



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support  
for Implementation of the Ramsar Convention**

Changwon Hotel, Changwon, Republic of Korea  
7-11 October 2013

**Briefing Note for agenda item 14**

**Wetlands and Climate Change**

## Working Session 6 Wetlands and Climate Change

Friday 11 October, 8.30-10.30

### Objectives

1. Contribute to the preparation of advice on i) the implications of climate change for maintaining the ecological character of wetlands, including strategies for assessing the resilience and vulnerability of wetlands to climate change and ii) for developing ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change for coastal and inland wetlands.
2. Identify the potential for developing collaborate links with relevant national agencies and wetland managers and researchers to further investigate the potential contribution of wetland ecosystems to climate change mitigation and adaptation through case studies and specific analyses and assessments.
3. Initiate a process to review any relevant advice provided by national agencies and wetland managers and researchers on adaptation to climate change and to further investigate the potential contribution of other Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements.

### Background

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has addressed climate change through decisions taken at the Conference of Parties in 2002, 2008 and 2012. [Resolution XI.14](#) in 2012, entitled “Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands” provided a brief synopsis of the importance of climate change for wetlands, including the following:

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that wetlands were amongst those natural systems especially vulnerable to climate change because of their limited adaptive capacity and that they may therefore undergo significant and irreversible damage.
- The IPCC was undertaking further work at the request of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), on the preparation of the guidelines on National Greenhouse gas inventories for wetlands.
- Significant progress has been made with respect to knowledge and awareness of the importance of the carbon sequestration and storage function of wetlands (including *inter alia* inland peatlands and coastal wetlands), including the scientific understanding of greenhouse gas fluxes from wetlands and the drivers of greenhouse gas fluxes from land use, land use change, and forestry sources, and through the ‘wet carbon’ and ‘blue carbon’ assessments.
- The continuing degradation and loss of some types of wetlands can cause the release of large amounts of stored carbon and thus exacerbate climate change.
- The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention had continued to address change issues during the 2009-2012 triennium, including on: i) methods for assessing the vulnerability of different wetland types to climate change; ii) opportunities for adaptation to climate change; iii) wetland restoration as a tool for climate responses; and iv) the role and importance of different wetland types in the global carbon cycle.

The resolution then called for the STRP to undertake the following activities:

- Prepare advice on the implications of climate change for maintaining the ecological character of wetlands, including *inter alia* strategies for dealing with the emergence of novel or hybrid ecosystems as a consequence of climate change, the determination of appropriate reference conditions for assessing change in ecological character, determining specified limits of change, and the reporting of change in ecological character at Ramsar Sites, and how this can be reflected in Ramsar Information Sheets, and to collate information from such assessments for future meetings of the Conference of the Parties;
- Work with interested Contracting Parties and international organizations, to prepare advice on sustainable management of carbon stocks which enhances wetland biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services, thereby contributing to human well-being, with special attention to indigenous peoples and local communities;
- In conjunction with the Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Initiative Networks and Centres, to collaborate with relevant international organizations and conventions to further investigate the potential contribution of wetland ecosystems to climate change mitigation and adaptation through:
  - a) preparing advice on assessing social resilience and vulnerability of wetlands to climate change, to complement the existing advice on assessing the biophysical vulnerability of a wetlands to climate change.
  - b) preparing advice on ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change for coastal and inland wetlands.
  - c) reviewing any relevant advice provide by other Multi-lateral Environment Agreements, in particular the outcomes of CBD COP-11.

The Changwon Declaration also refers to climate change. In particular it identifies the importance of wetland for sequestering and storing carbon and the vulnerability of wetlands to climate change. It further noted the importance of managing water in wetlands to both adapt to the impacts of climate change on wetlands and to ensure the many benefits provided by wetlands to people are sustained, or restored, where appropriate. It also highlighted that the natural infrastructure provided by wetlands for managing water provides opportunities for combating and adapting to climate change, and that the conservation and wise use of wetlands can help reduce the negative economic, social and ecological effects that may result as a consequence of climate change.

The above guidance from [Resolution X1.14](#) and the [Changwon Declaration](#) will be used as a basis for the discussions in this workshop.

### **Schedule and tasks**

In this session participants will focus on developing ideas and material that can contribute to the work plan being undertaken by the STRP, in particular those parts addressing ecosystem-based adaptation and the mitigation of climate change.

### **Friday 11 October**

#### **8.30-8.50**

Introduction to climate change adaptation and maladaptation and the role of ecosystem-based approaches in reducing the impact of climate change on wetlands. (*Max Finlayson, Invited expert, STRP*)

**8.50-9.20**

Discussion about ecosystem-based adaptation and the identification of management approaches, or tools that may contribute to reducing the impact of climate change on wetlands.

**9.20-9.40**

Introduction to the role of wetlands in mitigating climate change, and ways of measuring the capacity of wetlands to sequester and store carbon. (*Max Finlayson, Invited expert, STRP*)

**9.40-10.00**

Discussion about carbon sequestration and storage in wetlands and the identification of potential case studies for exploring the role of wetlands in the carbon cycle.