



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Secretary General Statement at the UNFCCC COP16

Cancun, 10 December, 2010

Mr President,

Your Excellencies,

Honorable delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my thanks for the invitation to speak at today's conference. We are delighted to be invited by the UNFCCC Secretariat and to highlight the role of wetlands in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation.

The Ramsar Convention is working on the conservation and wise use of 42 types of wetlands as important assets for various sectors such as agriculture and food security, forestry, energy, water supply, health, urban and rural settlements, infrastructure, tourism, wildlife, trade and transport that contribute to sustainable socio-economic development.

As a matter of fact, wetlands are natural infrastructures from the mountain to the sea, including glaciers, rivers and their tributaries and floodplains, lakes, estuaries, deltas, peatlands, oasis, coastal areas, including mangroves and coral reefs, and many others.

The Millennium Eco Assessment provides a clear statement about the state of the world's wetlands and the need for restoration to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

For Mitigation: wetlands are carbon stores, especially peatlands, mudflats, mangroves and all forested wetlands. Wetlands both store and release carbon, and much of this is related to the flooding/drying cycles; climate change may change this as can our management.

For Adaptation: we need the link with the ecosystem services issues, especially the value of food from wetlands, and fresh water supply. That is, effective management, including restoration, under climate change scenario could also support basic human needs for food and water; and keeping in mind that increasing demand for food and water could further undermine wetland management.

To that end, partnership between many players is needed; in this regard, joint work underway between the Ramsar Convention and various partners, including the UN system, National and international Research organizations, NGOs, and the business sector, is contributing to:

- Better recognition of the role of wetlands as vital natural infrastructures, deserving careful attention because effective management of wetlands provides the most robust and resilient mechanism for managing water under conditions of uncertainty;
- Better understanding of the role of wetlands in relation both to climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- More attention to measures that can be implemented in the short term to increase ecosystem resilience and robustness;
- Increased collective action to address management and conservation issues in critical focal areas such transboundary systems, including rivers and lakes, groundwater systems, mangroves, coral reefs, and peatlands;

Thank you.

Anada Tiega

Secretary General

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