



11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands: home and destination”

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Agenda item XV

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Draft Resolution XI.14

Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Prepared by the Scientific & Technical Review Panel, submitted by the Standing Committee

Explanatory note. Text in square brackets [] concerns substantive changes proposed by participants in the 43rd meeting of the Standing Committee, but on which at that meeting and in subsequent consultations the Standing Committee has not reached consensus. Curly brackets { } indicate that further information, such as titles of Resolutions adopted by COP11, has still to be supplied.

1. RECALLING that Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands* (2008), which updated and superseded Resolution VIII.3 on *Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation and mitigation* (2002), recognized the potential implications of climate change for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and, among other things, called upon Contracting Parties to manage their wetlands in such a way as to increase their resilience to climate change and extreme weather events and to ensure that climate change responses would not lead to serious damage to the ecological character of wetlands, and RECOGNIZING the Ramsar Convention's role and mandate to address all issues affecting the maintenance of the ecological character of wetlands;
2. ALSO RECALLING that in its Third and Fourth Assessment Reports, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that wetlands are amongst those natural systems especially vulnerable to climate change because of their limited adaptive capacity and that they may therefore undergo significant and irreversible damage, and AWARE that the IPCC is presently conducting a Fifth Assessment Report to provide in 2013/2014 an update of knowledge on the scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of climate change;
3. AWARE that the IPCC is currently undertaking further work at the request of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA), notably the preparation of the “2013 Supplement to the IPCC 2006 Guidelines on National Greenhouse Gas activities: Wetlands”;

4. RECOGNIZING the significant progress made since Ramsar COP10 (2008) with respect to knowledge and awareness of the importance of the carbon sequestration and storage function of wetlands (including *inter alia* inland peatlands and coastal vegetated wetlands such as mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrass beds), including in the scientific understanding of greenhouse gas fluxes from wetlands and the drivers of greenhouse gas fluxes from land use, land use change, and forestry sources, through ‘wet carbon’ and ‘blue carbon’ assessments made by UNEP, the World Bank, IUCN, the Ramsar Convention (with the Danone Fund for Nature), Wetlands International, and others, but ALSO RECOGNIZING that the continuing degradation and loss of these wetlands releases large amounts of stored carbon and thus exacerbates climate change;
5. RECALLING that the preambular text of the Convention expresses the desire to “stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future”, and NOTING that avoiding such loss and degradation has been reaffirmed in subsequent COP Resolutions as the primary option for delivering wetland conservation and wise use (as outlined in {COP11 DR9} on *An Integrated Framework for avoiding, mitigating and compensating for wetland losses*), and CONCERNED that the importance of wetlands in managing greenhouse gas emissions is not yet fully recognized by international and national climate change response strategies and mechanisms;
6. ALSO RECALLING that the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* ({COP11 DR8, Objective 4.1}) urges the use of Ramsar Sites as baseline and reference areas for monitoring to detect trends in climate change, among other things; RECOGNIZING the role that the designation and effective management of Ramsar Sites can play in carbon sequestration and storage functions and climate regulation; and AWARE that three types of forested wetlands are included in the Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type (types I: Intertidal forested wetlands; Xf: Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands; and Xp: Forested peatlands);
- [7. WELCOMING the continuing progress made by the Ramsar Convention, as outlined in {COP11 DR6} on *Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*, in expanding cooperation with other MEAs and other institutions, so that the expertise and advice available from the Ramsar Convention may be available to support all such other bodies in addressing issues affecting the conservation and wise use of wetlands];
8. RECALLING the establishment by the Danone Group, IUCN, and the Ramsar Convention at COP10 of the “Danone Fund for Nature” (DFN) initiative to develop a programme for restoring wetlands, especially mangroves, for carbon storage and offsets, and NOTING the progress made by this initiative since COP10, including the development of a large-scale methodology for the restoration of mangroves for carbon offsets which was approved by the UNFCCC Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in 2011;
9. RECOGNIZING that wetlands deliver a wide range of ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being, and that some wetland types deliver services that are important for climate change adaptation, including by acting as natural infrastructures to reduce the impacts from severe weather events such as storms, flooding, coastline erosion, and the intrusion of saltwater into freshwater systems;

- [10. AWARE that potential funding mechanisms associated with REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) under the UNFCCC and elsewhere may have the potential to provide developing nations with significant funding for forest restoration activities that contribute to climate change mitigation, sustainable management, and carbon stocks; ALSO AWARE that in 2011 the Society for Ecological Restoration made available a review of the opportunities and challenges for ecological restoration within REDD+; and NOTING that many REDD+ projects under development may involve forested wetlands;]
- [11. RECOGNIZING that to be successful the REDD+ regime should foster explicit linkages between nationally-owned forest governance processes and nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs), and that REDD+ donors and recipients should be encouraged to establish quantifiable, cost-effective and participatory approaches to sustainable management and carbon-stock enhancement that enhance both wetland biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services for both nations and local communities and indigenous people;]
12. ALSO AWARE that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has, at the request of the Contracting Parties in Resolution X.25, continued to address wetlands and climate change issues during the 2009-2012 triennium, including on:
- i) methods for assessing the vulnerability of different wetland types to climate change;
 - ii) opportunities for adaptation to climate change;
 - iii) wetland restoration as a tool for climate responses;
 - iv) the role and importance of different wetland types in the global carbon cycle; and
 - v) recent key messages and recommendations concerning wetlands, water and climate change from relevant intergovernmental and international processes and initiatives; and
13. THANKING the STRP for making much of this work available to the Parties and others through Ramsar Technical Reports and other documents, and AWARE that aspects of this work is still in progress;
14. RECALLING that the Key Messages of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) *Wetlands and Water Synthesis Report* and subsequent scientific reports indicate that the degradation and loss of wetlands is occurring more rapidly than for other ecosystems, that global climate change is likely to exacerbate the loss and degradation of many wetlands, that the adverse effects of global climate change will lead to a reduction in the services provided by wetlands, and that the projected continued loss and degradation of wetlands will reduce the capacity of wetlands to mitigate impacts;
15. RECOGNIZING that the conservation and wise use of wetlands helps organisms to adapt to climate change by providing connectivity, corridors and flyways along which they can move, and AWARE of efforts by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to address these issues, including the adoption at its 10th Conference of the Parties (November 2011) of Resolution 10.19 on “Migratory species conservation in the light of climate change”, {and the adoption by the 5th Meeting of Parties (MOP5) of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) in May 2012 of Resolution 5.xx on migratory waterbirds and climate change};

16. NOTING the preparation by the Convention on Biological Diversity's Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity in 2009 of a report containing advice on the incorporation of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, and of the CBD Technical Series No. 59 report on "REDD-plus and Biodiversity" (2011), and ALSO NOTING that Decision X/33 of the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the CBD on biodiversity and climate change requested advice to be prepared concerning the application of relevant REDD+ safeguards for biodiversity for approval by CBD COP11 in October 2012, [and also called for:
- i) undertaking actions to reduce the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and biodiversity-based livelihoods;
 - ii) taking ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation, including the protection of peatlands, sustainable wetland management, restoration of degraded wetlands and natural grasslands, and conservation of mangroves, salt marshes and seagrass beds;
 - iii) enhancing the conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of marine and coastal habitats that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change or which contribute to climate change mitigation, such as mangroves, peatlands, tidal salt marshes, kelp forests, and seagrass beds; and
 - iv) conserving and restoring organic carbon in soil and biomass, including in peatlands and other wetlands,

as a contribution to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Convention on Biological Diversity;]

17. FURTHER NOTING Target 15 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 adopted by the CBD ["By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification"]; and RECOGNIZING that implementation of Strategies 1.4, 1.5 and 1.8 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 will contribute towards the achievement of that target, as is indicated in {COP11 DR3} on adjustments to the Ramsar Strategic Plan;
18. REAFFIRMING that integrative policies and planning measures for the wise use of wetlands need to be encouraged in order to address the influence of global climate change on the interdependencies between wetlands, water management, agriculture, energy production, poverty reduction, and human health, and WELCOMING Ramsar Technical Report No. 6 on wetlands and human health interactions, {as well as {COP11 DR12} which further elaborates upon the many benefits that people obtain from healthy wetlands and the need to incorporate climate change adaptation approaches into efforts to alleviate poverty}; and
19. RECALLING that Objective 4.1 of the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List* [is "to use Ramsar Sites as baseline and reference areas for national, supranational/regional, and international environmental monitoring to detect trends in the loss of biological diversity, climate change, and the processes of desertification"], but CONCERNED that mechanisms may not be in place for determining specified limits of

change in ecological character or adequate baselines or reference conditions against which change can be assessed, or for reporting under Article 3.2 of the Convention (see also COP11 DOC.xx concerning limits of acceptable change in the Ramsar context);

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

20. AFFIRMS that this Resolution builds upon Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, which requested the Ramsar Secretariat, the STRP, and the Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands (CCGAP) to work together with relevant international conventions and agencies (including the CBD, CMS, UNCCD, UNEP, UNDP, FAO and the World Bank, and especially UNFCCC and IPCC, acknowledging the distinct mandates and independent legal status of each convention and the need to avoid duplication and promote cost savings [and recognizing that the multilateral forum for discussions on climate change is the UNFCCC]) to investigate the potential contribution of wetland ecosystems to climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially for reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience to climate change, and to prepare advice for Contracting Parties on these matters;
21. URGES Contracting Parties to maintain the ecological character of wetlands as far as possible in the face of climate-driven ecological changes and, where necessary, to promote the restoration of degraded wetlands in order to enhance their resilience, their ability to contribute to nature-based climate adaptation, and their capacity to sequester and store carbon as important responses to climate change;
- [22. URGES Contracting Parties to take all necessary steps to ensure that national approaches for REDD+ contain steps to provide appropriate quantifiable, cost-effective, and participatory approaches for sustainable management and carbon-stock enhancement which enhance both wetland biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services for both nations and local communities and indigenous people, and REQUESTS the STRP, working with interested Contracting Parties and international organizations, to prepare advice to assist in the development of such approaches and identify the circumstances under which comparative benefits may or may not accrue to local communities and indigenous people;]
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and their representatives to reach out to their counterparts in the UNFCCC and its Ad-Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) in order to initiate and foster greater information exchange on the actual and potential roles of wetland conservation, management, and restoration activities [in implementing national REDD+ strategies;]
- [24. ALSO ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, the private sector, and other stakeholders, respecting national legislation, to explore opportunities for incentive measures and funding mechanisms under climate change adaptation and mitigation activities to support the sustainable use and restoration of wetlands as well as to support local livelihoods and contribute to poverty eradication, including exploration of incorporating the concept of [ecosystem valuation][eco-compensation mechanisms], consistent with the Convention, internationally agreed development goals, and other relevant obligations;]
25. URGES Contracting Parties to develop and implement policies that promote opportunities to take advantage of the regulatory services already provided by wetlands to

the global climate system, while at the same time contributing to improving human livelihoods, alleviating poverty, and meeting biodiversity goals, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets established by CBD COP10 Decision X/2, and to communicate progress, successes and best practices to the Secretariat through their national reporting to the Conference of the Parties;

26. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and other organizations to undertake studies of the role of both forested and non-forested wetlands in relation to i) climate change mitigation, including the role of wetlands in carbon storage and sequestration, emissions from degrading wetlands, and avoidance of emissions by sources and removals by sinks, and ii) adaptation to climate change, including for flood mitigation, water supply and storage, and reducing the impacts of sea level rise; INVITES Contracting Parties and other organizations to make their findings available to the Ramsar Secretariat, the UNFCCC, and other relevant bodies through existing reporting processes; and REQUESTS the STRP to collate and assess such case studies and other information and make this available to Contracting Parties;
27. URGES Contracting Parties and others to make use of the existing Ramsar guidance on the wise use of wetlands (available in the Handbooks for the Wise Use of Wetlands), much of which is applicable to many of the threats and impacts on wetlands arising from climate change, in developing their policies and adaptations to climate change impacts on wetlands;
28. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to review or develop policies for sectors impacting the carbon stocks of wetlands, {as noted in COP11 DR10 on wetlands and energy issues};
- [29. URGES Contracting Parties and other governments, and INVITES the secretariats and scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of environment conventions, to improve collaboration on biodiversity and climate change at the international level through capacity building, resource mobilisation, and collaborative work programmes, including under such established mechanisms as the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio conventions and the Biodiversity Liaison Group;]
30. REQUESTS the STRP to continue to prepare advice on the implications of climate change for maintaining the ecological character of wetlands, including *inter alia* the reporting of change in ecological character and determining specified limits of change, the determination of appropriate reference conditions for assessing change in ecological character, and strategies for dealing with the emergence of novel or hybrid ecosystems as a consequence of climate change;
31. ALSO REQUESTS the STRP, in conjunction with the Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Initiatives and Regional Centres, to collaborate with relevant international organizations and conventions, within their respective mandates, to further investigate the potential contribution of wetland ecosystems to climate change mitigation and adaptation [through
 - i) preparing advice on assessing resilience and social vulnerability to climate change, to complement the existing advice on assessing the biophysical vulnerability of a wetland to climate change (Ramsar Technical Report No. 5/CBD Technical Series No. 57);

- ii) preparing advice on ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change for coastal and inland wetlands, working with *inter alia* the World Bank, UNEP, the International Organization Partners, and other NGOs including The Nature Conservancy (TNC); and
- iii) reviewing any advice adopted by CBD COP11 concerning the application of relevant REDD+ safeguards for biodiversity, and advising on its relevance for application in the context of wetlands under the Ramsar Convention;

without pre-empting any future decisions of the UNFCCC;]

- 32. URGES the STRP National Focal Points to engage in and contribute to this work in order to provide national and regional perspectives and contribute expertise from their in-country networks of wetland scientists and other experts;
- 33. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to share this Resolution [with its counterparts in the Biodiversity Liaison Group and the Joint Liaison Group] [with the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and any regional preparatory meetings to this COP] in order to ensure input from the Ramsar Convention to deliberations concerning ecosystem restoration and the sustainable use of biodiversity in a landscape perspective; and
- 34. INVITES Ramsar Administrative Authorities to bring this Resolution to the attention of the national focal points of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to promote collaborative work among the national focal points of MEAs in support of its implementation.