



Statement by Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on World Wetlands Day 2025

Protecting wetlands for our common future

Today we celebrate the importance of wetlands.

Marshes, ponds, lakes, rivers, floodplains, swamps, fens, estuaries, mangroves, and lagoons are precious parts of what makes this planet such a hospitable, beautiful and bountiful home to humankind.

Wetlands provide innumerable benefits.

More than a billion people across the world depend on them for their livelihoods.

40 per cent of all plant and animal species live or breed in them. This includes many endangered, threatened and endemic species that can only survive in certain wetland habitats and nowhere else.

Wetlands link habitats and facilitate the movement of species. This role is vital for maintaining genetic diversity and healthy fauna populations.

Freshwater wetlands, in particular, are hotspots for biodiversity, hosting almost all amphibians, half of fishes and over one third of vertebrates.

Peatlands store 30 per cent of land-based carbon, keeping it safely locked away from the planet's atmosphere.

Lakes and rivers supply food and medicine.

Mangroves and coral reefs serve as a natural defence against climate-induced hazards and disasters.

But the planet is shedding wetlands at an alarming pace. 35 per cent of them have been lost since 1970.

This staggering decline shares many of the drivers of biodiversity loss, chiefly unsustainable practices in construction, agriculture, industry, tourism and other sectors running at the expense of nature.

Failure to protect wetlands means foregoing immense benefits for people, including jobs, health and well being, and for all living things.

Yet, wetlands are sometimes viewed and treated as wastelands and are left to rot.

So, World Wetlands Day provides an opportunity to highlight the vital importance of these ecosystems and why everyone should care about their plight.

Indigenous peoples and local communities who have safeguarded and benefited from wetlands for millennia must be part of the policy solutions to the ills afflicting these ecosystems.

Women and youth must be given the space and means to contribute to protecting them.

In a world shaped by urbanization, ensuring biodiversity-inclusive urban planning is critical for a sustainable future.

When COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity reconvenes in Rome later this month, Parties will consider a decision endorsing the sixth joint work plan 2024–2030 of the CBD and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance – the RAMSAR Convention.

We at the CBD Secretariat are proud of our long-standing cooperation with the Ramsar Convention, including in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the world's masterplan to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

Making peace with nature includes protecting wetlands, for our common future.