



International Peatland Society[®]



**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS,
AGENCIES, AGREEMENTS AND
PROGRAMMES**

SUMMARY

***International Conventions, Agencies, Agreements and Programmes.
Implications for Peat and Peatland Management - Summary***

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Peatland in Central Finland. Photo: Susann Warnecke

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Introduction

The objective of this document is to identify and summarise the activities of those international conventions, agencies, agreements, and programmes that influence responsible management and wise use of peatlands and peat globally. It is hoped it will increase awareness and understanding of how, when and why these organisations were established and how some of the policies they initiate are implemented by governments.

This report contains information on 22 international organisations that have some relevance to peatlands and peat. Most were established by the United Nations or an Agency of the UN. Some have general remits that cover important global issues of which peatlands form part, for example UNDP focusses on sustainable development and relief of poverty while UNEP has a mandate for global environmental issues and manages the Global Environment Fund (GEF). A few, such as Ramsar and IUCN were formed in response to specific environmental conservation needs, independently of the UN but linked to it and committed to by large numbers of nation states and other bodies, including international NGOs.

The origins of all of these organisations can be traced back to immediately after World War II when the United Nations was established in 1945 by 51 countries initially. Soon afterwards UNESCO was formed in the firm belief that political and economic agreements are not enough to build a lasting peace and that humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity are also essential. UNESCO promotes education, intercultural understanding, protection of heritage, scientific co-operation and freedom of expression, aspects of which have been consolidated in later international conventions and agreements. UNESCO, for example, acted as sponsor of the Ramsar Convention and received its documents of agreement and incorporation in 1971.

IUCN also owes its origin to UNESCO because Julian Huxley, the first Director of UNESCO, sponsored a conference to establish a new environmental institution to promote mutually beneficial conservation linked to sustainable development.

The *Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management*¹ emphasises the commitment of the International Peatland Society and its partners and stakeholders to the *Wise Use* of peatlands and peat by safeguarding their environmental, social and economic functions while respecting their local, regional and global values. It focusses on several priority issues including *biodiversity, water, climate change, economic activities, restoration, institutional capacity, involvement of local people* and *good governance*. These are all matters of importance and concern that are also the priorities of the international organisations that are the subject of this document.

It is hoped that this document will help to unravel the often-complex implications of international agreements and regulations that affect the management of peatlands, peat processing and peat transportation for the better understanding and wise use of this important and valuable local, regional and global resource.

Jack Rieley

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¹ Clarke, D. and Rieley, J.O. (2010) *Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management*. International Peat Society, Jyväskylä, Finland.



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO was created in 1945, in order to respond to the firm belief of nations, forged by two world wars in less than a generation that political and economic agreements are not enough to build a lasting peace. UNESCO has 195 member states and nine associate members.

Implications of UNESCO for peatlands and peat

There is no direct implication of UNESCO for peatland management and peat use except perhaps through the educational programmes on biodiversity and climate change. The main importance of UNESCO is its involvement in the formation and operation of several key international organisations concerned with the environment and sustainable development.



Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is a comprehensive, binding agreement between governments covering the conservation and use of biodiversity. It was signed at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro and came into force on 29 December 1993.

Implications of CBD for peatlands and peat

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most important conventions affecting the management of peatlands and use of peat through far reaching international agreements for the conservation of key ecosystems and the protection and enhancement of endangered habitats and species. Wetlands, of which more than 50% by area are peatlands, are prominent on the CBD target list and activities on these that lead to a reduction in biodiversity are discouraged.



United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The UNFCCC is a "Rio Convention", one of three adopted at the "Earth Summit" in 1992. The ultimate objective of the Convention is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner."

Implications of UNFCCC for peatlands and peat

The UNFCCC has important implications for industries utilising peat and peatlands because GHG emissions associated with peat extraction, processing and use, as well as emissions due to peatland forestry and agriculture, must be accounted for in national GHG inventories. Some studies show that, in the short to medium term, peatland forestry can be a net carbon sink. Peat is regarded as a solid fossil fuel when used for energy. Drained peatland may emit non-CO₂ GHGs (e.g. N₂O) and this must be accounted for.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a specialised agency that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information and helps developing countries and countries in transition modernise and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.

Implications of FAO for peatlands and peat

Since it was formed the emphasis of FAO has changed from providing advice on wetland and peatland drainage for their conversion to agriculture to promoting strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions through measures such as rewetting, re-wilding and alternative forms of production.

FAO Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture (MICCA) Programme



MICCA is a time-limited, multidisciplinary programme launched in 2010 to build on FAO's long-standing work carried out by its different technical departments and collaborate with international and national organizations to address climate change. The primary goal of MICCA is to make agriculture more climate-smart.

MICCA Activities Involving Peatland and Peat

FAO, the MICCA Programme and *Wetlands International* launched the global 'Organic soils and peatlands climate change mitigation initiative'. This is an informal network of organizations and people committed to reducing emissions from peatlands and safeguarding the other vital ecosystem services peatlands provide.

World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)



The WMO is the UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth's atmosphere, weather and climate, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces, and the resulting distribution of water resources

Implications of WMO for peatlands and peat

This convention may not have direct implications for peatlands and peat but it is important to know that together with UNEP in 1988 it was responsible for the creation of the IPCC that assesses all aspects of climate change and its impacts; it also determines the emissions factors for GHG emissions resulting from land use change, including peat extraction. WMO also provides basic data and advice to certain other environmental conventions, including CBD and UNFCCC.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)



IPCC is a scientific body under the auspices of the United Nations that prepares, based on available scientific information, assessments on all aspects of climate change and its impacts, with a view of formulating realistic response strategies. Because of its scientific and intergovernmental nature, the IPCC embodies a unique opportunity to provide rigorous and balanced scientific information to decision makers. By endorsing the IPCC reports, governments acknowledge the authority of their scientific content.

Implications of IPCC for peatlands and peat

GHG emissions as a result of peatland drainage and related use (extraction, forestry, agriculture) must be accounted for in national inventories for reporting to UNFCCC using emission factors and methodologies determined by IPCC. The Fifth IPCC Assessment Report (2014) introduced scope for mitigation as a result of rewetting degraded peatlands that may provide a degree of compensation for GHG emissions resulting from land use change.

United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD)



REDD is a cutting-edge forestry initiative that aims at tipping the economic balance in favour of sustainable management of forests so that their formidable economic, environmental and social goods and services benefit countries, communities, biodiversity and forest users while also contributing to important reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Implications of UN-REDD for peatlands and peat

This programme is aimed at developing countries and at first sight appears to be of little interest to peat and peatland related industries in Europe and N. America. However, in SE Asia, for example, peat industry involves plantations of oil palm and paper pulp trees grown on peat to which REDD could be relevant.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



UNDP helps countries develop strategies to combat poverty by expanding access to economic opportunities and resources, linking poverty programmes with countries' larger goals and policies, and ensuring a greater voice for the poor. UNDP also works at the macro level to reform trade, encourage debt relief and foreign investment and ensure the poorest benefit from globalisation.

Implications of UNDP for peatlands and peat

UNDP does not affect peatland and peat users directly, but it is active in developing countries many of which have peatland, and some have activities on peatland or use peat. It was a partner with UNEP and FAO in the establishment of the UN-REDD Programme.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



UNEP's activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy. It has played a significant role in developing international environmental conventions, promoting environmental science and information and illustrating the way those can be implemented in conjunction with policy. It is working on the development and implementation of policy with national governments, regional institutions in conjunction with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Together with FAO, UNEP established the Global Peatlands Initiative of which the IPS is a founding partner.

Implications of UNEP for peatlands and peat

UNEP may not affect users of peatland and peat directly, but it was a partner with UNDP and FAO in establishing the UN-REDD Programme, with the WMO in formation of IPCC, and with FAO in establishing GPI. UNEP is active in all UN countries and is a major funder of international environmental projects some of which have been on peatland. It has influence on other international conventions, agencies and programmes.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)



IMO is the United Nations specialised agency and global standard-setting authority with responsibility for the safety and security of international shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships. IMO measures cover all aspects of international shipping – including ship design, construction, equipment, manning, operation and disposal – to ensure that this vital sector remains safe, environmentally sound, energy efficient and secure.

Implications of IMO for peatlands and peat

This United Nations Agency sets out the rules that regulate the movement of international shipping and therefore affects the trans-shipment of peat. Peat industry needs to provide the information on what these regulations are and how they affect the transport of peat by ship.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands



The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including peatlands, and their resources. Unlike other global environmental conventions, Ramsar is not part of the United Nations system of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, but it works very closely with the MEAs and is a full partner in the "biodiversity-related cluster" of treaties and agreements.

Implications of Ramsar for peatlands and peat

The Ramsar Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including peatlands, and their resources. It has long been regarded by the IPS as the most important international convention for peatlands and peat and IPS has been closely associated with the RC from 1999 through observer status on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel. IPS was influential in raising the profile of peatlands within RC through the *'Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GGAP)'* that was accepted at COP8 in Valencia in 2002.

Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands



The STRP is the subsidiary body of the Ramsar Convention that provides scientific and technical guidance to the Conference of the Member Parties (COP), the Standing Committee and the Ramsar Bureau (Secretariat). It also provides support to Ramsar National Focal Points and wetland managers, through Ramsar Advisory Missions to threatened Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and capacity building training. The IPS has been an invited Organisation member of STRP since 1999.

Implications of Ramsar STRP for peatlands and peat

STRP initiates policy guidance affecting wetlands, including peatlands, that once accepted at COP are implemented by governments. Other international conventions look to the Ramsar Convention as the main source of scientific information on climate change processes from wetlands and peatlands. IPS played a major role in formulating and implementing the *'Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GGAP)'*.

World Trade Organization (WTO)



The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. The organization deals with regulation of trade between participating countries; it provides a framework for negotiating and formalizing trade agreements, and a dispute resolution process aimed at enforcing participant's adherence to WTO agreements. Under the SPS agreement, the WTO sets constraints on members' policies relating to food safety (bacterial contaminants, pesticides, inspection and labeling) as well as animal and plant health (imported pests and diseases). The latter are defined by standards developed by the IPPC (see IPPC section).

Implications of WTO for peatlands and peat:

See under SPS Agreement

World Trade Organisation Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement)

Under the SPS agreement, the WTO sets constraints on member-states' policies relating to food safety (bacterial contaminants, pesticides, inspection and labelling) as well as animal and plant health (phytosanitation) with respect to imported pests and diseases. The SPS agreement encourages governments to establish national SPS measures consistent with international standards, guidelines and recommendations. The WTO itself does not develop the standards.

Implications of SPS for peatlands and peat

There is evidence to suggest that WTO SPS measures could be used to prevent the transport of peat from one country to another. The contention is that there is a high potential of risk as soil (peat) is a pathway for harmful pests. There is no scientific basis to support this assertion and the ban is based primarily on a horticultural values concern for plants that would be grown in the imported peat.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The overriding strategy and policy of the IUCN has been to explore and promote mutually beneficial conservation arrangements that suit those promoting development as well as assisting people and nations to better preserve their flora and fauna. With the pre-eminence of the concept of sustainable development, IUCN has expanded into many of the nations around the world, making available the services of a large pool of mainly voluntary specialists, providing local level advice and conservation services. IUCN publishes the Red List of Threatened Species, which assesses the conservation status of species. The activities of the Peatland Ecosystems Thematic Group (PEG) of the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) are of great interest and relevance to IPS and peat industry.



Implications of IUCN for peatlands and peat

There is considerable overlap between the programme of the IUCN Peatland Ecosystems Thematic Group and the objectives and activities of IPS. Since IUCN has observer status on several international conventions and programmes it would be sensible for IPS to engage with IUCN at several levels in order to participate in policy-oriented discussions and help provide a balanced input to them.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)



CITES aims to conserve biodiversity and contribute to its sustainable use by ensuring that no species of wild fauna or flora becomes or remains subject to unsustainable exploitation through international trade, thereby contributing to the significant reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss and making a significant contribution towards achieving the relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Implications of CITES for peatlands and peat

This convention may only be of marginal interest to IPS and the peat and peatland related industries, but it is important in terms of protecting biodiversity, especially if any species listed in the *'Red Data Books of Rare and Endangered Species'* has been recorded on a particular peatland.

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)



The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) funds and co-ordinates research into agricultural crop breeding with the goal of "reducing rural poverty, increasing food security, improving human health and nutrition, and ensuring more sustainable management of natural resources".

Implications of CGIAR for peatlands and peat

CGIAR is probably of minimal importance to the peat industry since it is a consortium of agriculture and forestry research centres in developing countries, except that through the CCAFS Programme it is engaged with climate change problems in agriculture and forestry. In addition, one of the CGIAR institutes, CIFOR, plays a major role in research and policy formulation on forested peatlands in developing countries, for example, Indonesia and Peru.

Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)



CIFOR is the leading centre for the CGIAR Research Programme 'Forests, Trees and Agroforestry' that brings together four Centres— the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), CIFOR, the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and Biodiversity International. The programme convenes expertise across the CGIAR system, and partners with research and practitioner organisations around the world. CIFOR works with Indonesia's Ministry of Forestry, particularly the Forestry Research and Development Agency (FORDA), to identify areas of collaboration in research and outreach and with which it launched a Tropical Peatland Centre in 2018 based in Bogor, Indonesia.

Implications of CIFOR for peatlands and peat

CIFOR advises the Government of Indonesia on forestry management and peatland forests. In addition, CIFOR makes inputs to CBD, IPCC and UN-REDD and therefore has implications for peatland management, climate change processes and biodiversity in tropical countries. Staff of CIFOR has published extensively on sustainable management of peatland in Indonesia and greenhouse gas emissions from Indonesia's peatlands under different land uses and land use change.



The Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI) is a multi-partner United Nations Environment Programme initiative, to save peatlands, one of the world's largest carbon stores and prevent it being emitted into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. The GPI aims to increase the conservation, restoration and responsible management of peatlands in countries with significant peat deposits.

Implications of GPI for peatlands and peat

GPI will assess the extent, status and importance of peatlands to provide a comprehensive picture of their importance in global efforts to mitigate climate change. Initially, international activities are focussing on three partner countries, Indonesia, Peru and the Republic of Congo where pilot projects are promoting sustainable management.



IPBES is the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Its objective is to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, human well-being and sustainable development.

Implications of IPBES for peatlands and peat

Ramsar Convention has requested IPBES to undertake an assessment of global peatland resources and especially implications for climate change including adaptation and mitigation.

Global Landscapes Forum



Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on sustainable land use, dedicated to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. GLF believes in taking a holistic, fact-based approach to the most pressing global challenges: restoring billions of hectares of idle, degraded land; tackling insecure tenure, community and gender rights; addressing food insecurity and declining rural livelihoods; confronting inadequate finance and unsustainable supply chains; and finding a universal framework of indicators to measure progress.

Implications of GLF for peatlands and peat

Peatlands are one of the largest global landscapes that store more carbon than the atmosphere or forests. They play an important role in climate change processes.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Management of peatlands, peat use, and its commercial supply chain are influenced by the decisions taken and policies formulated by the international conventions, agencies and programmes summarised in this Report. Peat industries are affected by these decisions, and ensuing policies enacted by governments.
2. The most important international bodies that protect and promote peatland environmental quality are CBD (biodiversity), UNFCCC (GHG emissions and climate change), FAO (drained peatlands and GHG mitigation), IUCN (nature conservation) and Ramsar (wetland/peatland wise use).
3. Other international organisations affect peatlands, peat use and peat industry in more specific ways, for example, regulating international trade (IMO and WTO), formulating sanitary and phytosanitary standards (IPPC and SPS) and enforcing them (WTO) and focusing on reducing GHG emissions from tropical peatlands by preventing deforestation (UN-REDD) or implementing mitigation measures for drained peatlands (FAO/MICCA).
4. Stakeholders involved in peatland management, peat use, and the peat supply chain should become acquainted with the international bodies mentioned in this Report and their implications for their own activities and business.
5. In addition, they should update themselves regularly on any changes to the aims, objectives and policies of these bodies to be alerted to any new implications for peatland management and peat use as a result.
6. It is clear that peat industry organisations such as Growing Media Europe (GME), Energy Peat Europe (EPE) and Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association (CSPMA) can lobby their own governments (EU or Canada) but they cannot influence or participate in the work of the international bodies whose decisions affect their member companies. The same applies to individual companies or groups of companies within countries.
7. It is only through the activities of IPS that influence can be exerted on the policy making processes of these international organisations.
8. In this respect IPS should:
 - i. Promote or participate in side events at the COPs of CBD, UNFCCC and Ramsar (and others if appropriate), either on its own or in partnership with appropriate INGOs and/or GMA, EPE, and CSPMA.
 - ii. Maintain its formal relationship with Ramsar, UNFCCC, GPI, FAO and input to UN-REDD and MICCA activities and others as appropriate.
 - iii. Identify IPS members who are active on the advisory committees and working groups of these international organisations and determine how IPS can assist them in and be informed of their work.
 - iv. A detailed scientific assessment of the role of peat industry activities in climate change processes should be carried out to include:
 - GHG emissions from natural, extracted, abandoned and restored peatlands,
 - GHG emissions from peatlands undergoing extraction,
 - Checking IPCC emissions factors for peat extraction, including peat surface emissions and CO_{2e} of extracted peat,
 - Inventory of current peat resources, rates of use and export/import country by country together with climate change implications,
9. These recommendations should be integrated with the IPS Strategic Plan.