



Distr.: General  
23 December 2020

English only



**United Nations  
Environment Assembly of the  
United Nations Environment  
Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the  
United Nations Environment Programme  
Fifth session**

Nairobi (online), 22–26 February 2021\*  
Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*\*

**International environmental policy and  
governance issues**

**Information on implementation of resolution 4/16 on  
conservation and sustainable management of peatlands\*\*\***

**Note by the Executive Director**

**Introduction**

1. In its Resolution 4/16 on the Conservation and sustainable management of peatlands, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), among other things, encouraged member states and other stakeholders to enhance regional and international collaboration for the conservation and the sustainable management of peatlands. In paragraph 2 of its Resolution 4/16, it also requested the Executive Director of UNEP, within existing resources and in consultation with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar) Secretariat, to coordinate efforts to create a comprehensive and accurate global peatlands inventory, which will be crucial as a basis to identify the extent of peatlands around the world, determine the appropriate interventions, understand carbon sequestration value and potential, and plan for sustainable peatlands management.
2. Resolution 4/16 is consistent with expected accomplishment (a) of the healthy and productive ecosystems subprogramme of the UNEP's Programme of Work 2019-2021 (The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks at the national and international levels).
3. Resolution 4/16 has no formal reporting requirements and as such, the present information document has been prepared as a courtesy to share an update on progress made on the implementation of the resolution. The present note, including its annex, has not been formally edited.

\* In accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly held on 8 October 2020 and at the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Assembly is expected to adjourn on 23 February 2021 and resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

\*\* UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.1.

\*\*\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

## I. Progress on implementation of the resolution

4. Resolution 4/16 emphasizes the importance of inter-disciplinary research, knowledge exchange and cooperation among all stakeholders involved to achieve effective conservation, protection and restoration of peatlands worldwide. Resolution 4/16 acknowledged the ongoing work of UNEP coordinating the Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI) an international partnership of 39<sup>1</sup> organizations and 4 tropical peatland countries formed at the end of 2016. A team in the UNEP Ecosystems Division is supporting countries and stakeholders to implement 4/16 in connection with the GPI<sup>2</sup> Project and their regular activities under the UNEP Programme of Work (POW).

5. Since its adoption in 2019, progress on the implementation of Resolution 4/16 has contributed directly to achieving the aims of Subprogramme 3 EA(a) in the POWs. Specifically, contributing to Indicator (a)(iii) Increase in the number of countries and groups of countries that improve their cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks for marine and terrestrial ecosystem management.

6. In collaboration, UNEP and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) undertook a survey of nations with peatlands yielding responses from 26 countries. Of these, 12 were priority countries on the basis of their significant peatland extent or contributions of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from degraded peatlands. Eight out of these twelve countries had a national peatland strategy or policy, and a combined total of 27 peatland strategies and policies were identified across the countries that responded. Most of these included: coordination of action to protect existing peatlands; work to assess the distribution and condition of peatlands; and policies to support local communities. Few however included: policies to sustainably manage peatlands; monitor greenhouse gas emissions from degraded peatlands; stop peat extraction; or leverage private investment in peatlands restoration. Countries identified a number of barriers to the development of peatland policies and strategies, including lack of resources; limited understanding of peatland extent or issues; coordination between semi-autonomous provinces; low visibility of peatlands in national policy-making; and resistance from stakeholders with competing uses.

7. Momentum for 4/16 implementation is built on the work of UNEP and the GPI partners and the commitments made by the Republic of Congo (ROC), Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) outlined in the 2018 Brazzaville Declaration on Peatlands.<sup>3</sup> UNEP and GPI partners support by facilitating high-level South-South exchanges<sup>4</sup> between the 3 signatory countries of the Declaration and Peru. UNEP is also helping to strengthen the International Tropical Peatlands Centre (ITPC),<sup>5</sup> an international hub for the advancement of tropical peatlands research and by coordinating and hosting research workshops and events to accelerate information, data, tools and methods exchanges. For example, in July 2019 Enhancing Evidence-Based Policy by Developing Core Common Outcomes and Collaborations for Peatland Research and Monitoring<sup>6</sup> helped to advance tropical peatlands inter-disciplinary research and collaboration. Building on outputs from this workshop, in 2020, peatland researchers from across the tropics prioritized key variables for peatland monitoring and research. In 2021 a standardized approach to peatland monitoring will be proposed to increase the availability of comparable data for evidence synthesis, which can improve the evidence base for future peatland policy and practice. This built on results of the GPI co-hosted workshop with Newcastle University to develop Core Common Outcomes and Reporting Standards for Peatlands Research<sup>7</sup> with 32 United Kingdom and 5 international peatlands researchers and policymakers.

8. Spurred on by 4/16, a dedicated Peatlands Unit under the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of DRC, with technical and financial support from the Japanese Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNEP, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and GPI partners organized the

<sup>1</sup> Number of partners as at end November 2020 (see more at [www.globalpeatlands.org](http://www.globalpeatlands.org)).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/details/project/the-global-peatlands-initiative-assessing-measuring-and-preserving-peat-carbon-18\\_III\\_096-3039](https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/details/project/the-global-peatlands-initiative-assessing-measuring-and-preserving-peat-carbon-18_III_096-3039).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/resolutions-treaties-and-decisions/brazzaville-declaration>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/south-south-cooperation-peatlands-indonesia-republic-congo-solidify-their> and <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Good-Practices-in-SSTC-for-Sustainable-Development-Vol.-3-2020-Digital-Light-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tropicalpeatlands.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globalpeatlands.org/?p=16418>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.globalpeatlands.org/?p=16378>.

first ever DRC National Peatlands workshop<sup>8</sup> in Kinshasa. UNEP continues to support the DRC to advance on roadmap development and national action plan peatlands sustainable management. In fact, UNEP is working through the GPI to help support all countries by providing expert technical support and bringing best practice approaches to global events, outreach and workshops, while sharing information and inspiring collaboration and commitments through informal and formal partnerships. In May 2019, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), UNEP, Wetlands International, Ramsar Secretariat, Greifswald Mire Center (GMC) invited the Secretariats of relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) - the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN Convention on Combat Desertification (UNCCD), The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Group, Water Convention - with contracting parties, international organizations and peatland experts to “Exploring Synergies for Peatlands – Detecting and enhancing the global importance of peatlands in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”.<sup>9</sup>

9. And later in the year, the German Minister for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and UNEP once again joined forces with BfN, Ramsar Secretariat, GMC and GPI members to provide technical guidance to 30 government representatives, experts and stakeholders from the public sector and civil society from 11<sup>10</sup> EU Member States, other European countries and beyond in order to establish key principles for the development or revision of their national peatlands policies or strategies as captured in the Policy Brief: Peatland strategies in Europe.<sup>11</sup> Following, UNEP together with co-hosts CMS, held a Working Meeting for Peatlands Synergies securing commitment and actionable collaboration to identify synergistic activities to advance peatland conservation, restoration and sustainable management.

10. Other noteworthy milestones were:

(a) The vital role of peatlands and importance of peatlands for carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation included in Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report.<sup>12</sup>

(b) Peatlands as a vital nature-based solution for global climate action emphasized at Secretary-General’s Climate Summit<sup>13</sup> by German Minister for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), by Indonesia’s Deputy Minister of Environment and Forestry and by FAO’s Forestry Policy and Resources Division Director.

(c) Peatlands were emphasized at an Extraordinary Meeting of Ministers of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)<sup>14</sup> as Minister of Tourism and Environment of ROC, supported by DRC Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development secured peatlands as a topic for discussion in the formal agenda for the next COMIFAC Heads of State Conference.

(d) FAO and GPI partners advanced critical on work to improve Peatland mapping and monitoring: recommendations and technical overview<sup>15</sup> during a participatory workshop.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.globalpeatlands.org/?p=16582>.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/mea\\_peatlands\\_workshop\\_report\\_e.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/mea_peatlands_workshop_report_e.pdf); [https://redd.unfccc.int/uploads/2\\_231\\_190814\\_workshop\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://redd.unfccc.int/uploads/2_231_190814_workshop_report_final.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, France, the UK, Latvia, Switzerland, Estonia, Austria and Sweden.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/internationalernaturschutz/Dokumente/Peatland\\_Workshop\\_2019/Policy\\_brief\\_peatland\\_strategies\\_bf.pdf](https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/internationalernaturschutz/Dokumente/Peatland_Workshop_2019/Policy_brief_peatland_strategies_bf.pdf); <https://www.globalpeatlands.org/?p=16675>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.globalpeatlands.org/?p=16613>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://pfbc-cbfp.org/files/docs/news/8-2020/COMMUNIQUE%20FINAL%20DE%20LA%20SESSION%20EXTRAORDINAIRE%20DU%20CONSEIL%20DES%20MINISTRES%20DE%20LA%20COMIFAC%20TENUE%20PAR%20VISIOCONFERENCE%20LE%20JEUDI%2020%20AOUT%202020.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/CA8200EN/CA8200EN.pdf> and <http://www.fao.org/gfoi/news-events/news/detail/en/c/1265531/>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZp5NgJ2-dK6-oTRJrJvIgzbbZ0vIehyN>.

(e) As one of the emerging issues of our time GPI coordinated Permafrost Peatlands: Losing ground in a warming world<sup>17</sup> chapter in the Frontiers Report.

(f) UNEP and GPI partners urged for action for peatlands conservation, restoration and sustainable management at key global and regional policy forums: 7 Global Landscapes Forums; 8 events at UNFCCC COP25; Wetscapes; IUCN, UK Peatland Conference; Eurosite Annual General Meeting and many more online sessions.

(g) Advancing the work on peatlands inter-disciplinary research, Newcastle University, UNEP and the ITPC established a GPI (Tropical) Peatlands Research Working Group to foster collaboration on core outcome sets, joint research funding proposals and provide essential skills training.

(h) Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is currently preparing specific guidance (technical, policy) for peatland restoration. In addition, Ramsar Secretariat is also preparing together with UNDP a webinar for the respective national focal points on how best to integrate wetland-based solutions into the updates of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as requested by the Paris Accord.

## Regional efforts

11. **Latin America and the Caribbean:** With Peruvian Ministry of Environment (MINAM), FAO, UNEP, GMC and GPI support knowledge exchange through global forums and a series of 5 national webinars to advance and consolidate efforts toward sustainable management of peatlands in Peru.<sup>18</sup> With Chilean Ministry of Environment, UNEP, GMC and GPI supported Chile<sup>19</sup> to include peatlands in their NDC, helped to launch Chile's national roadmap for the conservation and sustainable management of peatlands during a "Protection and sustainable use of peatlands as nature-based solutions to climate change: international experiences" webinar as a celebration of International Bog Day.

12. **North America:** UNEP, the Water Institute, University of Waterloo convened 3 online workshops *Canada's Peatlands: Towards a National Assessment*<sup>20</sup> to establish and activate the peatlands network in Canada and identify gaps, data sources, to contribute the Global Peatlands Assessment/Inventory as requested in Resolution 4/16.

13. **Europe:** UNEP works with Eurosite by strengthening the Eurosite Care-Peat Restoration and Management Group<sup>21</sup> with best practice and policy approaches from GPI for conservation and restoration of peatlands, linked to the peatlands work stream of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and coordinating efforts for a globally significant celebration of Bog Day in 2021.

14. **Africa:** UNEP, GMC and GPI are supporting the Nile Basin Initiative to identify Peatlands Restoration, Conservation and Sustainable Management actions as effective solutions to Climate Change challenges in the Nile Basin. UNEP is supporting DRC and ROC by delivering direct technical support during 5 webinars and 1 consultative workshop to help connect and prioritize peatlands in key initiatives such as: Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI); *proposed* Conservation and Sustainable Management of Peatlands in Congo Programme; CongoPeat Project; GEF7 Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (CBSL IP); etc.

15. **Asia and the Pacific:** With the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Indonesia, UNEP, FAO and GPI are delivering support on peatlands management, livelihood opportunities and decision-making planning in Indonesia. Additionally, the ITPC with support from GPI is negotiating Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with international universities and has gained international

<sup>17</sup> [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27542/Frontiers1819\\_ch3.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27542/Frontiers1819_ch3.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.tropicalpeatlands.org/presentation/towards-a-new-paradigm-for-conservation-and-sustainable-management-of-peatlands-in-peru/> and [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2019/20191202\\_01.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2019/20191202_01.html) and <https://events.globallandscapesforum.org/agenda/biodiversity-2020/28-october-2020/peatlands-a-super-nature-based-solution-home-and-refuge-for-unique-and-threatened-biodiversity/>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/growing-awareness-value-chiles-peatlands>; <https://www.globalpeatlands.org/?p=16720>; <https://mma.gob.cl/ministerio-del-medio-ambiente-anuncia-hoja-de-ruta-de-turberas/>; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwMMNDR9\\_Yg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwMMNDR9_Yg).

<sup>20</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/water-institute/news/water-institute-joins-global-peatlands-initiative>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.eurosite.org/eurosite-network/working-groups/>.

attention through its Focus Group Discussions<sup>22</sup> by sharing best practices and gathering information on the Peatlands Project Initiatives happening in Indonesia.

16. As a result of ongoing work by UNEP with the Global Peatlands Initiative partners, significant gains in awareness, action and policy have been witnessed, including an increasing interest in the GPI by Mongolia, England, Belarus, France, Germany and Scotland. Similarly, a diverse set of stakeholders are also reaching in to join efforts with UNEP and the Global Peatlands Initiative including coordinated youth advocacy groups, private sector companies and think tanks.

17. Unfortunately, UNEP has very limited financial and human resources for the implementation of Resolution 4/16 with contributions received to support the GPI Project from 2018 from the German International Climate Initiative (IKI) of 2 million Euros and a recent contribution of 100,000USD from the SIDA 2020 allocations. As such, additional resources are requested and being sought in an effort to support more countries to implement Resolution 4/16 and as a priority to complete an extensive *Global Peatlands Assessment* as a critical step to enable UNEP, together with the Ramsar Secretariat and partners, to establish a *Global Peatlands Inventory* as called for in 4/16 (OP. 2).

## II. Recommendations and suggested actions

18. A key lesson learned has been the value of continuous, high level and broad engagement, seeking opportunities for collaboration and partnership to advance the Resolution implementation with minimal funds. UNEP's approach to leading the GPI partnership has been impactful as we have seen our collective work contributing to peatlands becoming recognized as a key ecosystem for climate action and biodiversity conservation. For example, Canada and Germany have both included peatlands in their nature based solution packages; and in Canada and the UK peatlands have been included in updated quantification methods in carbon markets; the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration has highlighted peatlands as a key landscape for conservation and restoration action. Furthermore, outreach to UNEP colleagues working with private banks has enabled the inclusion of criteria on sustainable land use investments that do not lead to degradation or drainage of peatlands as articulated in the vision of the & Green Fund. We have also seen increased investment into peatlands-targeted work by Germany through an IKI dedicated theme, and by Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility (GEF).

19. However, UNEP was unable to support a larger number of countries to initiate actions to update and develop peatlands policies and strategies for the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of these valuable ecosystems, as there is a global difficulty in knowing where exactly peatland areas are located and what decisions or ongoing land uses are impacting peatland health negatively, thus contributing to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions or biodiversity and resilience losses.

### 20. Recommendations

(a) More work will need to be done to enable peatlands coordinated action, especially to answer the fundamental question of where peatlands are and how they are changing – we must continue to advance and strengthen the links between science and policy – while undertaking the Global Peatlands Assessment which aims to set a baseline picture of the state of global peatlands.

(b) Further investment is needed in peatlands science and technical capability especially on the knowledge of peatlands extent, GHG fluxes, ecosystem valuation, and carbon storage capacity.

(c) Further investment in direct conservation of intact peatlands ecosystems in order to avoid emissions, support biodiversity protection, water and climate resilience.

(d) Continue to highlight key role of peatlands in climate change mitigation, especially in relation to NDCs under the Paris Agreement with particular opportunities in Articles 5 and 6.

(e) Continue to highlight the key role of peatlands in biodiversity conservation as key areas for investment in meeting CBD targets.

21. Continue to stress the complementarity of peatlands conservation for advancing MEAs and providing multiple benefits including climate, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and for our economic and social health and well-being.

22. UNEP and the GPI partners will need the support of Member States to concertedly raise the flag on the need to establish the state of peatlands globally by securing and leveraging government

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.tropicalpeatlands.org/event/collecting-and-sharing-status-peatlands-project-initiatives-in-indonesia/>.

commitments, building on ongoing and future academic research, and drawing on the diverse set of GPI partners to establish a basis for the ambitious Global Peatlands Inventory as outlined in Resolution 4/16. Such a Global Peatlands Inventory is expected to become a vital tool for countries to track and report on peatlands health, their GHG emissions, emissions reductions and avoidance while accounting for unique biodiversity and other vital ecosystem services that peatlands provide.

### **III. Further information**

23. UNEP's work leading the Global Peatlands Initiative was highlighted as one of 6 stand-out best practices for South South and Triangular Cooperation in the 2020 collection of United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation Good Practices publication<sup>23</sup> for the Life on Land Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Global Peatlands Initiative was further featured as a best practice in South South Galaxy<sup>24</sup> portal & captured in UNEP's South South Cooperation in Action – Stories of Success.<sup>25</sup> Finally, GPI was highlighted to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Committee for Programme & Coordination (CPC) by UNEP as a major result for Subprogramme 3 in 2018/2019 and significant result area planned for the ongoing 2020/2021 Programme of Work.

24. IUCN, Ramsar and have UNEP agreed to coordinate efforts to jointly report on the progress of complementary peatlands resolutions<sup>26</sup> – to bring together content reported toward the different peatlands resolutions, exchange information and reduce the reporting burden.

25. You may find additional information and follow progress at our UNEP resolution online reporting tool (<https://unea.unep.org/monitoring/viewoutcome/84>) which will provide more detailed information on the implementation of Resolution 4/16 on the Conservation and sustainable management of peatlands. For additional information, kindly contact UNEP Global Peatlands Coordinator, Dianna Kopansky via email at [dianna.kopansky@un.org](mailto:dianna.kopansky@un.org).

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Good-Practices-in-SSTC-for-Sustainable-Development-Vol.-3-2020-Digital-Light-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/South-South-Cooperation-in-Action-Stories-of-Success.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/about-us/commission-ecosystem-management/iucn-resolution-43-reporting>.