



11th 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

Opening address by the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Mr. Anada Tiega at Ramsar 11, Bucharest, Romania, 6 July 2012

Your Excellency Mr. President of the Republic of Romania,
Honorable Ministers, Members of Parliament,
Distinguished national and international guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Buna seara chi boune vénite la COP ounsprazétché
Good evening and welcome to COP11

It is a great honor and a privilege for me to address such a distinguished audience today at the Ramsar COP11. The theme of COP11 – “Wetlands, Tourism and Recreation” – is timely, current and relevant, especially in the context of current economic concerns and the outcomes of Rio+20.

The conclusions of Rio+20 recognize that well-designed and managed tourism can make a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development; its linkages to other sectors can create decent jobs and generate trade opportunities. Tourism is one of the many services that wetlands deliver. Ensuring well-managed tourism practices in and around wetlands and educating tourists on the value of wetlands contributes to their health and the long-term benefits that wetlands provide to people, wildlife, economics, and biodiversity.

It is also encouraging to note the relevance of the Ramsar Convention’s COP11 debate to the key challenges addressed by Rio+20 Summit. I am happy to notice that both Rio+20 and Ramsar COP11 are addressing sustainable development challenges, including sustainable tourism, energy, sustainable cities, health and population, poverty eradication, climate change, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, water and sanitation, oceans and seas.

I take this opportunity to renew my sincere gratitude and the appreciation of the Ramsar Secretariat on behalf of the Contracting Parties to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Romania, and to the government and the people of the Republic of Romania for hosting Ramsar COP11 and for their hospitality, the great organization of the Conference, and the financial support provided to prepare and hold this important meeting.

Ramsar COP11 is my last COP in my capacity as your Secretary General. I cannot go over all achievements here, but I am happy to report that the work of the Convention has proven to be

of great relevance to sustainable development. We have made a lot of progress in bringing the Ramsar Convention and our Ramsar principles into the centre of the global environmental discourse, and of course at the national and local levels, many great things have been achieved by our Ramsar family. I am pleased that I will leave to my successor, at his or her first COP at COP12, a Convention that is continuing its growth and its momentum. But at the same time, I have to warn my successor that, especially in a time of economic uncertainty, there are challenges ahead that are also growing. The fact is that, after 40 years, the Ramsar Convention still has institutional weaknesses in the ways in which it is financed and supported by the Parties, weaknesses that make it even more vulnerable to economic stresses than are other members of the global environmental community, and I will urge my successor to continue to work with the Parties to resolve those problems.

But as I've said, we have achieved considerable and encouraging success together because over the past five years I have been blessed to have the help and support of many brilliant and dedicated people to whom I want to express my sincere gratitude.

- To our wonderful Ramsar staff; Ramsar is privileged to have dedicated and skilled people; without them, even this COP could not have been organized.
- To all Ramsar Contracting Parties, and especially to Switzerland, our Host Country, for continued support and encouragement.
- To the Ramsar Standing Committee members for their guidance, enthusiasm and support, especially the Chairman, Mr. Yoo and the Chairperson of the Sub Group on Finance, Tiina.
- To STRP members, especially the Chairperson, Heather, for their scientific and technical guidance and assistance.
- To the Ramsar IOPs, for their dedicated support and continuing efforts to promote wetland conservation and wise use on the ground.
- To IUCN for administering our Secretariat facilities.
- The UN partners, especially UNEP, the UN World Tourism Organization, UNESCO, UN-HABITAT, FAO, and the UN Conventions for their fruitful collaboration.
- To the Danone Group for promoting the involvement of the business sector in our mission and providing financial support for it.
- To Star Alliance for its generous support for many of the delegates to our meetings.
- To the observer countries and international organizations that have been building partnerships that care for wetlands and their values.
- To the NGOs and representatives of the business sector attending COP11 and exploring ways to implement COP Resolutions with local communities.
- To all people who share our vision and passion for wetlands and to all those many individuals who have in their own special ways encouraged me, and taken my thoughts and ideas to build a foundation on which our collective work is based.

Working with all of you over the past five years has been a great privilege and a fantastic opportunity to address many challenges, including political, social, environmental and financial issues.

To remove the bottlenecks facing wetland conservation and wise use, the Ramsar Secretariat believes that wetland conservation and wise use require a sound combination of diverse strategic and operational actions, including efficient wetland inventories, policies, legislative frameworks, inclusive programmes and specific actions by a wide range of stakeholders.

Here, I would like to encourage the commitment of all Contracting Parties to continue promoting wetlands as water providers for satisfying the vital needs of human societies. The Secretariat welcomes any opportunity to strengthen the perception of wetland values by all key players in each Contracting Party and to encourage the participation of:

- The Ramsar Administrative Authorities
- The government
- The Parliament
- Wetland user groups
- NGOs
- Private sector

The potential for wetland conservation and wise use is huge and recent developments tell us to enhance our achievements through:

- team work at local and national level, including cities;
- more experience with the economics of wetlands, water and the ecosystems services they provide;
- forward-thinking and innovative work on the role of wetlands in addressing biodiversity conservation, water management, food security, energy and climate change; and
- integration of wetlands management into overall landscape and seascape management so as to incorporate wetlands into local, national and international priorities

Consequently, our key approach is to build and strengthen partnerships

- at local, national levels
- at regional level, through river/lake basin organizations and regional economic organizations
- at international level with
 - the Ramsar IOPs
 - the UN system
 - donors, including Contracting Parties, the World Bank and GEF
 - other NGOs, and
 - the business sector

I promise, on behalf of the Ramsar Secretariat, our continued commitment to assist our Contracting Parties and to strengthen our partnership with all of you.

I welcome you all to this 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and I'm sure you join me in looking forward to some stimulating and fruitful debates.

Let me finish by expressing our deep thanks and appreciation to all Contracting Parties that contribute to the Ramsar core budget and all those who have been contributing financially on a voluntary basis over the 2009-2012 period:

Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mauritius, the Netherlands, France and its overseas territory, New Caledonia, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, the UK, and the USA.

We thank Contracting Parties as hosts of major meetings and 40th anniversary celebrations, in the past two years, including COP, Romania, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Mexico, Palau, and Slovakia.

And again, we thank as well the following organizations: UNEP, IUCN, CBD, The Francophonie Organization and its IEPF, MAVIA, the Danone Group, and Star Alliance.

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Thank you.

Anada Tiéga