
Busan Statement on Cooperation for the Conservation of the Tidal Flats and Coastal Wetlands of the Yellow Sea

Released on the occasion of the Side Event “Flying Beyond Borders: Conserving the Yellow Sea Tidal Flats through Transboundary Cooperation on the East Asian–Australasian Flyway”

48th session of the World Heritage Committee · Busan, Republic of Korea · 25 July 2026

Preamble

WE, the co-organising and cooperating institutions and relevant States Parties, gathered for the Side Event “*Flying Beyond Borders: Conserving the Yellow Sea Tidal Flats through Transboundary Cooperation on the East Asian–Australasian Flyway*” during the 48th session of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, Republic of Korea,

Recalling the principles of the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) (hereafter “the Convention”) and the shared responsibility of the international community to cooperate in safeguarding heritage of Outstanding Universal Value,

Further recalling the Strategic Objectives of the World Heritage Committee, namely Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building, Communication and Communities (historically known as the “five Cs”),

Welcoming the adoption by the Committee, at its present 48th session, of “Collaboration” as a sixth Strategic Objective, in recognition of the central role that international cooperation plays in the effective implementation of the Convention,

Recognising the exceptional ecological value of the tidal flats and coastal wetlands of the Yellow Sea, which together form an interconnected system of intertidal habitats of global importance, and in particular indispensable staging, breeding, non-breeding and wintering grounds for the migratory waterbirds of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway (EAAF),

Noting that this natural system in the Yellow Sea is already reflected on the World Heritage List through “Getbol, Korean Tidal Flats” (Republic of Korea, inscribed 2021) and the “Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea–Bohai Gulf of China” (China, inscribed 2019), and that further coastal wetlands of the region feature on the Tentative Lists of States Parties, including that of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,

Welcoming the inscription by the World Heritage Committee, on the occasion of its 46th session, of the “Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea–Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II)” (China), and this 48th session, of a significant extension to “Getbol, Korean Tidal Flats” (Republic of Korea), which further strengthens the representation of this ecological corridor on the World Heritage List,

Mindful of the value of the established mechanisms of the Convention for shared natural heritage, including the coordinated management of serial transnational and transboundary properties, sustained exchange between site managers, and cooperation with related

Conventions and existing cooperation mechanisms such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) with its Flyway Network of internationally important sites for migratory waterbirds,

Taking note of Resolution 036 adopted by the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2025, “Facilitating synergistic delivery of multilateral commitments on conserving coastal ecosystems”, which encourages international designation of coastal wetlands, including as World Heritage Sites and Wetlands of International Importance,

Recognising EAAFP as an existing regional flyway cooperation mechanism that connects governments, site managers, scientists and partners across the EAAF, including through Flyway Network Sites, Working Groups, Task Forces and Sister Site partnerships,

Building on the spirit of cooperation expressed in recent flyway-wide commitments and in the Regional Framework Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific (2023-2030) for World Heritage and the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted during the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15).

express our shared commitment to the following:

A. Purpose and scope

1. This Statement promotes a voluntary, non-binding initiative for cooperation and the exchange of knowledge among the participating institutions and relevant States Parties, in support of the conservation of the tidal flats and coastal wetlands of the Yellow Sea and the migratory waterbirds they sustain. It concerns regional scientific, technical and management cooperation; it does not address, and is without prejudice to, any matter of a political or jurisdictional nature.

B. Shared commitments

2. Within our respective mandates and means, we are committed to work together to:
 - (a) strengthen the long-term conservation and effective management of the relevant World Heritage properties and other significant coastal wetlands of the Yellow Sea;
 - (b) enhance the communication and collaboration among the relevant States Parties and representatives of the national organisations from the Yellow Sea countries;
 - (c) advance understanding and promotion of the ecological connectivity of the Yellow Sea habitats, including through shared science, monitoring and data;
 - (d) focus on sharing experiences with the sustainable implementation of conservation of the OUV of the Yellow Sea properties, which can lead to establishing a common regional framework;
 - (e) promote the exchange of management experience, good practice including sustainable tourism and capacity among local authorities, local communities, site managers and institutions in the region; and

- (f) support, as appropriate, in accordance with the procedures of the Convention and led by the States Parties concerned, the coherent representation of this ecological connectivity, a key bottleneck of the EAAF on the national Tentative Lists and through further additional nominations for inscription on the World Heritage List, consistent with the Convention's *Operational Guidelines*, as well as promoting coherence and synergies implementation of related national, regional and global agreements.

C. Areas of technical cooperation

3. Cooperation under this Statement may include, in particular promotion of:

- Standardized and harmonized approaches among countries to better monitoring of intertidal habitats and migratory waterbird populations, and the sharing of data, indicators and methodologies;
- collaborative research on tidal-flat ecology, sediment dynamics, climate-change adaptation and threats common to the region and testing of novel management and restoration techniques, including control of invasive species such as *Spartina*;
- a working network of local authorities, site managers and technical experts, drawing upon existing regional coordination mechanisms, and supported by regular technical meetings and study exchanges;
- joint capacity-building, training and the sharing of management tools, including twinning arrangements between sites;
- coordination and synergy through existing international and regional cooperation mechanisms including UNESCO designated sites, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, EAAFP, IUCN, UNESCAP Sub-regional Office for the East and North-East Asia, the World Coastal Forum and relevant UNESCO category 2 centres, to align efforts, facilitate implementation and avoid duplication; and
- shared communication, capacity building and education materials that raise public awareness of the value of the Yellow Sea's tidal flats and the need for their conservation.

D. Follow-up actions

- 4. As an immediate and concrete contribution to the Busan Declaration of the World Heritage Committee and the newly adopted Strategic Objective "Collaboration", the participating institutions will present this cooperation as an early, practical application of that objective and will seek to align their shared commitments accordingly.
- 5. The participating institutions will designate technical focal points and convene, with the support of the UNESCO, EAAFP and other relevant existing international and regional cooperation mechanisms, a first technical coordination meeting within twelve months to agree specific areas of cooperation and an indicative timetable.
- 6. Progress under this Statement will be reviewed periodically. Progress may be reported, as appropriate, at the regular sessions of the World Heritage Committee.

7. Participation in this cooperation remains open to other institutions and to the custodians of relevant coastal-wetland sites around the Yellow Sea wishing to contribute to its technical objectives.
8. Where appropriate, participating institutions may advance the implementation of this Statement, including by sharing best practices, promoting international dialogue, and identifying opportunities for collaborative initiatives.

E. Nature of this Statement

9. This Statement is an expression of goodwill and intent. It is voluntary and non-binding, creates no legal or financial obligations, and is without prejudice to the positions, rights or obligations of any States. It is to be implemented in a manner consistent with the World Heritage Convention and its *Operational Guidelines*, as well as the respective rules of the participating institutions.

Busan, Republic of Korea, on 25 July 2026