

Proposed changes to the Draft Resolutions for COP 10 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

In this document, we highlight (in bold) the proposed improvements to the Draft Resolutions for COP X in Korea. Please contact us for any further questions. We hope for your support in Korea.

Jane Madgwick
CEO Wetlands International

Resolution VI: Regional initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

Amend this article:

21. A regional initiative requires both political and financial support from **most and preferably** all Contracting Parties and other relevant partners in the region. **The initiative must not be opposed by a Contracting Party in the region.** A substantial support from a host country is especially important if a coordinating office is to be established.

Explanation:

The amendment is consistent with that proposed and agreed at the last Standing Committee meeting, in recognition that often regional initiatives are developed by a number of CPs in a region and that other CPs join at a later stage. They are often not willing or able to commit to formal support when they are not actively participating. If the text would stay as it is, then some very promising initiatives may not go forward – and some of the current initiatives would not have been developed. It might also limit the geographical ambition of a regional initiative and therefore reduce its potential. The important issue is not that all sign up initially, but that the initiative will not be blocked or opposed by any CP.

Resolution X.11: Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions

Delete this article:

16: ENCOURAGES the Secretariat to continue working closely with the Danone Group and the Star Alliance in mutually beneficial ways and to be prepared to develop similar relationships with the private sector where these can be beneficial to the Convention and consistent with the Convention's mission and objectives;

Explanation:

This is an issue for Draft Resolution X.12. It is here out of place. The relations with for instance CBD or UNFCCC are of a totally different order than for instance the Danone Group.

Draft Resolution X.14 : A Framework for Ramsar data and information needs

Add between 1 and 2:

AWARE of the Ramsar Sites Information Service developed and managed by Wetlands International to support Contracting Parties in their implementation of wetland conservation and wise use

RECOGNISING the critical role that waterbird data gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers annually and compiled into the Waterbird Population Estimates publication

by Wetlands International in identifying and designating Ramsar sites of international importance

Add between 5 and 6:

INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to include in its core budget resources that will help secure the continuation of data gathering and analyses that are critical to site designation and implementation of its Strategy

Explanation:

These core data management processes and analyses are critical to implementation of the Ramsar Convention and its future Strategy and yet their continuation is threatened due to lack of resources.

Annex: A Framework for Ramsar data and information needs

The Framework should mention by name the relevant IOP that is involved in and committed to assisting in delivering each objective, rather than grouping the 5 organisations together as “IOPs”. It is usually just one organisation. MEAs and IGOs are mentioned by name.

Resolution X.21: Guidance on responding to the continued spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1

We explicitly welcome and recommend this resolution. Wetlands International was actively involved in drafting the Resolution as part of the Task Force for Avian Influenza and Wild Birds.

ResolutionX. 22: Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways

Add in 6

ALARMED at the continuing decline in abundance of many waterbirds throughout the world, resulting not only from unsustainable exploitation, but especially from the loss and degradation of wetland habitats (in particular through both small-scale and larger-scale land claims and other land use changes of intertidal wetlands), and AWARE that anthropogenic impacts on habitats, including climate change, are increasingly concentrating the distribution of birds into fewer and smaller areas, which can increase their vulnerability to waterbird diseases and inadvertently contribute to the spread of waterbird disease such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) [(as outlined in Resolution [COP10 DR 21))], which also has impacts on humans, domestic agriculture and large scale commercial enterprises in poultry production.

Explanation:

The spread of the disease is often a result of transport between large commercial poultry farms as and a lack of biosecurity in small domestic but also large commercial farms.

Changes in 22:

URGES the governing bodies of flyway initiatives to take steps to share knowledge and expertise on best practices in the development and implementation of flyway-scale waterbird conservation policies and practices, including successful means of disseminating critical supporting data **such as the Critical Sites Network Tool being developed in the AEWA region** and information to stakeholders and others, and URGES the Secretariats of Ramsar, CMS and AEWA to work together with their governance and scientific subsidiary bodies and other interested organizations to establish a mechanism for such sharing of knowledge and experience; and

Resolution X.23: Wetlands and human health and well-being

Add in preamble

Recalling Resolution 13/1 of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in which environmental protection is reaffirmed as one of the three pillars of sustainable development and countries are urged to provide assistance to achieve integrated water resource management including *inter alia* enhancing ecosystem sustainability as a way to support the provision of human-well-being (*para (d) (v)*)

Explanation

IWRM is an important conceptual approach and framework for wetland management, to which governments are committed, for example through the MDGs.. The Ramsar Convention has developed detailed guidance on wetlands and IWRM for this purpose. it is important for the Resolution to emphasise this water management link as it could form an important means to mainstream wetland conservation into the human health agenda, especially given the current focus on issues such as sanitation that have a strong bearing on health in and around wetland areas.

Alter the pre-amble (10.)

ALSO RECOGNIZING that there are a number of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases such as ~~HIV/AIDS~~ and schistosomiasis, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) that can create human health problems associated with wetlands and water, and TAKING NOTE of the guidance on wetlands and HPAI in [COP10 draft Resolution X.21];

Explanation

There is no known causal link between AIDS and wetlands!

Add in para 18.

...their capacity to deliver ecosystem services is diminished; and that this has direct and indirect effects on human health, including through loss of food production, loss of livelihoods, the emergence of infectious diseases and disease epidemics, **vulnerability to disasters and extreme events** and the spread of water-related diseases previously thought to be under control

Add in para 25

ENCOURAGES those concerned with wetland conservation and management to **encourage on-going and new research investigating the links between wetlands and health and** to bring information on the scientifically proven contributions that naturally-functioning wetland ecosystems make to good health and well-being....

Explanation re para 25

This was a key recommendation from the Wetlands International - Shaoxing City Symposium that is not adequately addressed in the current Resolution. Research is urgently needed to clarify these linkages.

Amend in para 26

URGES Contracting Parties, the human health sector and all relevant stakeholders to collaborate in assessing the consequences of wetland **conservation and** management measures linked with human health, **and vice versa the consequences of current practices and developments that aim to maintain or enhance human health on wetland ecological character and health**, including the identification of appropriate trade-offs in decision-making.

Explanation

Former wording places the focus too strongly on assessing the consequences of wetland management on human health when there also reverse relationships to be considered that are not included in this Resolution. Measures that address human health problems also affect ecosystem health – for example interactions with wetlands and sanitation issues in urban and peri-urban situations. Wetlands can harbour disease and therefore may be a target for drainage or destruction, whereas alternative management approaches would enable wetlands to provide part of the solution. These issues have also been raised by the CSD considerations on water, sanitation and human settlements.

Resolution X.24 Climate Change and Wetlands

Add between 16 and 17:

CALLS UPON the Contracting Parties of the UN-FCCC to include incentives and / or targets to reduce the emissions from peatland degradation and loss in both Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 countries, in any new global climate treaty.

Explanation:

Peatland emissions fall currently not under a mandatory accounting system, cannot be used to correct national emission figures (such as the case for emissions or sequestration from forestry). A post Kyoto climate treaty should definitely include peatland emissions (10-15% of all CO₂ emissions).

Add:

Add article between 26 and 27:

ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to include the restoration and management of coastal wetlands as a vitally important strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation, resulting in the attenuation of storm and sea level rise impacts, such as loss of coastal habitats and salinisation;

Add article between 26 and 27:

ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to include the restoration of mountain wetlands as a vitally important strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation, for example reducing the impacts of extremes in precipitation and attenuating the impacts of melting glaciers and the related reduction of water storage in mountain areas;

Explanation:

Mountain and coastal wetlands urgently need to be acknowledged and targeted in adaptation strategies as major contributors to adaptation to extreme weather events. Article 26 alone is too limited and generalized as it just focuses on river basins and their wetlands,.

Add:

CALLS FOR STRP together with Wetlands International to undertake special investigation on potential adaptive strategies for Arctic wetlands; to prepare in cooperation with Arctic Council list of NO GO Arctic zones for countries consideration during COP 11.

Explanation:

Most of the Arctic is wetland, including Ramsar wetland types: permafrost peatlands (polygonal, shallow peat tundra, palsa mires); shallow lakes; rivers and deltas; periodically flooded lands; coastal wetlands; shallow sea water. Arctic wetlands are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and yet they are not given sufficient attention by the Arctic Council. The Ramsar Convention should address this as a matter of urgency.

Resolution X.25 Wetlands and “Biofuels”

Add between 13 and 14:

URGES Contracting Parties to exclude peatlands from production with biofuel crops that need drainage and to develop social and environmental criteria to determine possible incentives for biofuel use and production.

Explanation:

The rate and biodiversity/ livelihood/ climate consequences of peatland degradation due to palm oil production is alarming. This article is in line with criteria currently developed in the EU (Renewables Directive).

Draft Resolution X 26: Wetlands and Extractive Industries

Amend 3:

AWARE of the potential for certain activities related to extractive industries, if not appropriately managed and regulated, to impact directly and indirectly negatively on the ecological character of wetlands, including Ramsar sites, and RECOGNIZING the particular vulnerability of wetlands to the impacts of extractive industries, given not only the role of wetlands as sources of **key ecosystem services including** water provision and

storage, but also the potential for impacts to be transferred both upstream and downstream within a river basin;

Add between 3 and 4:

RECALLING Resolution VIII – 3 and VIII - 17 about peatlands and their value of carbon store and the irreversible damage caused by peat exploitation.

Explanation:

This is the extractive industry with a most direct and negative impacts on wetlands. It should be named explicitly.

Changes to 16:

URGES Contracting Parties to review, and where necessary revise, regulatory and permitting procedures related to all phases of extractive industrial activities in order to ensure that **impacts on** wetland ecosystems and their ecosystem services are **avoided and minimized as far as possible and any unavoidable impacts are sufficiently compensated for** ~~addressed in such procedures.~~ **These procedures should** allow sufficient time for collection of wetland inventory and baseline information to support effective Environmental Impact Assessment, permitting and oversight of extractive industries, especially with respect to enforcement of compliance with the conditions of authorizations and licences, and particularly to ensure that local and indigenous communities have appropriate opportunities to participate in decision-making, applying as needed the guidance adopted in Resolution VII.7 *Guidelines for reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands* and Resolution VII.8 *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous peoples' participation in the management of wetlands* (1999);

Explanation:

The word “addressed” is too vague and open to interpretation. The avoid-minimise-compensate approach is accepted best practice by leading extractive industry groups.

Changes to 17:

URGES Contracting Parties to ensure that existing or new extractive industrial development projects address the need to **avoid and minimize as far as possible and** compensate for the loss of livelihoods that may result, directly or indirectly, from the impacts of these projects on wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services, for example by supporting, in consultation with local communities, the adoption of alternative sustainable livelihood activities, **and by supporting measures to compensate for the impacts on wetland biodiversity;**

Explanation:

To be consistent with the approach in para 16 and promote best practice approaches.

Add between 16 and 17:

URGES Contracting Parties to exclude all Ramsar sites from direct or indirect impacts of extractive activities unless - applying the precautionary principle – the SEA or EIA does not predict any substantial or irreversible loss of wetland values and services.

Explanation:

For this convention, maintaining the conservation status of Ramsar sites are critical. Extractive industries that occur well outside Ramsar sites can nevertheless cause significant effects e.g. the impacts of spills from mining tailing lagoons on downstream wetlands (ref Donana in Southern Spain).

Add between 16 and 17:

URGES Contracting Parties to prevent any further exploitation of peat.

Explanation:

Peat extraction causes irreversible damage to the wetland and accelerates climate change. Further extraction should be prevented.

Draft Resolution X.27: Wetlands and Urbanisation.

Amend 6:

6. CONCERNED that many wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments are or are becoming degraded through encroachment of surrounding populations, pollution, poorly managed waste and infilling or other developments, ~~often driven by misguided public health motives that fail to recognize the balance of human health advantages of wetlands as expressed in Resolution [COP10 DR 23] on Wetlands and human health and well-being,~~ and that these activities have diminished both the ecosystem services that urban wetlands can provide and the recognition of their value and importance by both decision-makers and urban communities;

Explanation:

It narrows the scope of what is to blame - there are many more important pressures driving degradation of wetlands in urban areas than health motives. We believe this misrepresents the tone and balance of the human wealth Resolution in which it is recognised that wetlands also can present very real threats to human health that need to be dealt with in a precautionary way. An alternative text addressing this issue is proposed below.

Add (between 6 and 7?):

RECOGNIZING that whilst urban wetlands are of great importance to human health, the relationship between wetlands and disease is complex and development of human settlements in wetland areas should take into account and be informed by the provisions of Resolution [COP10 DR.23] and its associated Information Document [COP10 DOC.28]

Amend 9:

9. ALSO CONCERNED about the increasingly adverse impacts on wetlands of the consumption patterns of urban populations and the increasing demand from cities on ~~the Earth's~~ wetland ecosystems for water and other natural resources and services provided ~~by wetlands;~~ and

Explanation:

Omit superfluous text.

Draft Resolution X 28: Wetlands and Poverty Reduction

This Resolution was informed by the advice of Wetlands International, following regional consultations with CPs.

Add to 8:

8. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to identify ways and means of further implementing the framework for action on wetlands and poverty reduction adopted in Resolution IX.14, and particularly action to reduce poverty amongst communities living in and around Ramsar sites, and to report on their successes, challenges, constraints and opportunities in achieving action on wetlands and poverty reduction **as part of the National Reports;**

Resolution X 31: Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems

Add between article 2 and 3:

AWARE that dry cultivation taking place in certain parts of South America, will result in declines in waterbird populations and other aquatic taxa;

AWARE that a common activity in rice fields is duck hunting which, unless carefully managed, can be a threat to waterfowl populations that depend on these habitats;

AWARE that the “Rice and Waterbirds Working Group” through Wetlands International could provide further information and expertise;

Add as a third element is article 14:

URGES responsible use and reduction of pesticides/agrochemicals which are the main threat to biodiversity in rice fields.