WETLAND ACTION TO ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KMGBF

Briefing paper for Convention on Biological Diversity COP17 from the International Organization Partners of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Summary

The Global Review of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) highlights the need to accelerate action and scale up investment in biodiversity. This is most urgently needed for inland waters and coastal ecosystems (wetlands), which are shown to be lagging behind in both ambition and action.

This briefing paper proposes seven actions that Contracting Parties can take during and after CBD COP17 to harness the role of inland waters and coastal ecosystems in meeting the goals and targets of the KMGBF and enhancing synergies with the UNCCD and UNFCCC, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, particularly the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

1. **Prioritise wetlands as vital natural infrastructure for biodiversity, climate and people.** Champion wetlands in high-level dialogues, COP decisions, and national actions to enhance delivery of the KMGBF. Recognise wetlands as critical watery interconnectors of all three Rio Conventions and the UN Water Conference.

2. **Increase ambition and action on wetland restoration and conservation to deliver Targets 1, 2 and 3.** Improve the incorporation of Wetlands of International Importance and other wetlands into 30x30 and the Protected Areas Programme of Work. Engage with multistakeholder implementation initiatives such as the Freshwater Challenge, Mangrove Breakthrough, and Peatland Breakthrough.

3. **Invest in wetlands as ultimate nature-based solutions for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience, and as critical nodes in the global hydrological cycle.** Include an explicit focus on water and water-related ecosystems as part of efforts to align biodiversity and climate action. Mainstream wetland protection, restoration and wise use at national level, in climate finance, and in the multilevel roadmap.

4. **Accelerate resource mobilization for inland water and coastal wetland restoration and conservation, and redirect harmful subsidies.** Integrate wetlands into national biodiversity finance plans; use GEF, GCF, MDB and bilateral finance to build investment pipelines; and mobilise private and blended finance with environmental and social safeguards.

5. **Enhance practical cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands to strengthen KMGBF implementation and MEA synergies.** Make the most of wetland data, technical guidance on integrating wetlands into NBSAPs and other topics. Strengthen collaboration between National Focal Points; and improve cooperation between Ramsar Regional Initiatives and CBD Technical Support Centres.

6. **Incorporate wetlands into subnational implementation of the KMGBF and strengthen connections with the Wetland City Accreditation scheme.**Support the fuller integration of wetlands into urban development frameworks and spatial zonation; and prioritise wetlands as natural infrastructure in urban planning.

7. **Address the direct and indirect drivers of wetland biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.** Transform agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and water-related infrastructure sectors. Explore the benefits of ecocentric approaches such as Rights of Wetlands and Rights of Rivers.

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1. Prioritise wetlands as critical natural infrastructure for biodiversity, climate and people

Wetlands are among the world's most productive yet threatened ecosystems: from rivers, springs, lakes and floodplains, to peatlands, marshes, mudflats and mangroves. Healthy wetlands can make a disproportionally positive contribution to getting on track to meet the KMGBF 2030 targets. Wetlands are not only vital for biodiversity; they provide critical natural infrastructure for climate resilience, carbon storage, water security, livelihoods and economies.

The outcome of the Global Review needs to drive action and resources into areas of the KMGBF with lower global progress, including inland waters and coastal ecosystems, which are shown to be lagging behind in both ambition and action.

We encourage Parties to prioritise wetland conservation, restoration and wise use in high-level dialogues and discussions at CBD COP17, and ensure wetlands are adequately incorporated into decisions and outcomes.

We also encourage Parties to champion the power of wetlands in providing connectivity across all ecosystems from source to sea; and as critical watery interconnectors of the Rio Conventions by putting wetlands at the heart of synergistic delivery of climate, nature and land goals.

Relevant agenda items: 9 (a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; 13. Cooperation with international organizations and bodies established under other conventions.

2. Increase ambition and action on wetland restoration and conservation to deliver KMGBF Targets 1, 2 and 3

The global report demonstrates welcome progress on the incorporation of wetland restoration, protection and conservation into national implementation of the KMGBF. This reflects a growing recognition of the critical role of wetlands in achieving multiple global biodiversity targets. It affirms the importance of Parties having explicitly included inland water and coastal ecosystems in Target 2 on restoration and in Target 3 on protected and conserved areas when the KMGBF was adopted in 2022.

However, significantly greater ambition and stronger action on wetland conservation, restoration and wise use are urgently needed. This is demonstrated by the findings of the global report that identifies inland waters and coastal ecosystems as lagging behind, and therefore **wetlands as key areas where further effort is needed to meet the 2030 targets, especially for Targets 2 and 3**. Implementation of Target 1 spatial planning also requires explicit recognition of inland waters and other wetlands to improve national planning around wetland resources as critical for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The global report finds that Wetlands of International Importance, commonly known as Ramsar Sites, under the Convention on Wetlands, constitute the largest network of internationally recognized important ecological sites in the world (a total of 2,535 sites, covering nearly 258 million hectares) and are an important mechanism for implementing and monitoring Target 3. **Wetlands of International Importance, and other well managed wetlands, should be more strongly incorporated into 30x30 implementation.**

The **Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA)** should seek to address the finding of the

global report that inland water ecosystems are currently under-represented in ambition (target setting) and implementation, especially when compared with terrestrial ecosystems. Wetlands are critical to achieving the KMGBF goal to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and a particular focus is needed to design protected and conserved area networks that are representative of, and effective in conserving, inland water ecosystems.

The PoWPA is a key opportunity to deliver synergies in practice through: including inland waters in protected and conserved area planning, management, and designation; emphasizing the importance of aquatic connectivity; prioritizing the representation and tracking of inland waters; prioritizing the incorporation of Ramsar Sites and other effectively managed wetlands into Target 3 implementation; improving cooperation between established Ramsar Regional Initiatives and CBD Technical and Scientific Cooperation Support Centers; and ensuring wetlands are fully integrated into the wider PoWPA.

In relation to the programme of work on **forest biodiversity**, adequate attention should be given to mangroves and forested peatlands, both of which tend to be overlooked in broader forest agendas, despite their importance for biodiversity, climate, and livelihoods.

For **coastal and marine ecosystems**, Parties should take action to identify areas of most importance for biodiversity and marine protected areas, aligned with EBSA processes. This can be supported by using best available scientific information and complementary tools, including Key Biodiversity Areas, Important Marine Mammal Areas, Important Shark and Ray Areas, Important Marine Turtle Areas, and Global Mangrove Watch.

Relevant agenda items: 9(a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; 13. Cooperation with international organizations and bodies established under other conventions;17(c) Strategic review of and updates to the programme of work on protected areas; 18(c) Marine and coastal biodiversity and island biodiversity.

The Freshwater Challenge, Mangrove Breakthrough, and Peatland Breakthrough

We encourage Parties to support and participate in global voluntary multistakeholder initiatives focused on the effective upscaling of wetland conservation and restoration to align and accelerate the achievement of biodiversity, climate and sustainable development goals. Such initiatives support the achievement of multiple KMBGF targets, especially Targets 2 and 3.

The Freshwater Challenge is a country-led partnership rooted in Targets 2 and 3 of the KMGBF, with a goal to restore 300,000 kilometers of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030, while securing the protection of freshwater ecosystems. It is designed to accelerate delivery of national plans and strategies to restore and conserve freshwater ecosystems, by supporting and accelerating targeted interventions for rivers, lakes and other wetlands, and increasing overall investment. 54 countries and the European Union have joined the Freshwater Challenge so far.

The Mangrove Breakthrough, which features as a case study in the global report, provides a framework for state and non-state actors to work together towards securing the future of over 15 million hectares of mangroves globally by 2030, underpinned by a goal of reaching $4bn of sustainable finance. The acceleration of action and investment through the Mangrove Breakthrough contributes directly to the achievement of multiple KMGBF targets, well as global climate goals,

The Peatland Breakthrough aims to accelerate finance, knowledge and partnerships to enable large-scale action around the world. It provides a shared vision, guided by science-based global targets for 2030: halting the anthropogenic loss of undrained peatlands, ensuring at least 30 million hectares of peatlands are being rewetted and restored, and developing enabling conditions for sustainable, wise use. The Peatland Breakthrough will be formally launched at UNFCCC COP31.

3. Invest in wetlands as ultimate nature-based solutions for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience; and as critical nodes in the global hydrological cycle

The global report notes that Parties have progressed efforts to strengthen climate resilience and adaptation under Target 8 of the KMGBF and generally the implemented actions have been effective. Wetland examples cited include peatland rewetting and mangrove restoration. However, overall progress, including deployment of nature-based solutions, remains insufficient.

Therefore, more emphasis and investment should be directed into wetlands as vital to achieving Target 8, including inland waters. Wetlands regulate, store and connect water across landscapes and seasons, and therefore function as highly efficient nature-based solutions for water management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction (including alleviating the risk and impact of floods, droughts, storms and wildfires). **Wetlands function as critical nodes in the global hydrological cycle, and their role in maintaining hydrological functions should be recognized alongside their biodiversity and carbon values.**

Parties should adopt the multilevel roadmap on options for enhancing cooperation and policy coherence across the Rio Conventions under item 18(a) and ensure that, as part of this, cooperation between IPBES and IPCC includes an explicit focus on water and water-related ecosystems, and draws on existing wetland expertise and data. This is needed due to the increasingly extreme impacts of climate change on water, the IPBES nexus report's explicit focus on water, and the importance of wetland ecosystems for climate mitigation and resilience, and as critical components of the hydrological cycle. Any strengthened mandate for the Joint Liaison group in supporting uptake of the roadmap should improve routes for collaboration with the Convention on Wetlands.

Strengthened national alignment of biodiversity and climate plans, policies and investments should also include an explicit focus on water and wetlands, the hydrological cycle, and seek to involve national focal points of the Convention on Wetlands to harness relevant expertise and data and to enhance synergies.

Relevant agenda items: 18(a) biodiversity and climate change; 9(a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

4. Accelerate resource mobilization for inland water and coastal wetland restoration and protection, and redirect harmful subsidies

Investing in wetlands offers unparalleled benefits to nature, climate, water resources, human health, livelihoods and economies. According to the Global Wetland Outlook, **the world's remaining wetlands can deliver ecosystem services worth up to $39 trillion annually** - more than any other type of ecosystem. Yet wetland-related finance remains far below the scale of need required to achieve global wetland conservation, restoration and management

commitments under both the KMGBF and the Convention on Wetlands.

The alignment of finance with wetland conservation, restoration and wise use, should be a key component of accelerating action to achieve GBF Targets 18 and 19, progress on which is lagging behind. This should consider investments and subsidies linked to the services that rivers and other wetlands provide such as water security, food from inland fisheries, water for irrigated agriculture, and transport and navigation.

Parties should cost their wetland components of NBSAPs; integrate wetlands into national biodiversity finance plans; use GEF, GCF, MDB and bilateral finance to build investment pipelines; redirect environmentally harmful subsidies; incorporate wetlands into Systems Environmental Economic Accounting; mobilise private and blended finance with environmental and social safeguards; and treat functioning wetlands as natural infrastructure in public investment decisions.This aligns with the Ramsar Fifth Strategic Plan, which explicitly calls for mobilisation of public, private and innovative finance.

Relevant agenda items: 8. Resource mobilization and financial mechanism: 9(a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

5. Enhance cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands to strengthen KMGBF implementation and MEA synergies

The global report shows that many Parties already recognise beneficial synergies between the CBD and Convention on Wetlands, as a valuable implementation-focused MEA: finding that **the Convention on Wetlands is the second most frequently cited MEA**, featuring in 46 out of 80 NBSAPs. At the same time, this suggests there are major untapped opportunities to strengthen synergies and alignment to enhance implementation.

CBD Decision III/21 invited the Convention on Wetlands to serve as a lead partner for wetland-related activities under the CBD. More recently, CBD Decisions 15/6 and 15/13 recognise the important contribution of biodiversity-related MEAs to implementation of the KM-GBF. To enhance mutually reinforcing implementation, the CBD and the Convention on Wetlands developed the 6th Joint Work Plan 2024-2030. The Joint Work Plan seeks to align efforts towards achievement of the objectives of both Conventions, enhance cooperation between them, and maximize the impact of their actions in addressing the challenges of biodiversity conservation and sustainable/wise use of wetlands. The global report notes that alignment is reinforced through Ramsar COP15 resolution XV.4, which encourages integration of wetland data into NBSAPS and strengthening of the designation of Wetlands of International Importance and freshwater data to support global conservation targets.

The Convention on Wetlands has developed practical guidance to support the integration of wetlands into NBSAPs, alongside data and tools to support implementation, monitoring and reporting. **We encourage Parties to use relevant Convention on Wetlands data, tools and guidance** when updating national targets and implementation measures in response to gaps identified in the Global Review.

Discussions and decisions on MEA synergies should centre water and wetlands, and recognise the value of the cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands at national, regional and subnational level to deliver simultaneously on countries' biodiversity, climate, water and sustainable development priorities. Parties should seek to send a strong call to action on unlocking wetland and water synergies from CBD COP17 to the forthcoming UNFCCC COP31 and the UN Water Conference.

Parties should seek to strengthen **cooperation between Ramsar Regional Initiatives and CBD**

Technical and Scientific Cooperation Support Centers; ensure TSCs are making the most of existing wetland data, tools and technical guidance, including outputs of the Convention on Wetlands STRP (Science and Technical Review Panel; and encourage closer working between IPBES and the STRP. This would be a practical action in response to the finding of the global report that significant knowledge and experience already exists that could be better leveraged to support implementation of the KMGBF, including reporting and monitoring.

Relevant agenda items: 13 Cooperation with international organizations and bodies established under other conventions; 9(a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; Item 12 (a) Capacity-building and development and technical and scientific cooperation.

6. Incorporate wetlands into subnational implementation of the KMGBF, and strengthen connections with the Wetland Cities Accreditation scheme

A greater focus on **urban wetland restoration and creation** in the implementation of KMGBF Target 12 on urban green and blue spaces would deliver multiple benefits: spaces for wildlife to thrive, improved flood protection, water quality and cooling for residents of towns and cities, and reconnecting people with nature. Creating and restoring high-quality wetlands in low-income urban areas can also help tackle inequalities, through bringing climate change resilience and the health benefits of wetlands to the people that need them most.

Whilst rehabilitation of urban wetlands and pollution reduction feature in the global report, countries and cities can accelerate implementation by stronger integration of wetlands into urban development frameworks and spatial zonation, and the prioritisation of wetlands as natural infrastructure (nature-based solutions) in urban planning, including for water management.

We encourage Parties to improve awareness and access to urban wetlands through participation in the international **Wetland City Accreditation scheme** under the Convention on Wetlands. This recognises cities that demonstrate a strong commitment to wetland conservation: protecting, restoring and wisely managing wetlands, blue spaces and biodiversity, while also involving communities and celebrating the role wetlands play in urban life. In 2026, there were 74 accredited wetland cities across 27 countries, sharing knowledge and best practice through the Wetland City Network and the Roundtable of Wetland City Mayors.

These actions should be part of a wider approach of integrating wetlands more fully into subnational, basin and landscape governance, working alongside basin authorities, spatial planners and local governments.

Relevant agenda items: 14(b) engagement with subnational governments, cities and other local authorities; 9(a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

7. Address the direct and indirect drivers of wetland biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation

The global report reveals the need for strategic and prioritised action on the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss, to transform the systems that impact nature. For wetlands, this requires a focus on **transforming agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, water services, inland navigation, and water-related infrastructure sectors.**

Here too, proactive national efforts to align implementation of the KMGBF and the Convention on Wetlands Fifth Strategic Plan can deliver multiple benefits, especially in catalysing transformative change and addressing key drivers of the loss and degradation of wetlands and other ecosystems, such as unsustainable agricultural and industrial practices, climate impacts, urbanisation, and invasive alien species.

Such transformation should be underpinned by equitable and inclusive governance, recognition and respect of the rights, tenure and customary governance systems of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the application of free, prior and informed consent where applicable (Target 22). Decision-making should enable meaningful and gender-responsive participation by women, youth and other affected groups, ensure the equitable sharing of costs and benefits arising from wetland conservation and use, and strengthen access to information, grievance mechanisms and justice. This is essential both for protecting rights and for sustaining the local stewardship on which effective wetland conservation and restoration frequently depend.

In addition, we encourage countries to **explore the potential of ecocentric approaches, such as Rights of Rivers and Rights of Wetlands.** These can be valuable legal and governance mechanisms that also contribute significantly to addressing the disconnection between humans and nature, which is a key underlying driver of biodiversity loss.

Relevant agenda items:14(a) Mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across sectors; 9(a) Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Supporting information: recent decisions, resolutions and reports underpinning a stronger role for wetlands in KMGBF implementation

i) Inland waters in the global report on collective progress towards KMGBF goals and targets

The findings of the CBD global report on collective progress in the implementation of the KMGBF make a compelling case for a greater focus on wetlands in the discussions and decisions at CBD COP17 and for their prioritisation in implementation at local, national and regional level. The global report:

- finds that ambition and implementation across inland water, coastal and marine ecosystems is lagging behind terrestrial, including for Targets 1-3 on restoration, protected areas and OECMs, and addressing land use change;
- highlights that the List of Wetlands of International Importance, commonly known as Ramsar Sites under the Convention on Wetlands, constitutes the largest network of internationally recognized important ecological sites in the world (2,535 sites, covering nearly 258 million hectares) and is an important mechanism for implementing and monitoring Target 3; and
- emphasises the importance of cooperation across MEAs including alignment between the Convention on Wetlands Fifth Strategic Plan and implementation of the KMGBF, and notes the scope to further integrate wetland data into NBSAPs and national reports, and to strengthen the use of the designation of Wetlands of International Importance and freshwater data to support global conservation targets.

The global report contains many additional wetland references and examples of incorporation of wetlands into NBSAPs under multiple targets, such as peatland rewetting, mangrove restoration, river revitalisation and catchment/basin scale action.

ii) Convention on Wetlands resolutions relating to the KMGBF

CBD COP17 represents an important opportunity to take forward resolutions adopted by Contracting Parties at the Convention on Wetlands COP15 in July 2025 that relate to wetlands and the KMGBF. These include:

Resolution XV.3 The Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands 2025-2034

- notes CBD decision III/21 which invites the Convention on Wetlands to cooperate as lead partner in the implementation of activities related to wetlands under the CBD, as well as CBD decision 15/13 which recognizes that other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements can contribute to the implementation of the KMGBF
- recognises that implementation of the Convention on Wetlands Fifth Strategic Plan will enhance synergies, cooperation or collaboration with and contribute to fulfilment of different MEAs and processes, including the CBD and KMGBF
- requests the STRP, considering the data and reporting systems of relevant MEAs, to develop an indicator framework for the Fifth Strategic Plan. This is strongly aligned with the KMGBF.

Resolution XV.4 Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

- recognizes the critical importance of wetland protection, restoration and wise use for the achievement of the goals and targets of the KMGBF
- recalls the CBD decision III/21 inviting the Convention on Wetlands to cooperate as a lead partner in the implementation of activities related to wetlands under the CBD
- welcomes the sixth joint work plan between the Convention on Wetlands and the CBD, which seeks to align efforts towards achievement of the objectives of both Conventions, enhance cooperation between them, and maximize the impact of their actions in addressing the challenges of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the wise use of wetlands.

Resolution XV.18 Achieving the equitable governance and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

- reinforces the role of wetlands in contributing specifically to "30x30" as protected areas and OECMs
- encourages Contracting Parties to identify,

report and integrate Wetlands of International Importance, and other effectively managed wetlands, into national implementation of T3

Resolution XV.16 Strengthening national actions for the conservation and restoration of waterbird flyways and critical sites

- notes that flyway conservation, as a large-scale biodiversity conservation action, significantly contributes to the delivery of the KM-GBF across various targets, including by delivering enhanced ecological connectivity, as well as to synergies with other MEAs.

iii) IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025 resolutions

Several resolutions adopted by the IUCN Members Assembly in October 2025 further reinforce the case for a greater prioritization of wetlands to accelerate implementation to reach global biodiversity goals and targets under the CBD as well as the Paris Climate Agreement and other MEAs. Several call on governments and other stakeholders to take action, such as:

- Resolution 023 Prioritising wetlands conservation and restoration to tackle the dual climate and biodiversity crises. This encourages all IUCN Members to acknowledge and prioritise the conservation and restoration of wetlands as a strategic action for biodiversity and climate
- Resolution 018 Advancing and tracking global river conservation to meet biodiversity and climate goals. This urges governments to incorporate river conservation in KM-GBF Targets 1 to 3 delivery; review and clarify protected and conserved area laws to include explicit river conservation mechanisms and facilitate practical implementation
- Resolution 066 Living in harmony with rivers through the rights of nature and ecocentric law. This supports work on Rights of Nature and related initiatives on rivers and wetlands; and promotes cross-border cooperation,

collaboration, and knowledge-sharing.

Useful resources

- Scaling up wetland conservation and restoration to deliver the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: guidance on incorporating wetlands into NBSAPs, Technical Report 12, Convention on Wetlands STRP
- The role of OECMs for inland water biodiversity outcomes, Technical Note, IUCN Freshwater Specialist Group
- Guidance on identifying, reporting, monitoring and strengthening the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including Wetlands of International Importance, as OECMs, Briefing Note 14, Convention on Wetlands STRP
- Societal Benefits of Large-Scale River and Wetland Restoration, report and briefing paper, WWF, 2026
- Technical Guidance on Designing and Managing Protected and Conserved Areas to support Inland Water Biodiversity, IUCN WCPA, available October 2026 in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.

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