

Declaration of the 2020 Flyway Youth Forum Participants

Preamble

Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet, home to a great diversity of migratory waterbirds and providing countless ecosystem services to people and the environment. Yet, wetlands are in a state of global decline, disappearing three times faster than terrestrial forests, threatening the very ecosystems that we depend upon. For the over 50 million migratory waterbirds of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, ongoing wetland degradation is presenting an unprecedented risk for these species, threatening their home and their existence.

As the youth of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, we feel that we are losing a part of our home, a part ourselves and we are not given a chance to fight for it. We recognise the urgency for cooperation across nations and offer our strengths and determination to act now. This is our global stand to empower youth advocates and strengthen youth collaborations within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for the benefit of wetlands and the flyway.

The meaningful participation of youth is essential for the successful implementation of comprehensive wetland conservation programs for they are part of society and they represent the views of new generations. Youth are:

- Influential, dynamic and inspiring driving forces to change the norm, to bring intergenerational equity and uphold long-lasting solidarity with conservationists and local communities across the Flyway
- Collaborative partners capable of creating a bridge between the scientific and policy world and the general public bringing flexibility, fresh and creative ideas to systematic and emerging problems
- Fundamental changemakers in their own local and global communities for wetland and flyway conservation through the diversity of skills, the motivation and potential that they possess

Yet, youth voices and concerns regarding the threats to migratory waterbirds and wetland loss are often disregarded because of the lack of accessible platforms for youth at different levels of decision-making. The neglect of young people's perspectives is symbolic of a lack of respect and recognition of their rights to be heard and of the impact that the decisions today will have on their present and their future.

Strengthening Youth-government relationships can generate a better understanding of our mutual needs and vision to implement collective wetland and flyway conservation. These relationships will empower young people as essential stakeholders to reach this common dream.

Declarative section

We, the Flyway Youth Leaders of today and tomorrow, recognise our purpose and our role to proactively protect, conserve, and restore wetlands and commit to building a peaceful revolution that establishes sustainable development and fosters environmental justice for wetland and migratory waterbird conservation.

To provide greater intergenerational equity in decision making,

We call for increased, proactive and meaningful participation of youth in decision making processes in the EAAFP and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

We call upon policy-makers to include youth, as allies, in creating and implementing policies that promote the greater protection, restoration and wise use of our wetlands as a contribution to sustainable development.

To provide youth-friendly spaces for meaningful participation,

We call for greater cooperation and the establishment of youth friendly platforms for us to work together with various stakeholders for the conservation and wise use of all wetlands and their species.

We urge the development of more and regular wetland and flyway dialogues, panels, forums and symposiums led by or developed collaboratively with youth to encourage active communication and collaboration among Flyway youth.

We urge the creation and support of tangible platforms (online and offline) for youth networking to amplify youth-led advocacy and to enhance global solidarity among like-minded youth groups.

To ensure active and sustainable participation,

We call for greater resources invested in youth including funding, man-power, training opportunities, facilities and platforms for youth-led initiatives and activities involving youth.

We seek increased support from, cooperation and solidarity with civic organisations, the EAAFP and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to provide meaningful youth participation in wetland and flyway conservation activities.

To empower and raise awareness of all youth,

We support the urgent need to mainstream and introduce biodiversity and wetland education at all levels of nation-wide education curriculums to raise awareness and improve knowledge on the importance of biodiversity protection and nature conservation, helping students understand their natural environment, their place and their role within it as well as their responsibility.

About the Declaration

This Declaration has been developed by the Declaration Drafting Team composed of 11 representatives of the Flyway Youth Forum, selected by the Flyway Youth Forum Organising team, with the support of the Organising team. The objective of this Declaration was to give an opportunity to Flyway Youth Forum Participants to come together to establish common key messages, concerns and asks that they have gathered based on the discussions that took place during the 4-day Forum. This Declaration is directed to the Contracting Parties and stakeholders of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Partners of the EAAFP. The Declaration Drafting team met online on three separate occasions and worked virtually to prepare this Declaration, seeking the feedback from all participants on the first draft via a google form.

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