

Annex 4. Siem Reap Message

Siem Reap Message On Wetlands for our Future²

Asian Wetland Symposium/Ramsar Pre-COP12 Asia Regional Meeting

Siem Reap, Cambodia

3 to 7 November, 2014

Introduction

1. Thanking the Government of Cambodia for their generosity and hospitality in successfully hosting the joint Asian Wetland Symposium and Ramsar Pre-COP12 Asia Regional Meeting in Siem Reap, from 3rd to 7th November 2014;
2. Appreciating the diversity of presentations made on wetland conservation and wise use in the Asia Region in general, and in particular from Cambodia regarding the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve and the Mekong river basin;
3. Following the field visit to the Prek Toal Core Area of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve, the meeting participants recognise the international importance of the site and its considerable potential for designation as a Wetland of International Importance ('Ramsar Site'), and to be managed under the principle of the wise use of wetlands;
4. Recognizing that this first joint meeting of the Asian Wetland Symposium and the Ramsar Pre-COP Asia Regional Meeting, as called for in Resolution IX.19, has proved to be effective in increasing understanding among the various wetland stakeholders in Asia and has provided a platform to promote and enhance partnerships between them;

Wise use of wetlands

Wetland ecosystem services

5. Recognizing that wetlands are water infrastructures and that wetlands and the resources that they support, e.g. water and biodiversity, are connectors of nations
6. Recognizing that wetland ecosystem services, and in particular the provision of and delivery of water, are vital for human well-being; recognizing also, that healthy functioning wetlands contribute to sustainable development, for example in ensuring livelihood, food security, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation;
7. Recognizing the importance of inter-linkages between wetland conservation and poverty eradication, and the need to use a wetland ecosystem based approach which simultaneously involves relevant stakeholders at the different scales/levels – from policy to the site management level and local community - to mainstream this concept into national programs, policies and action plans;

² This document is a report of the main points discussed during the joint Asian Wetland Symposium and the Ramsar Pre-COP12 Asia Regional Meeting

8. Recognizing also the role of wetlands in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, the meeting participants encourage Contracting Parties to put in place policies that will ensure the conservation of wetlands, and to manage and restore wetlands so as to maintain this vital service;
9. Contracting Parties are encouraged to put in place policies that will ensure conservation of wetlands and protection of the rights of wetland-dependent people displaced by natural hazard
10. Recognizing the cultural values of wetlands in Asia, including religious institutions, and their importance in supporting the conservation and wise use of wetlands, invites all interested persons to become members of, and participate in the Ramsar Culture Network (www.ramsarculture.org);
11. In decision-making related to infrastructure development, give priority to maintaining the ecological integrity of wetland ecosystems, and to the cultural and socio-economic values of wetlands, particularly for wetland-dependent communities;
12. Emphasizing the need for policies that encourage independent environmental impact assessment (EIA) for infrastructure development which could potentially impact the functionality of wetlands, and the need to develop a mechanism to minimize negative impacts of developments on wetlands with the aim for conservation and wise use of wetlands;
13. Urging Contracting Parties to develop and implement energy saving policies, and to explore, whenever possible, alternative, clean energy resources that do not impact negatively on wetlands;

Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)

14. Recognizing the good practices and lessons learnt under the Ramsar Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) program, the Contracting Parties reiterate and reaffirm the crucial need to increase awareness of government policy makers and the private sector, and to enhance the understanding and take into consideration the importance of wetlands and their ecosystem services in decision-making processes;
15. Promoting the CEPA program at all levels; and recognizing the value of wetland education centres, and the interest expressed by the participants of this meeting for such centres to be connected, such as through Wetland Link International (<http://wli.wwt.org.uk>);
16. Recognizing the vital role that local communities play in the management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, and the need to consider local and cultural knowledge and practices in wetland management practices;
17. Noting that there is a wealth of experience, information and knowledge in Asia from wetland projects and that this should be shared in more efficient manner;
18. Encouraging Contracting Parties to ensure capacity development of stakeholders for effective management and wise use of wetlands;

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

19. Noting the importance of priority wetlands identified under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Regional Initiative, and calling on Contracting Parties to recognise the value of these ecosystems and to designate these sites as Wetlands of International Importance, and to designate sites that meet the relevant criteria as EAAFP Flyway Network Sites;
20. Recognising the need to promote the conservation of Ramsar Sites in terms of both quantity and quality, and encouraging Contracting Parties to develop a set of best practices guidelines for Ramsar Site management and to provide support at the policy level to implement these best practices. Contracting Parties are encouraged to consider adopting simple and effective tools to evaluate the management effectiveness of their Ramsar Sites and other wetlands;

21. Noting the need for Contracting Parties to ensure that the Ramsar Information Sheets for their Ramsar Sites are updated every 6 years and encouraging NGOs and local site managers to support the Contracting Parties in making these updates;
22. Encouraging Contracting Parties to use the Ramsar Advisory Missions mechanism to address and respond to threats to their Ramsar Sites; Noting that Ramsar Advisory Missions have already been implemented in Pakistan (post-floods disaster), and requested by Iraq (potential oil industry threats), and urging Contracting Parties to request such Advisory Missions when change or likely change of ecological character of Ramsar Sites occurs;

National and international cooperation

23. Encouraging countries to consider ecosystem services mapping and valuation at the basin scale as a way to inform and improve decision making process;
24. Urging policy makers to establish bi-lateral or multilateral technical committee to consider the issue of collaborative management of transboundary river basins, especially with addressing the needs of local communities at both sides;
25. Encouraging Contracting Parties to engage with and support the work of the current Ramsar Regional Initiatives and the Regional Training Centre in Thailand, and to support the establishment of other regional initiatives such as the proposed regional initiative among the Mekong river basin countries and the proposed regional initiative for South Asia;
26. Encouraging Contracting Parties to offer technical and financial support to the Governments of the Least Developed Countries and countries in special situations who are Parties to the Convention, to fulfil their obligation under the Convention as well as ensure participation in all important forums including the COP.

Looking forward to Ramsar COP12

27. Presenting the view of the Asian Contracting Parties on the Draft Resolutions, as well as the priority themes and actions for the STRP to undertake during the 2016-2018. These are:
 1. Best practice methodologies/tools to monitor Ramsar Sites, including surveying, mapping, and inventorying;
 2. Balancing wetland conservation and development: infrastructure;
 3. Best practices for developing and implementing management plans for protected areas/ Ramsar Sites;
 4. Methodologies for valuation of wetlands goods and services, and then jointly:
 - 5a. Balancing wetland conservation and development: urbanization, and
 - 5b. Legal frameworks for conservation of wetlands;
28. Presenting the views of the Asian Contracting Parties on other priorities identified. There were:
 - a) The need to enhance the linkages between science and policy and;
 - b) Addressing climate change adaptation-disaster risk reduction-ecosystem management (including restoration) nexus and focussing on improving community resilience.
29. Acknowledging the interest of most of the Contracting Parties for the concept of a Ramsar Community Accreditation scheme and requests them to provide written suggested improvements to the DR to the Secretariat;
30. Urging the Convention to support the adoption of new working/official languages of the Convention and the important role of effective communication in improving the visibility of the Convention at all levels