

Initiative to establish the World Coastal Forum 10 January 2022

This is a statement of the World Coastal Forum International Advisory Meeting hosted by China on 10-11 January 2022. It was prepared by the informal WCF Shapers Group¹.

A. Background

The need for our world to be united in tackling ecological problems has never been greater. **People need to work together to achieve an ecological civilization and ensure harmony between humans and nature. Coastal ecosystems are among the most important, yet most imperiled of all ecosystems**, threatened worldwide by habitat loss and degradation, for example by reclamation, including for urban and agricultural expansion, pollution, unsustainable use of coastal resources, altered hydrology, invasive alien species, and coastal erosion associated with sea level rise, compounded by climate change.

Working with nature in a coordinated way to maintain the vital ecological functions of coastal ecosystems, especially wetlands, in the face of climate change and other anthropogenic threats, is emerging as a cost-effective solution. There is an urgent need to learn from successful initiatives and apply this knowledge and practice to protect, manage and restore such coastal ecosystems across the world, including as nature-based solutions to address problems caused by sea level rise and other climate change related effects.

In recognition of this, the global conventions on Biological Diversity (CBD), Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar) and Migratory Species (CMS) and IUCN **have called** via resolutions and decisions (details in Annex I), **for the establishment of a global coastal forum** that brings together stakeholders to focus on the protection, conservation management, restoration and sustainable use of coastal ecosystems, with a focus on coastal wetlands (according to the Ramsar definition) in line with the Ramsar Resolution and CBD Decision. This forum is referred to here as the World Coastal Forum (WCF).

The **WCF will facilitate concerted, cooperative delivery of commitments** made under the:

- Relevant Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
- UN Decade of Restoration, of which “Oceans and Coasts” is among 8 focal ecosystems
- Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development
- 2021 CBD COP15 Kunming Declaration “to step up actions to...protect marine and coastal biodiversity and strengthen the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems to climate change”, and
- 2021 UNFCCC COP26 Glasgow Climate Pact (eg paragraph 38 on nature and ecosystems)
- Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted by CBD COP15 in 2022.

¹ including invited representatives from *Asian Development Bank, Birdlife International, Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat, Eco Foundation Global, Future Earth Coasts, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, International Crane Foundation, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Mandai Nature of Singapore, Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM), University of Cambridge, University of Queensland, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, Wetlands International and Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, in consultation with relevant treaty secretariats.*

B. *Why is a World Coastal Forum needed now?*

1. **A novel international platform is urgently needed to accelerate conservation of coastal ecosystems with a focus on wetlands, by:**
 - i) **reducing fragmentation of effort** through **fostering cooperation** at geographic, scientific, technical, practical, sectoral and policy levels and on capacity building
 - ii) **operating globally and regionally, scaling up what works** nationally and locally
 - iii) **supporting governments, especially subnational, and developing countries, and other stakeholders** to meet international commitments
 - iv) ensuring dissemination of, and the filling of gaps in, existing **evidence**
 - v) inspiring **fresh approaches**.

2. This is needed to facilitate:
 - i) provision of **nature-based solutions**, for example to climate change mitigation (eg “blue” carbon storage) and adaptation (eg disaster risk reduction as flood defences in the face of rising sea levels and increasing extreme weather events), including through protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)
 - ii) provision of other **ecosystem services**, including through sustainable use, such as: food and other coastal eco-products; tourism, recreation and wellbeing; sustaining livelihoods and cultural traditions
 - iii) conservation of important **biodiversity**
 - iv) maintenance and restoration of international **ecological connectivity**, vital for coastal wetland-dependent migratory species, and supporting adaptation to climate change of this endangered global heritage.

C. *What will the World Coastal Forum be and do?*

The WCF will be an international, multi-stakeholder platform.

Proposals for its main focus, for refinement during its establishment process, are to promote the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems focusing on wetlands and their contribution to achieving biodiversity conservation targets and nature-based solutions including the following aims:

- a. Collect, share and disseminate **evidence and expertise**, including international best practices for the conservation, management and restoration of coastal wetland ecosystems
- b. Promote and encourage **coordinated, concerted and cooperative implementation** of priority actions at an international scale.
- c. Support **capacity building** including through mentoring, site twinning and networks of demonstration sites, especially in developing countries
- d. Enhance **communication, education and public awareness**, including youth engagement, on the value and conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems.

Specific initial products to inform the work of the WCF may include:

- a. **situation analyses** on the state of the world’s coasts as a baseline, to be reviewed regularly and ensure monitoring to common standards (of data collection, curation and sharing) to track progress towards conservation objectives using simple indicators.
- b. a database for creation and dissemination of **evidence-based guidance** on coastal wetland ecosystem protection, management and restoration
- c. a **global review of relevant organizations, initiatives, businesses and other stakeholders** to help define roles and responsibilities of the WCF to deliver added value which will enhance cooperation and collaboration and build a broad-based constituency.

D. How could the World Coastal Forum be established?

- a. At the World Coastal Forum meeting on 10-11 January 2022, hosted by the People’s Republic of China’s Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Jiangsu Provincial People’s Government, the **establishment process for the WCF will be formally launched**, with the final draft of this document being included as a meeting outcome.
- b. An international establishment group to be convened in January 2022 will support the WCF establishment process including development of the institutional framework, until the WCF is launched.
- c. Below is a **roadmap** of tasks and milestones in preparation for the formal launch of the WCF’s operation, planned for Ramsar COP14, 21-29 November 2022 in Wuhan, China.

Deadlines in 2022	Task
10-11 Jan	Launch of the WCF establishment process..
Mid Jan	First meeting of WCF Establishment Group (WCFEG) to develop Terms of Reference for itself and begin to develop draft Terms of Reference, governance model, scope and work plan for the World Coastal Forum.
Late Jan	Secretariats of treaties and IUCN will be invited to consult with their parties on this document and alerted of the proposal to formally establish the WCF during 2022, with their engagement invited. Treaties may also wish to discuss this proposal via the Liaison Group of biodiversity-related Conventions.
Late Jan	A review of organizations and initiatives with mandates complementary to WCF will be commissioned to identify areas of cooperation and collaboration and to ensure the WCF will add value to existing organizations and initiatives.
Feb	Treaty/IUCN Secretariats consult national focal points on 1 st draft of WCF TOR, governance model, scope and work plan to ensure that the WCF becomes a valuable tool to help them deliver on international commitments.

The WCF Establishment Group (WCFEG) will hold side events or informal meetings at several important international biodiversity conservation conferences to build a constituency of support for the WCF, shaping how it will add value to existing initiatives, including:

Time in 2022	Side Events or Informal Meetings
Late Jan/ early Feb	Side event at Network of West Africa coastal and marine Wetlands (WacoWet) meeting
March	Side event at CBD Resumed Sessions (SBSTTA/SBI/OEWG) in Geneva
June	Side event at CBD COP15 , Kunming, China
27 June to 1 July	Side event or informal meeting at UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal
11-15 Sept,	WCF side event at BirdLife World Congress, Cambridge, UK
Oct	Side event at Meeting of Parties of UNEP African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, Hungary
7 – 18 Nov	Side event at UNFCCC COP27, Egypt
21-29 Nov	The WCF's establishment will be formally announced at a Side Event at Ramsar COP14, Wuhan, China, followed by the official establishment of the WCF Secretariat

In addition to the above, opportunities will be taken to make presentations and hold side events at meetings of relevant bodies including regional groups such as Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), the West African Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM) and others.

Annex I: Resolutions/Decisions of Conventions and IUCN

The governments of the world have called for the establishment of a "Global Coastal Forum" (GCF) via three global Conventions and IUCN, as follows:

I. 2017 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Resolution 12.25 *Promoting Conservation of Critical Intertidal and other coastal Habitats for Migratory Species*

2. *Requests* the Secretariat to explore actively with other relevant multilateral environmental agreements, funding permitting, the possibility **to set up a global 'Coastal Forum'**, to raise the profile of intertidal wetland and associated coastal habitats conservation and wise-use within relevant programmes of work, share experience and knowledge on solutions related to the conservation and management of these ecosystems, and to encourage stakeholders to support such an initiative;

3. *Requests* the Scientific Council, funding permitting, to seek input from the scientific subsidiary bodies of other multi-lateral environment agreements, **to establish a multi-stakeholder working group, under the proposed Coastal Forum**, to develop global guidance on the conservation, wise use and management of sustainable 'Working Coastal Habitats', in particular elaborating strategies and models for economic development, that maintain the ecological character and functionality of such habitats to the benefit of local communities and migratory species, and to submit this draft guidance for consideration at COP13;

4. *Urges* Parties and the Scientific Council, funding permitting, **to support and engage in the establishment, under the Coastal Forum**, of a "Caring for Coasts" initiative to promote restoration of coastal wetlands and other relevant habitats;"

II. 2018 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as

Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar) Resolution XIII.20 *Promoting the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically-associated habitats*

"36. REQUESTS the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, **to explore** actively with other relevant multilateral environmental agreements, governments, the private sector, relevant international and national non-governmental organizations, experts and other stakeholders, **the possibility to set up a multi-stakeholder global coastal forum**, to facilitate the protection,

management and restoration of coastal ecosystems by raising the profile of the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically-associated habitats within relevant programmes of work, sharing experience and knowledge on solutions related to the conservation, management and restoration of these ecosystems, and encouraging stakeholders to support such initiatives;

37. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, subject to the availability of resources, and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas for 2019-2021, in developing its proposed work plan for presentation at the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee, **to consider actively participating in the coastal forum** proposed in paragraph 36 of the present Resolution to promote the restoration of coastal wetlands and other relevant habitats;”

III. 2018 Convention on Biology Diversity (CBD) Decision 14/30 *Cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives*

“15. *Calls upon* Parties, in accordance with national priorities and capacity, in the light of the results of the consultation process conducted under the “Caring for Coasts” initiative, the resulting work plan presented in the information document issued by the Executive Secretary ([CBD/SBI/2/INF/20](#)) and the related resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals at its twelfth meeting⁶ and the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat at its thirteenth meeting to provide **further support for the implementation of the activities of the proposed work plan, including, among other things, the global “Coastal Forum” focused on coastal wetland conservation;**

16. Requests the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources, to further coordinate the “Caring for Coasts” initiative with the secretariats of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, and other relevant organizations, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in the context of its Blue Bio Trade Initiative, in order to advance synergies in their work on the management and restoration of coastal ecosystems worldwide;” [Developing a new global initiative ‘Caring for Coasts’ for the restoration of coastal wetland \(cbd.int\)](#)

IV. 2020 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) WCC-2020-Res-030-EN
Enhancing the resilience of coastal areas in the face of climate change, biodiversity crisis and rapid coastal development

RECALLING the necessity to increase effective coastal protected area networks to reduce the impacts of rapid development on coastal ecosystems;

WELCOMING the implementation of Resolution 5.028 Conservation of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and its threatened waterbirds, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea (Jeju, 2012), including the call for establishment of a global coastal forum by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS - Resolution 12.25, 2017), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Resolution XIII.20, 2018) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD - Decision 14/30, 2018) facilitating establishment of coastal wetland site networks, development of guidance on conservation management of working coastal wetlands and restoration of coastal wetlands; and

APPRECIATING the contributions of the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) Coastal Specialist Group.

1. RECOMMENDS that the Director General and Commissions:

c. support the establishment of a global coastal forum to facilitate establishment of coastal site networks, including World Heritage and Ramsar sites, and development of guidance on conservation management of working coastal wetlands and on restoration of coastal ecosystems;