

Declaration of International Workshop on Intertidal Wetland Conservation and Management in the Yellow Sea Provinces of China

Loss and degradation in the Yellow Sea intertidal wetlands is of critical global concern due to it being one of the most important biodiversity hotspots and one of the most threatened habitats in the world. At the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Jeju, Korea in September 2012, 100% of voting governments (including China) agreed to adopt Resolution 28 on 'Conservation of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and its threatened waterbirds, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea'. CBD COP 10 announced the Aichi Target for the increased protection of habitats. Both decisions call on governments and organizations to take effective solutions to stop the decline of wetland ecosystems along the coast of the Yellow Sea including to protect habitats for migratory waterbirds. To respond to the urgency of this issue, over 160 officials, experts, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and media gathered together in Beijing, from China and around the world.

A common recognition was formed: the Yellow Sea mudflat is the largest muddy intertidal area on the world and has significant global importance; the coastal wetlands provide vital ecosystem services and are the core foundation of social-economic development; the Yellow Sea wetlands and the management of its ecosystem are the key strategic international cooperation issues concerning environment; effective conservation and restoration of the coastal wetlands along the Yellow Sea plays a significant role in international collaboration, sharing global response and the practice of Eco-civilization.

The 18th National Congress of CPC identified Eco-civilization as the national strategy. However, the implementation of national policies including ecological redlining, national wetland conservation policy and eco-compensation, which began a new era for coastal wetland conservation, never happened.

The status of reclamation and degradation of the Yellow Sea wetlands is extremely shocking and is resulting in a very critical situation. In the last decade, 2% has been lost every year. 1.4 million ha has been lost since 2005, making up 22% of the total area of wetlands. Also the protection rate of coastal wetlands is only near 20%, far below the average national protection rate for wetlands (43.51%). Pollution in the near shore area is increasing whilst the habitat for migratory birds is shrinking; fishery resources are nearly exhausted with decline in quality for eco-tourism. All these factors have caused a major threat to the ecological security in the Yellow Sea.

The workshop participants call for the solutions as below:

- 1) Strong recognition of the important ecosystem services of the intertidal zone of the Yellow Sea, including biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, coast protection, disaster risk reduction, fishery, tourism etc, by all society and by national, provincial and local governments.. These ecosystem services are also very important for the development of eco-civilization. Their protection should be adopted in governmental agenda. Promote CEPA and public consultation in management with social supervision.
- 2) Accelerate the legislation process for the protection of wetlands, freeze all on-going reclamation projects, and conduct assessment on the ecosystem and sustainability in the area. Identify priority zones, especially in intertidal area, for protection. Establish nature reserve at key places which are not under protection, such as Nanbao Wetland in Tangshan and Rudong in Jiangsu; evaluate the effectiveness of current protection system and improve it.
- 3) Use ecosystem-based approaches to scientifically assess the current ecological redlines. According to protection priority principle, setup the redline balancing different governmental agencies and local economy development; establish an institution for eco-compensation.
- 4) Development of a national action plan and strategy for the protection of the coastal wetland ecosystems of the Yellow Sea for inclusion in the framework of the 13th “Five Year National Social-economic Development Plan (2016-2020)”.
- 5) Strengthen national and international collaboration and exchange of information on achievements and experiences in protection and wise use of intertidal wetlands, and put intertidal wetlands in Yellow Sea into key international cooperative frameworks.
- 6) Strengthen monitoring and research on ecological characteristics of the Yellow Sea coastal wetlands, establish national coastal wetland monitoring network, and provide scientific and technical support for scientific/wise policy-making and management.