

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

AWARE that wetlands have incredible geodiversity and have exceptional biodiversity; that wetlands are found across all altitudes and climatological zones including high mountain areas, arid and dryland countries, across temperate and tropical zones, and across freshwater, saline/brackish and inter-tidal biomes; that diverse wetlands provide a wide range of ecosystem services essential for water security, food security, climate regulation, disaster risk reduction, livelihood activities, traditional cultural practices, and economic development, yet face disproportionately large threats compared to marine and terrestrial ecosystems;

CONCERNED that over 85% of wetland area has been lost according to the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), particularly as a result of the combined effects of pollution, climate change, and development activities;

RECOGNIZING the role of all wetlands, including urban and artificial wetlands as biodiversity hotspots and areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, whose conservation and restoration benefits biodiversity and climate change mitigation/adaptation; and NOTING the multiple climate, ecological and social services all wetlands provide for humans and ecosystems such as supporting biodiversity, protection from the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, and promoting wellbeing of local communities;

CONSIDERING the key role that all 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 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 14), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (including Articles 4 and 5 on carbon sinks and Article 7 on Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, 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. ENCOURAGES all IUCN Members to acknowledge and prioritise the conservation and restoration of all wetlands as one of the strategic actions for climate and biodiversity solutions:

a. emphasising benefits, such as carbon storage, greenhouse gas emission reduction, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation including waterfowl and shorebird conservation, and recreation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and

b. including collaboration with UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the 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 Nature-based Solutions, and respecting human rights 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 all wetlands, including forested wetlands, in the energy transition;

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

d. encourage inclusion of wetland-based high-integrity (teal and blue) carbon credits in voluntary carbon markets following the mitigation hierarchy, with rigorous safeguards to protect biodiversity, geodiversity, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' rights, as set out in UNDRIP; and

e) generate scientific and technical knowledge and data through inventories of wetlands highlighting traditional uses and knowledge, geological interest, cultural values, scientific and educational opportunities, and sustainable tourism, particularly in data-poor, arid, or highly modified environments; and

f) ensure relevant coordination with international, national and local stakeholders, including collaboration with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands' Programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA), and improve integration with global wetland monitoring platforms (e.g., Ramsar Global Wetland Outlook) and national environmental data platforms; and

3. INVITES State Members to engage with the Freshwater Challenge, Mangrove Breakthrough and other relevant wetland conservation and restoration initiatives to support the development of indicators to monitor wetland restoration progress; and

4. REQUESTS IUCN Commissions to consider support and guidance for all 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, including forested wetlands, arid-zone and saline wetlands, and urban and artificial wetlands into programmes, publications and policy recommendations, respecting the human rights of the communities that live within and rely upon wetlands.