



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



PRESS RELEASE

Declaration of Punta del Este affirms wetlands as essential for sustainable development

Delegates approve new Ramsar Strategic Plan that recognizes that all wetlands have a role in the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Punta del Este, Uruguay | 9 June 2015- Addressing the factors that drive wetland loss and degradation will be a priority action for all Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, in the next triennium 2016 to 2024. The 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP12) closed today in Punta del Este, Uruguay with delegates approving a new Strategic Plan to guide country actions to conserve and wisely use their wetlands.

Over 800 delegates from 160 countries met in Uruguay from 1 to 9 June 2015 to review the progress of the Convention and agreed on four strategic priorities that will stem wetland loss and degradation, and that offer solutions to pressing issues such as food security, water security and climate change. They include:

- Addressing the factors driving the loss and degradation of wetlands by ensuring that decision-makers in key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism and urban development, appreciate the value and benefits wetlands provide and include these benefits in policy
- Renewing country commitment to conserve and protect the Ramsar site network, considered to be of high value to each country and to the world because of the ecosystem services they provide.
- Promoting wise use of all wetlands and restore wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Improving the implementation of the Convention by mobilizing resources, working through partnerships, building capacity and raising awareness.

“Reaching consensus among the Parties on each of the resolutions was for us very important, as it is the only way to affirm the Convention as being truly global,” said **COP12 President, Jorge Rucks**, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment, Uruguay. “We are therefore pleased that we have successfully worked with each region and country to adopt a new strategic plan and are committed to its implementation.

The Declaration of Punta del Este, approved by the contracting parties, and put forward by the Government of Uruguay, affirmed the vital role of wetlands to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and called on parties to diligently implement the new Strategic Plan.

“The discussions have been long and in-depth, demonstrating dedication and interest of the Parties to make sure the new Strategic Plan is relevant to the reality and urgent need to address conservation and wise use of wetlands and wetland loss,” said **Dr. Christopher Briggs, Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**. “We thank the government of Uruguay and the parties for having completed a wonderful job. Uruguay for hosting the meeting so well and for their commitment over the next triennium to ensure that wetlands are conserved, restored, and continue to provide benefits to humanity.”

Delegates meeting in Uruguay also approved key decisions that will facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan. These include:

- The key role of peatlands in climate change regulation
- The key role of wetlands in reducing disaster risks
- Protecting water requirements of wetlands in order to maintain their healthy functioning for the future and present.
- Welcoming the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) as an International Organization Partner of the Convention
- Establishing the World Wetland City Accreditation System to preserve urban and peri-urban wetlands threatened by expanding cities
- Conservation of the Mediterranean Basin Island wetlands

The United Arab Emirates was officially accepted as the next host for the next COP13, also the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP13) to take place in Dubai in 2018.

Note to editors

About COP12.

The 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP12) was held in Punta del Este at the Conrad Resort, Uruguay, from 1 to 9 June 2015. It is the decision-making body of the Convention and meets every three years to assess the progress of the Convention, consider emerging issues and approve the Secretariat's work plan.

About the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the global framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is the only global treaty to focus on a single ecosystem. The Convention was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and entered into force in 1975. Since then, 168 countries, almost 90% of UN member states from the entire world's geographic regions have acceded and become Contracting Parties. The State of Kuwait will become the 169th Contracting Party to the Convention on Wetlands in 2015.

Under this treaty, member states undertake to protect and sustainably use all the wetlands on their territory by undertaking local measures and collaborate through international cooperation to maintain the ecological characteristics of wetlands. Each Member State upon adopting the Convention designates at least one site considered to be of high value to the country and the world because of the ecosystem services they provide. These sites are added to the network of Ramsar Sites of International Importance. Currently there are over 2100 designated Ramsar sites around the world, covering an area of 208 million hectares, an area larger than Mexico.

About wetlands

The definition of the word 'wetland', under the Convention, is any land area that is saturated or flooded with water, either seasonally or permanently. Inland wetlands include aquifers, lakes, rivers, streams, marshes, peatlands, ponds, flood plains and swamps. Coastal wetlands include all coastlines, mangroves, saltmarshes, estuaries, lagoons, seagrass meadows and coral reefs. According to recent estimates "64% of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900 and the trends point to continued decline of the world's wetlands.

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