods.**

### *People's health and wetlands*

Wetlands are important for the health benefits they provide, and also as places that people can visit for education, recreation, ecotourism, spiritual and cultural experiences, or simply to enjoy their natural beauty.

**Interrelationships between wetland ecosystems and human health should be a key component of national and international policies, plans and strategies.**

Development sectors, including mining, other extractive industries, infrastructure development, water and sanitation, energy, agriculture, transport and others can have direct or indirect effects on wetlands. These lead to negative impacts on wetland ecosystem services, including those that support human health and well-being. Managers and decision-makers in such development sectors need to be more aware of this and take all possible measures to avoid these negative impacts.

**The health and wetland sectors need to co-manage the links between wetland ecological character<sup>5</sup> and human health.** Wetland and water managers must identify and implement interventions that benefit both wetland ecosystem “health” and human health.

It is already clear that many of the continuing pressures on wetlands that are driving trends in human health are rooted in issues of water, as for example waterborne transmission of diseases and vectors and/or dwindling supplies of water of suitable quality for food production, sanitation, and drinking water.

### ***Land use change, biodiversity and wetlands***

**Better knowledge and understanding of the costs and benefits of changes to wetland ecosystems lead to better decision-making.** Decisions on land use change must integrate adequate knowledge of the range of benefits, and their values, that wetlands provide for people and biodiversity.

**Decision-making should, wherever possible, give priority to safeguarding naturally-functioning wetlands** and the benefits they provide, especially through ensuring the sustainability of ecosystem services, while recognizing that human-made wetland systems can also make a significant contribution to water and food security objectives.

**More actions are required to address the root causes of the loss of biodiversity and to reverse these losses** by reference to agreed recovery targets, including targets to be adopted in the follow-up to the “2010 target”<sup>6</sup> concerning significant reduction in the rate of decline of biodiversity.

**What types of cross-cutting mechanisms are most helpful in delivering all this?**

### ***Planning, decision-making, finance and economics***

**Policy development and decision-making in response to each of the issues addressed in this Declaration very often require tradeoffs across policy objectives from multiple sectors.** Sound decision-making depends upon wise balancing of legitimate objectives that are interconnected, even if full and detailed information is not available.

Good use of rapid and practical decision-support tools (such as rapid assessment, conflict resolution, mediation, decision-trees, and cost-benefit analysis) can often be of critical assistance in identifying issues and policy options.

**Full recognition should be given to the significance of wetlands in spatial planning,** especially Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites<sup>7</sup>), so that the values they represent can properly inform land-use and investment priority-setting and the adoption of necessary safeguards.

**Cost-benefit analyses should be sufficiently comprehensive** to best reflect the economic value of wetlands, as well as the reality that investing in the maintenance of wetland ecological

character is usually a much more cost-effective strategy than later remediation for the loss of wetland services.

**Adequate and sustainable financing for wetland conservation and wise use is essential**, and this can be helped by the use of innovative financial instruments and partnerships between those sectors and stakeholders outside the Ramsar Convention who might not have worked together on wetland issues in the past. Especially when resources are limited, activities relevant to wetland conservation and wise use should seek to maximise the efficiency of use of currently available resources.

### *Sharing knowledge and experience*

**Basic information on the global extent and characterisation of wetlands urgently needs to be enhanced.** There are increasing opportunities to make good use of evolving earth observation techniques and other information technologies.

**Organizations with shared interests in data and information and knowledge (including indigenous and traditional knowledge) relevant to the issues covered in this Declaration should intensify efforts to seek common, harmonised and accessible approaches**, so that knowledge and experience (for example, concerning good practices) can be shared more effectively, including through appropriate information technology applications.

### *Your call to action*

Each and every one of us has a stake in the outcomes that are supported by this Declaration.

Many groups around the world are already working towards the wise use of wetlands in just the way this Declaration calls for. There are valuable experiences and knowledge to be shared that can help us all to make real, tangible progress. Reach out, get connected, get wet!

### *Ensuring impact*

Measures of the success of this Declaration will include:

- its existence becoming widely known, reported, translated and remembered;
- its messages being taken up in planning and decision-making in local and river basin level governance/management processes;
- its relevant elements being incorporated into national-level plans, decisions and action programmes;
- its elements being incorporated into international policy statements, decisions and action programmes, including through briefings for government delegations to relevant international meetings.

### *Notes:*

- 1 The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is the lead intergovernmental authority on wetlands and strives to ensure that the contributions wetlands make to all aspects of human well-being are recognized and strengthened in all sectors and at all levels of society.

- 2 “**Wise use**” of wetlands has been defined under the Convention as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. (The phrase “in the context of sustainable development” is intended to recognize that whilst some wetland development is inevitable and that many developments bring important benefits to society, developments can be facilitated in sustainable ways by approaches elaborated under the Convention, and it is not appropriate to imply that ‘development’ is an objective for every wetland.)
- 3 “**Wetlands**” encompass a broader range of ecosystems than is often realised. Article 1.1 of the Ramsar Convention defines them as “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.
- 4 In recent years, Ramsar **Conferences of the Contracting Parties (COPs) have been given themed titles** to reflect priority issues of the moment in the Convention’s evolution. Previous themes have emphasised different aspects of the links between wetlands and people, and the theme for COP10, “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”, positions the Convention in relation to an emerging understanding about the critical links between wetlands and human health and sets the context for the adoption of new decisions in this area.
- 5 The “**ecological character**” of wetlands is a key concept of the Ramsar Convention, defined as “the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time”. (Within this context, ecosystem benefits are defined in accordance with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment definition of ecosystem services as “the benefits that people receive from ecosystems”).
- 6 The “**2010 Biodiversity target**”, adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and by Heads of State at the 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), is “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.”
- 7 “**Ramsar sites**” (Wetlands of International Importance) are recognized and designated by the governments of the world that are Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention. They form the largest global network of “protected areas”, currently (as of November 2008) covering over 168 million hectares in over 1,822 sites.

## Annex 2: Global summary analyses of the implementation of the Changwon Declaration by Contracting Parties

### 2a. Global summary of the responses received in the COP11 National Reports to specific questions about the Changwon Declaration

Question	Number of Contracting Parties (% of total number of National Reports)				
	Yes	No	In progress	Planned	No response (152 a-d)/Not applicable (154)
152a: Have you brought the “Changwon Declaration” (Resolution X.3) to the attention of your head of state?	27 (25%)	85 (67%)	-	13 (10%)	2 (2%)
152b: Have you brought the “Changwon Declaration” (Resolution X.3) to the attention of your parliament?	25 (20%)	82 (65%)	-	13 (10%)	7 (6%)
152c: Have you brought the “Changwon Declaration” (Resolution X.3) to the attention of your private sector?	35 (28%)	62 (49%)	-	23 (18%)	7 (6%)
152d: Have you brought the “Changwon Declaration” (Resolution X.3) to the attention of your civil society?	47 (37%)	51 (40%)	-	23 (18%)	6 (5%)
153: Has the “Changwon Declaration” been used to inform the positions of your national delegations to other external processes (such as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UN agencies, multilateral environmental agreements, and the World Water Forum)?	13 (10%)	72 (57%)	34 (27%)	8 (6%)	-
154: Have you translated and disseminated the “Changwon Declaration” into local languages relevant for your country?	16 (13%)	78 (61%)	5 (4%)	14 (11%)	14 (11%)

### 2b. Global summary of the responses received in the COP11 National Reports which relate to the themes of the Changwon Declaration

	Yes	No	Partly/In progress	Planned	Not applicable
1.3.2 Does the National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) incorporate any 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets and actions?	<b>48%</b>	22%		14%	13%
1.4.2 Have wetland programmes and/or	<b>39%</b>	16%	24%	6%	14%

projects that contribute to poverty alleviation objectives and/or food and water security plans been implemented?					
1.4.4 Have socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands?	<b>57%</b>	11%	22%	9%	
1.7.1 Has the Convention's water-related guidance (see Resolution IX.1. Annex C) been helpful in informing decision-making related to <b>water resource planning</b> and management?	<b>40%</b>	17%	29%	12%	
1.7.5 Has your country established policies or guidelines for enhancing the role of wetlands in mitigation and/or adaptation to <b>climate change</b> ?	<b>28%</b>	<b>31%</b>	21%	17%	1%
1.7.6 Has your country formulated plans or projects to sustain and enhance the role of wetlands and water in supporting and maintaining viable <b>farming systems</b> ?	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	29%	8%	
1.10.1 Is the <b>private sector</b> encouraged to apply the Ramsar wise use principle and guidance (Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands) in its activities and investments concerning wetlands?	<b>39%</b>	22%	28%	9%	
2.4.6 How many sites have a cross-sectoral management committee?	391/2000 <b>(20%)</b>				
3.1.1 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)?	<b>66%</b>	13%	13%	8%	
3.1.3 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of UN and other global and regional bodies and agencies (e.g. UNEP, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNECE, ITTO, etc)?	<b>43%</b>	23%	23%	10%	
4.1.3 Does the Contracting Party:	<b>70%</b>	3%	20%	6%	
a) promote public participation in decision-making with respect to wetland planning and management					
b) specifically involve local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management?	<b>56%</b>	9%	22%	11%	
4.1.6 Do you have an operational National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee (or equivalent body)?	<b>54%</b>	31%		14%	
4.1.7 Are other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and					
a) Ramsar Sites managers?	<b>56%</b>	22%	18%	2%	
b) other MEA national focal points?	<b>46%</b>	21%	25%	4%	

c) relevant ministries, departments and agencies?	54%	13%	27%	3%	
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### **Annex 3: List of documentation considered for this information paper**

National Reports on the Implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, submitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Romania, June 2012.

Bishnu B. Bhandari, Seung Oh Suh, and Sung-Hoon Woo (in prep). The Changwon Declaration in Action: For the wise use of wetlands. Changwon: RRC-East Asia.

Presentations and papers from the Changwon Declaration Network Meetings, 2009-2011.  
Available on CD from the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia.