

023 Prioritising wetlands conservation and restoration to tackle the dual climate and biodiversity crises

AWARE that wetlands are exceptionally biodiverse and essential for water security, climate regulation, human livelihoods and economic development, yet face disproportionately large threats compared to marine and terrestrial ecosystems;

CONCERNED that 85% of wetlands are destroyed or heavily degraded according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), particularly as a result of the combined effects of pollution and climate change;

CONSIDERING the key role that wetlands play in carbon storage and regulation of greenhouse gases as well as in balancing the Earth's climate system and that degraded wetlands can become carbon emitters;

RECALLING the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands aims to conserve and wisely use all wetlands, and the contribution of wetland conservation and restoration to implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) (including Targets 2, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 14), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement (including Articles 4, 5 and 7 on carbon sinks) and Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Riyadh Political Declaration;

ALSO RECALLING United Nations Environment Programme Environment Assembly Resolution UNEP/EA.5/RES.4 *Sustainable lake management* and IUCN Recommendation 6.107 *Integration of nature-based solutions into strategies to combat climate change* (Hawai'i, 2016);

ACKNOWLEDGING IUCN's commitment to "water security and stewardship" within its 20-year Strategic Vision to 2045, including "promoting equitable river basin planning and governance" and "improving land use planning and use of protected and conserved areas to safeguard freshwater resources";

WELCOMING the engagement of IUCN, alongside countries, non-governmental organisations, private sector and others in voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiatives notably the Freshwater Challenge focused on the restoration and protection of rivers, lakes and other freshwater wetlands, and the Mangrove Breakthrough focused on mangrove conservation and restoration;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. REQUESTS IUCN States and Members to prioritise wetland conservation and restoration as strategic actions for climate solution:

a. emphasising benefits, such as greenhouse gas emissions reduction, adaptation and biodiversity conservation; and

b. including collaboration with UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); and

2. INVITES governments and local authorities to:

a. incorporate ambitious wetland targets and actions into their Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans, embedding wetland Nature-based Solutions as a vital component of national climate plans, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and other national plans and strategies;

b. ensure adequate safeguards to protect wetlands in the energy transition;

c. mobilise additional funding for large-scale wetland restoration through public-private partnerships and innovative financial mechanisms; and

d. ensure that wetland-based high-integrity (teal and blue) carbon credits are included in voluntary carbon markets following the mitigation hierarchy, with rigorous safeguards to protect biodiversity and local communities' rights; and

3. INVITES State Members to engage with the Freshwater Challenge, Mangrove Breakthrough and other relevant wetland conservation and restoration initiatives; and

4. REQUESTS IUCN Commissions to consider support and guidance for wetland restoration and protection in their actions by:

a. promoting existing tools and guidance and identifying gaps; and

b. incorporating wetland restoration, management and protection into programmes, publications and policy recommendations.