

Saga Statement

Asian Wetland Symposium

Saga, Japan

7 to 11 November 2017

Introduction

1. RECOGNIZING the 25 years of Asian Wetland Symposiums (AWS) held in Japan, Malaysia, India, Vietnam, China, and Cambodia, that have contributed to understanding wetlands in Asia, influencing national and international wetland policies and plans, and promoting conservation and wise use of wetlands. Additionally ACKNOWLEDGING the statements from the previous seven AWS and the publication of the history of the AWS in the period 1992-2017;
2. ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of AWS 2017 in Saga City, Japan from 7th to 11th November, with the theme “Wetlands for Sustainable Life”, with the overall objective to review achievements, practices, progress, and challenges faced related to conservation of wetlands in Asia and consider what should be done to mainstream conservation and wise use of wetlands. The AWS hosted 450 participants from 26 countries;
3. NOTING Saga City faces the Ariake Sea, Kyushu encompassing the tidal flats i.e. Arao-higata, Hizen Kashima-higata, Higashiyoka-higata, that have been designated as Ramsar Sites, where the water systems provide valuable ecosystem services and have been traditionally used by local people, leading to the adoption of the Saga Water Statement (Saga Mizu Sengen) in 2003;
4. RECOGNIZING the increasing severe impacts of disasters being accelerated by climate change, and the fact that Asia is the most disaster prone region in the world, and the damage caused by floods that occurred very recently in northern Kyushu in July 2017;
5. RECALLING the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant international treaties such as the Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
6. AWARE OF the keynote presentations, nine oral sessions and field visits to the Ariake Sea and important tidal flats including Ramsar Sites. Innovative sessions at the AWS included Ariake Sea Session, Youth Session, Mayor’s Roundtable, Participatory Poster Sessions, which were highlighted as that accelerated proactive communication among different stakeholders and generations; and
7. RECOGNIZING the usefulness of interactive and participatory poster sessions not only to promote effective peer-learning that can overcome barriers among various generations, stakeholders, cultures and academic backgrounds, but also to support future actions on the ground.

We, the participants of this symposium, declare as follows;

1. Enhance Networking and Collaboration among wetland sites

We affirm the recommendation of the Mayor's Roundtable on the importance of cooperation and collaboration (local, national and international) between Ramsar Sites and other wetlands with common characteristics and context for effective conservation and wise use inspired by champions at each site, and informed by both good and poor practices.

2. Ensure a Holistic Approach to Conserve Coastal Wetland Ecosystems

We have learned from the history and ongoing research of Ariake Sea including the serious damages caused by large scale developments at other coastal sites across the region, we must take a holistic approach at landscape level. We also need to work at appropriate scales to conserve, restore coastal wetland ecosystems throughout Asia.

3. Implement Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR)

We recognize the importance of Eco-DRR actions on the ground by combining with traditional practices and scientific knowledge, quantifying its effectiveness through research, and pursue its incorporation into policies, legal frameworks or administrative measures at national and local levels.

4. Conserve and Revive Urban Wetlands

We recognize the important role of urban as well as peri-urban wetlands in providing ecosystem services and in sustaining and re-establishing the connection between humans and nature. Therefore we call for urban wetlands to be incorporated into urban land use planning and legal frameworks, CEPA for urban decision makers, private developers to be encouraged to adopt good practices so that they can be conserved and restored as healthy ecosystems.

5. Encourage Responsible Wetland Tourism

We highlight that conserving wetland ecosystems can serve as the foundation for successful implementation of responsible tourism (e.g. Suncheon Bay (R.O. Korea) and Chilika Lake (India)), which can be a model to achieve economic development and wetland conservation.

6. Enhance Local Production Initiatives in Wetlands

We learn from many best practices introduced by various participants, e.g. by appropriate branding such as Ramsar Logo, which demonstrate that sustainable agriculture, fishery or forestry could not only revitalize local communities by providing added-values to local economies, but also maintain and rehabilitate wetlands.

7. Ensure Youth Leadership in Wetland Conservation

We recognize the capacity of youth to exchange ideas between various stakeholders, build networks, and actively participate in various wetland conservation actions. We expect youth leadership to enable the AWS to continue its vital contribution to effective wetlands management.

8. Deliver CEPA Programs that lead to Direct Conservation Actions

We acknowledge the importance of structured, targeted and long-term approach supported by sustainable finance and skilled staff to deliver CEPA program which leads to positive conservation outcomes on the ground. We need to replicate and disseminate those good practice across the region through existing structures and partnerships.

We urge all Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, organizations, participants and concerned citizens to build upon the first 25 years of the AWS to ensure the AWS continues to fill its vital role into the future.

Lastly, thanking the Government of Japan, Saga Prefecture, Kumamoto Prefecture and Saga City, Kashima City, Arao City, Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia and all sponsors and supporters for their generosity and hospitality in successfully hosting the Asian Wetland Symposium in Saga, from 7th to 11th November 2017.

And that the organizers seek the support and assistance of the Government of Japan to convey this statement to the forthcoming Asian Regional Meeting on the Convention on Wetlands, the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention to be held in Dubai in October 2018.

Saga, 10 November 2017