

Wetlands and sustainable development

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to review the appended Draft Resolution, submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran, and adopt it for the consideration of the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

1. The appended Draft Resolution has been submitted by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and seeks to bring forward the valuable outcomes of the Ramsar 40th anniversary commemorations that were held in that country in early March 2011.
2. The results of the discussions during that ‘Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future’ were formulated as the “Tehran Declaration on wetlands and sustainable development”, which was agreed by participating ministers and heads of delegations at the conclusion of the meeting. The main focus of this document is on the future role of the Convention, describing how the conservation and wise use of wetlands can make a valuable contribution towards sustainable development through achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The declaration recognizes the need to create greater awareness of the full range of benefits and functions that wetlands provide for people and the environment and stresses the need for greater regional cooperation for wetland conservation, the creation of new funding mechanisms, and the inclusion of wetlands in the “REDD+” mechanism for reducing carbon emissions from ecosystem destruction and degradation.
3. In this Draft Resolution, the Conference of the Parties will be requested to invite all Contracting Parties and other relevant organizations to read and reflect upon the conclusions of that meeting as articulated in the appended document.
4. The Secretariat takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to the government and organizations of the Islamic Republic of Iran who organized and hosted the 40th anniversary in Tehran and Ramsar, Iran. A news article reporting on those celebrations can be seen on the Ramsar website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-archives-2011-40th-anniversary-iran/main/ramsar/1-26-45-489%5E25071_4000_0__.

COP11 Draft Resolution 11-xx

Wetlands and sustainable development

Submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran

1. AWARE that the “Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future” was held in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 5-6 March 2011 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and that it was attended by more than 300 ministers, senior officials, and high-level representatives from Contracting Parties, international and regional organizations, academic institutions and other partners to the Convention;
2. HAVING BEEN INFORMED that the forum looked back over the history and work of the Convention and discussed the key areas where the Convention needs to focus its work in the coming years;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING with gratitude the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran in hosting that important meeting and of the participants for their careful consideration of matters of great consequence for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and the future work of the Convention; and
4. AWARE that the results of those considerations have been distilled in a document entitled the “Tehran Declaration”, which was agreed by the ministers and heads of delegations participating in the forum;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

5. INVITES all Contracting Parties to reflect upon the points made in the appended document agreed by the ministers and heads of delegations participating in the Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future, and to disseminate the document widely to other relevant organizations and stakeholders, in order to help to promote actions that will enhance the implementation of the Convention over the next 40 years and beyond.

Annex

Tehran Declaration on Wetlands and Sustainable Development on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future to commemorate the 40th anniversary of signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was held in Tehran and Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 5th and 6th March 2011 respectively, attended by ministers, senior officials and high-level representatives from Contracting Parties, international and regional organizations, academic institutions and other partners to the Convention. The forum looked back over the history and work of the Convention and discussed the key areas where the Convention needs to focus its work in the coming years.

From an initial 18 signatory countries, the Convention has now grown to have 160 Contracting Parties who have committed themselves to implement the “three pillars” of the Convention, i.e., to work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; to designate suitable wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar List”); and to cooperate internationally.

The ministers and heads of delegations participating in the Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future;

Expressing appreciation to the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,

Bearing in mind that water is the irreplaceable source of life, and that wetlands are the Earth’s primary natural infrastructure for storing and - directly or indirectly - providing water for nearly seven billion inhabitants of the planet,

Aware that over the course of history and to this day, many human communities have developed adjacent to wetlands because of the benefits that they provide, including a reliable supply of freshwater, food from farming and fisheries, fuel and fiber, and protection from storms and floods, and that wetlands play a major role in maintaining the health and livelihood of human communities, thus reducing the risk of hunger and poverty,

Reaffirming that wetlands are also important for their contribution to biodiversity, as well as for addressing the effects of climate change, noting that the wise use of wetlands plays a major role in climate change mitigation and adaptation including through the storage and sequestration of carbon and the regulation of the water cycle, and that planning at floodplain- and catchment-scale is crucial for effective water supply and flood risk management,

Noting with concern that despite their importance, approximately half of the world’s wetlands have already been lost over the last century and that this rate of loss and degradation is continuing at a faster pace than for any other ecosystem, due in part to the ever-increasing need to supply freshwater for a growing human population and for irrigated agricultural systems,

Cognizant of the fact that wetlands are being adversely affected by the demand for land for development, especially in parts of the globe experiencing rapid economic growth, through industry, infrastructure, energy and agriculture projects,

1. *Recognize* the importance of wetlands as a natural infrastructure that stores and delivers water, noting that water is essential for the maintenance of wetlands, and also the multiple functions and benefits that wetlands provide for people and nature;
2. *Acknowledge* the vital role of wetlands in sustainable development and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015;
3. *Stress* the need to promote greater awareness of wetlands through the development by Contracting Parties of programmes of education and awareness building, directed especially towards stakeholder groups and local communities;

4. *Urge* the Contracting Parties with the support of the Secretariat and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to seek the inclusion of wetlands in the “REDD+” mechanism for reducing carbon emissions from ecosystem destruction and degradation;
5. *Urge* the further streamlining of the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in conjunction with other international conventions and processes, so as to meet targets of mutual relevance, such as the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets established by the international community at the Convention on Biological Diversity’s tenth Conference of Parties in Nagoya, 2010;
6. *Reiterate* the significance of incorporating economic values of wetlands in development projects so as to ensure that decision-makers better understand the full range of benefits and values provided by wetlands;
7. *Underline* the necessity of formulating action plans and guidelines to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands when developing alternative means of livelihood for local communities;
8. *Insist on* promoting wise use of wetlands and the ecosystem services that wetlands provide, as well as investments and incentives for the conservation of wetlands;
9. *Reaffirm* the crucial role of participatory management of wetlands involving all stakeholders;
10. *Reiterate* the importance of capacity building through financial support and training, as well as sharing data and experiences among the Contracting Parties, and facilitating the transfer of technology and best practices to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
11. *Recognise* the potential benefit for implementation of the Ramsar Convention that could be gained from the formation of a Trust Fund, and *call upon* the international donor community and the private sector to explore the possibilities for contributing to such a Fund;
12. *Call upon* the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to convey the contents of the present Declaration to the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012;
13. *Invite* interested Parties to participate in an eminent persons group to develop further a vision on the role of wetlands in providing ecosystem services for sustainable development in conjunction with STRP, to be completed in time for presentation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012, and *welcome* the invitation by the I.R. Iran to host a meeting of this group in Tehran;
14. *Invite* the Ramsar Convention’s Secretariat to further develop the main themes of this Declaration for consideration and endorsement by the forthcoming Conference of the Parties in 2012, and to make all efforts for their practical implementation.