

Submission on the future work of the Ad-hoc working group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP)

Wetlands International, 27 July 2012

During its first session held in Bonn from 17-25 May 2012, the ADP agreed on its Bureau, adopted its agenda and initiated two work streams, one addressing matters related to paragraphs 2.6 of decision 1/CP.17 and another addressing matters related to paragraphs 7.8 of that same decision.

*IGO's and NGOs were invited to contribute to the thinking on **how** the ADP can advance its work, in light of the ADP's agenda, under both work streams in Bangkok and for the remainder of 2012 by 27 July 2012.*

Wetlands International welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the thinking on the organisation of future work of the ADP.

Decision 1/CP.17 (paragraphs 2-6) mandates the Durban Platform to negotiate, by 2015, a new protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties, to enter into force as of 2020. It is essential to agree a clear plan of action before the end of 2012 to guide work in a manner conducive to reaching a successful agreement by the assigned date. Decision 1/CP.17 (paragraphs 7-8) mandates the Durban Platform to launch a work plan on enhancing mitigation ambition to identify and to explore options for a range of actions with a view to ensuring the highest possible mitigation efforts by all Parties.

As we gain clarity on the scale of the gap between the current emissions reductions pledges and the necessary emissions reduction to keep global climate change below 2 degrees C, it becomes clear that a key component of the 2015 agreement must consist of a global commitment to reduce emissions, commensurate with the objective of keeping climate change below 2/1.5 degrees C. This global emissions reduction target must then be accompanied by national commitments that cumulatively deliver the necessary global cuts.

This submission stresses the need for enhanced action with respect to the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This must be one of the priorities to be addressed in order to effectively deliver on the mandate of the ADP as per Decision 1/CP.17.

The degradation of natural ecosystems (including their conversion to plantations) significantly reduces their carbon storage and sequestration capacity. The loss of natural ecosystems strongly contributes to the release of greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, an overarching policy must be adopted and implemented with the highest priority to protect and restore natural ecosystems. In this submission, we highlight the mitigation potential of peatlands (organic soils) as this is our expertise and because they play a critical role in climate regulation.

On only 3% of the world's land surface, peatlands hold 30 percent (550 GT carbon) of all soil carbon, an amount equivalent to 75% of all atmospheric carbon and twice the carbon stock in the entire forest biomass of the world. The majority of the carbon in peatlands is stored below ground, in the peat soil. This carbon is released to the atmosphere when the peatland is drained, when vegetation is (partly or totally) removed, and when peat fires occur. When drained, deforested or degraded, peatlands release the peat carbon much faster than it has been sequestered (Couwenberg et al. 2010, Dommain et al. 2010, 2011). Emissions from drained peatsoils are disproportionately large. Drained peatlands, covering a mere 0.3 percent of the global land surface, are responsible for some 6 percent of total global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions (Joosten 2010). Well-functioning ecosystems such as peatlands have greater resilience to climate change which will aid in their natural adaptation.

To address the huge emissions from land use and land use change, the UNFCCC should work towards

comprehensive accounting for the AFOLU¹ sector. This process could and should be set in motion by applying a **step-wise approach** whereby priority is given to the **hotspots** and **conservativeness** is applied to where uncertainty is highest.

- **Comprehensive accounting of emissions and removals by all developed countries.**

Under the current system for the LULUCF sector, Parties to the Kyoto Protocol can choose to simply not account for a range of activities, including for 'Wetland Drainage and Rewetting'. The first Commitment Period has shown that Parties invariably choose *not* to account for those activities because they might reflect negatively on their emissions reduction goals. A more comprehensive, land-based accounting approach would eliminate these flaws and ensure that all emissions by sources and removals by sinks in the LULUCF sector are accounted for. The Durban platform should negotiate rules that ensure that developed Parties reliably and mandatorily account for emissions and removals from all land use and land use change and that reduction claims are calculated against a fixed, historical base period. This accounting must include accurate and complete accounting of bio-energy emissions to avoid the current perversities and loopholes. The rules should ensure that LULUCF contributes positively to the overall level of ambition of developed countries. The negotiations should be informed by the discussions in the newly initiated SBSTA work programme which is exploring 'more comprehensive accounting of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks from LULUCF.'

- **Land use, land-use change and forestry activities in developing countries with high mitigation potential.**

The REDD+ mechanism has the potential to make a major contribution to global climate mitigation by reducing deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. A framework has been agreed, but a number of technical issues remain to be resolved. It is unlikely that all matters associated with REDD+ will be resolved this year. REDD+ should thus be folded into the Durban Platform process, with input from SBSTA and SBI on technical issues, where requested. Organic soils on forest land are to be included in the national reference levels of countries participating in REDD+.

When considering enhanced ambition under the Durban Platform, also other ecosystems than forested ecosystems should be identified for climate change mitigation across AFOLU, with priority for "hotspots" or "key categories". These would include organic soils across other land categories than forest land. This means that REDD+ should be expanded to also address other ecosystems. Alternatively in addition to REDD+, other incentives should be created and encouraged for Parties to reduce emissions from land use, including from peat soil, in particular peat soil drained for agriculture. Peatland rewetting (cf. the Kyoto Protocol activity 'Wetland Drainage and Rewetting' newly adopted in COP17) should hence be encouraged in developing countries over all land use categories (forest land, cropland, grassland, wetlands, settlements and other land), as is already the case with the newly adopted activity under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

We recommend that the Durban Platform gives priority to identifying how to address emissions from non-forested ecosystems, such as non-forested peatlands, e.g. through its work on:

- REDD+
- National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA's)
- A work programme for Agriculture
- Research and Systematic Observation (FCCC/SBSTA/2011/L.27, paragraphs 4 and 8), in which special attention to peatlands was already requested by Parties
- Capacity building to provide Parties support for identifying their mitigation potential from land use such as peatlands and taking the necessary steps to reduce the emissions from these ecosystems.

¹

AFOLU = Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses.