

**Proposed Ramsar COP10 DR 32**

## The “Changwon Declaration”

**Explanatory note by the Secretariat:**

- i) In Decision SC37-14, the 37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee agreed with the proposal by the Republic of Korea that Parties at COP10 should be invited to consider for adoption a “Changwon Declaration” which would provide an overarching statement on wetland issues in relation to the COP10 theme of “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”. Such a Declaration should speak to and link the various key issues that are the subjects of COP draft Resolutions, as “a strong, ambitious message to outsiders about the Ramsar Convention.”
- ii) It was agreed that a draft of the Declaration would be prepared following SC37 by members of the STRP and experts from the Republic of Korea and any other interested Parties. That draft would then be presented to the Conference Committee at the COP, so that the Committee if agreeable could introduce it in a draft Resolution as an “emerging issue” under the COP Rules of Procedure. Use of this process would ensure sufficient time for the drafting to take into account the contents of the other draft COP10 Resolutions once they had been finalised by the Secretariat.
- iii) A Changwon Declaration drafting group met in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 12-14 August 2008, to prepare the draft document below. The drafting group consisted of STRP members, Korean experts, and members of the Ramsar Secretariat and was chaired by STRP Vice-Chair, Ms Rebecca D’Cruz. The STRP and Secretariat are most grateful to the Republic of Korea for their excellent hosting and support for the work of the drafting group.
- iv) The drafting group reviewed the many past declarations concerning wetlands made by both the Ramsar Convention and other international bodies, and it agreed that the Changwon Declaration should be formulated differently – rather as a set of strong, clear and simple key messages for decision-makers and all others involved in activities concerning or affecting wetlands. In other words, it should be a powerful communications tool for all to take up and use in raising the profile and understanding of the importance of the role of wetlands for people and their well-being. Thus it should complement the Convention’s Strategic Plan, which provides the ‘internal’ Ramsar Convention tool for future implementation by Ramsar Parties and Convention bodies.
- v) Following the work of the drafting group in August 2008, the draft Changwon Declaration was circulated for comment to the STRP, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat, and the Ministry of Environment in the Republic of Korea.

The draft Resolution below and the annexed “Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands” incorporates comments received during this consultation.

- vi) The Changwon Declaration is structured to include a set of explanatory texts at the start, setting out why the Declaration is important to everyone (and not just the wetland community), where it has come from, who it is for, and the call for action by all those who should use it. The main part of the Declaration is a set of key messages on five major inter-related issues that are the subjects of COP attention and concern the relevance and importance of wetlands to water; climate change; people’s livelihoods; people’s health; and land use, land-use change and biodiversity declines. This is followed by key messages concerning cross-cutting mechanisms that can help in responding to the thematic messages: on planning, decision-making, finance and economics, and knowledge management. Finally the Declaration identifies some ways and means of assessing its own impact in external processes.
- vii) Since the Changwon Declaration is designed to be used by a wide range of external audiences and users, many of whom will not be familiar with the specific wetland-related language used in Ramsar processes and materials, the language of the Declaration text is kept as simple as possible, but a set of explanatory “end-notes” are provided which explain what Ramsar means by wetlands, wise use and ecological character, the nature of COP themes, and Wetlands of International Importance.
- viii) For the same reason, since the Declaration is designed to have resonance with these external users, including governance bodies and managers in other sectors, the wording in the Declaration focuses on the business of these external readers. Thus key messages sections are, for example, entitled “People’s health and wetlands” rather than “Wetlands and people’s health”.

## **Draft Resolution X.32**

### **The Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands**

#### **Submitted by the Conference Committee**

1. CONCERNED that as reported by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) the many pressures from land use and water use change, exacerbated by a warming and increasingly variable climate, mean that wetlands continue to be lost and degraded in many parts of the world and at rates faster than other ecosystems, and that this is jeopardising the future provision of their services and thus the foundation they provide for human well-being;
2. AWARE of the many efforts by Ramsar Contracting Parties and others at local, national and international levels to address this situation in recognition of the vital contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, as well as to biodiversity, that can be delivered through maintaining and restoring their ecological character, but RECOGNISING that these efforts need to be redoubled if present declines are to be halted or reversed and if the 2010 biodiversity target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals environment targets are to be achieved;

3. AWARE that the theme of this Conference is “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”;
4. RECOGNISING the urgent need for governments, international processes, the private sector and civil society to understand more fully the roles they can and should play in securing the future health of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character, in relation to the global commitments made under the Ramsar Convention, and the need to develop more effective cross-sectoral action to secure this;
5. THANKING the government of the Republic of Korea for its initiative to prepare a “Changwon Declaration” to provide an overarching agenda for future action on wetlands for the people of the world;
6. INFORMED that the primary purpose of the “Changwon Declaration” is to transmit key messages concerning wetland-related issues to the many stakeholders and decision-makers beyond the Ramsar community who are relevant to the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and that the Declaration is designed to complement the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2014, which provides the Convention and its bodies with their own future approach and priorities for implementation; and
7. RECOGNISING that the “Changwon Declaration” has been prepared through a collaborative process drawing on the expertise of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP), the International Organisation Partners (IOPs), the government of Korea as the COP10 host country, and the Ramsar Secretariat; THANKING the government of Korea for its support for this process; and ALSO THANKING the government of Korea for its declared intention to champion the dissemination and uptake of this Declaration in future;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. ADOPTS the “Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands” as annexed to this Resolution;
9. STRONGLY URGES Contracting Parties and other governments to bring the “Changwon Declaration” to the attention of their heads of state, parliaments, private sector, and civil society, and to encourage them and all government sectors (including *inter alia* water management, human health, climate change, poverty reduction, and spatial planning sectors) and agencies responsible for activities affecting wetlands to respond to the call for action for wetlands embodied in the Declaration;
10. ALSO STRONGLY URGES Contracting Parties and other governments to utilise the “Changwon Declaration” to inform their national policies and decision-making, including in the positions of their national delegations to other external processes, and through specific opportunities at local, national and international levels where the Ramsar Convention and other processes have good potential for mutual assistance and collaboration, including *inter alia* the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UN agencies, multilateral environmental agreements, and the World Water Forum, and REQUESTS the Secretariat to prepare advice on relevant action opportunities in support of this;

11. FURTHER STRONGLY URGES the Standing Committee, the STRP, the Ramsar Secretariat, CEPA National Focal Points, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, the International Organisation Partners (IOPs) and others to utilise the “Changwon Declaration” in their future work and establishment of priorities, and also to use their own means and all other relevant opportunities actively to promote the Declaration;
12. ENCOURAGES other organisations, bodies and initiatives whose activities are relevant to wetland conservation and wise use to promote to their constituencies the messages in the Changwon Declaration;
13. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and others to find the resources to translate the “Changwon Declaration” into local languages and to facilitate its dissemination and understanding as widely as possible;
14. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat and Standing Committee to develop and include indicators in the National Report Format for COP11 concerning the dissemination, uptake and impact of the “Changwon Declaration” and to report on this to Contracting Parties and others; and
15. REQUESTS the Standing Committee, the STRP, CEPA National Focal Points, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, the International Organisation Partners (IOPs), and other interested parties to advise the Secretariat on their experiences of the uptake of the Declaration in order to inform COP11.

## ANNEX

**The Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands****WHY SHOULD YOU READ AND USE THIS DECLARATION?**

As the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands approaches four decades of existence, it continues to grow and to focus its agenda on the critical priorities for the environment at global, national and local levels. It is the lead intergovernmental authority on wetlands<sup>1</sup> and on ensuring that the contributions wetlands make to progress on other agendas are recognised and strengthened.

Human well-being depends on healthy wetlands. Policymaking, planning, decision-making and management action by a wide range of sectors, at all levels from international to local, can benefit from the global consensus input that the Ramsar Convention provides. This includes the identification of the relevance of wetlands, and the importance of their conservation and wise use, in ensuring security of the benefits that nature provides, including humankind's future security of water, food, health, energy and livelihoods – issues that are all closely interrelated. It also includes technical know-how, guidance, models and support networks to help in putting this knowledge to practical use.

The Changwon Declaration presents an overview of priority action steps which together show “how to” deliver some of the world's most critical environmental sustainability goals.

It is relevant to all of us, everywhere, who are concerned with the future of our environment.

***Where does this Declaration come from?***

The mission of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) is:

“the conservation and wise use<sup>2</sup> of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

The Conference of the Convention's Contracting Parties held its 10<sup>th</sup> meeting in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008, on the theme of “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”<sup>3</sup>, focusing on the link between human well-being and the functions of wetlands and the identification of positive actions in this regard.

***Who is this Declaration for?***

The Conference addresses this Declaration to all stakeholders in environmental governance and management, particularly those in positions of leadership, both in relevant fora at global level, including heads of government, and equally in “hands-on” delivery at local and river basin levels.

## ***Why is it not “just another Declaration”?***

Declarations have been issued from many international environmental conferences. The Changwon Declaration aims not to cover “standard” ground, but to add value by:

- being directed primarily to audiences beyond the Ramsar Convention itself, and to opportunities for action;
- offering positive, practical action steps; and
- defining the ways in which the Declaration’s impact will be assured.

## **Your call to action**

Everyone has a stake in the outcomes that are supported by this Declaration.

In particular, if you are a planner, policymaker, decision-maker, elected representative or manager in any environmental, land or resource-use sector, or in the fields of education and communication, human health, economics or livelihoods, then this text is directed personally to you!

Positive actions for ensuring human well-being and security outcomes in the future are given under five priority thematic headings below, followed by two key areas of cross-cutting delivery mechanisms.

## **Water and wetlands**

**There is an urgent need to change water governance.** Instead of being demand-driven, which drives over-allocation, water governance should treat wetlands as our “*natural water infrastructure*”, integral to water resource management at the scale of river basins. **Continuing with “business as usual” is not an option.**

**Our increasing demand for, and over-use of, water jeopardizes human well-being and the environment.** Access to safe water, human health, food production, economic development and geopolitical stability are made less secure by the degradation of wetlands driven by the rapidly widening gap between water demand and supply.

**There is often not enough water to meet our direct human needs and to maintain the wetlands we need.** Even with current attempts to maintain water flows for ecosystems, the capacity of wetlands to continue to deliver benefits to people and biodiversity, including clean and reliable water supplies, is declining. Actions to support water allocation to ecosystems, such as environmental flow, water ‘caps’, new water management legislation, and payments for water for ecosystems, need to be redoubled and strengthened.

**Climate change is increasing uncertainty in water management and making it more difficult to close the gap between water demand and supply.** We are increasingly going to feel the effects of climate change most directly through changes in the distribution and availability of water, increasing pressures on the health of wetlands.

To close this “water gap”, we need to:

- **use our available water more efficiently;**
- **stop our wetlands from becoming degraded or lost** – based on clearly recognising that we all depend on healthy wetlands for our water security, and that wetland services are currently being lost at a faster rate than in any other ecosystem;
- **wisely manage our wetlands** – by always ensuring they have enough water for them to continue to be the source of the quantity and quality of the water we need for food and energy production, drinking water and sanitation. Failure to do so makes our water problems worse, since **wetlands are the only source of water we have.**

## Climate change and wetlands

**Wetlands are vital parts of the natural infrastructure we need for mitigating and adapting to climate change.** Degradation and loss of wetlands make climate change worse and leave people more vulnerable to climate change impacts such as floods, droughts and famine.

**Governments need to include water and wetland management in effective strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change at national level.** Decision-makers need to recognise the natural infrastructure of wetlands as a major asset in combating and adapting to climate change.

**Water and well-functioning wetlands play a key role in responding to climate change and in regulating natural climatic processes** (through the water cycle, maintenance of biodiversity, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and buffering of impacts). Conservation and wise use of wetlands helps to reduce the negative economic, social and ecological effects that may result.

**Developing opportunities should be seized for collaboration** among international technical bodies involved in climate change (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel), **to share understanding and harmonise analyses**, especially in relation to wetlands/water/climate linkages.

## People's livelihoods and wetlands

**Action is needed to maintain the benefits provided by wetlands for economic development and the livelihoods of poor people.** Investment in maintenance of the services provided by wetlands should be integral to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and related policies and plans.

**Wise use, management and restoration of wetlands should be used to build opportunities for improving people's livelihoods**, particularly for wetland-dependent, marginalised and vulnerable people. Wetland degradation affects livelihoods and exacerbates poverty, particularly in marginalised and vulnerable sections of society.

**Wetland/livelihoods linkages need to be better analysed and documented.** Capacity and partnerships should be promoted at multiple levels to support learning, collecting and sharing knowledge about these linkages.

**Sustainable wetland management should be supported by indigenous and traditional knowledge, recognition of cultural identities associated with wetlands, stewardship promoted by economic incentives, and diversification of the support base for livelihoods.**

## **People's health and wetlands**

**Interrelationships between wetland ecosystems and human health should be a key component of national and international policies, plans and strategies.**

Development sectors, including mining, other extractive industries, infrastructure development, water and sanitation, energy, agriculture, transport and others can cause direct or indirect effects on wetlands. This leads to negative impacts on wetland ecosystem services, including those that support human health and well-being. Managers and decision-makers in such development sectors need to be more aware of this and take all possible measures to avoid these negative impacts.

**The health and wetland sectors need to co-manage the links between wetland ecological character<sup>4</sup> and human health.** Wetland and water managers must identify and implement interventions that benefit both wetland ecosystem “health” and human health.

It is already clear that many of the current and continuing pressures on wetlands and that are driving trends in human health are rooted in issues of water: in relation to waterborne transmission of diseases and vectors and/or as a result of dwindling supplies of water of suitable quality for food production, sanitation, and drinking water.

## **Land use, land-use change and wetland biodiversity declines**

**Decisions on land-use change must integrate adequate knowledge of the range of benefits, and their values, that wetlands provide for people and biodiversity.** Better knowledge and understanding of the costs and benefits of changes to wetland ecosystems lead to better decision-making.

**Decision-making should, wherever possible, give priority to safeguarding naturally-functioning wetlands** and the benefits they provide, especially through ensuring the sustainability of ecosystem services while recognising that human-made wetland systems often also make a significant contribution to water and food security objectives.

**Actions are required to address the root causes of the loss of biodiversity and to reverse these losses,** by reference to agreed recovery targets, including targets to be agreed in the follow-up to the “2010 target”<sup>5</sup> concerning significant reduction in the rate of decline of biodiversity.

***What types of cross-cutting mechanisms are most helpful in delivering all this?***

## **Planning, decision-making, finance and economics**



**Policy development and decision-making in response to each of the issues addressed in this Declaration are (very often) a question of tradeoffs across multiple sectoral policy objectives.** Sound decision-making depends on wise balancing of legitimate objectives that are interconnected, even if full and detailed information is not available.

Good use of rapid and practical decision-support tools (such as rapid assessment, conflict resolution, mediation, decision-trees and cost-benefit analysis) can often be of critical assistance in identifying issues and policy options.

**Full recognition should be given to the significance of wetlands in spatial planning,** especially wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites<sup>6</sup>), so that the values they represent can properly inform land-use and investment priority-setting and the adoption of necessary safeguards.

**Sufficiently comprehensive approaches need to be taken to cost-benefit analysis,** to reflect the reality that investment in the maintenance of wetland ecological character is usually a much more cost-effective strategy than later remediation for loss of wetland services.

**Adequate and sustainable financing for wetland conservation and wise use is essential,** and this can be helped especially by innovative financial instruments and partnerships. Current funding levels fall far short of what is needed and the majority of what is provided is directed towards short-term actions, with insufficient sustainability in the long term.

## **Management of knowledge**

**Basic information on the global extent and characterisation of wetlands urgently needs to be enhanced.** There are increasing opportunities to make good use of evolving earth observation techniques and other information technologies.

**Organisations with shared interests in data and information and knowledge (including indigenous and traditional knowledge) relevant to the issues covered in this Declaration should intensify efforts to seek common, harmonised and accessible approaches,** so that knowledge and experience (for example, concerning good practices) can be shared more effectively, including through appropriate information technology applications.

---

## **Ensuring impact**

Measures of the success of this Declaration will include:

- its existence becoming widely known, reported, translated and remembered;
- its messages forming part of the briefing for government delegations to relevant international meetings;
- its messages being taken up in planning and decision-making in local and river basin level governance/management processes;
- its relevant elements being incorporated into national-level plans, decisions and action programmes;

- its elements being incorporated into international policy statements, decisions and action programmes.

### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> “**Wetlands**” encompass a broader range of ecosystems than is often realised. Article 1.1 of the Ramsar Convention defines them as “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.

<sup>2</sup> “**Wise use**” of wetlands has been defined under the Convention as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. (The phrase “in the context of sustainable development” is intended to recognise that whilst some wetland development is inevitable and that many developments have important benefits to society, developments can be facilitated in sustainable ways by approaches elaborated under the Convention, and it is not appropriate to imply that ‘development’ is an objective for every wetland).

<sup>3</sup> In recent years, Ramsar **Conferences of the Contracting Parties (COPs)** have been given **themed titles** to reflect priority issues of the moment in the Convention’s evolution. Previous themes have emphasised different aspects of the links between wetlands and people, and the theme for COP10, “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”, positions the Convention in relation to an emerging understanding about the critical links between wetlands and human health and sets the context for the adoption of new decisions in this area.

<sup>4</sup> The “**ecological character**” of wetlands is a key concept of the Ramsar Convention, defined as “the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time”. (Within this context, ecosystem benefits are defined in accordance with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment definition of ecosystem services as “the benefits that people receive from ecosystems”).

<sup>5</sup> The “**2010 Biodiversity target**”, adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and by Heads of State at the 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is: “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.”

<sup>6</sup> “**Ramsar sites**” (Wetlands of International Importance) are recognised and designated by the governments of the world that are Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention. They form the largest global network of “protected areas”, currently (as at October 2008) covering over 161 million hectares in over 1,770 sites.