

# Manila Statement

Asian Wetland Symposium  
Manila, Philippines  
25 to 28 November 2024

## Introduction

1. RECOGNIZING the continuous organization of Asian Wetland Symposiums (AWS) in Japan, Malaysia, India, Vietnam, China, Cambodia and the online platform during the difficult time of pandemic, which have contributed to understanding wetlands in Asia, influencing national and international wetland policies and plans, and promoting conservation and wise use of wetlands. Additionally, ACKNOWLEDGING the statements from the previous nine AWS and the publication of the history of the AWS in the period 1992-2021;
2. ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of the 10th AWS in Manila, Philippines from 25th to 28th November 2024, with the theme “Wetland-based Solutions”, with the overall objective to mainstream wetland conservation and wise use across all sectors of the society as a contribution to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and its strategic plan. The 10th AWS hosted 280 participants from 19 countries and regions;
3. NOTING that the Philippines has extensive wetlands, including 10 Wetlands of International Importance with two newly designated Ramsar Sites that were officially announced at the 10th AWS which provide various ecosystem services that benefit both nature and communities but are vulnerable to threats to their ecological integrity, thus the need for an overarching national policy for their wise use and conservation;
4. RECALLING the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Baku Climate Unity Pact and other relevant international treaties such as the Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
5. AWARE OF the keynote presentations, twelve oral sessions, poster sessions and field visits to Candaba Wetlands, Pangul River Eco-Park and Las Piñas – Parañaque Wetland Park. The featured sessions are wetland schools, nature positive economy and SDGs, which highlighted the necessity of transformative change through proactive communication among different stakeholders and strengthening “Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness” (CEPA) for future generations.

We, the participants of this symposium, declare as follows;

### **1. Combat Climate Change through Wetland-based Adaptation and Mitigation**

We recognize the importance of wetland-based solutions in accelerating climate change adaptation and mitigation. Conservation and restoration of peatlands, mangroves, seagrass and development of green infrastructure should be promoted through collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, in a way that can achieve biodiversity conservation objectives.

### **2. Conserve and Utilize Coastal Ecosystems for Disaster Risk Reduction**

We highlight that wetlands, particularly coastal ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrasses, play a significant role in ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR), while it also contributes to carbon sequestration, food security, biodiversity conservation, and livelihood improvement. These ecosystems are crucial for climate change adaptation and should be prioritized for restoration and protection.

### **3. Ensure Science-based Decision Making for Wetland Biodiversity and Conservation**

We acknowledge the significance of systematic research and continuous monitoring of Asian wetland ecosystems, with a particular emphasis on carbon sequestration and biodiversity, avoiding negative impacts within the wetland ecosystems.

### **4. Promote Citizen Science to Facilitate Community Engagement for Wetland Conservation**

We recognize that citizen science not only contributes to monitoring the latest status of wetlands, but also raises public awareness and can contribute to facilitate community engagement for wetland conservation

activities. Providing opportunities for trainings and field experiences can enable non-experts to play a similar role as researchers.

#### **5. Promote Ethnobiological Knowledge related to Wetlands**

We recognize that systematic documentation of ethnobiological knowledge related to wetlands is essential. Developing policies that recognize the cultural importance of wetland flora and fauna species and incorporating this knowledge in education can support conservation and wise use of wetlands and its biodiversity.

#### **6. Encourage Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing through CEPA**

We acknowledge that effective wetland conservation and restoration require collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, private companies, NGOs/CSOs, researchers, and local communities through CEPA. Shared learning and capacity building are essential. Wetland schools involving children and students play an important role in disseminating and mainstreaming wetland conservation activities.

#### **7. Establish Networks within the Asian Region to Facilitate International Cooperation and Shared Learning**

We recognize that sharing of knowledge and experiences among partners in similar socio- economic and ecological regions can contribute to promote conservation and wise use of wetlands. Regional networks can create an environment for international cooperation, shared learning, and integrating different voices into decision-making processes, which would further accelerate practices for wetland-based solutions in the Asian region.

#### **8. Facilitate Community-Driven Conservation**

We recognize that successful wetland conservation efforts are often driven by local communities, enabling sustainable livelihoods that achieve both socio-economic and ecological benefits. Community engagement is critical for long-term conservation success.

#### **9. Promote Sustainable Built Environments**

We recognize the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity and wetland conservation in the design and development of the built environment through appropriate planning, construction, operations and employing innovative solutions such as constructed wetlands, restoration of abandoned fishponds, and green infrastructure.

We urge all Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, organizations, participants and concerned citizens to build upon the first 32 years of the AWS to ensure that the AWS continues to fill its vital role into the future. On the other hand, we are also aware that there are still several Asian countries that have not yet participated in AWS and strongly hope that such countries will also participate in the near future.

Lastly, we thank the Government of the Philippines, the Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands, Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia, the Ramsar Center Japan and all sponsors and supporters for their generosity and hospitality in successfully hosting the 10th AWS in Manila, from 25th to 28th November 2024.

And we hope that the organizers seek the support and assistance of the Government of Philippines to convey this statement to the forthcoming Asian Regional Meeting on the Convention on Wetlands, the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention to be held in Zimbabwe in 2025.

**Manila, 28 November 2024**