



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS  
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES  
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES  
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



CBD

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Joint release by Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and Peter Bridgewater, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

release of the report of the expert meeting on  
**WATER, WETLANDS, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

(the report is available at

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/case-studies/wtr/cs-wtr-ramsar-en.pdf>

Wetlands present major opportunities to avoid the unmanageable and manage the unavoidable. Better awareness of wetland-biodiversity-climate change inter-linkages can significantly improve policies and management in a rapidly changing world. This year's theme for the International Day for Biological Diversity, Biodiversity and Climate Change, is a fitting moment for us to launch this major new report on climate change. The report is filled with key issues, messages and responses, backed by supporting information, to help governments and the general community.

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that the main impact of climate change will be on the earth's hydrological cycle and, therefore, wetlands are particularly vulnerable. Wetlands are amongst the world's most threatened ecosystems. Wetland services for people, underpinned by biodiversity, are simultaneously vulnerable to climate change and yet can help us cope with the impacts of climate change. Mangroves can protect communities from the impacts of increasingly frequent and severe storm events; maintaining or rehabilitating river systems can reduce the impacts of catastrophic floods – more cost effectively than building traditional flood protection responses. A key lesson is to learn to engineer our responses to climate change by working with nature, not against it.

Wetlands also play a key role in combating the emission of Greenhouse Gases – the primary driver of climate change. Although wetlands cover only 6% of the Earth's land surface they store about 35% of global terrestrial carbon. Wetland systems containing peat (peatlands) are the most efficient carbon stores of all terrestrial ecosystems. They store twice the carbon present in forest biomass of the world and their storage is a very long term, contrary to forests. Yet despite this, degradation of peatlands continues unabated, whilst world attention continues to focus elsewhere.

For example, emissions from degraded peatlands in South-east Asia far exceed fossil fuel contributions from major polluting countries. Investments in carbon emission avoidance through peatland restoration can be up to 100 times more cost effective than other measures. A conclusion of the report is that one of the most immediate and important practical actions that can be taken regarding climate change issues is to halt the degradation of peatlands in South-East Asia and promote sustainable management of these ecosystems including sustainable biofuel production.

The CBD, Ramsar Convention and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are co-operating on the subject of wetlands, biodiversity and climate change and we are pleased to launch the report to better inform public debate on these issues.



**Information for Journalists:****The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it currently has 190 Parties—189 States and the European Community—who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal.

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**The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, (Ramsar, Iran 1971)**

The Convention on Wetlands (popularly known as the Ramsar Convention) provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The convention covers all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognizing wetlands as ecosystems that are extremely important for biodiversity conservation in general and for the well-being of human communities.

For further information about the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, please contact the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland (tel +41 22 999 0170, fax +41 22 999 0169, e-mail [peck@ramsar.org](mailto:peck@ramsar.org)).