

WCC-2012-Res-068-EN

The importance of assessing the water needs of wetlands in order to preserve their ecological functions

CONSIDERING the basic ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of hydrological regimes and as habitat for characteristic fauna and flora;

RECOGNIZING that wetlands provide a wide range of ecosystem services which contribute to human well-being, that their conservation and wise use is vital for the continued provision of these services, and that wetlands are both sources of water and water users;

NOTING that the lack of hydrological resources for wetlands is due to the growing human demand for water extraction which is one of the main factors that produces continuous alterations and causes the deterioration and disappearance of wetlands and their services;

RECALLING that the growing demand for water and its overexploitation endanger human well-being and the environment, and that there is often insufficient water to satisfy direct human needs and to maintain the wetlands that we need;

CONSCIOUS that it is vital to manage and protect our wetlands wisely, ensuring the availability of the quantities of water that they need to maintain their ecological characteristics, and thus to improve people's means of survival, in particular for people who are vulnerable, marginalized or dependant on wetlands;

HIGHLIGHTING that knowledge of the water needs of wetlands would contribute effectively to the wise use of the latter, establishing the water contributions necessary and assessing potential alterations through appropriate monitoring programmes;

RECOGNIZING that establishing and consolidating the water needs of wetlands would contribute to better management of river basins, harmonizing water use strategies with those relating to land use, considering the importance of the water management cycle and the relationship that exists between ground and surface waters for the purpose of their management and administration;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that the scientific methods used to justify decisions on the management of water resources pertaining to wetlands, including establishing the environmental water needs of wetlands, must be credible and must be supported by the opinion of the scientific community;

HIGHLIGHTING that organizations with shared interests in terms of data, information and knowledge (including indigenous and traditional knowledge) must increase their efforts in seeking to adopt common approaches, which are in harmony and accessible, so that their knowledge and experience (for example, in best practice) may be exchanged more efficiently, including through appropriate uses of information technology; and

RECALLING that, as a result of progress in the field of wetland management, a set of technical and scientific guidelines and other materials are available for the application of measures to promote conservation and wise use of wetlands, as well as allocation of water resources, with the objective of maintaining the ecological characteristics of wetlands;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:

1. CALLS UPON States to renew the commitment to assessing and guaranteeing appropriate allocation and management of water resources for the maintenance of the ecological functions of wetlands, and to ensuring that the principles stated by IUCN (i.e. the ecosystems approach, sustainability, etc.) are incorporated into their national policies on water resources and wetlands;
2. PROPOSES that States compile credible information and bring it to the attention of those directly concerned with responsibilities in order to improve management of wetlands of ecological importance, in particular the sites listed under the Ramsar Convention, including administrators of wetland sites, ministries, governmental departments and bodies, organizations responsible for water and river basin management, non-governmental organizations and civil society, encouraging the aforesaid interested parties to take into account the importance of establishing the water needs of wetlands in adopting decisions and in activities related to ensuring the wise use of wetlands through preservation of their ecological characteristics;
3. URGES the Director General, the IUCN Commissions and scientific community in general to develop projects, initiatives and activities to identify valid and appropriate methods for assessing the water needs of wetlands, and to ensure immediate dissemination of the results of such assessments among its offices, the IUCN Commissions and membership as well as governments with the aim of taking informed decisions on wetlands management;
4. INVITES the Director General to use the Union's Observer Status at the United Nations General Assembly to disseminate this approach and seek its formal adoption within the United Nations structure and its components;
5. URGES riparian States with wetlands located in transboundary river basins to work together for the equitable, reasonable and optimum utilization of water resources;
6. URGES the Parties to the Ramsar Convention to approve at the 12th Conference of the Parties scheduled in 2015 in Uruguay, a technical resolution with guidelines for the application of methods which facilitate assessing the water needs of wetlands for the purpose of maintaining their ecological functions and ensuring water allocation;
7. URGES multilateral and bilateral donors to ensure that assessing water needs for the purpose of maintaining the ecological functions and production potential of wetlands is fully taken into account in the creation, planning and application of management projects for river basins and water resources, taking into consideration the circumstances and special limitations of the countries involved; and
8. ENCOURAGES States and other interested organizations to create projects and other activities that promote and demonstrate best practice in assessing the water needs of wetlands for the purpose of maintaining their ecological functions, to make these examples of best practice available to other interested parties through the information exchange mechanisms of IUCN, and also the Joint Ramsar/CBD River Basin Initiative, and to provide information about the successes achieved and lessons learned from these activities.

State and agency Members of the United States abstained during the vote on this Motion for reasons given in the US General Statement on the IUCN Resolutions Process.