



**STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA  
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on the occasion of

**WORLD WETLANDS DAY – 2 FEBRUARY 2021**

*"Wetlands and water"*

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as this year marks 50 years of dedication and progress toward the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Water is one of our most precious resources. It sustains all life on Earth. Although it may seem like we have an abundance of water around the world, approximately 2.5 per cent is considered freshwater, and only 1 per cent of this freshwater is available for people to use. Furthermore, our water supplies are decreasing at a faster rate than ever before.

Wetlands are critically important, particularly for the ecosystem functions and services they provide, such as recycling, filtration and moderation of water for freshwater ecosystems to thrive. Wetland ecosystems contribute to the benefit of people, including the provisioning of water for essential water and sanitation services, agricultural activities, improving water quality and availability, protection from droughts and floods and can even shield coastlines from disasters. Around 90 per cent of global wetlands extent has been lost since the 1700s, while 25 per cent of all wetland species face extinction.

Wetland restoration is a key approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Protecting and restoring wetlands is essential for food and water security, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Water and sanitation remain critical to containing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and reinforces the need to strengthen integrated approaches to water resources management while also underlining the link between nature and health.

The restoration of wetlands offers so many multiple benefits to other sectors and areas of sustainable development, that they cannot be overlooked. This year also marks the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 which presents a unique opportunity to increase ambitions and collective action towards restoring wetlands and freshwater ecosystems.

The recently published fifth *Global Biodiversity Outlook* outlines a sustainable freshwater transition in order to reverse biodiversity loss and its impact on freshwater ecosystems, species and services. An integrated approach must be taken to guarantee the flow of water required by nature and people. Key actions to support this approach include improving water quality, protecting critical habitats, controlling invasive species and safeguarding connectivity to allow the recovery of freshwater systems from mountains to coasts.

Together we can bend the curve of biodiversity loss and ensure that wetlands and freshwater ecosystems are protected, conserved and wisely used not only for our generation but for our common future.

