

## INDIA'S RAMSAR CoP 15 RESOLUTION: ENVIRONMENT

**NEWS:** India's resolution to the Ramsar Contracting Parties on 'Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for the Wise Use of Wetlands', adopted at Ramsar CoP15 in Zimbabwe

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India is strengthening its commitment to wetland conservation under the Ramsar Convention by increasing the number of designated Ramsar Sites, but concerns remain over implementation, ecological degradation, and lack of effective management in several notified wetlands. The Ramsar Convention provides the international framework for conserving wetlands of international importance, especially as waterfowl habitats.

### India's Ramsar CoP15 Resolution on Wetlands

#### I. Context: Ramsar CoP15 Resolution by India

- **India proposed a resolution** titled “**Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for the Wise Use of Wetlands**” at the **15th Conference of the Contracting Parties (CoP15)** to the Ramsar Convention.
- **Venue:** Zimbabwe
- **Adoption:** The resolution was **adopted with overwhelming support** from:
  - **172 Contracting Parties**
  - **6 International Organisation Partners (IOPs)**
  - **Numerous observer organizations**
- The resolution aligns with India's leadership on **sustainability and climate action**, particularly through **Mission LiFE**.

#### II. Wetlands – Definition & Ecological Significance

- A **wetland** is an area **flooded or saturated with water** either permanently (for years or decades) or seasonally (for shorter durations).
- They are **unique ecosystems** supporting:
  - Biodiversity
  - Flood regulation
  - Groundwater recharge
  - Livelihoods for local communities
- Wetlands are also crucial **carbon sinks** and **climate buffers**.

#### III. Core Objectives of India's Resolution

- Promote **sustainable lifestyles** for conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- Encourage a **whole-of-society approach (WoS)** involving all stakeholders.
- Integrate **individual behavior change** and **collective social action** for wetland sustainability.
- Reinforce the global commitment to the **UNEA Resolution 6/8** on sustainable lifestyles.

#### IV. Whole-of-Society (WoS) Approach

- Refers to **collaborative participation across all societal sectors**, including:
  - Government agencies
  - Private sector
  - Civil society & NGOs
  - Academic and research institutions
  - Media
  - Faith-based organizations
  - Local communities & individual citizens
- Goal: To achieve large-scale, inclusive impact in sustainability, conservation, public health, or disaster resilience.

#### V. Sustainable Lifestyles – Key Features

Defined as **daily practices and behaviors** that:

1. **Minimize environmental degradation:**
  - Through **resource conservation**, reducing carbon and water footprints.
2. **Promote equitable socio-economic development:**
  - By ensuring sustainable consumption that benefits both present and future generations.
3. **Enhance quality of life:**
  - Including mental and physical well-being, access to basic needs, social harmony, and safety.

#### VI. India's Global Leadership – Mission LiFE

##### Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)

- Launched by **PM Narendra Modi at UNFCCC CoP26 in Glasgow**.

- A global movement to **encourage individuals and communities** to adopt **climate-friendly behaviors**.
- Focuses on “**Pro-Planet People**” who practice mindful consumption.

### **Integration with Wetland Conservation**

- Mission LiFE is integrated with national wetland efforts:
  - **Mission Sahbhagita** – A participatory wetland conservation framework.
  - **Save Wetlands Campaign** – Raises awareness and mobilizes communities.
- **Achievements:**
  - Mapping of **170,000+ wetlands** across India.
  - Boundary demarcation of **nearly 120,000 wetlands** in 3 years.

### **VII. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands – Overview**

- **Adopted:** 1971, Ramsar (Iran)
- **Came into force:** 1975
- **Objective:** Framework for **international cooperation** in the **conservation and wise use of wetlands** and their resources.

#### **◆ Key Features:**

- Wetlands that meet ecological criteria are designated as “**Wetlands of International Importance**” (**Ramsar Sites**).
- Focus on:
  - **Cross-border wetland ecosystems**
  - **Migratory bird protection**
  - **Sustainable development goals (SDGs)**

#### **India & Ramsar Convention:**

- **Joined:** February 1, 1982
- **Current Status:**
  - **91 Ramsar Sites**
  - Spread across **1.36 million hectares**
  - **Largest wetland network in Asia** and **3rd largest globally**
  - **250% expansion** in Ramsar sites in the last decade.

## VIII. Urban Wetlands Recognition

- For the **first time**, two Indian cities — **Udaipur (Rajasthan)** and **Indore (Madhya Pradesh)** — have been designated as “**Wetland Cities**” under the Ramsar framework.

Recognizes the cities’ commitment to **wetland conservation in urban planning, public engagement, and policy integration.**

## IX. Wetland Wise Use Framework – India’s 2024 Guidelines

**Released by:**

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** in 2024.

**Core Principles:**

### 1. **Ecological Character Conservation:**

- Emphasis on biodiversity, hydrology, and water quality.

### 2. **Ecosystem-Based Approach:**

- Wetlands viewed as providers of ecosystem services like **fisheries, flood control, and bird habitats.**

### 3. **Decentralized & Participatory Governance:**

- Involvement of **local communities, indigenous peoples, and wetland authorities.**

### 4. **Integration with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

## X. Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules – Key Provisions

- Governed under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.**

**Major Provisions:**

- Wetland conservation must follow the “**Wise Use**” principle as per the Wetlands Authority.
- Activities **prohibited in notified wetlands** include:
  - **Conversion** for non-wetland uses (e.g., real estate, agriculture)
  - **Encroachment**
  - **Setting up or expanding industries**
  - **Disposal of construction & demolition waste**
  - **Poaching**
  - **Discharge of effluents or untreated waste**

## XI. Significance of India’s Ramsar CoP15 Resolution

- Aligns with global efforts like **UNEA 6/8** and **UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration**.
- Emphasizes **individual and societal responsibility** in conserving wetlands.
- Boosts India's image as a **climate leader and biodiversity champion**.
- Strengthens **policy coherence** between climate action (Mission LiFE) and wetland conservation (Mission Sahbhagita).

Source: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2150496>