



Press release

Dubai, 23th October 2018

Fully 48% of wetlands in the Mediterranean basin have disappeared since 1970, according to a recent analysis, while the average global loss is around 35%. The most productive ecosystem on the planet is also the most endangered. There is great urgency to act, and solutions exist!

In view of this, nearly 1,000 delegates from 170 countries are gathering in Dubai from 21 to 29 October to attend the 13th Conference of the Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, and to decide on the best ways to protect wetlands, the most lavish ecosystem on the planet and yet the most threatened. Fittingly, on this occasion will be made public the second report of the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory on the state, challenges, perspectives and solutions for sustainable Mediterranean wetlands.

Wetlands, solutions based on nature

Increasingly we are experiencing extreme weather events, with a failure to adapt and mitigate climate change, loss of biodiversity and collapse of ecosystems, natural disasters, human-caused environmental damage . . . and if wetlands were part of the solution?

- Lake, pond, marsh, river, estuary, bog, meadow, lagoon, chott, merja, daya, guelta, wadi . . . Wetlands, the most productive ecosystem on the planet and yet the most threatened, are places of biodiversity – abundant in flora and fauna, welcoming for people, necessary to the well-being of everyone and the safety of all.
- Vital for the survival of humanity, they are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems. Consider that they supply almost all the fresh water consumed in the world. More than a billion people depend on wetlands for their livelihoods and survival, as do countless plant and animal species. However, they continue to be destroyed, degraded and transformed for other uses, such as industry, tourism, urbanization, agriculture, etc. This development undermines human well-being through the loss of the multiple benefits provided by wetlands. It is urgent to take action!

The lights are red! Some figures from the indicators of the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory show that:

- 48% of wetlands in the Mediterranean basin have disappeared since 1970 (Indicator 5),
- The population of the Mediterranean basin has increased by one-third since 1990, and by 42% in coastal areas (Indicator 10),
- The human ecological footprint in the Mediterranean basin is today almost twice as high as the world average, and
- 23% of the remaining wetlands are artificial (e.g., impoundment lakes, salt marshes, rice paddies), compared to 12% worldwide.



Water

- 1/3 of the Mediterranean countries are undergoing very heavy water stress, particularly serious in the Middle East and North-East Africa (Indicator 3),
- Most rivers have experienced a very significant reduction in flow (-25 to -75%) (Indicator 3),
- Agriculture is the main contributor to the increase in water withdrawals in the Mediterranean basin with 2/3 of the total (Indicator 9)
- The flood control capacity of wetlands has decreased by 20% in some Mediterranean countries (Indicator 12).

Climate change

- 95% of the wetland sites hosting more than 50,000 waterbirds are coastal and threatened with submersion following sea level rise,
- The Iberian Peninsula, the Maghreb, the Balkans and the Near East are the regions that are likely to lose the largest number of wetland species as a result of climate change (Indicator 11).

Biodiversity

- 36% of Mediterranean wetland species are now threatened with extinction. Their decline is accelerating, their populations having been almost halved since 1990 (indicator 2),
- The abundance of mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish has declined by about 35% since 1990 (Indicator 1).

But solutions exist and initiatives are put in place by a community of actors!

In Morocco, the **designation of Ramsar Sites** has led to better conservation of waterbirds and reduced threats to these sites.

Well-managed or restored coastal wetlands act as "climate buffers", providing low-cost protection for people and goods and providing habitat for endangered species.

Agriculture and wetlands: sustainable cohabitation?

Our recent studies show that sustainable agriculture can and must reconcile food security with the maintenance of wetlands.

Well-being and education

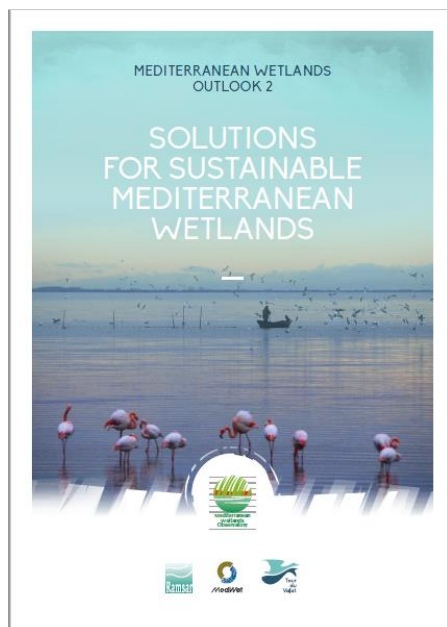
More and more people are visiting and enjoying Mediterranean wetlands for educational experiences, tourism and recreation, and simply for their well-being purposes (Indicator 13).

Governance and protection

Where the regulatory framework and the necessary means have been mobilized, there has been an increase in waterbird populations since the mid-2000s (Indicator 1).



The Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2



Discover the full version of the report "[Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2: Solutions for sustainable Mediterranean wetlands](#)".

The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory just published the new report "Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2: Solutions for Sustainable Mediterranean Wetlands (MWO-2)".

The MWO-2 updates the situation of Mediterranean wetlands since 2012, the year of publication of the first Outlook report (MWO-1), which was the first regional assessment based on indicators of the state of wetlands and the problems they face.

This report, comprising 16 indicator sheets and a synthesis for policy makers, provides a regional perspective on the outcomes of the first Ramsar Convention report entitled "Global Wetlands Outlook: State of the World's Wetlands and their Wetlands" on the occasion of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the

Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on wetlands (Ramsar COPI3, Dubai, October 2018)

Join our side events at Ramsar COPI3 in Dubai

Side event: Monitoring the status and trends of wetlands in the Mediterranean region: the Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2

18:15 - 19:30 | October 25



The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory, coordinated by Tour du Valat within the framework of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative - MedWet, will introduce the latest results of the 2nd Mediterranean Wetland Outlook report (MWO-2) with an update on Mediterranean wetlands status since the 1st report (MWO-1) in 2012, and will provide regional support for the findings of the Ramsar Convention's first Global Wetland Outlook (GWO).



Side event: Enhancing the Conservation of Mediterranean Coastal Wetlands

18:15 - 19:30 | October 24



The MAVA Foundation launched a five-year strategy on enhancing Mediterranean coastal wetlands' conservation. Four sites are selected in Oristano (Maristanis project, Sardinia, Italy), Ghar el Melah (Tunisia), Ulcinj Salina (Montenegro) and Buna River Protected Landscape (Albania). Horizontal actions are also set up with islands wetlands inventories (the MedsWet project implementing the XII.14 Ramsar resolution), also campaigning with Off Your Map*, integrated coastal wetlands governance, and socio-economic project.

*Off Your Map: Don't let Coastal Wetlands be wiped off the map

Off Your Map is a campaign of 11 international partners aiming at improving the understanding of coastal wetlands' characteristics and the ways to conserve, manage and enjoy them sustainably. Together we must turn the tide for Mediterranean Coastal Wetlands.

More information and Press Release here: http://bit.ly/Offyourmap_launch_EN

The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory

Coordinated by the Tour du Valat, the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory was created in 2008 in the framework of the MedWet Initiative to monitor and evaluate the status and trends of Mediterranean wetlands, and to further improve the knowledge of their multiple benefits. Its ultimate goal is to improve wetland conservation and management by providing information to as many people as possible, in particular political decision makers and the general public, in line with the MedWet strategic vision. The MWO catalyzes the efforts of a number of partners committed to this vision, including the Plan Bleu, UNEP-WCMC, Wetlands International, EKBY and many others.

www.tourduvalat.org/en/mediterranean-wetlands/mwo



MedWet – The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative

Established in 1991, the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) brings together 27 Mediterranean and peri-Mediterranean countries that are Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), Palestine and a number of organizations and wetland centres. The MedWet Mission is to ensure and support the effective conservation of the functions and values of Mediterranean wetlands and the sustainable use of their resources and services.

www.medwet.org





Tour du Valat

Tour du Valat is a research institute for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands created more than 60 years ago by Luc Hoffmann. It has since then developed its research activities for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands with the constant desire to achieve a better understanding for better management. Convinced that it will only be possible to preserve wetlands if human activities and the protection of the natural heritage can be reconciled, Tour du Valat has for many years been developing programmes of research and integrated management that favour interchanges between wetland users and scientists, and promote wetland benefits to decision makers.

www.tourduvalat.org



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