



13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

"Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future"

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Draft resolution on restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity and disaster risk reduction

Submitted by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

1. RECALLING Recommendations 4.1 on *Wetland Restoration* and 6.15 on *Restoration of wetlands*, which highlighted the important need for wetland restoration, Resolution VII.17 on *Restoration as an element of national planning for wetland conservation and wise use*, and Resolution VIII.16 on *Principles and guidelines for wetland restoration*;
2. RECALLING Resolution VIII.3 on *Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation, and mitigation* and Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, regarding the need to minimize degradation, promote restoration, and improve practices for managing peatlands and other wetland types that are significant carbon stores or have the ability to sequester carbon, and to encourage the expansion of demonstration sites on peatland restoration and wise use management in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation;
3. RECALLING Resolution VIII.17 on *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands*, stating that "Measures should be undertaken to restore peatland functions in those systems that have been degraded through human activity, drawing on experience and best management practices from different regions";
4. NOTING Resolution X.25, on *Wetlands and "biofuels"*, encouraging Contracting Parties to consider the cultivation of biomass on rewetted peatlands as an alternative to drained peatland use"; and AWARE that, since the adoption of this Resolution, the rewetting of peatlands while maintaining their productive use (paludiculture) has been recognized as a promising option to enhance climate-change mitigation;
5. RECALLING Resolution XII.11 on *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention*, requesting the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to advise the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on practical methods for rewetting and restoring peatlands and requesting the Secretariat, in collaboration with the STRP, International Organization Partners (IOPs) and other stakeholders, to compile best practices in peatland restoration techniques and share it through the official website of the Ramsar Convention; and FURTHER RECALLING the encouragement for collaboration with other conventions on the relationship between peatlands and climate change;

6. NOTING that rewetting of peatlands means restoring the water table or hydrologic regime toward original condition where the water table is close to the present land surface, with the aim of partial or total reversal of the effects of drainage;
7. RECOGNIZING that peatland restoration can contribute to the fulfilment of multiple obligations under different multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including, as appropriate, on climate-change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, better water regulation, mitigation of water runoff, and support to the Sustainable Development Goals and that, accordingly, it could be promoted as a cost-effective tool with cross-cutting benefits; and that, as part of responsible management, the requirement for restoration, and rehabilitation of peatlands should be recognized as a requirement for wise use; and that no peatland should be developed without a management plan;
8. ALSO RECALLING the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, its goals and targets to address the drivers of wetland loss and degradation and the need for restoration, in Target 12: "Restoration is in progress in degraded wetlands, with priority to wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation", through "restoration initiatives taken, projects, and programmes implemented";
9. FURTHER NOTING Decision X/2 on *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020* of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and in particular its Aichi Target 15: "By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks have been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification, and ALSO NOTING Decision XIII/5 on *Ecosystem restoration: short-term action plan*;
10. NOTING UNFCCC 4/CP.23, the Contracting Parties have an important opportunity to interact and collaborate on peatland restoration, especially under: 2 (b) "Methods and approaches for assessing adaptation, adaptation co-benefits and resilience"; and 2 (c) "Improved soil carbon, soil health and soil fertility under grassland and cropland as well as integrated systems, including water management";
11. NOTING that the UNFCCC is the primary multilateral forum on addressing climate change and that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the scientific assessment of climate change;
12. NOTING that the Paris Agreement, adopted under the UNFCCC aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by holding the increase in global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; and ALSO OBSERVING that emissions reductions and removals resulting from peatland restoration could contribute to the achievement of this temperature goal;
13. ACKNOWLEDGING the *2013 Supplement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Wetlands*;
14. NOTING also the large number of international studies on the link between mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by wetland restoration, and the wealth of experience that has been accumulated on the restoration of degraded peatlands, especially for biodiversity conservation and increasingly for reducing GHG emissions;

15. NOTING the significant and recent international recognition of the role of peatlands in carbon storage and sequestration and biodiversity conservation, as expressed by the increased profile given to peatlands in the outcomes of the following international conferences and workshops:
 - a. The *Changshu Declaration on Wetlands* of the 10th INTECOL International Wetlands Conference held in Changshu, China, in September 2016, and specifically target 3 of the Declaration: “to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in line with obligations under international agreements”;
 - b. The international workshop held on Vilm, Germany, in September 2016 on “Peatland Conservation and Wise Use in the Context of Climate Change” as a direct follow-up to Resolution XII.11, which highlights the close links between research, education and communication, and implementation of and policy on peatland conservation and wise use¹, and which, more specifically in the context of rewetting activities, stressed the need to consider local stakeholder involvement and agreement, landowner compensation and the adaptation of policy frameworks (for example, to avoid perverse incentives);
 - c. The second international conference on “Renewable resources from wet and rewetted peatlands”² held in Greifswald, Germany, in September 2017, where progress in the development and use of paludiculture in mitigating and adapting to climate change by rewetting drained organic peatland soils was demonstrated;
 - d. The substantial number of side events at the 23rd Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the UNFCCC in November 2017, which addressed the role of peatlands in climate change mitigation;
16. ALSO NOTING that the Global Peatlands Initiative, which was supported by a number of international organizations and national governments, co-founded by the Ramsar Convention, and launched at UNFCCC COP22, is a global effort by leading experts and institutions to save peatlands as the world’s largest terrestrial organic carbon stock; and FURTHER NOTING the presentation at UNFCCC COP23 of the Initiative’s first assessment, entitled *Smoke on Water – Countering global threats from peatland loss and degradation*;
17. NOTING that peatland restoration contributes to the implementation of obligations under different MEAs (Ramsar Convention, CBD, UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification); but also REAFFIRMING that the Ramsar Convention is the primary multilateral forum on addressing wetland issues;
18. ALSO NOTING that peatland restoration should not occur in isolation but, as appropriate, as part of wider consideration of water management at landscape scales, as highlighted during the Global Landscapes Forum convened by the UN in December 2017;

¹ The discussions of the workshop are summarized in a report available at:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/report_peatlands_vilm_workshop_sept_2016.pdf and a Briefing Note produced by Greifswald Mire Center available at:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/briefing_note_peatlands_vilm_workshop_sept_2016.pdf.

² The proceedings of the event can be downloaded at:

<http://www.rrr2017.com/doc/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/rrr2017/downloads/RRR2017%20-%20proceedings%20-%20web.pdf>.

19. WELCOMING the efforts of Contracting Parties reporting on peatland restoration projects and on the international and national organizations funding and implementing such projects;
20. ACKNOWLEDGING the 2018 thematic assessment report on *Land Degradation and Restoration* of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which states that land degradation is worsening worldwide and is now at a critical level, undermining the wellbeing of 3.2 billion people; and
21. NOTING that over 90% of natural disasters are caused by water-related hazards, as outlined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

22. URGES Contracting Parties to report – in their national reports – on progress with implementation of Resolutions VIII.7 and XII.11;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as appropriate, to develop or improve legislation on restoration and rewetting of degraded peatlands, as well as on the protection and sustainable use of peatlands in general;
24. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to conserve existing peatlands (Resolution VIII.17, *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands*) and to restore degraded peatlands in their territory, as one means to contribute to climate-change mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and restoration;
25. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to contribute, as appropriate, to a compilation of experiences on peatland restoration and rewetting methods, globally, resorting to a Ramsar Technical Report (that remains to be finalized) provided by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), mainly on acid bog restoration, that can be adapted to local or national contexts;
26. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as appropriate, to protect and restore peatlands as cost-effective instruments for enhanced biodiversity, climate-change adaptation and mitigation as well as disaster risk reduction;
27. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider stimulating the shift from drainage-based peatland agriculture and forestry, to rewetting followed by paludiculture when identified as the best management option, and away from non-sustainable uses of peatlands, such as overgrazing and construction;
28. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to seek to ensure that rewetting and paludiculture can take place where paludiculture is considered to be the best land use for climate-change mitigation and adaptation, and restoration where biodiversity values are not compromised, taking into account the peatland type, the site's present ecological status and the ecological potential after rewetting;
29. RECOMMENDS that Contracting Parties make use of remote sensing while assessing suitable sites for restoration and planning the restoration; and that they calculate peat volume at sites, that can benefit from rewetting and for which it may become an important factor when choosing sites for restoration; and if possible also consider the aspects of peat quality and the expected future vegetation and how it may influence the carbon balance after restoration;

30. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to restore peatlands while taking into account the water balance in the landscape, in particular:
- valuing peatlands as water regulators and filters, and preventing the release of water pollutants;
 - where suitable, including fish, fishing and other sustainable livelihood and nutrition generating activities on restored peatlands as increasing the long-term and overall sustainability of restoration efforts;
 - preventing land loss and salinization of the soil due to subsidence caused by drainage;
 - when it may contribute to the achievement of SDG target 15.3 and UNCCD Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets;
31. INVITES Contracting Parties with peatlands to engage in the Global Peatlands Initiative *inter alia* by contributing case studies of peatland restoration projects towards the global knowledge base of best practices³, and by creating partnership that support the multiplying and scaling up of such best practices in their own territories and elsewhere;
32. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to foster collaboration and synergies among MEAs and to support an initiative to develop a joint declaration of MEAs with respect to peatland conservation, restoration, and wise use thereby safeguarding the multiple benefits of peatlands including restored peatlands, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals;
33. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as appropriate within their national circumstances, to pursue peatland conservation and/or restoration measures that reduce anthropogenic emissions and increase removals, as a way *inter alia* to contribute to their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement;
34. REQUESTS the STRP, in developing its proposed work plan, to consider, related to the fourth Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024, to further elaborate on practical experiences of restoration methods for peatland types not yet covered by Ramsar guidance;
35. ALSO REQUESTS the STRP, consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas for 2019-2021, in developing its proposed work plan for presentation at the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee, to consider:
- making an assessment of the status of implementation of Resolution VIII.17;
 - elaborating on the practical experiences of restoration methods based on the integrated approach to ecosystem restoration;
 - developing guidance for the cost-benefit analysis of peatland restoration projects; and
 - developing templates for reporting on peatland restoration;
36. FURTHER INVITES Contracting Parties to provide peat-related information and case studies for inclusion in such guidance, and to disseminate outputs, and to report progress at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties together with the case studies and to consider what action is required by the Conference of the Parties; and

³ For example: www.fao.org/in-action/micca/knowledge/peatlands-and-organic-soils/cases-of-peatland-management-practices

37. INVITES Contracting Parties to consider options for developing and applying positive incentives to foster peatland restoration and conservation and to phase out incentives harmful to peatlands.