

Proposed draft resolution on restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems to support ecological character biodiversity and ecosystem services

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

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);
2. NOTING the focus on restoration in the 5th Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands, particularly in relation to targets... XXX]
3. ACKNOWLEDGING that restoration of freshwater ecosystems such as rivers, lakes and other wetlands, if complemented by other conservation measures, to address the drivers of wetland degradation, 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”;
4. ACKNOWLEDGING the status of the Convention on Wetlands as a Global Partner to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and its ongoing activities on wetland restoration and protection;
5. WELCOMING the Kunming-Montreal 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 coastal and marine 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;
6. ACKNOWLEDGING the status of the Convention on Wetlands as a Partner of UN-Water, the inter-agency coordination mechanism for the UN’s system-wide work on water and sanitation, and NOTING the adoption of the UN System-wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation aimed at improving the coherency and efficiency of the UN system’s work on water and sanitation, including restoration of freshwater ecosystems.
7. 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;
8. NOTING the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 3/10 (UNEA-3-2017) on “Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems”; and Resolution 6/13 (UNEA-6-2024) 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”;

9. EMPHASIZING that restoration of rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems should not occur in isolation but, as appropriate, as part of a wider river 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;
10. ACKNOWLEDGING the confirmation of the crucial roles of wetlands in blue and green waters³, and hence in the hydrological cycle that underpins, directly or indirectly, all Sustainable Development Goals, by the 2024 report the Global Commission on the Economics of Water;
11. [WELCOMING] [NOTING] the launch of the Freshwater Challenge at the United Nations Water Conference in March 2023 as a voluntary, country-led initiative to support, integrate and accelerate the restoration and protection of wetlands and freshwater ecosystems;
12. [WELCOMING] [NOTING] the outcomes of 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; and 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
13. NOTING that the Freshwater Challenge aims to accelerate freshwater ecosystem restoration, 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;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

14. 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;
15. [ENCOURAGES] [INVITES] Contracting Parties to include quantifiable targets, as appropriate and in line with their national priorities and capacities, 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) and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration];

³ Definition to be inserted from Global Commission on Economics of Water

16. [ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to adopt and pursue enhanced restoration including nature-based solutions (NBS), as defined in UNEA Resolution 5/5, and ecosystem-based approaches that deliver climate, biodiversity and development priorities, and that take a landscape and river basin approach, towards the recovery of the connectivity of freshwater ecosystems [such as the removal of barriers to restore the free-flowing status of rivers or the restoring and rewetting of peatlands], and to couple this with land-use planning around water and the effective protection of freshwater ecosystems important for biodiversity and ecosystem services within national systems of protected and conserved areas, and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Wetlands of International Importance;]
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, taking into account their national capacities and circumstances, 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 improve ecological character and the habitat's ability to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem services, including in response to changing climatic and hydrologic conditions;
18. INVITES Contracting Parties to engage with the Freshwater Challenge, particularly with Ramsar Administrative Authorities, in line with national circumstances as a means to enhance national implementation of the Convention on Wetlands and other global commitments as well as national priorities on freshwater ecosystem health and water security;
19. REQUESTS the Secretariat to engage and collaborate with the Freshwater Challenge, particularly with Ramsar Administrative Authorities, as appropriate, and subject to available resources [and to contribute 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];
20. 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 INVITES the STRP to engage with the Freshwater Challenge as appropriate in the production and dissemination of any such guidance and support;
21. [ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to adopt common restoration indicators, where possible consistent with indicators applied in the 5th Strategic Plan and in other MEA and global monitoring frameworks, for freshwater ecosystems and including policy measures in strategies, action plans and reporting across other MEAs and frameworks, as appropriate];
22. INVITES the International Organization Partners of the Convention, United Nations agencies, and other stakeholders to [incorporate the scaling up of areas and the application of guidelines for restoration] [continue work towards the upscaling and alignment of restoration] of rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems at the national, subnational, regional and international levels;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, international and national organizations, financial institutions and other stakeholders 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.