

THE VENICE AGREEMENT

On Peatlands



PRESS RELEASE

The Venice Agreement on Peatlands Gathers at Lake Victoria, Kenya for Its Third Global Workshop

2–5 June 2026 | Kisumu, Kenya

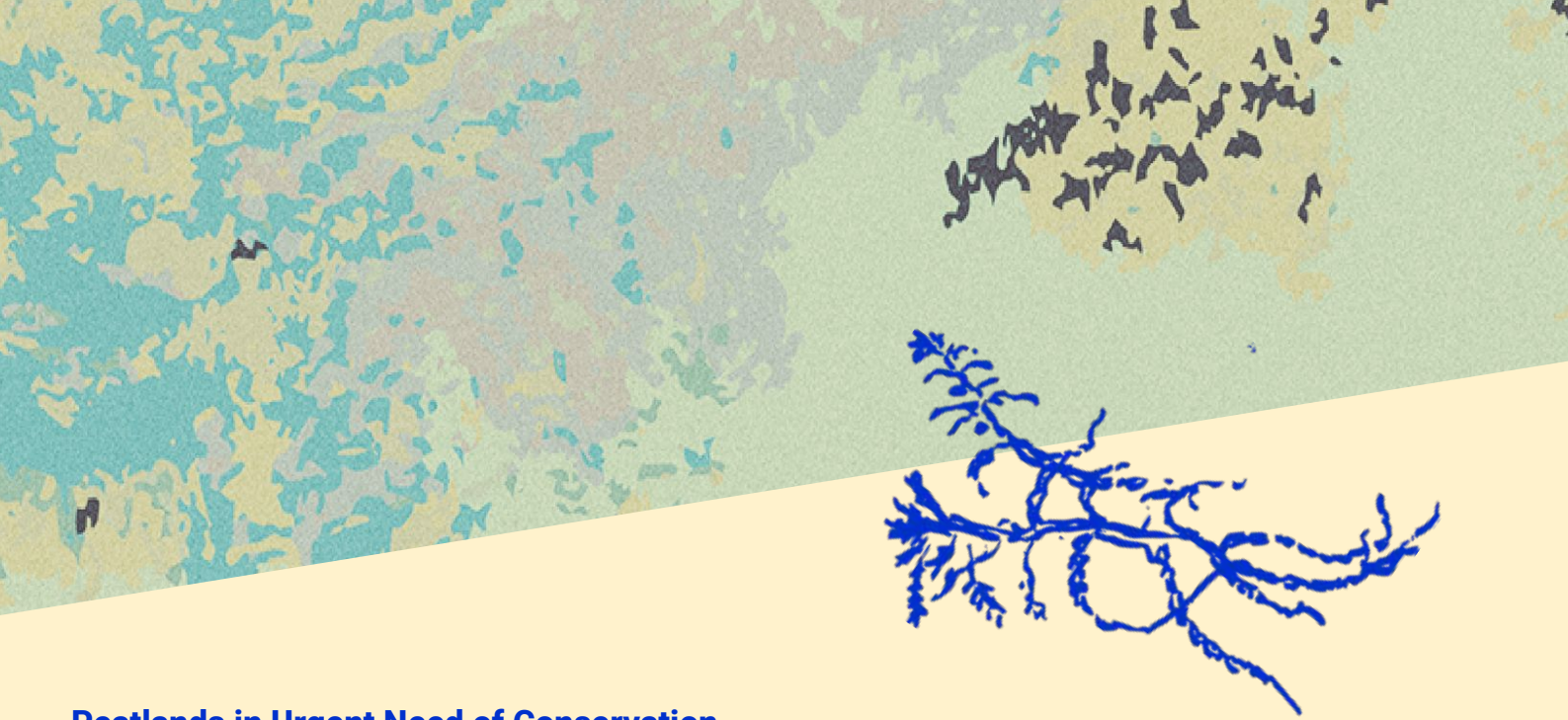
www.theveniceagreement.net

The Venice Agreement on Peatlands (VA) announces its third biennial series of workshops: 34 underground workshops – locally organised gatherings held in participants' own territories – across 16 countries and 9 languages, converging in an international workshop in the papyrus-rich wetlands of Lake Victoria, Kenya, timed to coincide with World Peatlands Day (2 June 2026).

From Argentina to Uganda, Australia to Norway, these underground workshops are already activating local action and trans-local solidarity around one of the planet's most vital yet threatened ecosystems. The 2026 international gathering in Kisumu will then bring together communities, practitioners, researchers, artists, and peatland custodians from Africa and around the world to exchange knowledge, strengthen collaboration, and celebrate the communities already caring for peatlands in their territories – centering the ecological realities of the Lake Victoria basin while weaving them into a global conversation.

The Venice Agreement on Peatlands is a global grassroots community reimagining how peatlands are protected. Emerging from the eco-cultural collaborations of [Turba Tol Hol-Hol Tol](#) (Venice Biennale 2022) and rooted in the growing international peatland movement, the VA brings together conservation, art, science, Indigenous knowledge, community organising, and cultural work – not as separate domains, but as intertwined responsibilities in times of ecological and social breakdown.

Co-organised by [Ecofinder Kenya](#) and international partners including the [Hach Saye](#), [RE-PEAT](#), [WCS Chile](#), [Double-U-Replay](#) the [Michael Succow Foundation](#) (partner in the [Greifswald Mire Centre](#)), [Global Peatlands Initiative](#), and [Peat4People](#), the VA 2026 workshops convene diverse stakeholders around peatlands across 16 countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, England, Germany, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and the USA. As with past gatherings in Venice (2022) and Torres Vedras (2024), the underground workshops precede the international event – not as warm-up acts, but as the living, distributed core of the VA itself.



Peatlands in Urgent Need of Conservation

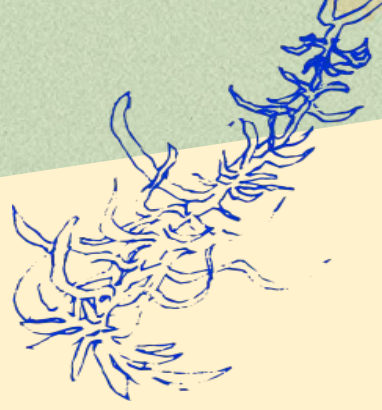
Peatlands are living ecosystems and archives of ecological memory. Their resilience continues to challenge simplified understandings of climate, conservation, and restoration. They regulate climate, sustain biodiversity, hold water, nurture livelihoods, and support complex relationships between human and more-than-human communities. For many communities, peatlands are not only ecosystems or resources, but living territories woven into cultural memory, spiritual practice, livelihood, and intergenerational responsibility.

In 2026, the VA international workshop will be hosted by the peat-forming papyrus wetlands of the second-largest freshwater lake in the world. Lake Victoria's ecosystems, shared by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, provide water storage, purification, fish breeding grounds, and materials for livelihoods, crafts, and cultural practices. As these vital ecologies face accelerating threats – overharvesting, draining, burning, and encroachment – community-led stewardship and collaborative conservation efforts anchored in the VA are urgently needed.

Dunga Swamp and Yala Swamp: Host Peatlands for the International Workshop 2026

Dunga Swamp, located approximately 10 km south of Kisumu City along the shores of the Winam Gulf of Lake Victoria, is both an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). Its papyrus wetlands sustain endemic bird species, provide breeding grounds for fish, shelter the semi-aquatic sitatunga antelope, store significant amounts of carbon, and support local livelihoods through fishing, material arts, and community-based tourism. Beyond its ecological importance, Dunga is a living example of the intricate relationships between wetland ecosystems and the communities that care for and depend on them.

Yala Swamp, the largest freshwater papyrus wetland in Kenya, is another vital peat-forming ecosystem and a recognised Important Bird Area and Key Biodiversity Area. Fed by the Yala River before it reaches Lake Victoria, the swamp supports rich biodiversity, regulates water systems, stores carbon, and sustains surrounding communities through farming, fishing, grazing, and harvesting of papyrus materials. As pressures from drainage, land conversion, and industrial development intensify, Yala Swamp stands as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for collaborative, community-led stewardship rooted in ecological reciprocity and long-term care.



Third International Workshop – Kisumu Programme

The Third Global Workshop will bring together approximately 35 peatland custodians and collaborators – including artists, scientists, Indigenous leaders, activists, conservation practitioners, policymakers, community organisers, and funders – from Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

With the gathering taking place in East Africa, the histories, realities, and futures of African peatlands and their communities will form the grounding context for this transnational encounter. A central objective of the workshop is to support and amplify African peatland initiatives while strengthening international networks of reciprocal learning and collaboration.

The international workshop serves as an editorial gathering, working with the results of underground workshops from around the world: systematising what emerged locally, and building toward a shared understanding of the themes and commitments that define the VA's 2026 objectives.

Participants will engage in exchanges, artistic programming, field visits, and collaborative discussions focused on peatland protection, restoration, and reciprocal approaches to ecological care. Themes running throughout the 2026 gathering include decolonial conservation, rights of peatlands, ecological and language justice, community-led stewardship, legal innovation, cultural revitalisation, and practices of reciprocal care between human and more-than-human communities.

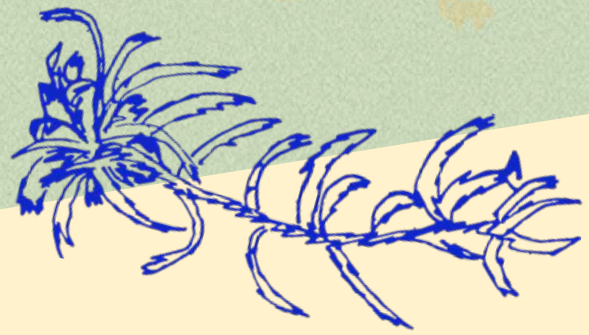
From these collaborations, the VA Commons initiative will collect and share practices, stories, research, artistic works, educational materials, and organising tools emerging from peatland communities and collaborators worldwide.

VA Commons: A Living Menu of How-Tos

In 2026, the VA will launch a collectively operated digital commons for community exchange, peatland education, and transdisciplinary collaboration. The platform will share materials, stories, research, artistic practices, and organising tools emerging from peatland communities and collaborators around the world. Materials will include documentation of local actions, participatory conservation initiatives, arts projects, educational and policy materials, community knowledges, scientific and transdisciplinary research, and stories shared through oral, written, musical, and audiovisual forms.

WETSOUNDS Radio

WETSOUNDS is a temporary radio station airing from Dunga Swamp during the gathering of peatland custodians in Kisumu. A co-production of [Sensing Peat](#), the [Venice Agreement on Peatlands](#), [Ecofinder Kenya](#), [Radio Lake Victoria](#), The Institute of Multi-Species Singing, and Uhenga, this artistic radio format will broadcast stories, sounds, music, and ways of imagining and relating to wetlands, alongside cultural practices, conservation experiences, and restoration initiatives shared by peatland inhabitants from the region, the African continent, and beyond.



The multilingual radio programmes will address listeners in Kisumu and around Lake Victoria, including fisherfolk, rural and urban communities, as well as Kiswahili- and English-speaking regional and international audiences. The radio shows will air live and later be available as a podcast series through participating radio stations and the Venice Agreement and Sensing Peat platforms.

Crowdfunder – Support the VA!

We are currently raising funds to support grassroots participation, local hosting efforts, translation, accommodation, and documentation connected to the gathering.

<https://www.succow-stiftung.de/en/va-kisumu>

At a time of accelerating ecological breakdown, the Venice Agreement seeks to nurture forms of collaboration grounded not only in conservation, but in reciprocity, humility, cultural continuity, and collective responsibility toward the living worlds that sustain us. Every contribution, big or small, helps make this gathering possible.

Credits

The 2026 gathering in Kisumu, Kenya, and the accompanying global underground workshops are organised by the VA Organising Committee: Antonieta Eguren, Camila Marambio, Caroline Vitzthum, Cisca Devereux, Fernanda Olivares, Leonard Akwany, Miguel Gerales, Nicole Püschel, and Suza Husse, together with [Ecofinder Kenya](#), [RE-PEAT](#), [WCS Chile](#), [Sensing Peat](#), [Michael Succow Foundation](#), partner in the [Greifswald Mire Centre](#), [Hach Saye](#), [W-U-Replay](#), and the [Global Peatlands Initiative \(GPI\)](#). This gathering is made possible with the support of the [Andrea von Braun Foundation](#), GPI/United Nations Environment Programme, the Peat4People consortium (GIZ, FAO, MSF), and the [IUCN UK Peatland Programme](#).

