



International Peatland Society

Peatlands Briefing Note 14:

UNFCCC COP25 Chile – Madrid 2019

Dear Corporate Members,

2019 has been a very important year for IPS. I had the opportunity and the pleasure to meet and to get to know many representatives from our corporate stakeholders, national committees and academic institutions. In this process I have been fortunate not only to meet many people, but also to learn a great deal about peat and the entire process chain from extraction to horticultural production, the relevance of peat as constituent of growing media and the importance of peatlands in relation to greenhouse gas emissions, climate change and biodiversity and hence the real challenges the peat industry is increasingly facing. I am assured that 2019 has brought IPS closer to its members and stakeholders, and we will continue to do so. Thank you!

Another prime objective for 2019 and the years to come is to further strengthen and consolidate IPS' relations with international organisations, conventions and multilateral environmental agreements in order to establish a stronger role of IPS at highest convention level. In March IPS participated in the Scientific & Technical Review Panel of the Ramsar Wetland Convention, where, among other things, the GAP (Guidelines for Global Actions on Peatlands) were re-launched. Professor Jack Rieley was elected to be part of the GAP co-ordination team. IPS also pro-actively participated in the workshops "Exploring Synergies for Peatlands" in Vilm (*Peatlands International 2.2019*) and "European Peatland Strategies" in Bonn (*Peatlands International 4.2019* & peatlands.org/european-peatland-strategies), where I was part of the panel that discussed the proposition of a unified European Peatland Strategy. The year 2019 culminated with a participation at the UNFCCC climate summit in Madrid. All these meetings have most likely an increasing impact on how your business and our daily life will be influenced by international and national-decision making.

UNFCCC COP25 Chile – Madrid 2019

The UNFCCC Climate Summit COP25 2019 Chile was held in Madrid in the beginning of December. IPS participated as UNFCCC observer, and organized, in collaboration with the Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI), a side event on "Peatlands as Nature-Based Solution; accelerating action and impact through MEA collaboration and synergy". Participation at UNFCCC Conferences of Parties (COP) is another step of IPS to raise its profile and its determination to be an active player at highest international level. The side-event focused on peatlands as nature-based solution for conservation of key ecosystems and mitigation of climate change. During the panel discussion I had the opportunity to present the relevance of IPS' network and its know-how, and especially its *Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management (SRPM)* to peatlands in this respect. "We are in a situation where perception of development vs. conservation is increasingly counterproductive to both ends. In order to find real world solutions that secure both, thriving human communities and healthy natural ecosystems, the SRPM is needed more than ever". Through events like this IPS is becoming a stronger partner in the GPI partnership.

According to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the final outcome of the Summit was disappointing, stating that "...the international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation and finance to tackle the climate crisis". This disappointment was mostly brought about by the lack of ambition and commitment from three major, powerful countries.



This must not, however, be interpreted as a temporal relief of the challenges many industrial sectors, including the peat industry, are facing. On the contrary, from grass-root to international convention level, the awareness about the role of peatlands in adapting to and mitigating climate change, is getting stronger and more widespread. Discussions at COP25, as well as in the previous events mentioned above show that an ever-increasing number of international organisations, conventions and multilateral environmental agreements are forming synergies and pull at the same side of the rope. Also, consumer awareness is on the rise. The environmental agenda has a strong momentum, and their argumentations are increasingly convincing both consumers and decision makers. As an example, the two largest Swiss retail companies Migros & Coop, who cover 70% of the consumer growing media market in Switzerland, will voluntarily stop selling growing media that contains peat by 2020. A similar campaign, for both consumer and professional substrates, with a planned phase-out of peat as soon as 2030, is on the agenda on high political level in Germany. While these campaigns are, for the time being, on a voluntary basis, they do send a strong signal to consumers and other retailers.

For the peat and growing media industry, it is therefore increasingly important that IPS is present as a proactive player at conventions and international key events such as UNFCCC COP. If IPS is not present, then there is no voice for the industry. As a French proverb says, *“les absents ont toujours tort”*, meaning that it is easy to accuse someone absent of being wrong or of having done something wrong, because they are not there to defend themselves. That being said, it is very important that the industry takes current developments seriously and also raises its responsibility in respect to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

The IPS would like to express a big thank you to its corporate members, to you, for the continuous support, without which such representation would not be possible. With these reflections and from behalf of the IPS, I would like to send you my sincerest Christmas greetings and all good wishes for your health and happiness in the coming year.



Gilbert Ludwig
International Peatland Society