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IUCN is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN is a multi-cultural, multilingual organization with 1000 staff located in 42 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

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## NEWS RELEASE

# MORE WETLAND CONSERVATION, LESS FLOODS AND DROUGHTS

**Valencia, 28 November** (IUCN) – The Ramsar Convention is on its way to effectively deal with extreme events and reduce the risk of flooding and drought in vulnerable countries. The Parties to the Convention have agreed to a resolution for the protection and restoration of wetlands and watersheds, which could help the world to counter some of the current and predicted effects of climate change, in line with Paragraph 35 of the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

*"This resolution is an important first step for countries to begin their preparations and find practical adaptation measures"*, said Brett Orlando, Climate Change specialist of IUCN.

Climate change includes climate variability. It refers to altered weather patterns and the rising occurrence of floods and droughts, which is already an undeniable reality. Wetlands can play an important role to reduce the impacts of climate change. Wetlands can for instance store excessive water and thus mitigate or prevent floods, and mangrove forests can limit the impact of storms.

*"Climate change is here, and there are more changes to come, even with the Kyoto Protocol in place. Wetlands can help mitigate the disastrous impacts"*, said Orlando.

In turn, wetlands also play a role in the causes of climate change. The destruction of peatlands, accounting for 50 per cent of the wetlands in the world and 20 to 30 per cent of the global terrestrial carbon store, may lead to dramatic increases of greenhouse gas emissions. Conservation of wetlands can thus reduce climate change.

The resolution "Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation and mitigation" takes both the role of wetlands in mitigating climate change and the effects of climate change on wetlands into account. It calls on Contracting Parties to:

- manage wetlands to increase the resilience of wetlands to climate change and extreme events;
- minimise peatland degradation and foster peatland restoration;
- further assess the role of wetlands (including dam reservoirs) in climate change mitigation; and
- ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

*"I am very happy with the inclusion of peatlands in this resolution, following suggestions from the Global Biodiversity Forum. It makes clear no one disputes their major global function as carbon stores"*, said Peter Schei of the Norwegian delegation and chair of the contact group on the climate change resolution.

The resolution follows many of the recommendations made by the 17<sup>th</sup> Global Biodiversity Forum held prior to the Conference of Parties, since the final report of the GBF was used in several contact groups where the resolution was discussed.

IUCN's long-standing involvement in the Ramsar Convention and climate change issues are leading to practical responses for climate change mitigation and adaptation. IUCN supports the resolution and the conclusion of the final report of the GBF, which calls for the production of regional and national adaptation action plans to provide a response to extreme events.

**More information**

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