

**Proposed draft resolution on restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems
to support ecological character biodiversity and ecosystem services
[and the Freshwater Challenge]**

Submitted by Gabon, co-sponsors to be invited

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached draft resolution for consideration by the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Secretariat cover note

The draft resolution aims to promote global efforts for freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration and presents the Freshwater Challenge as an initiative that can support Contracting Parties' actions towards these goals.

The text points to the contribution of the Freshwater Challenge to the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands and to the improving of synergies with other Conventions and global goals, such as the Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement or the Sustainable Development Goals. Several operational paragraphs call for specific actions from Contracting Parties and other stakeholders including the Convention's International Organization Partners. Paragraph 12 encourages Contracting Parties to improve national legislation and policies for restoration of freshwater ecosystems.

The Secretariat notes that in line with STRP and other Convention guidance documents, paragraph 13 invites Contracting Parties to include quantifiable targets for restoration and protection of freshwater ecosystems in their national policies and plans for climate, development, biodiversity, wetlands, desertification, disaster and risk management. The text also encourages financial institutions and other organizations to mobilize finance from all sources for the restoration and long-term conservation of freshwater ecosystems.

The text requests the Secretariat to support Contracting Parties, including by engaging with the Freshwater Challenge as appropriate and by contributing to knowledge and policy development in relation to green water (paragraph 17). The text also requests the STRP to engage in the field of restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater wetlands.

The Secretariat reminds Contracting Parties of Resolution XIV.5, which called for the consolidation of resolutions on the same subject into a single resolution. Following instruction from the Standing Committee a consolidated draft resolution on water, water-related and water-management-related

matters was prepared and approved by the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting (SC63) for consideration by the Contracting Parties at COP15.

The Standing Committee may consider instructing the Secretariat to publish for consideration at COP15, in addition to the present proposal, an amended consolidation of water, water-related and water-management-related Resolutions that also includes the paragraphs from the present proposed draft resolution, to facilitate the eventual efforts of the Contracting Parties at COP15 to adopt a single resolution on water and freshwater ecosystems.

The Secretariat invited the STRP to review the draft resolution and provide a view as to whether specific tasks such as knowledge development in relation to green water and the global hydrological cycle, as well as identification of policy measures and delivery of restoration programmes dedicated to freshwater ecosystems, could be incorporated in the STRP workplan for the next triennium.

Introduction

This proposed draft resolution seeks to enable stronger action on freshwater ecosystem restoration, as a component of ecosystem conservation, alongside sustainable management and use, as well as area-based and non-area-based protection, including for rivers and lakes, and to raise awareness of the Freshwater Challenge¹ as an initiative that can support Contracting Parties in restoring and protecting freshwater ecosystems.

Contracting Parties have recently adopted specific Resolutions covering the restoration of peatlands, and the restoration of coastal ecosystems (e.g. mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrasses) and will also consider the complementary draft resolution XV.xx on equitable and effective conservation of wetlands, and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs²). To complement this, there is a need to give more attention to the restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems, in particular degraded areas within, and connected to, designated Wetlands of International Importance, and for freshwater ecosystem restoration to be better integrated across other multilateral environmental agreements.

This draft resolution gives the restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems the attention it deserves, and coupled with draft resolution XV.xx on protected areas and OECMs, highlights the Freshwater Challenge as a country-led multi-stakeholder initiative that can support the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands and improve synergies with other Conventions and global goals.

Financial implications of implementation

Paragraph (number and key part of text)	Action	Core budget cost (CHF)	Non-core budget cost (CHF)

¹ Freshwater Challenge: <https://www.freshwaterchallenge.org/about-the-challenge>

² Draft Resolution XV.xx Achieving the equitable and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

Draft Resolution XV.xx

Freshwater ecosystem restoration [and the Freshwater Challenge]

1. RECALLING Resolutions [XIV.6](#) (Enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions); [XIV.16](#) (Integrating wetland protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management into national sustainable development strategies); [XIV.17](#) (The protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of wetland ecosystems in addressing climate change); [XIII.13](#) (Restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity and disaster risk reduction); [XIII.14](#) (Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems); draft resolution XV.xx (Achieving the equitable and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs));
2. ACKNOWLEDGING that restoration of freshwater ecosystems such as rivers, lakes and other wetlands, if complemented by other conservation measures, contributes to the implementation of multiple obligations or commitments under different multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and to multiple Sustainable Development Goals including Goal 6 “availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” and Target 15.1 on ensuring the “conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular ... wetlands, ... in line with obligations under international agreements”;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING the status of the Convention on Wetlands as a Global Partner to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and its ongoing activities on aquatic ecosystem restoration and protection;
4. WELCOMING the Global Biodiversity Framework provisions relating to wetland restoration, in particular the inclusion of inland water ecosystems in Target 2: “Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity”, alongside Target 1 (spatial planning) and Target 3 (area-based conservation through protected areas and OECMs) and NOTING that this is further reflected in the 6th Joint Work Plan, 2024-2030, of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Wetlands;
5. NOTING that the importance of restoring inland water ecosystems for climate mitigation and adaptation, alongside other conservation measures, is recognised in the global goal on adaptation and global stocktake under the Paris Agreement;
6. NOTING the outcomes of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6 relating to freshwater wetland restoration including Resolution 6/13 on *Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution*, which calls on all Member States and encourages others to “mainstream sustainable water management and the protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems into relevant intergovernmental processes”;
7. EMPHASIZING that restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems should not occur in isolation but, as appropriate, as part of a wider basin approach, considering water and land management at landscape and waterscape scales, and should be coupled with protection,

conservation and management of freshwater ecosystems important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, including action to address the indirect and direct drivers of degradation, pollution and loss;

8. ACKNOWLEDGING the confirmation of the crucial roles of wetlands in blue and green waters, and hence in the global hydrological cycle that underpins, directly or indirectly, all Sustainable Development Goals, by the report “The economics of water: Valuing the hydrological cycle as a global common good” of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water;
9. WELCOMING the launch of the Freshwater Challenge at the United Nations Water Conference in March 2023, as the world’s largest wetland restoration and protection initiative, including for rivers, lakes, peatlands, and other freshwater wetlands;
10. WELCOMING the Ministerial Roundtable on the Freshwater Challenge during the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP28) in December 2023; the status of the Freshwater Challenge as one of the official outcomes of the United Arab Emirates COP28 Presidency’s thematic focus on water, nature and climate; and the commitments of countries which have become members of the Freshwater Challenge to setting, by 2025, quantifiable targets for the restoration and protection of freshwater ecosystems in national plans; and
11. NOTING that the Freshwater Challenge is a country-led multi-stakeholder implementation mechanism aimed to accelerate freshwater ecosystem restoration, together with protection and effective management, primarily at national level, and where appropriate at transboundary level through technical, policy and financial support to member countries, in alignment with and supporting the delivery of the Convention on Wetlands and multiple other Conventions and global commitments, with the support of international organizations and agencies;

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12. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to develop or improve national legislation and policies for restoration of freshwater ecosystems, in addition to protection and sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems;
13. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to include quantifiable targets for restoration and protection of freshwater ecosystems in national policies and plans for climate, development, biodiversity, wetlands, desertification disaster and risk management, and to report on progress in implementing river, lake and other freshwater wetland restoration and protection in National Reports for the Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Convention to Combat and Desertification, among other relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);
14. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to adopt and pursue enhanced restoration including nature-based solutions (NBS) and ecosystem-based strategies that deliver climate, biodiversity and development priorities, that integrate NBS and/or ecosystem-based approaches (EBA) and that take a landscape and basin approach, such as the removal of barriers to restore the free-flowing status of rivers, or the rewetting of peatlands, and to couple this with the effective protection of freshwater ecosystems important for biodiversity and ecosystem services within national systems of protected and conserved areas, including Wetlands of International Importance, including the rewetting of peatlands;

15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to include in their priorities, the restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems within and connected to Wetlands of International Importance, and other conservation areas, with a focus on restoration and effective management activities that would improve ecological character and ability to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem services, including through changing climatic and hydrologic conditions;
16. INVITES Contracting Parties to engage with the Freshwater Challenge in line with national circumstances as a means to enhance national implementation of the Convention on Wetlands and other global commitments and national priorities on freshwater ecosystem health and water security;
17. REQUESTS the Secretariat to support Contracting Parties in restoration of freshwater ecosystems, including by engaging with the Freshwater Challenge as appropriate, and by contributing to the implementation of the mission to “Conserve and restore natural habitats critical to protect green water” identified by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water;
18. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas, to consider the need for additional support, guidance and technical capacity building on the restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater wetlands, including on setting of targets, selection of indicators, identification of policy measures, and delivery of restoration programmes, and to engage with the Freshwater Challenge as appropriate in the production and dissemination of any such guidance and support;
19. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to adopt common restoration indicators for freshwater ecosystems and including policy measures in strategies, action plans and reporting across other MEAs and frameworks;
20. INVITES the International Organization Partners of the Convention, United Nations agencies, and other stakeholders to work towards the upscaling and alignment of restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems at the national, subnational, regional and international levels; and
21. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, international and national organizations, financial institutions and others to address the need for adequate mobilization of finance from all sources to achieve the restoration and long-term conservation of freshwater ecosystems at scale.