

BRIEFING NOTE: THE NEED FOR LOCAL ACTION TO SUSTAIN PEATLANDS GLOBALLY: 10 NOVEMBER 2017

This event convened on 10 November 2017, in Bonn, Germany, on the sidelines of the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The event was organized by Wetlands International and the Greifswald Mire Centre. The event explored the need for local action to sustain peatlands globally.

Jan Peters, Greifswald Mire Centre, moderated the event. Tim Christophersen, UN Environment, stressed the role of peatlands in global carbon sequestration, as well as in providing livelihoods for local communities. He said peatland ecosystems deserve a differentiated treatment in the international system, and emphasized that one of the aims of the Global Peatlands Initiative is to help developing countries access peatland technical expertise in a coordinated way.



Moderator **Jan Peters**, Greifswald Mire Centre

Hans Joosten, University of Greifswald, emphasized the need to restore and maintain wet peatlands to avoid emissions. He stressed that peatlands can be



Hans Joosten, University of Greifswald, said “peatlands are like a jar of pickles: if you remove the water, they rot.”

found around the world and can look very different, and noted peatlands have been traditionally under-addressed in fora, such as the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity. He highlighted that peatlands are the most effective carbon stocks of all terrestrial ecosystems, holding twice as much carbon as all forested areas, and underscored the need for economic uses of wet peatlands, including paludiculture crops such as reeds.

Alberto Paniagua, Executive Director, Profonampe, Peru, described his institution as a non-profit environmental trust fund. Noting the importance of working with local communities, he



L-R: **Hans Joosten**, Greifswald University; Moderator **Jan Peters**, Greifswald Mire Centre; **Victorine Che Thöner**, Greenpeace Africa; **Bas Tinhout**, Wetlands International; **Alberto Paniagua**, Executive Director, Profonampe, Peru; and **Ruben Rashidi Bukanga**, Ministry of Environment, DRC



Alberto Paniagua, Executive Director, Profonanpe, Peru, highlighted the challenges of working with seven indigenous peoples' communities with different languages and cultures.

highlighted a Green Climate Fund-approved project involving seven indigenous peoples groups to protect peatlands. Paniagua highlighted land-use change and agriculture as key threats to peatlands in Peru, and identified sustainable uses of peatland products as a solution.

Ruben Rashidi Bukanga, Ministry of Environment, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), outlined his country's activities on climate change and peatlands, emphasizing that it is a pioneer country in REDD+ activities. He described a research expedition in cooperation with Greenpeace to identify carbon sequestration potentials from peatlands in the DRC. Participants watched a video from Greenpeace with highlights from the expedition. He said a peatland management unit had been created by the government, noting that it required support to, *inter alia*, conduct peatland cartography and develop a peatland strategy.

Victorine Che Thöner, Greenpeace Africa, presented "wishes" from people from the people of the Congo Basin, compiled in a photo book, to the Ministry of Environment and UN



Victorine Che Thöner, Greenpeace Africa, said people in the Congo Basin want authorities to protect their forests.



Bas Tinhout, Wetlands International, said peatland fires have high human, economic and environmental costs.

Environment. She said that the wishes, collected during the trip of the Esperanza boat to the Congo Basin, could be summarized as "the people asking authorities to protect their forest."

Bas Tinhout, Wetlands International, highlighted his organization's roadmap to accelerate action for peatland restoration. He outlined scientific research to quantify greenhouse gas emissions, subsidence, flooding and peatland inventories. Tinhout stressed the impact of peatland fires in Indonesia, including 100,000 premature deaths during the 2015 fire season. He identified communities as key for sustainable agriculture in the region, stressing the role of paludicultures and land tenure rights.

During the ensuing discussion, participants addressed, *inter alia*: the interaction between large commercial monocultures and small-scale farmers; data collection and peatland inventories; and restoration rates of peatlands.



Victorine Che Thöner, Greenpeace Africa, presents "wishes" from people from the Congo Basin, to **Ruben Rashidi Bukanga**, Ministry of Environment, DRC, and **Tim Christophersen**, UN Environment.