

Agenda item 8.14

A possible draft Resolution on wetlands and urbanization

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to consider the suggested draft Resolution and advise on how best to bring it forward for COP10 consideration.

Note by the Secretariat

1. Following discussion during the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee of the importance of urban wetlands and the lack of attention they have received from the Convention to date, it was agreed (though no formal SC decision was made) to discuss further the potential contents of such a draft Resolution on urban wetlands, with input from Wetlands International.
2. Owing to the limitations of time and capacity since SC36, the Secretariat regrets that it has not been possible to progress this matter as planned. The Secretariat has prepared the attached outline of a possible draft Resolution, however, as a basis for the Standing Committee's consideration about whether and how to further develop a draft Resolution for COP10 consideration, and this matter will be discussed further with Wetlands International and others prior to SC37.

Draft Resolution X.00

Wetlands and urbanization

1. RECALLING the commitments by Contracting Parties to achieving the wise use, as far as possible, of all wetlands in their territory and to maintain the ecological character of designated Ramsar sites;
2. AWARE that the world is becoming increasingly urbanized and that over 50% of the global population now lives in urban environments;
3. RECOGNIZING that wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments can deliver many important ecosystem services to people, such as wastewater treatment, and ALSO RECOGNIZING that urban green and blue space is increasingly known to contribute to people's physical and mental health and well-being;
4. FURTHER RECOGNIZING the important role that urban and peri-urban wetlands can play in communication, education, participation and awareness for urban communities about wetlands, as well as the value of establishing education and visitor centres in such places;

5. CONCERNED that many wetlands in urban environments are or are becoming degraded through encroachment of surrounding populations, pollution, and poorly managed waste and that this has diminished both the ecosystem services they can provide and the recognition of their value and importance by both decision-makers and urban communities;
6. ALSO CONCERNED that the spread of urbanization is leading to wetlands, including Ramsar sites, which were formerly in rural areas becoming increasingly urbanized with consequent increased risk of their degradation;
7. AWARE that much of the increasingly urbanization is occurring in coastal and downstream parts of river catchments and that the demand for water for human use in these areas is increasing, but CONCERNED that many river basins are already water-stressed because of the levels of upstream abstractions;
8. CONCERNED about the increasingly adverse impacts of the consumption patterns of urban populations on wetlands and the increasing demand from cities on the Earth's wetland ecosystems for water and other natural resources and services provided by wetlands;
9. AWARE of the necessity a) to assess the Earth's wetland ecological capacity to regenerate under the current pressures and, b) using this assessment, to estimate how many wetlands it would take to support humanity if everyone lived a given lifestyle; and
10. AWARE of the cities and biodiversity initiative developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which has established links among the mayors of the host cities of CBD Conferences of Contracting Parties;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. URGES all Contracting Parties to pay due attention to the importance of their wetlands in urban environments;
12. ALSO URGES all Contracting Parties to review the state of their urban wetlands and, where needed, to put in place schemes for their restoration and rehabilitation so that they can deliver their full range of ecosystem services to people and biodiversity;
13. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties to organize their land-use planning and management so as to minimize further future impacts on urban wetlands, including those currently in rural or peri-urban situations that are vulnerable to urban encroachment;
14. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and others to establish wetland education and visitor facilities on urban and peri-urban wetlands, and particularly Ramsar sites in such locations, as a means of increasing urban community public awareness under the Convention's CEPA Programme 2009-2014 and, in view of the recreational, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions of wetlands, as a means of supporting the health and well-being of people by facilitating access to such wetlands;
15. REQUESTS Contracting Parties and others that have established such education and visitor centres to report to the Secretariat on their experiences and achievements so that

they can be shared with other Parties that are developing such facilities, including through the Wetland Link International (WLI) mechanism;

16. ENCOURAGES the mayors of cities, particularly those that have hosted meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention and that have urban and peri-urban wetlands, to connect with the CBD initiative on cities and biodiversity;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to involve municipalities in their planning processes and operational actions on wetland conservation and wise use in order to seek contributions from municipalities a) to assess the ecological footprints of urban areas on wetlands and b) to offset the negative impacts of the increasing urban consumption of wetland products and ecosystem services;
18. REQUESTS Contracting Parties, through their appointed Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) National Focal Points, to advise the STRP on issues concerning urban and peri-urban wetlands that would benefit from additional scientific and technical guidance; and
19. INSTRUCTS the STRP, in the light of this advice, to consider the preparation of guidance for Contracting Parties on issues specific to urban and peri-urban wetlands guidance for Contracting Parties.