

Resolution VIII.3

Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation, and mitigation

1. RECOGNIZING that climate change may substantially affect the ecological character of wetlands and their sustainable use, and AWARE of the potentially important role of wetlands in adapting to and in mitigating climate change;
2. CONCERNED that persistent drought in many regions of the world is already seriously affecting the ecological character of wetlands and that climate change, along with other land use and land management activities, is projected to exacerbate such problems;
3. FURTHER CONCERNED by the recent degradation of peatlands through drainage and fire in many parts of the world and the associated impacts on greenhouse gas emissions as well as the impact on biodiversity and local people of this degradation;
4. RECOGNIZING that heavy precipitation events are projected in many areas as a consequence of climate change and NOTING that many Contracting Parties are concerned that this will seriously adversely affect the ecological character of wetlands and their potential for supplying economic benefits, especially coral reefs and sea grass beds, which are wetland types under-represented in the Ramsar List;
5. ALSO NOTING that in its Third Assessment Report (TAR), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that some wetlands, including reefs, atolls, mangroves, and those in prairies, tropical and boreal forests, and arctic (including permafrost) and alpine ecosystems, are considered to be amongst those natural systems especially vulnerable to climate change because of their limited adaptive capacity, and may undergo significant and irreversible damage;
6. RECOGNIZING the ecological, social and economic vulnerability of small islands developing states to the impact of climate change and in particular of sea level rise;
7. RECALLING that Action 5.1.6 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002 requested the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to prepare for consideration at COP8 a comprehensive review of the potential impacts of climate change on wetlands and the roles that wetlands can potentially play in mitigating the effects of climate change and sea level rise;
8. RECOGNIZING the work of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its subsidiary bodies and their understanding that education, training and public awareness are vital tools in addressing issues of climate change, and NOTING the contribution that the Ramsar Convention's Communication, Education, and Public

Awareness Programme, as elaborated by Resolution VIII.31, can make to addressing issues of climate change and wetlands;

9. WELCOMING efforts by countries to address climate change, including those reflected in the 2001 Marrakesh Declaration, the Marrakesh Accords, and the 2002 Delhi Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainable Development; RECOGNIZING the work of the IPCC and WELCOMING its report on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), which includes forested wetlands; and EXPRESSING DEEP CONCERN about the findings of the IPCC Third Assessment Report;
10. ACKNOWLEDGING the developing cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements and their subsidiary bodies on matters of common interest on climate change; AWARE that the Joint Work Plan 2002-2006 between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention includes joint actions on climate change, wetlands and biodiversity; and WELCOMING the decision by the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC at its eighth session which notes the need for the Joint Liaison Group between the CBD, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the UNFCCC to invite the secretariat of the Ramsar Convention to share information and to participate in the meetings of the Joint Liaison Group, as appropriate;
11. THANKING the STRP for its preparation of the comprehensive COP8 information paper on climate change and wetlands; ALSO THANKING the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist, Australia, the Australian National University scientists involved in the IPCC assessments, and IUCN–The World Conservation Union for their contribution to this work; and HAVING HAD AVAILABLE the “Interim Executive Summary to Ramsar COP8 DOC. 11: Climate Change and Wetlands” (COP8 DOC. 40) distributed at this meeting of the COP;
12. AWARE that the STRP’s report recognizes that there are key gaps in current knowledge and information on the impacts of climate change upon wetlands, and on wetland adaptation, and on the ways in which wetlands can mitigate climate change impacts, notably the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration; and
13. NOTING that other guidance adopted by this meeting of the Conference of the Parties is relevant to addressing issues of climate change and wetlands, notably *Principles and guidelines for incorporating wetland issues into Integrated Coastal Zone Management* (Resolution VIII.4), *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands* (Resolution VIII.17), *Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions* (Resolution VIII.5), and Strategic Plan Operational Objective 3 (Resolution VIII.25);

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

14. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to manage wetlands so as to increase their resilience to climate change and extreme climatic events, and to reduce the risk of flooding and drought in vulnerable countries by, *inter alia*, promoting wetland and watershed protection and restoration;
15. CALLS UPON all relevant countries to take action to minimize the degradation, as well as promote restoration, and improve management practices of those peatlands and other wetland types that are significant carbon stores, or have the ability to sequester carbon and

are considered as mitigation factors, as well as to increase the adaptive capacity of society to respond to the changes in these ecosystems due to climate change;

16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider, and use as appropriate, the information on climate change and wetlands in the background papers COP8 DOC. 11 and COP8 DOC. 40 when integrating climate change considerations into their national policy pertaining to the conservation and wise use of their wetlands;
17. URGES Contracting Parties to make every effort, when implementing UNFCCC and, where appropriate, its Kyoto Protocol, including revegetation and forest management, afforestation and reforestation, that this implementation does not lead to serious damage to the ecological character of their wetlands, using, where appropriate, strategic and other forms of environmental impact assessment and risk assessment, taking account Resolutions VII.10, VII.16 and VIII.9, as well as Article 4.1 of the UNFCCC and Article 2.1 of the Kyoto Protocol, as appropriate;
18. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and other organizations to undertake, where possible, studies of the role of wetlands in carbon storage and sequestration and in mitigating the impacts of sea-level rise and to make their findings available to the Convention;
19. INVITES Contracting Parties to pay special attention to the need for building and strengthening institutional capacity and synergies between related instruments at the national level in order to address the linkages between climate change and wetlands, and to report to COP9 on progress in this matter, including achievements and the identification of difficulties encountered;
20. INVITES the IPCC and UNFCCC to focus some of their future work on issues related to region-specific wetland data, and to improve knowledge on the vulnerability of wetlands to climate change and the capacity to project impacts on wetlands; and REQUESTS the STRP to become involved in this work, drawing upon the work of the IPCC and other relevant bodies as appropriate and reporting on the status of international discussions at COP9;
21. WELCOMES the recognition by the Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of the need to improve and apply more widely techniques and methodologies for assessing the potential adverse effects of climate change on wetlands, and, as appropriate, to assist countries that are particularly vulnerable to those effects;
22. NOTES that in the WSSD Plan of Implementation, States that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol strongly urge States that have not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so in a timely manner; and
23. REQUESTS the Secretary General to request promptly that the IPCC prepare a Technical Paper on the relationship between wetlands and climate change, in time for consideration at the second STRP meeting prior to COP9; and FURTHER REQUESTS that the STRP develop, on the basis of the IPCC Technical Paper, a synthesis of key issues on wetlands and climate change as an information paper, which should undergo a review process as determined by the STRP, for consideration by Contracting Parties at COP9. If the IPCC is

unable to undertake preparation of a Technical Paper on the relationship between wetlands and climate change, the Conference of the Parties REQUESTS the STRP to prepare an information paper, based on the IPCC Third Assessment Report and other authoritative, updated information, that synthesizes key issues on wetlands and climate change, which should undergo a rigorous peer review process as directed by the Standing Committee upon the advice of the STRP, and which should be made available for consideration by the Parties at COP9.