



## COP22 should recognise the key role wetland ecosystems play as Earth's greatest natural carbon stores

**4 November.** On the occasion of the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and in the eve of COP22, where governments are asked to discuss how to better achieve the goals by adopting mitigation and adaptation actions, Wetlands International calls all involved Parties to strengthen their contribution in the fight against climate change, by **recognising the key role wetland ecosystems play as Earth's greatest natural carbon stores.**

Under the Paris Agreement climate change mitigation and adaptation actions include prevention of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss. It recognizes the **role of ecosystems to regulate hydrological processes** to better adapt to the impacts of climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources, to build resilience of people and nature.

In order to reach the target of limiting the temperature increase to 1,5°C, **it is of utmost importance to protect, restore and wisely manage wetland ecosystems.** Wetlands are unique in their capability to store and capture large amounts of carbon. The conversion of natural wetland ecosystems leads to strong positive radiative forcing, thereby contributing to increases in the earth's temperature<sup>1</sup>. In particular GHG emissions from degraded peatlands represent circa 5% of the global total anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions<sup>2</sup>. The EU is the second largest contributor of peatland emissions in the world, behind South-East Asia and ahead of the Russian Federation. These emissions can be effectively reduced by rewetting and restoring drained peatlands.

**Wetlands International strongly calls all Parties in COP22 to transform in concrete actions and plans what has been agreed in the Paris Agreement by:**

- Strengthening the key **role of wetland ecosystems as hotspots** for high mitigation potential.
- Enhancing wetlands conservation and rehabilitation within national implementation plans to increase community resilience towards impacts of climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Avoiding emissions from peatlands which cover only 3% of global land area but contain 30% of the world's soil carbon
- Reducing emissions from degrading peatlands, which cover less than 0.4% of the global land surface but contribute over 5% of global anthropogenic emissions, will be **cost-efficient**, because this significant amount of emissions can be addressed by changing current land-use in this relatively small area of land.
- Stopping drainage of peatlands **to prevent soil subsidence and eventual flooding** and salt water intrusion. In mountain areas and riverine landscapes, healthy peatlands prevent soil erosion, downstream floods and desertification.
- Agreeing on **an international mandatory accounting for peatlands and managed wetlands** to achieve more ambitious emissions reductions targets. This would:

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<sup>1</sup> Petrescu, A.M.R., et al (2015). The uncertain climate footprint of wetlands under human pressure.

<sup>2</sup> Joosten, H. (2009). The Global Peatland CO<sub>2</sub> Picture. Peatland status and emissions in all countries of the world. Ede, Wetlands international.

- Incentivise wetland restoration;
  - Disincentivise drainage or damage of wetlands;
  - Improve methodologies to measure and monitor emissions and carbon sequestration of wetlands;
  - Develop a comprehensive inventory of wetlands/peatlands, both disturbed and undisturbed, and a system to monitor activities that would cause degradation and restoration;
  - Facilitate the assessment of the potential for trading in carbon credits derived from reduced peatland emissions.
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- Pushing for a **quick phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies** in agricultural and forestry sectors, which instead of delivering positive contributions to climate change mitigation are subsidizing activities that enhance emissions through wetland degradation;
  - Removal of regulations that block or hamper the introduction and up-scaling of environmentally sustainable land-uses in wetlands, including peatlands
  - A full **stop to the expansion of oil palm and other drainage-based production systems on peat**, and planning for the responsible phasing-out of such production systems from peat lands and phasing in of sustainable alternatives.
  - Including **integrated water and wetland management in the review of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) strategies** for building resilience to disasters and achieve a sustainable and secure world.
  - Mainstreaming **Ecosystem-based approach to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation measures** in all NDCs and National Adaptation Planning (NAP)
  - Encouraging and scaling-up **investments in Eco-DRR/CCA and nature based solutions**, including for protecting, restoring and sustainably managing wetlands.
  - Scaling up low-tech, low-cost and flexible adaptation strategies like **Building with Nature**, to help people in developing countries cope with the effect of climate change.
  - Emphasizing the **nexus between land degradation, climate change and migration**, and promoting strategies for water and wetlands management to support people livelihoods and increase the resilience of local communities.
  - Put in place standards and appropriate certification mechanisms to ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation activities have a **positive impact on nature and biodiversity**.

### About Wetlands International

Wetlands International is the only global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Our vision is of a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide. Wetlands International is a leading expert on environmental matters related to the production of palm oil in Southeast Asia. In our role as experts in the GHG working group of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil and as external reviewers of documentation and guidelines on emission factors for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we provide expertise regarding palm oil production, forest and peatland degradation due to direct and indirect land-use (change), and its related emissions and other impacts (such as soil subsidence and loss of biodiversity).

### For more information

Lea Appulo  
 Policy and Advocacy Officer on Climate and DRR  
 Wetlands International - European Association  
 Email: [lea.appulo@wetlands.org](mailto:lea.appulo@wetlands.org)  
 M: +32 496 031996  
<https://www.wetlands.org/>