



Report of the World Wetlands Day Seminar Wetlands and Climate Change



February 2, 2019
India International Center
New Delhi

To mark World Wetlands Day, Wetlands International South Asia (WISA) organized a seminar on “Wetlands and Climate Change” at India International Centre, New Delhi. The seminar discussed pathways and policy directions for mainstreaming diverse wetland ecosystems and ecosystem values in climate policy. The event was attended by 70 participants from central government agencies, International organizations, academia, civil society, media and experts (List at Annex I, Programme at Annex II).

Wetlands solutions for over six decades

Dr Sidharth Kaul, President, Wetlands International South Asia introduced the theme of World Wetlands Day. He also presented an overview of various initiatives taken by the organization to promote holistic management of wetlands in the South Asia region. Major programmes related to integrated management planning, capacity development, building wetlands knowledge base and ecosystems-based disaster risk reduction were discussed. Dr Kaul also informed the participants that the designation of Sundarban as a Ramsar site had been completed on February 1, 2019, and WISA had provided technical support to the designation process.

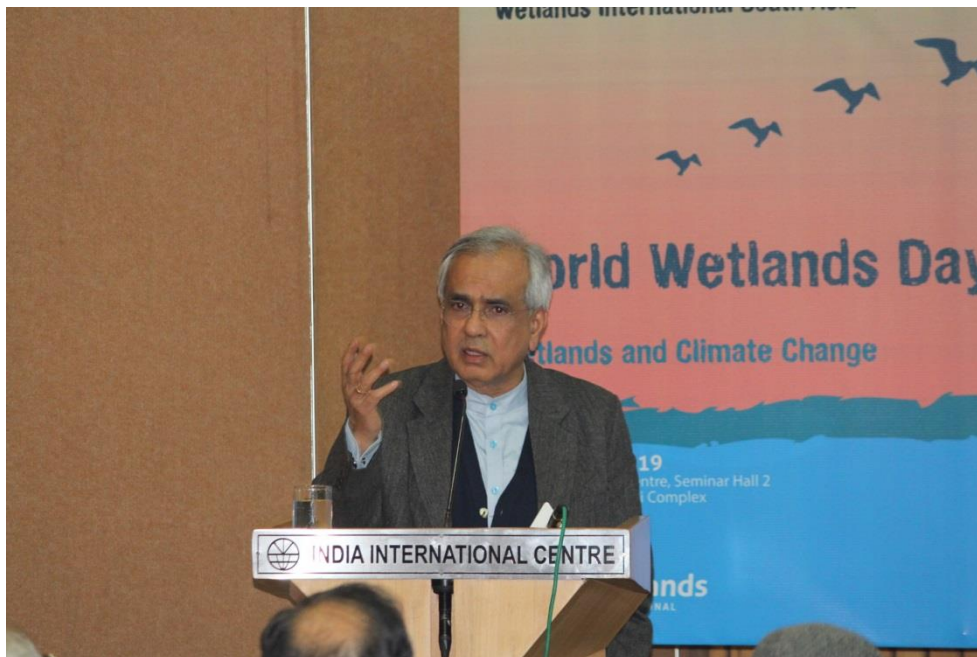
The Chief Guest of the event, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairperson, NITI Aayog (National Institution of Transforming India, the premier policy think-tank of Government of India) released the book *Wetland Conservation Ethos*, which provides an overview of wetlands, their values and functions, management approaches and role of citizens in conserving wetlands. A poster on the world wetland day theme was also released. Wetlands International also released a training module on integrated wetland management.



Wetland Conservation Ethos being released (L to R: Dr Sidharth Kaul, Dr Rajiv Kumar and Dr Ajit Pattnaik)

Clarion call to step up action on Wetland Conservation

Dr Rajiv Kumar delivered the keynote address at the event. Expressing happiness that WISA has been shouldering the responsibility of championing wetland conservation in South Asia. Dr Kumar called upon the need for upscaling efforts at the national and regional scale. Reminiscing his personal experiences of being with in wetlands around the country, Dr Kumar mentioned that wetlands formed an integral part of the Indian culture which was structured around the philosophy of man with and within nature, rather than man against nature.



Dr Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, delivering key-note address

Dr Kumar called on a paradigm shift in the way in which nature, including wetlands, is considered in developmental planning processes. Cautioning that society was slow to react to capacity development and outreach actions, he stressed the need for raising the nation-wide alarm on the rapid loss of wetlands and its consequences for development.

Dr Kumar mentioned that wetland conservation efforts adopted in the country so far had limited impact due to silo like approaches which failed to build on convergence opportunities. The need for Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to embellish its policy-making role beyond a focus on regulation was also mentioned. He also called upon wetlands conservation to be made a popular movement connecting masses and not confining to elitist issues addressing few sectoral interests.

At the close, Dr Kumar invited Wetlands International South Asia to work towards:

- a. Drawing attention to the rapid degradation of wetlands by highlighting the causes and consequences, and the impacts of this degradation on development.
- b. A national framework for conserving wetlands by building convergence across different development sectors.

- c. A framework for linking wetlands to the suite of indicators used for tracking progress under Sustainable Development Goals.
- d. Promoting the cause of wetlands conservation within states and diverse stakeholders through workshops, seminars and trainings.

Wetlands for climate change mitigation and adaptation



Clock-wise from top: Dr Sidharth Kaul, Dr Anil K. Gupta, Mr Pyush Dogra and Prof. C.K. Varshney

Prof. E.J. James (Member, Governing Body, WISA) chaired the technical session on 'Wetlands and Climate change'. In his introductory remarks, Prof. James mentioned that the buffering role of wetlands had acquired significance with increased instances of urban floods and droughts.

Prof. C.K. Varshney (Prof. Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Member, Governing Body, WISA) recollected his experiences of establishing Ramsar Convention, which had been instrumental in setting up a pathway for conservation-related multilateral environmental agreements. He presented an overview on the role of wetlands in combating the impacts of climate change. The need to recognise wetlands as a separate Land use category was stressed upon. Prof. Varshney also called for increasing the ambit of conservation actions from Ramsar to all wetlands in the country. In conclusion, he emphasized that conserving, restoring and constructing wetlands will be vital for adapting to climate change impacts.

Presenting the perspective of DDR practitioners, Dr Anil K. Gupta (Associate Professor, National Institute of Disaster Management) stated the need for building ecosystem-based

approaches such as wetlands conservation in disaster risk reduction measures. Landscape approaches which considered the functional role of ecosystems beyond static land use classes were mentioned as enabling conditions. The need to upscale wetland conservation beyond Ramsar sites was also called upon.

Mr. Pyush Dogra (Senior Environment Specialist, The World Bank) presented the green defence or nature-based approach which enabled the integration of wetlands in water resources management. The approach is an adaptive management philosophy which seeks to spatially integrate natural forces and human interventions and to balance incentive based and supply driven measures. Citing cases from The Netherlands, United States of America, China and Sri Lanka, he mentioned that often information, institution and investments acted as levers for integration.

Dr Ajit Pattnaik (Vice President, WISA) summarised the deliberations and affirmed that the organization would take up recommendation on the development of a framework for converging wetlands in development planning, and developing wetland indicators for SDGs on a priority.

Dr Ritesh Kumar (Conservation Programme Manager, WISA) delivered the vote of thanks.



Left to Right: Archana Chatterji; Dr K.K. Vass; Prof. B.B. Dhar; Mr SK Pande; Prof. J.K. Garg; Dr A.K. Kundra; Prof. C.K. Varshney; Dr Anil K. Gupta; Prof. E.J. James; Dr A.K. Pattnaik; Mr Pyush Dogra; Dr Sidharth Kaul and Dr Ritesh Kumar

Annex 1: List of Participants

Central Government Agencies

Dr Rajiv Kumar, NITI Aayog
Dr Anil K Gupta, National Institute of Disaster Management
Mr Paritosh C. Tyagi, Central Pollution Control Board
Mr Sandeep Behera, NMCG, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation
Mr Sravan Kumar, NMCG, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation

International Organisation

Mr Pyush Dogra, The World Bank
Dr Konard Uebelhor, GIZ India
Ms Neha A. Owaisy, GIZ India
Mr Ravindra Singh, GIZ India
Ms Aditi Kapoor, Red Cross & Red Crescent Climate Centre
Guru Naik, ARC Consortium Manager
Armstrong Asiimire, ARC M&E Manager
Mohammad Ashraf Himmat, Afghanistan
Mariam Kosha, Afghanistan
Zodiac Maslin Hahn, Afghanistan

Mariam Kosha, Afghanistan
Dr Mamta Prakash, National Environment Engineering Research Institute
Dr Manju Arora, NEERI

Research and Academic Institute

Dr Pamposh Bhat, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Mr Satish Kumar, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Mr Anmol Topno, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Mr Hriday Sagar, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Ms Shubhangi Bhatia, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Dr Surya Prakash, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Ms Rashmi Rohit Misra, National Environment Engineering Research Institute
Mr Suresh C. Rai, Delhi School of Economics
Mr Praveen Kumar, Institute of Management Technology
Ms Maansi Malik, Delhi School of Economics

Mr Praveen Kumar, Institute of Management Technology
Ms Aditi Bhowmick, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage

Think-Tank

Ms Aditi Bhowmick, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage

Experts

Mr T K Roy, Asian Waterbird Census Coordinator
Mr Abhijit Chatterjee, IT Power India

Corporate

Mr Abhijit Chatterjee, IT Power India
Dr Avneet Kaur, Centre for Science and Environment

Civil Society Organisation

Mr Sajid Idrisi, INTACH
Mr Manu Gupta, SEEDS
Mr Sushant Sharma, Welthungerhilfe
Mr Manu Bhatnagar, INTACH
Mr Manish Kumar, NIDAN
Mr Shambhavi Krishna, INTACH
Mr Khan Agha Qayoumir, Save the Children
Mr Shirinagha Samim, Save the Children
Mr Khan Agha Qayoumir, Save the Children
Mr Dipendra, All India Radio

Media

Mr Mukesh Sharma, Asian News International
Mr Jagdish Chand, Asian News International
Mr Anand Prakash, DD News
Mr Rajinder Joshi, DD News

Mr Rajinder Joshi, DD News
Mr Mayank Agarwal, DNA
Mr JAsjeep Singh, Times of India

Wetlands International South Asia

Dr Sidharth Kaul, President

Prof. J K Garg, Honorary Treasurer

Prof. C K Varshney, Member, Governing Body

Prof. E J James, Member, Governing Body

Dr A K Kundra, Founder Member

Mr S K Pande, Founder Member

Prof. B B Dhar, Honorary Member

Dr Archana Chatterjee, Honorary Member

Dr K K Vass, Honorary Member

Dr Ritesh Kumar, Conservation Programme Manager

Ms Nehha Sharma, Technical Officer

Mr Kamal Dalakoti, Junior Technical Officer

Mr ML Khan, Admin and Finance Officer

Ms Kalpana Ambastha, Research Associate

Dr Ridhi Saluja, Technical Officer

Mr Dushyant Mohil, Project Manager

Mr Ritesh Sikka, Technical Officer

Ms Sugandha Menda, Jr. Technical Officer

Mr Rakesh Verma, Office Support

Mr Mahendra Kumar, Office Support



Wetlands International South Asia

World Wetlands Day Wetlands and Climate Change

February 2, 2019

India International Center, Seminar Hall. 2, First Floor, Kamla Devi Complex
40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi – 110003



Agenda

10.30 – 11.30	Registration
11.30 – 11.32	Welcome Dr Ritesh Kumar, Conservation Programme Manager, Wetlands International South Asia
11.32 – 11.45	World Wetlands Day – an introduction Dr Sidharth Kaul, President, Wetlands International South Asia
11.45 – 11.50	Release of publications: a) World Wetlands Day Poster, b) Book – Wetland Conservation Ethos, and c) Training Module on Integrated Wetland Management
11.50 – 12.10	Keynote address Dr Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, Niti Aayog
12.10 – 12.15	Vote of thanks
12.15 – 12.30	High Tea
12.30 – 13.50	Seminar – “Wetlands and Climate Change”
12.30 – 12.45	Wetlands and Climate Change: Scope and Relevance Prof C K Varshney, Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University
12.45 – 13.00	Urban wetlands in a changing climate Dr P. S. N. Rao, Director, School of Planning and Architecture
13.00 – 13.15	Wetlands as natural infrastructure for building climate resilience Dr Anil K Gupta, Associate Professor, National Institute of Disaster Management
13.15 – 13.25	Water security and wetlands: World Bank perspective Mr Pyush Dogra, Senior Environment Specialist, The World Bank
13.25 – 13.40	Participation from floor
13.40 – 13.50	Session Summary and Way Ahead Dr Ajit Pattnaik, Vice President, Wetlands International South Asia
13.50	Lunch



