

High Level Segment
Agriculture Roundtable

Statement of behalf of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
Presented by the Convention's Secretary General Martha Rojas Urrego

Mr Chairman, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the government of Mexico for hosting this Conference of the Parties and for the initiative to focus the High Level Segment on Mainstreaming biodiversity, which is critical to achieve the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The linkage with agriculture is particularly important for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. I would like to highlight two points in this regard:

First, it is important to consider the role of biodiversity in **water** availability and quality, and more specifically on to the role of wetlands as critical infrastructure of the water cycle, providing water for consumption, irrigating crops, fisheries, aquaculture and biodiversity.

Only 3% of the water in the planet is freshwater. And it is increasingly under threat. Recent studies predict a 40% supply gap in 2030 and this will be further affected by climate change. Agriculture currently uses 70% of water and we will need to double irrigation by 2050 to grow enough food to meet the demand of an estimated population of 9 billion.

Thus, an important aspect of mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture is to conserve and sustainably use wetlands to ensure the quality and quantity of water needed for agriculture, while keeping water available for other uses, including for biodiversity. This requires the development and promotion of integrated approaches to water and river based management in agricultural policies that include the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. This is part of Sustainable Development Goal 6, and more specifically of target 6.6. on the protection of water-related ecosystems.

Secondly, we need to address the negative impacts of agriculture in biodiversity by identifying and scaling up best practices that deliver both agriculture and biodiversity outcomes. This is particularly important for wetlands which are being lost at faster rates than forests and their biodiversity is declining more rapidly than that of other terrestrial and marine ecosystems. A good example is rice, which grows on wetland paddies and feeds three billion people. The Ramsar Convention has developed guidance and is supporting efforts to manage rice paddies in an integrated way to ensure the production of this important staple, but also the values of these wetlands as a habitat for birds, through practices such as the reduction of pesticides. We have examples in which promoting these biodiversity values has also resulted in additional benefits, for example in tourism.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, with its 169 Parties, is taking steps to mainstream biodiversity values of wetlands in agriculture as a means to ensure the conservation and wise use of these important ecosystems, thus reaching the Convention's Strategic Plan and the Aichi targets and ensuring sustainable development for all.