



9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods”

Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005

Resolution IX.9

The role of the Ramsar Convention in the prevention and mitigation of impacts associated with natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities

1. RECALLING that at COP8 the Contracting Parties adopted Resolution VIII.35 on *The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems*, but RECOGNIZING that the spectrum of natural disasters is much wider than was covered in that document, as witnessed by continuing extreme climatic and other events and especially the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004;
2. AWARE that the joint United Nations Environment Programme / UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit (UNEP/OCHA) is the UN coordinating body mandated to mobilize international assistance in case of environmental emergencies and natural disasters with environmental impacts;
3. RECALLING that the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, 2005) has adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action, the scope of which encompasses disasters caused by hazards of natural origin and related environmental and technological hazards and risks, which thus reflects a holistic and multi-hazard approach to disaster risk management and the relationships between the various hazards which can have a significant impact on social, economic, cultural and environmental systems;
4. RECOGNIZING the important role that the Ramsar Convention can play as one of the international actors potentially involved in disaster avoidance and mitigation and in post-disaster restoration;
5. ALSO RECOGNIZING that floods are natural phenomena that play an essential role in ensuring ecosystem functioning and the provision of their benefits/services to society;
6. ACKNOWLEDGING that conservation of natural wetland ecosystems such as mangroves, as well as wise use of such wetlands in the coastal zone, contributes to natural flood and tidal surge mitigation, and that protection and rehabilitation of peatlands and other catchment or floodplain wetlands contribute to natural flood prevention;
7. AWARE that a number of regions in the world have been seriously affected by severe fires in wetlands, especially peatlands, and that such fires and associated smoke-haze affect the lives of millions of people and cause major environmental, social, and economic

impacts; and ALSO AWARE that negative impacts associated with natural phenomena may be exacerbated by different human activities such as drainage;

8. RECALLING that through Resolution VIII.1 Contracting Parties have emphasized the critical importance of maintaining water allocations to ensure that wetlands can continue to deliver their many benefits/services, including, *inter alia*, water retention and purification, groundwater recharge, and the provision of water, food and fiber for people and for the maintenance of global biological diversity, and that this need is particularly high in a post-disaster phase;
9. RECOGNIZING the significance of synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and agencies with a particular focus on the impacts of natural disasters, especially the joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and including the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the World Health Organization (WHO), The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Global Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (UNEP), the Program for the Mitigation of Natural Disasters (World Bank), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, and ALSO RECOGNIZING the role that can be played in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster by governmental, non-governmental (NGOs), and civil organizations, especially the Ramsar Tsunami Group comprising the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs) together with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Global Environment Centre (GEC); and
10. BEARING IN MIND the importance of Decision 17 of the Forum of Environment Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Caracas, Venezuela, from 31 October to 4 November 2005, and RECOGNIZING the importance of the impacts on wetlands of recurring extreme climatic events in the countries of the Wider Caribbean Area and other regions affected by such phenomena, as well as the need for financial resources to assist in prevention, early warning, rehabilitation, monitoring and other activities which may help to ensure that these wetlands continue to fulfill ecological functions;

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11. UNDERLINES the devastating impacts of natural disasters on the delivery of ecosystem benefits/services, and thus on the maintenance of the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance and other wetlands in affected countries;
12. URGES Contracting Parties to maintain or restore Ramsar sites, other wetlands, and associated ecosystems to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters in accordance with their natural hydrological regimes, bearing in mind the Convention's guidance to assist with restoration of ecological systems affected by natural disasters, in order to ensure that they can continue to deliver their full range of ecosystem benefits/services for people and for biological diversity, as called for in Resolution VIII.1;

13. SUPPORTS the expansion of measures being undertaken in different regions of the world to protect and rehabilitate peatlands to reduce the risk of fires and to provide water supply in times of drought;
14. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and River Basin Authorities to ensure that wetland ecosystems are managed and restored, as part of contingency planning, in order to mitigate the impacts of natural phenomena such as floods, provide resilience against drought in arid and semi-arid areas, and contribute to wider strategies aimed at mitigating climate change and desertification and thus reduce the incidence or magnitude of natural phenomena induced or enhanced by such change;
15. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat in collaboration with Contracting Parties and other partners to develop and act on decision-support tools for all affected ecological zones, so as to ensure integrated and socially equitable management of wetland ecosystems to prevent, mitigate and adapt to flooding and tidal surges, drought, invasive alien species, and other forms of natural disasters;
16. REQUESTS affected Contracting Parties to monitor and assess the impacts of natural disasters on the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands and on the livelihoods of affected people dependent upon these wetlands and, for designated Ramsar sites, to report this information to the Ramsar Secretariat so that it can be made available to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to assist in its reporting to subsequent COPs on the status and trends in the ecological character of sites in the Ramsar List and other wetlands, as called for in Resolution VIII.8;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to establish multi-hazard analyses that define sensible areas for development and appropriate contingency planning that recognizes pre-disaster measures for impact prevention and minimization involving wise wetland management;
18. CALLS upon Contracting Parties and others to work together urgently to promote and to actively support the recovery of coastal wetlands and associated community livelihoods in countries affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 as well as the reduction of the vulnerabilities of coastal communities and wetlands through
 - assistance with reduction of the impact of natural disasters, ensuring the implementation of ecologically sustainable management and redevelopment approaches and enhanced integrated coastal zone management throughout the region, in order to assist with the mitigation of impacts of any future tsunami and storm damage,
 - establishment or maintenance of coastal greenbelts of mangroves and other appropriate species,
 - mitigation of impacts of future tsunami and storm damage,
 - strengthening of regional initiatives and other existing regional fora to share experience and expertise and support collective efforts in natural disaster prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation of coastal wetland ecosystems; and
 - assistance with monitoring of long-term ecological impacts of disasters on Ramsar sites and other wetlands;

19. REQUESTS the Convention Secretariat and international donors to recognize the need for prioritization in the search for funds, resource mobilization and international cooperation in the context of the agreements to be established with each country in order to contribute with those governments to satisfying the needs derived from the implementation of actions aimed at mitigating, restoring, rehabilitating, and monitoring the impacts of these extreme climatic events on the wetlands of the countries of the Wider Caribbean Area and other regions affected by similar events, with a view to maintaining the ecological benefits/services provided by wetlands;
20. INSTRUCTS the STRP, working with relevant agencies and IOPs, to develop for Contracting Parties a set of restoration guidelines that may be implemented following natural disasters in general, including drawing on existing and new guidance relating to the role of wetlands in ICZM in implementing responses to ecosystem rehabilitation and vulnerability, and updating existing guidelines which emphasize the role of wetland ecosystems in mitigating against the effects of natural disasters, as appropriate;
21. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat, through the Convention's CEPA Programme, to develop materials, resources permitting, that highlight lessons learned from around the globe with regard to appropriate pre-disaster measures for impact prevention and minimization through contingency planning involving wise wetland management. These materials should exemplify successful approaches to disaster impact abatement and serve to raise societal awareness and capacity with regard to the role of wetlands as buffers; and
22. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat, working with relevant international organizations and agencies, especially the joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and including *inter alia* ISDR, WMO and UNEP, as well as, where appropriate, the IOPs, to develop guidance on a set of responses which can be initiated by governments and others immediately following the onset of a natural disaster affecting or likely to affect wetlands, especially sites in the Ramsar List.