



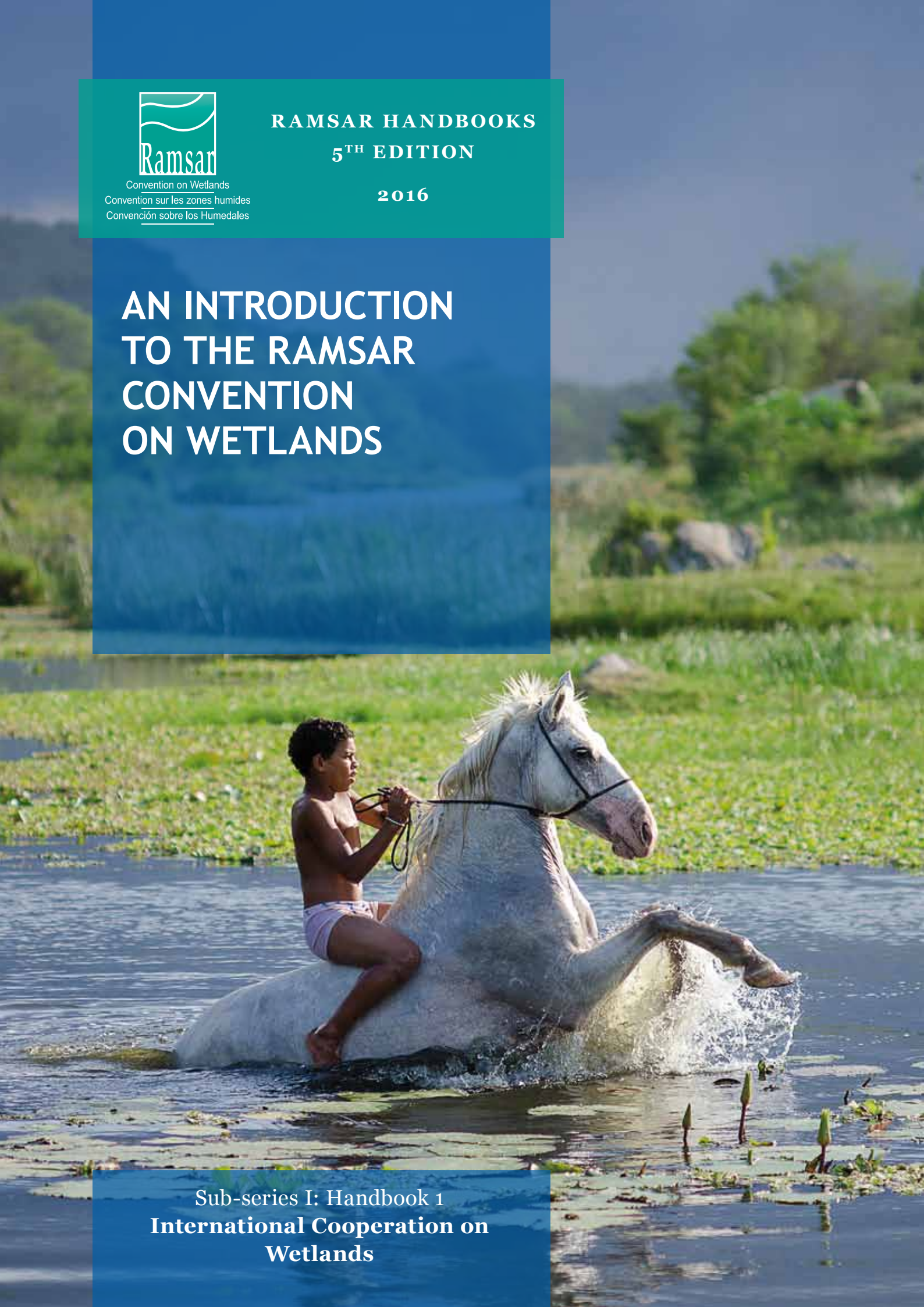
Convention on Wetlands
Convention sur les zones humides
Convención sobre los Humedales

RAMSAR HANDBOOKS
5TH EDITION

2016

**AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE RAMSAR
CONVENTION
ON WETLANDS**

Sub-series I: Handbook 1
**International Cooperation on
Wetlands**





About the Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) is an inter-governmental treaty whose mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”. As of January 2016, 169 nations have joined the Convention as Contracting Parties, and more than 2,220 wetlands around the world, covering over 214 million hectares, have been designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

What are wetlands?

Article 1 of the Convention states that “wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.

Hence, as defined by the Convention, wetlands include a wide variety of inland habitats such as marshes, peatlands, floodplains, rivers and lakes, and coastal areas such as saltmarshes, mangroves, intertidal mudflats and seagrass beds, and also coral reefs and other marine areas no deeper than six metres at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as dams, reservoirs, rice paddies and wastewater treatment ponds and lagoons.

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An Introduction to the Convention on Wetlands, 2016

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2 February - World Wetlands Day

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Table of Contents

Foreword	7
<hr/>	
1 The Ramsar Convention	8
<hr/>	
1.1 What is the Ramsar Convention?	8
1.2 What are wetlands?	9
1.3 Why conserve wetlands?	10
1.4 Why an intergovernmental convention on wetlands?	12
1.5 Why do nations join the Ramsar Convention?	12
1.6 Who may join the Ramsar Convention?	13
1.7 What are the commitments of Parties joining the Ramsar Convention?	14
1.7.1 Listed sites	14
1.7.2 Wise use	14
1.7.3 Reserves and training	14
1.7.4 International cooperation	14
1.7.5 Compliance with the commitments	14
1.8 Further interpretation of the commitments	14
1.9 Reporting	15
1.10 The Ramsar Convention today	16
1.11 The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024	16
1.12 Synergies with other environment-related Conventions	17
2 A brief history of the Ramsar Convention	19
<hr/>	
2.1 Background	19
2.2 The Paris Protocol and the Regina Amendments	19
2.3 A Ramsar chronology - key events	20
2.4 Further reading	26
3 How does the Ramsar Convention work?	27
<hr/>	
3.1 The Conference of the Contracting Parties	27
3.2 The Standing Committee	28
3.3 The Secretariat	30
3.4 The Administrative Authorities and diplomatic notifications	31
3.5 The Scientific and Technical Review Panel	31
3.6 The Ramsar Convention budget	32
3.7 The Ramsar regions	34
3.8 National Ramsar Committees	35
3.9 Cooperation with other organizations	35

4	Assisting the Contracting Parties	37
4.1	The Ramsar Handbooks	37
4.2	The wise use of wetlands	37
4.2.1	Establishment of national wetland policies	38
4.2.2	Knowledge of wetlands and their values	39
4.2.3	Action at particular wetland sites	40
4.3	Listed sites	41
4.3.1	The Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS)	43
4.3.2	The Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands	43
4.3.3	Criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance	45
4.3.4	Classification System for Wetland Type	45
4.3.5	The Montreux Record	48
4.3.6	The Ramsar Advisory Missions	48
4.3.7	Article 3.2	50
4.4	International cooperation	51
4.4.1	Cooperation with and between Contracting Parties	51
4.4.2	Transboundary wetland conservation	51
4.4.3	Transboundary species conservation	52
4.4.4	Ramsar Regional Initiatives	53
4.4.5	Small projects assistance programmes	54
4.4.6	Project support and external support agencies	56
4.5	Reserves and training	56
4.5.1	Reserves	56
4.5.2	Training	56
4.6	Communicating the Ramsar message	57
4.6.1	The Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) programme	58
4.6.2	Ramsar and the Internet	58
4.6.3	World Wetlands Day and WWD materials	59
4.6.4	The Wetland Conservation Awards	60
4.6.5	Ramsar Technical Reports and Briefing Notes	61
4.6.6	Ramsar Publications	61
5	How States may join the Ramsar Convention	62
5.1	The instrument of accession	62
5.2	Designating wetlands for the Ramsar List	62
5.3	The cost of joining the Convention	63
	Appendices	64
1	Text of the Ramsar Convention	64
2	Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties	70
3	References	87
4	The Ramsar Handbooks series	95
5	Ramsar FAQs: trivia questions on the Convention on Wetlands	97
6	Glossary of Ramsar acronyms, abbreviations, and terminology	100

Foreword

When the Introduction to the Convention on Wetlands (previously The Ramsar Convention Manual) was first published in 1994, it was welcomed as an essential guide to the world of Ramsar resolutions, guidelines and terminology. Over the 45 years since it was signed in February 1971, the Convention on Wetlands has steadily grown, developing new ways of addressing emerging challenges and opportunities. This edition brings the Ramsar story up to date as of January 2016, and establishes this volume as the first in the Ramsar Handbook Series 5.

Our intention is to provide the reader with a thorough introduction to the Convention on Wetlands, covering its rationale as the earliest environmental convention, its history and present organization. It describes the services and resources available to the Contracting Parties to the Convention, to people and organizations working for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and to the interested public. Technical details such as the process for new countries to accede to the Convention are also included.

This innovative edition provides links to online material, which lead to in-depth explanations and information on the Ramsar website, the new Ramsar Sites Information Service, and other sources including social media. Over the years, the Parties have adopted a host of technical guidelines on a wide range of subjects related to wetland conservation, management and wise use, as well as international cooperation. This Convention Handbook contains an overview of these materials and their uses. It is followed by the Handbook containing the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, and other handbooks summarizing the Convention's state-of-the-art guidance on wetland conservation and wise use, including Resolutions, technical frameworks, and links to the scientific literature.

As the number of countries which have joined the Convention has increased, and the number of Wetlands of International Importance which they have designated has grown, so too has the range of activities of the Convention. The Ramsar focal points in the ministries of the Contracting Parties work together with the staff of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, the Ramsar Regional Initiatives, the International Organization Partners and other NGOs, and local, national and international communities around the world. On World Wetlands Day 2016, more than 1,300 events worldwide celebrated wetlands and the sustainable livelihoods they support. And that is very encouraging news indeed.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2015 will depend on the health of the world's wetlands and the continued availability of their services and resources, especially water. There is an African proverb which says: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." To go ever further and deeper in the pursuit of sustainability, we in the Ramsar Secretariat look forward to working together with our many partners around the world, whether they are government officials, representatives of environmental organizations, private companies, or concerned members of the public.

*Dr Ania Grobicki
Acting Secretary General
January 2016*

1 The Ramsar Convention

1.1 What is the Ramsar Convention?

The **Convention on Wetlands** is an inter-governmental treaty adopted on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Thus, though the name of the Convention is written “Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)”, it has come to be known popularly as the “Ramsar Convention”. Ramsar is the first of the modern multilateral environmental agreements on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and compared with more recent ones, its provisions are relatively straightforward. It is unusual in establishing commitments at site level as well as at the level of national policy. Over the years, the Conference of the Contracting

Parties has further developed and interpreted the basic tenets of the treaty text and succeeded in keeping the work of the Convention highly relevant to the rapidly changing global environment.

The official name of the treaty, *The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat*, reflects the original emphasis upon the conservation and wise use of wetlands primarily as habitat for waterbirds. Over the years, however, the Convention has broadened its scope of implementation to cover **all aspects** of wetland conservation and wise use. Wetlands are now recognized as ecosystems that are vital for biodiversity conservation, as well as for sustainable development, thus fulfilling the full scope of the Convention text. For this reason, the increasingly common use of the short form of the treaty’s title, the “Convention on Wetlands”, is entirely appropriate. (Changing the name of the treaty requires amending the treaty itself, a cumbersome process that for the time being the Contracting Parties are not considering.)

The Convention entered into force in 1975 and as of January 2016 had 169 Contracting Parties, or member States, in all parts of the world. Though the central Ramsar message is the need for the sustainable use of all wetlands, the “flagship” of the Convention is the **List of Wetlands of International Importance** (the “Ramsar List”). Presently, the Parties have designated for this List more than 2,220 wetlands for special protection as “Ramsar Sites”, covering 214 million hectares (2.14 million square kilometres), larger than the surface area of Mexico.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) serves as Depositary¹ for the Convention, but the Ramsar Convention is not part of the United Nations and UNESCO system of environmental conventions



The mission of the Ramsar Convention is the conservation and wise use of all wetlands, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.

¹ The Depositary receives, reviews, and accepts the instruments of accession of each country member of the treaty, keeps the official text of the Convention in six official languages, and provides legal interpretations of the text when required. The Depositary does not have a role in the administration and/or implementation of the treaty.



Laguna de Rocha Ramsar Site in Uruguay, part of a complex of coastal wetlands on the Atlantic coast.

and agreements. The Convention is responsible only to its Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), and its day-to-day administration has been entrusted to a Secretariat under the authority of a Standing Committee elected by the COP. The Ramsar Secretariat is hosted under contract by IUCN—the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Gland, Switzerland.

The mission of the Ramsar Convention, as adopted by the Contracting Parties in 1999 and refined in 2002, is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

1.2 What are wetlands?

Wetlands are areas where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life. They occur where the water table is at or near the surface of the land, or where the land is covered by water.

The Ramsar Convention takes a broad approach in determining the wetlands which come under its mandate. Under the text of the Convention (Article 1.1), wetlands are defined as:

“areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent

or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.

In addition, for the purpose of protecting coherent sites, the Article 2.1 provides that wetlands to be included in the Ramsar List of internationally important wetlands:

“may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands”.

Five major wetland types are generally recognized:

- **marine** (coastal wetlands including coastal lagoons, rocky shores, seagrass beds and coral reefs);
- **estuarine** (including deltas, tidal marshes and mudflats, and mangrove swamps);
- **lacustrine** (wetlands associated with lakes);
- **riverine** (wetlands along rivers and streams);
- **palustrine** (meaning “marshy” – marshes, swamps and bogs).

In addition, there are **human-made wetlands** such as fish and shrimp ponds, farm ponds, irrigated agricultural land including rice paddies, salt pans, dams, reservoirs, gravel pits, wastewater treatment ponds and canals. The Ramsar

Convention has adopted a Ramsar Classification of Wetland Type (§4.3.4) which includes 42 types, grouped into three categories: Marine and Coastal Wetlands, Inland Wetlands, and Human-made Wetlands.

According to the text of the Convention, marine wetlands are considered to be wetlands up to a depth of **six metres** at low tide (the figure is thought to come from the maximum depth to which sea ducks can dive whilst feeding), but the treaty also provides for waters deeper than six metres, as well as islands, to be included within the boundaries of protected wetlands. It is also worth emphasizing that lakes and rivers are understood to be covered by the Ramsar definition of wetlands in their entirety, regardless of their depth.

Wetlands occur everywhere, from the tundra to the tropics. How much of the earth's surface is presently composed of wetlands is not known exactly. The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre has suggested an estimate of about 570 million hectares (5.7 million km²); roughly 6% of the Earth's land surface; Mitsch and Gosselink, in their standard textbook *Wetlands*, 5th ed. (2015), suggest 4% to 6% of the Earth's land surface. Mangroves cover some 240,000 km² of coastal area, and an estimated 600,000 km² of coral reefs remain worldwide. Nevertheless, a global review of wetland resources prepared for Ramsar COP7 in 1999, while affirming that "it is not possible to provide an acceptable figure of the areal extent of wetlands at a global scale", indicated a "best" minimum global estimate of between 748 and 778 million hectares. The same report indicated that this "minimum" could be increased to a total of between 999 and 4,462 million hectares when other sources of information were taken into account.

1.3 Why conserve wetlands?

Wetlands are among the world's most productive environments. They are wellsprings of biological diversity, providing the water and primary productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival. They support high concentrations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrate species. Wetlands are also important storehouses of plant genetic material. Rice, for example, which is a common wetland plant, is the staple diet of more than half of humanity.

Our over-exploitation of freshwater resources puts at risk human well-being and the environment. Access to safe water, human health, food production, economic development and geopolitical stability are made less secure by the degradation of wetlands driven by the rapidly widening gap between water demand and supply. Even with current attempts to maintain minimum water flows for ecosystems, the capacity of wetlands to continue to deliver benefits to people and biodiversity, including clean and reliable water supplies, is declining. Efforts to support water allocation to ecosystems, such as environmental flow requirements, placing upper limits on water allocations, and new water management legislation, must be strengthened.

The multiple roles of wetland ecosystems and their value to humanity have been increasingly understood and documented in recent years. This has led to large expenditures to restore lost or degraded hydrological and biological functions of wetlands. But it's not enough – the race is on to improve practices on a significant global scale as the world's leaders try to cope with the accelerating water crisis and the effects of climate change. And this at a time when the world's population is likely to increase by 75 million every year for the next 15 years.

The ability of wetlands to adapt to changing conditions will be crucial to human communities and wildlife everywhere as the full impact of climate change on our ecosystem lifelines is felt. Small wonder that there is a worldwide focus on wetlands and their services to us, not least in pursuit of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the United Nations in September 2015. Wetlands have a critical role to play in all the SDGs, especially those concerning water, climate, marine resources and ecosystems.

Policy and decision-makers frequently make development decisions based upon simple calculations of the monetary pros and cons of the proposals before them; the importance of wetlands for the environment and for human societies has traditionally been underrated in these calculations because of the difficulty of assigning dollar values to the wetland ecosystem's values and benefits, goods and services. Thus, more and more economists and other scientists are working in the growing field of the valuation of ecosystem services. This is a difficult task, but in order for decision-makers to have the correct information before them about the

comparable monetary values of a healthy wetland, the economic cost of a lost or degraded wetland, there is no choice but to progress in this direction. Some studies have indicated that ecosystems provide at least US\$ 33 trillion worth of services annually, of which about US\$ 4.9 trillion are attributed to wetlands.

In addition, wetlands are important, and sometimes essential, for the health, welfare and safety of people who live in or near them. They are among the world's most productive environments and provide a wide array of benefits.

a) Functions

The interactions of physical, biological and chemical components of a wetland, as part of the “natural infrastructure” of the planet, such as soils, water, plants and animals, enable the wetland to perform many vital functions, for example: water storage; storm protection and flood mitigation; drought buffering; shoreline stabilization and erosion control; groundwater recharge and discharge; water purification; retention of nutrients, sediments, and pollutants; and stabilization of local climate conditions, particularly rainfall and temperature.

b) Values

Wetlands frequently provide tremendous economic benefits, including water supply (quantity and quality); fisheries (over two thirds of the world's fish harvest is linked to the health of wetland areas); agriculture, through the maintenance of water tables and nutrient retention in floodplains; timber and other building materials; energy resources, such as peat and plant matter; wildlife resources; transport; a wide range of other wetland products, including herbal medicines; and last but not least, recreation

and tourism opportunities. It is estimated that more than a billion livelihoods worldwide are wholly or largely dependent on wetlands (see Ramsar Fact Sheet 7 “Wetlands: Source of Sustainable Livelihoods” www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/fs_7_livelihoods_en_v5.pdf).

In addition, wetlands have special attributes as part of the cultural heritage of humanity – they are related to religious and cosmological beliefs and spiritual values, constitute a source of aesthetic and artistic inspiration, yield invaluable archaeological evidence from the remote past, provide wildlife sanctuaries, and form the basis of important local social, economic, and cultural traditions.

In the **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)**, published in 2006, ecosystems are described as the complex of living communities (including human communities) and non-living environment (Ecosystem Components) interacting (through Ecological Processes) as a functional unit which provides a variety of benefits to people (Ecosystem Services).

Included in the term “Ecosystem Services” are provisioning, regulating, and cultural services that directly affect people, and supporting services which are needed to maintain these other services. Further information can be found in the Synthesis Report prepared by the MA for the Ramsar Convention (Finlayson, C.M., D’Cruz, R. & Davidson, N.C. 2005. *Wetlands and water: ecosystem services and human well-being*. World Resources Institute, Washington D.C). In the context of the Ramsar Convention this refers to products, functions and attributes as defined in Resolution VI.1 (1996), and the terms currently used in previous Ramsar guidelines and documents are shown here alongside those used in the MA.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment terms to apply in Ramsar guidelines and documents	Terms used in various previous Ramsar guidelines and other documents
Ecosystem Components: physical; chemical; biological (habitats, species, genes)	“components”, “features”, “attributes”, “properties”
Ecological Processes within and between ecosystems	“processes”, “interactions”, “properties”; “functions”
Ecosystem Services: provisioning; regulating; cultural; supporting	“services”, “benefits”, “values”, “functions”, “goods”, “products”

These “ecosystem services” and the “ecosystem components” can only be maintained if the ecological processes of wetlands are allowed to continue functioning. Unfortunately, in spite of important progress made in recent decades, wetlands continue to be among the world’s most threatened ecosystems, owing mainly to ongoing drainage, conversion, pollution, and over-exploitation of their resources. In a recent assessment by WWF (*Living Planet Report 2014: Species and spaces, people and places*. Gland, Switzerland), aquatic ecosystems were found to have lost 76% of their species populations between 1970 and 2010, while in the State of the World’s Wetlands report published by Ramsar in 2015, it was estimated that 64% of the world’s wetlands have been lost since the year 1900 (STRP Briefing Note 7 www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/bn7e_o.pdf).

1.4 Why an intergovernmental convention on wetlands?

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was developed as a means to call international attention to the rate at which wetland habitats were disappearing, in part due to a lack of understanding of their important functions, values, goods and services. Governments that join the Convention are expressing their willingness to make a commitment to reversing this history of wetland loss and degradation.

In addition, many wetlands are international systems lying across the boundaries of two or more States, or are part of river basins that include more than one State. The health of these and other wetlands is dependent upon the quality and quantity of the transboundary water supply from rivers, streams, lakes, or underground aquifers. The best intentions of countries on either side of those frontiers can be frustrated without a framework for international discussion and cooperation toward mutual benefits. Hence the Ramsar Convention encourages special emphasis on those sites designated by their Parties as Transboundary Ramsar Sites.

Human impacts on water sources, such as agricultural, industrial or domestic pollution, may occur at considerable distances from wetland areas, often beyond the borders of the States affected. Where this occurs, wetland habitats can

be degraded or even destroyed, and the health and livelihood of local people put at risk.

Many of the wetland fauna, for example some fish species, many waterbirds, insects such as butterflies and dragonflies, and mammals such as otters, are migratory species whose conservation and management also require international cooperation.

In sum, wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value to human life. Wetlands and people are ultimately interdependent. Furthermore, wetlands are an essential component of the global water cycle and play a key role in climate regulation. As such, the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands needs to be stopped, and measures must be taken to conserve and make wise use of wetland resources. To achieve this at a global level requires cooperative, intergovernmental action. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands provides the framework for such international, as well as for national and local, action.

1.5 Why do nations join the Ramsar Convention?

Membership in the Ramsar Convention:

- entails an endorsement of and commitment to the principles that the Convention represents, facilitating the development at national level of policies and actions, including legislation, that help nations to make the best possible use of their wetland resources in their quest for sustainable development;
- presents an opportunity for a country to make its voice heard in the principal intergovernmental forum on international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- brings increased publicity and prestige for the wetlands designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and hence increased possibilities of support for conservation and wise use measures;
- brings access to the latest information and advice on adoption of the Convention’s internationally-accepted standards, such as criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance, advice on application of the wise use

concept, and guidelines on management planning in wetlands;

- brings access to expert advice on national and site-related problems of wetland conservation and management through contacts with Ramsar Secretariat personnel and collaborators and through application of the Ramsar Advisory Mission when appropriate; and
- encourages international cooperation on wetland issues and brings the possibility of support for wetland projects, either through the Convention's own small grants assistance programmes or through the Convention's contacts with multilateral and bilateral external support agencies.

According to National Reports submitted by Contracting Parties, the Convention has frequently been instrumental in halting or preventing negative developments affecting wetlands. A few representative examples include:

- abandonment of plans to build a garbage dumping site at Fujimae, the last remaining major mudflat system near Nagoya City, Japan, when in 2001 the city government joined the momentum to designate Fujimae as a Ramsar Site;
- abandonment of plans to build a major new airport including the Cliffe Marshes Ramsar Site, part of the Thames Estuary in England, when in December 2003 the UK government concluded that “the internationally important status of some of the habitats ... mean that any potentially adverse effect would require the government to demonstrate that it had considered all reasonable alternatives. In light of the consultation, the government is satisfied that there would be reasonable alternatives to Cliffe”;
- cancellation of plans to build an extensive tourist resort adjacent to a Ramsar Site on the Caribbean island of Bonaire in the Netherlands Antilles, after the Netherlands Crown Court found in 2007 that the guidelines on buffer zones and Environmental Impact Assessments adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention must be considered binding upon on all Contracting Parties.

Recent surveys by independent environmental legal experts have found that Ramsar Site

managers in Africa and North America reported that the designation of Ramsar Sites has helped maintain the conservation status of those wetlands, with a common view that “the designation of a site as a Wetland of International Importance was more than a mere honor; the status offered tangible benefits” (see Appendix 3, References, under “Independent assessments of Ramsar benefits”). In those surveys, the benefits of site designation were often said to include: increased public awareness; increased participation by local stakeholders; greater support for protection of the site; increased access to conservation funding; and enhanced opportunities for research and ecotourism.

Furthermore, the trend is to designate larger and larger areas as Ramsar sites, in order to help protect whole watersheds, catchment areas and deltas, and to ensure their wise use. Examples include Queen Maud Gulf (>6 million ha), the Okavango Delta (>5.5 million ha) and the Zambezi River Delta (>3 million ha), along with smaller examples of catchments such as the Impluvium d'Evian (3,275 ha).

Wetlands need not be of international importance for the Ramsar Convention to play a part in their conservation and wise use. The very fact that a State is a Contracting Party to the Convention can be used to establish the necessary legislative and management framework, in order to ensure the long-term productivity and effective environmental functions of all its wetlands.

1.6 Who may join the Ramsar Convention?

According to Article 9.2 of the Convention on Wetlands, “Any member of the United Nations or of one of the Specialized Agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency or Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may become a Party to this Convention”. Unfortunately, supranational bodies, such as the European Union, are thus not eligible to join the Convention, but may nevertheless develop bilateral working agreements with the Convention Secretariat.

No state is too small to join as long as it can designate a wetland which meets one or more of the Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance (§4.3.1) adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention.

1.7 What are the commitments of Parties joining the Ramsar Convention?

Because wetlands are important for maintaining key ecological processes, for their rich flora and fauna and for the benefits they provide to local communities and to human society in general, the broad objectives of the Convention are to ensure their conservation and wise use. States that join the Convention accept four main commitments.

1.7.1 Listed sites

(Article 2 of the Convention. See Appendix 1)

The first obligation under the Convention is for a Party to designate at least one wetland at the time of accession for inclusion in the **List of Wetlands of International Importance** (the “Ramsar List”) (Article 2.4) and to promote its conservation, and in addition to continue to “designate suitable wetlands within its territory” for the List (Article 2.1). Selection for the Ramsar List should be based on the wetland’s significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology, or hydrology. The Contracting Parties have developed nine specific criteria, at least one of which must be met, along with guidelines for identifying sites that qualify for inclusion in the Ramsar List.

In Article 3.2 (§4.3.7), the Parties have committed themselves “to arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay” to the Ramsar Secretariat.

1.7.2 Wise use

(Article 3 of the Convention)

Under the Convention there is a general obligation for the Contracting Parties to include wetland conservation considerations in national planning (this might include, for example, land-use planning, water-resource management planning, or development planning). They have committed themselves to “formulate and implement their planning so as to promote ... as far as possible, **the wise use of wetlands in their territory**” (Article 3.1 of the treaty). The Conference of the Contracting Parties has approved guidelines on how to achieve “wise use”, which has been interpreted as being synonymous with “sustainable use” (§4.2).

1.7.3 Reserves and training

(Article 4 of the Convention)

Contracting Parties have also undertaken to establish nature reserves in wetlands, whether or not they are considered to be internationally important and included in the Ramsar List, and they also endeavour to promote training in the fields of wetland research and wetland management.

1.7.4 International cooperation

(Article 5 of the Convention)

Contracting Parties have agreed to consult with other Contracting Parties about implementation of the Convention, especially in regard to trans-boundary wetlands, shared water systems, and shared species.

1.7.5 Compliance with the commitments

The Ramsar Convention is not a regulatory regime and has no punitive sanctions for violations of or defaulting upon treaty commitments – nevertheless, its terms do constitute a solemn treaty and are binding in international law in that sense. The whole edifice is based upon an expectation of common and equitably shared transparent accountability. Failure to live up to that expectation could lead to political and diplomatic discomfort in high-profile international fora or the media and, more generally, would prevent any Party concerned from getting the most out of what would otherwise be a robust and coherent system of checks and balances and mutual support frameworks. Failure to meet the treaty’s commitments may also impact upon success in other ways, for example, in efforts to secure international funding for wetland conservation. In addition, some national jurisdictions now embody international Ramsar obligations in national law and/or policy with direct effect in their own court systems.

1.8 Further interpretation of the commitments

Over the years, the Conference of the Contracting Parties has interpreted and elaborated upon these four major obligations included within the text of the treaty, and it has developed guidelines for assisting the Parties in their implementation. These guidelines are published in the Ramsar Handbook series and on the Ramsar website.

Although Resolutions do not have the same legal force as commitments specified in the convention text itself, the Contracting Parties further spelt out their interpretation of their responsibilities in Resolution 5.1 (1993) of the Conference of the Parties (*Framework for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention*), as follows:

a) Conservation of wetlands

- to designate wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance;
- to formulate and implement planning so as to promote conservation of listed sites;
- to advise the Secretariat of any change in the ecological character of listed sites;
- to compensate for any loss of wetland resources if a listed wetland is deleted or restricted;
- to use Ramsar criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance;
- to use the Ramsar datasheet and classification system for describing listed sites;
- to consider appropriate management measures after designation and, where appropriate, to use the Montreux Record and [Ramsar Advisory Mission mechanisms];
- to formulate and implement planning so as to promote the wise use of wetlands;
- to adopt and apply the *Guidelines for implementation of the wise use concept*, notably as regards elaboration and implementation of national wetland policies, and the *Additional Guidance on wise use*;
- to make environmental impact assessments before transformations of wetlands;
- to establish nature reserves on wetlands and provide adequately for their wardening;
- to increase waterfowl populations through management of appropriate wetlands;
- to make national wetland inventories which will identify major sites for wetland biodiversity;

- to train personnel competent in wetland research, management, and wardening.

b) Promotion of international cooperation in wetland conservation

- to promote conservation of wetlands by combining far-sighted national policies with coordinated international action;
- to consult with other Contracting Parties about implementing obligations arising from the Convention, especially concerning shared wetlands and water systems and shared species;
- to promote wetland conservation concerns with development aid agencies;
- to establish wetland restoration projects.

c) Fostering communication about wetland conservation

- to encourage research and exchange of data;
- to produce national reports for Conferences of the Parties;
- to increase the number of Contracting Parties.

d) Supporting the work of the Convention

- to convene and attend Conferences of the Parties;
- to adopt the Paris Protocol and Regina Amendments;
- to make financial contributions to the Convention budget and to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund.

1.9 Reporting

Another important part of the Parties' responsibilities, suggested in the text and subsequently confirmed by COP decisions, has to do with reporting on the implementation of the Convention within their territories. The Parties report on their progress in meeting their commitments under the Convention by submitting triennial National Reports (§3.1) to the Conference of the Contracting Parties – these are prepared following a format adopted by the Parties which follows the Strategic Plan of the Convention, and they become part of the public record. For instance, under

the Strategic Plan, Parties are expected to establish National Wetland Committees and to carry out national wetland inventories, and are required to report on their progress in this regard. In addition, under Article 3.2 of the treaty (§4.3.7), Parties are expected to report to the Secretariat any changes or threats to the ecological character of their listed wetlands and to respond to the Secretariat’s inquiries about such reports received from third parties.

1.10 The Ramsar Convention today

As of January 2016, there were 169 Contracting Parties, or member States, in all parts of the world. More than 2,220 wetlands had been designated for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, covering 214 million hectares (2.14 million square kilometres), larger than the surface area of Mexico.

Representatives of the Contracting Parties convene every three years in meetings of the “Conference of the Contracting Parties”, or COP (§3.1), to discuss the implementation of the Convention and its further development, to consider national experiences, to review the status of sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, to adopt technical and policy guidance for the Parties on matters affecting the wetlands in their territories, to promote cooperative activities, to receive reports from international organizations, and to adopt the budget for the Convention Secretariat for the ensuing three-year “triennium”.

The Convention is administered by a Secretariat (§3.3), an independent body hosted by IUCN–International Union for Conservation of Nature under the authority of the Ramsar Standing Committee. Its headquarters are located in Gland, Switzerland.

1.11 The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024

The 6th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP6), held in Brisbane, Australia, in 1996, adopted the innovative Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which became a model for the planning processes of other conventions. Subsequent Ramsar Strategic Plans were adopted at COP8 (Valencia, Spain, 2002) and COP10 (Changwon, South Korea, 2008), covering the periods 2003-2008 and 2009-2015 respectively. Since January 2016 the Convention has operated under its fourth

Strategic Plan, for the period 2016-2024, adopted by Resolution XII.2 of COP12 (Punta del Este, Uruguay, 2015).

The Vision for the 4th Strategic Plan is: “Wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits are recognized and valued by all.” It contains four Strategic Goals:

- a) **Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss and Degradation** This Goal commits the Convention to enhancing its engagement with relevant stakeholders in order to diminish threats to wetlands (e.g., from agriculture or urbanization), influence trends, restore wetlands and communicate good practices;
- b) **Effectively Conserving and Managing the Ramsar Site Network** This highlights the need for Contracting Parties to commit themselves to protect and effectively manage existing Ramsar Sites, to enable full and effective participation of stakeholders (e.g., by

The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-24
 Vision: “Wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits are recognized and valued by all.”
 The Fourth Ramsar Strategic plan lays out a new vision under the Convention mission, four overall goals and 19 specific targets which are designed to support the efforts of Parties, partners and other stakeholders in preventing, stopping and reversing the global decline of wetlands.

Strategic Goal 1: Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss and Degradation
 Human impacts on wetlands are growing, influencing the drivers of wetland degradation and loss and the integration of the role of wetlands in (national and transboundary) land-use planning and decision making requires the development of a methodology that understands wetland functions and benefits are understood widely within societies. Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, Regional Initiatives and IOs will enhance their engagement with relevant stakeholders in order to diminish threats, influence trends, restore wetlands and communicate good practices.

- Wetland benefits are featured in national-level policy strategies and plans relating to key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism, urban development, infrastructure, industry, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries at the national and local level.
- Water use respects wetland ecosystem needs for them to fulfil their functions and provide services at the appropriate scale into all the basin level or along a coastal zone.
- The public and private sectors have increased their efforts to apply guidelines and good practices for the wise use of water and wetlands.
- Innovative alien species and pathways of introduction and expansion are identified and prioritized, priority invasive alien species are controlled or eradicated, and management responses are prepared and implemented to prevent their introduction and establishment.

Strategic Goal 2: Effectively Conserving and Managing the Ramsar Site Network
 Ramsar Sites constitute the largest network of officially recognized internationally important wetland areas in the world. This network constitutes the backbone of a larger network of wetlands. Parties must commit themselves to efforts to protect and effectively manage the existing Ramsar Sites and enable full and effective participation of stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as expanding the reach of the Convention by continuously working to add more sites and areas of wetlands recognized under the Convention.

- The ecological character of Ramsar sites is maintained or restored, through effective planning and integrated management.
- There is a significant increase in area, numbers and ecological connectivity in the Ramsar Site network, in particular under-represented types of wetlands including in under-represented ecoregions and Transboundary Sites.
- Sites that are at risk of change of ecological character have threats addressed.

Strategic Goal 3: Wisely Using All Wetlands
 The wise use of all wetlands requires that Parties ensure they are addressing wetlands beyond those currently included in the Ramsar Site network. This work may occur at the national, subnational, regional and transboundary levels, including at basin level. Mainstreaming recognition of ecosystem functions, services and benefits into a wide range of sectors and with a broad array of actors will help ensure the success of this effort.

- National wetland inventories have been initiated, completed, expanded and disseminated and used for promoting the conservation and effective management of all wetlands.
- The wise use of wetlands is strengthened through integrated resource management at the appropriate scale, inter alia, within a river basin or along a coastal zone.
- The traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities relevant for the wise use of wetlands and their customary use of wetland resources are documented, respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention, with a full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities at all relevant levels.
- Wetland functions, services and benefits are widely demonstrated, documented and disseminated.
- Restoration is in progress in degraded wetlands, with priority to wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Enhanced sustainability of key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism, urban development, infrastructure, industry, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, when they affect wetlands, contributing to biodiversity conservation and human livelihoods.

Operational Goal 4: Enhancing Implementation
 It will be vital for the survival of wetlands and the success of the Convention for Parties to enhance implementation of the Strategic Plan. Various measures will help strengthen the implementation of the Strategic Goals, and ultimately of the Convention itself. They involve critical actions to be undertaken by Contracting Parties themselves, and in partnership with other Parties and other entities, in particular with regard to scientific and technical advice and guidance, resource mobilization, public awareness, visibility and capacity building. The Ramsar Secretariat will also play a vital role in raising awareness and visibility of the Convention, as well as mobilizing resources to support enhanced implementation.

- Scientific guidance and technical methodologies at global and regional levels are developed as relevant input and are available to policy makers and practitioners in an appropriate format and language.
- Ramsar Regional Initiatives with the active involvement and support of the Parties in each region are established and developed into effective tools to assist in the full implementation of the Convention.
- Wetlands conservation and wise use are mainstreamed through communication, capacity development, education, participation and awareness.
- Financial and other resources for effectively implementing the Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 from all sources are made available.
- International cooperation is strengthened at all levels.
- Capacity building for implementation of the Convention and the Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 is enhanced.

The Ramsar Mission: Conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.

www.ramsar.org

The Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan is designed to support all stakeholders’ efforts to ensure that Wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits recognised and valued by all.

establishing a National Wetland Committee), and to work continuously to add more wetlands to the Ramsar List;

- c) **Wisely Using All Wetlands** This covers the requirement for Contracting Parties to address wetlands beyond the Ramsar Site network, and includes matters such as national wetland inventories, integrated river-basin and coastal-zone management, restoration of degraded wetlands, and the need for the impacts of key economic sectors on wetlands to be more sustainably managed; and
- d) **Enhancing implementation** through the development and dissemination of scientific and technical guidance, strengthening of Ramsar Regional Initiatives, increased communication, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA) and capacity building, enhanced international cooperation, and provision of necessary financial and other resources.

1.12 Synergies with other environment-related Conventions

The benefits of coordination and collaboration among conventions and international organizations with related or overlapping missions have been widely recognized for some time. The Ramsar Secretariat has devoted a great deal of effort to developing synergies with other biodiversity-related conventions, notably through the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), as well as the two water Conventions. Similarly, the Secretariat has been taking steps to encourage Ramsar's "Administrative Authorities" (§3.4) to build close working relationships with their counterparts for the other Conventions at national level. (Synergies with other organizations and institutions besides the conventions can be found in §3.9.) Finally, there are also initiatives to build synergies at site level in the case of wetlands that benefit from multiple international designations (e.g., dual Ramsar and World Heritage Site status).

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Secretariats of the Ramsar Convention and the CBD signed a first Memorandum of Cooperation in January 1996. In November of that year, the CBD's COP3 invited Ramsar "to cooperate as a lead partner" in implementing CBD activities related to wetlands, and shortly thereafter an innovative Joint Work Plan was put in place for 1998-1999. These

ground-breaking relationships have been widely followed by other international organizations, and the two Conventions are still working closely together, presently under the 5th Joint Work Plan.

The Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

The Ramsar and CMS Secretariats first signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in February 1997 which seeks to ensure cooperation between the two Secretariats in the fields of joint promotion of the two conventions; joint conservation action; data collection, storage and analysis; and new agreements on migratory species, including endangered migratory species and species with an unfavourable conservation status. Cooperation was guided by a Joint Work Plan for 2012-2014 signed by the secretariats of Ramsar and the CMS in May 2012, and a new Plan covering 2015-2017 is currently in preparation. An updated Joint Work Plan between Ramsar and the CMS's African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) will also soon be completed.

UNESCO World Heritage Convention

A first MOU was signed between the Ramsar Secretariat and the World Heritage Centre in May 1999 and a fruitful working relationship continues, with a view to: promoting the nominations of wetland sites under the two Conventions; coordinating the reporting on sites listed under both Conventions; and in many cases collaborating on advisory missions to those sites, as needed. (World Heritage and Ramsar have conducted joint expert advisory missions in recent years to Ichkeul in Tunisia, Djoudj and Diawling in Senegal and Mauritania, and Lake Srebarna in Bulgaria.) To find Ramsar Sites which are also designated under other global schemes, visit the Ramsar Sites Information Service at <https://rsis.ramsar.org>, and click on the "Statutory designation taxonomy" filter on the left hand side.

Regional conventions and basin commissions

The Ramsar Secretariat also has current agreements with the **Convention on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians** (Carpathian Convention) established in December 2006; and the **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River** (ICPDR) established in November 2000. The Ramsar Convention is involved in the work of the **Lake Chad Basin Commission** and the **Niger Basin Authority**, the **Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission** (OKACOM), and the **Zambezi Water Course Commission** (ZAMCOM).

Other close relationships with official bodies

Ramsar collaboration with the **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP) is continuing in many areas, particularly with the **UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre** (UNEP-WCMC, MOU signed in 2010) on harmonizing reporting requirements under the different instruments and on developing indicators of effectiveness, among other projects, and with UNEP/OCHA's **Environmental Emergencies Section**. The Secretariat participates in UNEP's **Environmental Management Group** (EMG) as well. In 2006, an agreement was put into effect with UNEP's **Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities** (UNEP-GPA), and a documentary was co-produced by Ramsar and UNEP's **Great Apes Survival Partnership** (UNEP-GRASP) in December 2008. The redeveloped Ramsar Site Information Service (RSIS) at <https://rsis.ramsar.org> has been maintained by UNEP-GRID under contract with the Ramsar Secretariat since 2014. The recently expired MOUs with the European Environment Agency and World Bank/GEF are being re-established.

In addition, the Ramsar Secretariat works closely with the **UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme** under the terms of a joint programme of work first agreed in 2002, and a list of wetlands that are both Ramsar Sites and MAB Biosphere Reserves can be consulted at the Ramsar Sites Information Service. Please click on the "Statutory designation taxonomy" filter on the left hand side. The Convention has also collaborated in recent years with the **UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education**. The first "Ramsar Chair for the Wise Use of Wetlands" was established through an agreement between Ramsar, UNESCO-IHE and Charles Sturt University, covering the period 2014-2018.

An agreement was signed with the **Global Terrestrial Observing System** (GTOS) in June 2006, and the Secretariat has been working closely with the **European Space Agency** on developing monitoring and management tools based on earth observation data. The GlobWetland I and II projects were followed by GlobWetland Africa, which was launched in 2015. Ramsar has collaborated extensively on projects and joint publications with the **UN Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO), the **World Health Organization** (WHO, with a joint publication in 2011), and the **World Tourism Organization** (UNWTO), and a cooperative agreement was signed in 2010 with the **Organization of**

American States (OAS). There is a long-standing agreement with UNCTAD's **BIOTRADE Initiative**. The Secretariat participates regularly as an observer at meetings of the **UN Commission on Sustainable Development**, and has been involved in recent years in collaborative work with **UN-Habitat**.

The Secretariat has also prioritized the establishment of effective collaboration with regional economic integration organizations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), Mercosur (Southern Common Market), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Commission Internationale du Bassin Congo-Oubangui-Sangha (CICOS).

The Secretariat also works closely with the **UNECE "Water Convention"** (the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes) which has recently been opened to accession by countries worldwide. In 2015 the Secretariat signed the Paris Pact on water and climate change. Finally, the Secretariat has been an active partner with **UN-Water** in the development of the global water goal (Goal 6 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals), and in particular on Target 6.6 on the conservation of water-related ecosystems.

Coordination among conventions

The Ramsar Secretariat also takes part in the Conventions' coordinating meetings within the United Nations system, as a participating observer in the work of the **Joint Liaison Group** (JLG) of the "Rio Conventions", UNFCCC (the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change), the CBD, and UNCCD (the UN Convention to Combat Desertification), and as a full member of the **Biodiversity Liaison Group** (BLG), which is composed of the seven biodiversity-related conventions – the CBD, CITES (the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species), CMS, IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention), ITPGRFA (International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture), Ramsar, and World Heritage. There is a joint website for the biodiversity-related Conventions hosted by the CBD at www.cbd.int/brc/. In addition, the Chair of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP, §3.5) participates regularly in the **Chairs of Scientific Advisory Bodies** (CSAB) group and, with the Secretary General, in the **Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** (IPBES).

2 A brief history of the Ramsar Convention

2.1 Background

The initial call for an international convention on wetlands came in 1962 during a conference which formed part of Project MAR (from “MARshes”, “MARécages”, “MARismas”), a programme established in 1960 following concern at the rapidity with which large stretches of marshland and other wetlands in Europe were being “reclaimed” or otherwise destroyed, with a resulting decline in numbers of waterfowl.

The MAR Conference was organized by Dr Luc Hoffmann, and was held in Les Saintes Maries-de-la-Mer in the French Camargue, 12-16 November 1962. Participants included the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (now IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature), the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, IWRB (now Wetlands International), and the International Council for Bird Preservation, ICBP (now BirdLife International)

Over the next eight years, a convention text was negotiated through a series of international meetings (St. Andrews, 1963; Noordwijk, 1966; Leningrad, 1968; Morges, 1968; Vienna, 1969; Moscow, 1969; Espoo, 1970), held mainly under the auspices of IWRB, the guidance of Prof. G.V.T. Matthews, and the leadership of the government of the Netherlands. Initially the envisaged convention was directed specifically at the conservation of waterfowl through the creation of a network of refuges, but as the text developed, especially with the expert advice of legal consultant Mr Cyrille de Klemm, conservation of wetland habitat (rather than species) took prominence.

Finally, at an international meeting organized by Mr Eskander Firouz, Director of Iran’s Game and Fish Department, and held in the Caspian seaside resort of Ramsar in Iran, the text of the Convention was agreed on 2 February 1971 and signed by the delegates of 18 nations the next day.

The Convention entered into force in December 1975, upon receipt by UNESCO, which had agreed

to act as the Convention’s depositary, of the seventh instrument of accession to or ratification of the Convention, which came from Greece. Throughout 2011 the Convention celebrated the 40th anniversary of its creation.

Since its adoption, the Ramsar Convention has been modified on two occasions: by a protocol (a new treaty which amends the original treaty) in December 1982, and by a series of amendments to the original treaty, known as the “Regina Amendments” of 1987.

2.2 The Paris Protocol and the Regina Amendments

The **Paris Protocol** was adopted at an Extraordinary Conference of the Contracting Parties held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in December 1982. The Protocol, which came into force in 1986, established a procedure for amending the Convention (Article 10 bis) and adopted official versions of the treaty in Arabic, French, English, German, Russian and Spanish.

The **Regina Amendments** are a series of amendments to Articles 6 and 7 that were accepted at an Extraordinary Conference of the Contracting Parties held in Regina, Canada, in 1987. These did not affect the basic substantive principles of the Convention, but related to its operation – briefly, the amendments defined the powers of the Conference of the Parties, established an intersessional Standing Committee, and established both a permanent secretariat and a budget for the Convention. These amendments came into force on 1 May 1994, although the Parties, in the spirit of Resolution 3.4 from the 1987 meeting, observed the provisions of the amendments on a voluntary basis throughout the interim period.

New Contracting Parties normally join the Ramsar Convention as amended by the Paris Protocol and the Regina Amendments (Appendix 1), using the model instrument of accession shown in §5.1.



The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat is agreed by representatives of 18 nations, 2 February 1971.

2.3 A Ramsar chronology - key events

2 February 1971

The *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat* is agreed by representatives of 18 nations meeting in the Iranian town of Ramsar, and signed the following day.

January 1974

Australia becomes the first State to deposit an instrument of accession to the Convention.

December 1974

The International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl is held in Heiligenhafen, Germany, and adopts the first “Criteria to be used in identifying Wetlands of International Importance” as a recommendation; the Conference was intended to be the first meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, but an insufficient number of countries had ratified the Convention to bring it into force in time.

December 1975

The Ramsar Convention comes into force four months after the seventh nation, Greece, deposits an instrument of accession. (The first six were Australia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, and Iran.)

August 1979

Contracting Parties are invited to prepare the first National Reports on the implementation of the Convention in their territories, for presentation to the First meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

November 1980

The First meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Cagliari, Italy:

- adopts new criteria for identifying wetlands suitable for designation to the List of Wetlands of International Importance;
- approves the elaboration of a protocol (later to become the Paris Protocol) to amend the treaty.

December 1982

A Protocol modifying the original text of the Ramsar Convention is adopted by an Extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris.

May 1984

The Second meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Groningen, the Netherlands:

- establishes the framework for implementing the Convention, a list of agreed commitments, and priorities for the next triennium.

October 1986

The Paris Protocol enters into force (after acceptance by two-thirds of Contracting Parties in 1982).

May-June 1987

An Extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties adopts the Regina Amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of the Convention.

The Third (ordinary) meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Regina, Canada:

- adopts revised criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance;
- adopts guidelines for the implementation of the wise use of wetlands concept;
- establishes the Standing Committee, which meets for the first time;
- approves the establishment of the Ramsar “Bureau” (or Secretariat) in two units, one within IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, and one within IWRB headquarters in Slimbridge, UK;
- establishes formal scientific and technical links with IUCN and IWRB;

- establishes a Wise Use Working Group to develop case studies and guidelines.

January 1988

The Ramsar Secretariat (called the “Bureau”) is formally established, with Mr Dan Navid (USA) as the first Secretary General.

The Ramsar Advisory Mission (then called the “Monitoring Procedure”, and later the “Management Guidance Procedure”) is established by the Ramsar Standing Committee at its fourth meeting, in Costa Rica.

1989

Adoption of the first Ramsar logo (a soaring blue bird of unknown species, trailed by splashes of pastel blue and green).

January 1989

Viet Nam becomes the 50th Contracting Party to the Convention.

August 1989

Ramsar publishes its first book, *A Legal analysis of the adoption of the implementation of the Convention in Denmark*, by Veit Koester (in the IUCN Environmental Policy and Law Papers series).

July 1990

The Fourth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Montreux, Switzerland:

- approves the framework for the implementation of the Convention;
- develops and adopts revised criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance;
- expands the guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept;
- consolidates the Ramsar Secretariat into a single unit within IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland;
- continues to charge IWRB with responsibility for maintaining the Ramsar Database of Listed Sites;
- formalizes the Management Guidance Procedure;
- establishes the Montreux Record (though not formally known by this name until June 1993);
- establishes the Wetland Conservation Fund

(later renamed “the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use”);

- adopts Spanish as the third working language of the Convention, alongside English and French.

December 1991

The first Ramsar Regional Meeting (Asia) takes place, in Karachi, Pakistan.

June 1993

The Fifth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Kushiro, Japan:

- adopts the Kushiro Statement as the basis for the Contracting Parties’ priorities for the coming triennium;
- establishes the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);
- adopts additional guidance for the implementation of the wise use of wetlands concept;
- adopts management planning guidelines for wetland sites.

June 1993

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: its history and development, by G.V.T. Matthews, is published.

October 1993

Publication of *Towards the wise use of wetlands*, the report of the Wise Use Project.

December 1993

Lithuania becomes the 80th Contracting Party.

January 1994

The first meeting of the STRP takes place in association with the IUCN General Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

May 1994

The Regina Amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of the Convention enter into force.

December 1994

Mr James McCuaig, seconded from Environment Canada, serves for six months as Interim Secretary General, replacing Mr Dan Navid.

August 1995

Mr Delmar Blasco (Argentina) becomes the

Convention's second Secretary General.

January 1996

A Memorandum of Cooperation is signed between the Secretariats of the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the first of many memoranda between the Ramsar Secretariat and the secretariats of other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs). In subsequent years, Joint Work Plans are developed to increase synergies between the two Conventions.

February 1996

The Ramsar Convention's website is launched.

March 1996

The Sixth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Brisbane, Australia:

- adopts the Strategic Plan 1997-2002;
- adopts criteria based on fish for identifying wetlands of international importance;
- adopts working definitions of ecological character and guidelines for describing and maintaining the ecological character of listed sites;
- adopts a resolution on Ramsar and water.

October 1996

The Standing Committee formally establishes 2 February as World Wetlands Day.

The Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (medwet.org/documents/medwetcom-meetings) is established as the first regional arrangement under the Convention – paving the way for the current portfolio of Regional Initiatives around the world.

February 1997

Bahamas and Georgia both accede to the Convention on 7 February, becoming the 99th and 100th Contracting Parties.

2 February 1997

The first World Wetlands Day is celebrated in about 50 nations and becomes an annual event.

May 1997

The Ramsar Forum, a public e-mail discussion group for Ramsar-related issues, is established by the Secretariat.

The Ramsar Secretariat's Internship Programme begins with the arrival of the first group of four assistants to the Senior Regional Advisors (then called "Regional Coordinators").

Ramsar publishes *The Economic valuation of wetlands* in English, French, and Spanish.

October 1997

First three-year phase of the Wetlands for the Future initiative begins by agreement between the Ramsar Secretariat, the United States State Department, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service; later renewed regularly.

December 1997

Wetlands, biodiversity and the Ramsar Convention: the role of the Convention on Wetlands in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, edited by A.J. Hails, is published by the Ramsar Secretariat.

January 1998

The Evian Project, to assist communications and training activities under the Convention, is established by an agreement signed by the Ramsar Secretariat, the Groupe Danone from the private sector, the French GEF, and the government of France.

October 1998

The Standing Committee adopts the new Ramsar logo (the word Ramsar on a blue-green background with two white lines suggesting waves).

May 1999

The Seventh meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in San José, Costa Rica:

- adopts an array of guidelines on National Wetland Policies, reviewing laws and institutions, river basin management, education and public awareness, international cooperation, and more;
- adopts a Strategic Framework for the development of the Ramsar List;
- revises the system of regional representation under the Convention and reconstitutes the membership of the Standing Committee and STRP;
- confers the first Wetland Conservation Awards upon five recipients;
- confirms BirdLife International, IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature,

Wetlands International, and WWF International as “International Organization Partners” (IOPs) of the Convention.

July 1999

Honduras designates the Sistema de Humedales de la Zona Sur de Honduras, the Convention’s 1,000th Ramsar Site.

September 1999

The Society of Wetland Scientists inaugurates its annual Ramsar Support Framework grants programme; the programme runs until 2004.

May 2000

The *Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands* are published in nine booklets in a boxed set. A CD-ROM version is published by the United Nations University in September 2002.

February 2001

Inauguration of a joint website between Ramsar and UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Programme. A Programme of Joint Work is agreed between the two secretariats in March 2002.

August 2001

Hungary and Slovakia agree the collaborative management of the first Transboundary Ramsar Site, the Baradla Cave System and Domic, respectively.

November 2001

The MedWet Coordination Unit is opened in Athens, Greece, as a 5-member outposted branch of the Ramsar Secretariat, headed by a new MedWet Coordinator and funded by the government of Greece and members of the MedWet Committee.

June 2002

Surface area of the world’s Wetlands of International Importance surpasses 100 million hectares with the designation of Peru’s Abanica del río Pastazo.

November 2002

The Eighth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Valencia, Spain:

- adopts further guidance for the Parties, on allocation and management of water, site management planning, integrated coastal zone management, wetland inventory, under-represented wetland types, wetland restoration, peatlands;
- adopts a new Strategic Plan for 2003-2008;

- adopts a new *modus operandi* for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);

- adopts a Communications, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) programme for 2003-2008, as a successor to the Outreach Programme 1999-2002;

- confers Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards to three organizations.

August 2003

Mr Peter Bridgewater (Australia) is named as the Convention’s third Secretary General, succeeding Delmar Blasco.

October 2005

Thirty-eight Ramsar Sites are added to the List by Finland, which brings the total number past the 1,500 mark.

November 2005

The Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Kampala, Uganda:

- adopts further guidance for the Parties, covering groundwater management, river basin management, and rapid assessment of wetland biodiversity;
- adopts frameworks for understanding relationships among existing guidance on wise use, water-related issues, and wetland inventory, assessment, and monitoring;
- establishes a Management Working Group, an STRP Oversight Panel, and a CEPA Oversight Panel as functions of the Standing Committee;
- endorses eight regional initiatives within the framework of the Convention and authorizes financial assistance for five of them;
- adopts a new *modus operandi* for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);
- adopts topical Resolutions on fisheries resources, poverty reduction, and avian influenza;
- endorses a fifth member of the Convention’s International Organization Partners, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); and
- confers Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards to four recipients.

December 2005

Barbados joins the Convention as its 150th Contracting Party.

May 2006

Launch of the Ramsar Technical Reports series, with its first title, *Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity*, published jointly with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

February 2007

The 11th annual World Wetlands Day is celebrated with the theme of “wetlands and fisheries”.

April 2007

Benin’s designation of the Site Ramsar du Complexe W and Zone humide de la rivière Pendjari brings the total area of Ramsar Sites to over 150 million hectares.

May 2007

Launch of the Biosphere Connections partnership between the Star Alliance airline network and the Ramsar Convention, UNESCO MAB Programme, and IUCN.

August 2007

Mr Anada Tiéga takes over as the Ramsar Convention’s fourth Secretary General. The 3rd edition of the *Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands*, now grown to 17 volumes, is published on CD-ROM.

January 2008

The Danone Group’s financial support for a succession of joint projects with the Ramsar Convention enters its 10th year.

February 2008

The 12th annual World Wetlands Day is celebrated with the theme of “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”.

July 2008

Designation by the Democratic Republic of Congo of the world’s largest Ramsar Site, Ngiri-Tumba-Maindombe, at more than 6.5 million hectares.

October 2008

Gambia and Senegal agree the collaborative management of the Convention’s 10th Transboundary Ramsar Site, called “Niimi-Saloum”, and the first TRS outside of Europe.

October-November 2008

The Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Changwon, Republic of Korea:

- adopts the “Changwon Declaration” on wetlands and human health and well-being;
- adopts guidance on principles for partnerships with the Convention, describing the ecological character of wetlands, wetlands and river basin management, and highly pathogenic avian influenza;
- adopts frameworks for guidance on Ramsar data and information needs and on detecting, reporting, and responding to change in ecological character;
- adopts topical Resolutions on wetlands and human health, climate change, “biofuels”, extractive industries, urbanization, poverty alleviation, small island states, and biodiversity in rice paddies;
- adopts a new Strategic Plan and a new Communications, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) Plan for 2009-2015; and
- confers the fourth set of Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards.

February 2009

The 13th World Wetlands Day is celebrated with the theme of river basins: “Upstream-Downstream: wetlands connect us all”.

July 2009

The first issue of the quarterly Newsletter of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is published (last one distributed in 2013).

September 2009

Argentina designates the world’s southernmost Ramsar Site, Glaciar Vinciguerra y turberas asociadas, at 54°45’S 068°20’W.

February 2010

The 14th annual World Wetlands Day is celebrated with the theme of “Caring for wetlands – an answer to climate change”.

March 2010

Launch of the Convention’s YouTube channel.

February 2011

The 15th annual World Wetlands Day is celebrated with the theme of “Forests for water and wetlands”. Publication of *Ramsar’s liquid assets*, highlighting 40 years of the Convention’s achievements and challenges; 40th anniversary celebrations continue throughout 2011.

March 2011

The Convention’s List of Wetlands of International Importance surpasses 2,000 Ramsar Sites worldwide.

March 2011

The Star Alliance of airlines, through its Biosphere Connections agreement with Ramsar, IUCN, and UNESCO, releases a series of high quality films, several of which focus on Ramsar Sites.

July 2011

Publication of the 4th edition of the *Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands* on the Ramsar website and CD-ROM.

August 2011

Creation of the Ramsar Convention’s Facebook page, with over 140,000 “likes” by January 2016. As part of events to mark the Convention’s 40th Anniversary an on-line photo gallery is also launched to enable wetland enthusiasts to contribute their favourite photographs directly.

February 2012

The 16th annual World Wetlands Day is celebrated round the world with the theme of “Wetlands and Tourism”.

February 2012

Launch of the Convention’s *Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes* series of publications from the STRP.

July 2012

The Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Bucharest, Romania, with the theme of *Wetlands, Tourism and Recreation*:

- adopts a Resolution on “Tourism, recreation and wetlands”;
- adopts new procedures and guidance on describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and in subsequent updates, paving the way for on-line submission of site data by Parties in coming years;



In February 2011 the Ramsar Convention celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Convention then had 158 Contracting Parties.

- adopts new guidelines for avoiding, mitigating and compensating for wetland losses
- adopts Resolutions on important cross-sectoral issues such as wetlands and energy, management of urban wetlands, wetlands and health, wetlands and poverty eradication, wetlands and climate change, rice paddy pest control, and promoting sustainable investment by the private sector;
- adopts Resolutions on administrative matters, such as the budget for 2013-2015, the composition and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, the *modus operandi* of the STRP and future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for the next triennium;
- resolves years of study by choosing to continue the institutional hosting by IUCN rather than join the United Nations system; and
- confers the fifth set of Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards.

February 2013

The 17th annual World Wetlands Day is celebrated round the world with the theme of “Wetlands and Water Management”, in recognition of the UN’s International Year of Water Cooperation.

The total area of the world’s Ramsar Sites passes 200 million hectares, while the number of Ramsar Sites in Europe exceeds 1,000.

April 2013

Dr Christopher Briggs is appointed as Ramsar’s fifth Secretary General and takes up his duties in August 2013.

August 2013

A new web-based platform to facilitate the work of Ramsar's Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) is launched.

February 2014

The 18th annual World Wetlands Day celebrates the theme of "Wetlands and Agriculture".

May 2014

Former Ramsar Secretary General Delmar Blasco takes up the role of MedWet Coordinator, based in the Camargue, France.

June 2014

The Convention publishes the *Handbook on Best Practices for the Planning, Design and Operation of Wetland Education Centres*, produced in collaboration with the Environmental Ecosystem Research Foundation (ERF), Republic of Korea.

February 2015

The 19th annual World Wetlands Day celebrates the theme of "Wetlands for Our Future".

Attended by more than 100 participants from 42 Contracting Parties, the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee, held in Gland, Switzerland, is the largest in the Convention's history.

May to October 2015

The entry into force of the Convention in Kiribati, Oman, South Sudan, Swaziland and Zimbabwe brings the number of Contracting Parties to 168.

May 2015

The Convention's briefing note *State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People: A compilation of recent analyses* highlights the estimated 64-70% decline in the extent of the world's wetlands during the 20th century.

June 2015

The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP12), at Punta del Este, Uruguay, with the theme of *Wetlands for our Future*, adopts 16 Resolutions, including Resolution XII.2 approving the Convention's 4th Strategic Plan, covering the period 2016-2024.

September 2015

Kuwait becomes the 169th Contracting Party.

November 2015

Dr Ania Grobicki is appointed as the Convention's Acting Secretary General.

2.4 Further reading

Two Ramsar publications provide a detailed background to the Ramsar Convention's historical and legal development up to 1993:

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: Its History and Development, by G.V.T. Matthews, 1993, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/lib/Matthews-history.pdf; and

The Legal Development of the Ramsar Convention, by C. de Klemm and I. Créteaux, 1993, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/the_legal_development_of_the_ramsar_convention_o.pdf.

Additional background resources:

Karin Baakman, *Testing times: the effectiveness of five international biodiversity-related conventions*. Nijmegen, Netherlands: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2011, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2012.00740_1.x/abstract.

Michael Bowman, "The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: has it made a difference?", in *Yearbook of International Co-operation on Environment and Development 2002/2003* (London: Earthscan), 61-8, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/key_law_bowman2.pdf.

Royal C. Gardner, "Rehabilitating nature: a comparative review of legal mechanisms that encourage wetland restoration efforts", *Catholic University Law Review*, v. 52, no. 3 (2003), www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/wurc_rest_incentives_gardner.pdf.

Clare Shine and Cyrille de Klemm, *Wetlands, water and the law: using law to advance wetland conservation and wise use*. Gland: IUCN and Bonn: IUCN Environmental Law Centre, 1999, https://books.google.ch/books/about/Wetlands_Water_and_the_Law.html?id=vbdHSAuybRkC&redir_esc=y.

3 How does the Ramsar Convention work?

The implementation of the Ramsar Convention is a continuing partnership between the Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Convention Secretariat, with the advice of the subsidiary expert body, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the support of the International Organization Partners (IOPs). Every three years, representatives of the Contracting Parties meet as the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the policy-making organ of the Convention which adopts decisions (Resolutions and Recommendations) to administer the work of the Convention and improve the way in which the Parties are able to implement its objectives.

The *Framework for Implementation of the Ramsar Convention*, first adopted at the 1984 Conference of the Parties (Recommendation 2.3), set out both the long-term commitments and the priorities for the attention of the Contracting Parties to the Convention. Subsequent meetings of the Conference have updated the Framework in light of decisions of the COP, and, within this framework, priority objectives have been agreed for the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Secretariat for each coming triennium. Since 1996, this has been done by means of a **Strategic Plan** and associated Work Plan which set out, in the context of the priority objectives, the actions expected or requested of the Parties, the Standing Committee, the Secretariat, the STRP, the IOPs, and other collaborators. The Convention is presently operating under its fourth Strategic Plan, for the period 2016-2024.

3.1 The Conference of the Contracting Parties

The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) is the policy-making organ of the Convention. Government representatives from each of the Contracting Parties meet every three years to receive national reports on the preceding triennium, approve the work programme and budgetary

arrangements for the next three years, and consider guidance for the Parties on a range of ongoing and emerging environmental issues. (Articles 6 and 7 of the Convention set out the broad duties of the Conference (see Appendix 1).)

Representatives of non-member States, inter-governmental institutions, and national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may participate in these meetings as non-voting observers. There is a procedure stipulated in the treaty and the “Rules of Procedure” for voting by the Parties, but in fact there has not yet been a vote on any substantive decision, and all decisions have in the end been made by consensus.

The programme of each meeting of the COP includes a number of opportunities for presentations and discussions among the Parties of ongoing and emerging issues of importance regarding wetland conservation and wise use, including further interpretation and development of key Convention concepts and guidance for the Parties on key areas of implementation. These issues are considered in the plenary sessions, leading to the adoption of Resolutions.

Ramsar COPs have gained the reputation of being highly effective events, with important Resolutions being agreed by Parties, and allowing an active involvement and participation of the non-governmental and academic communities.

The Proceedings of each meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties are published subsequently, in the Convention’s three official working languages (English, French, and Spanish), by the Secretariat. Typically, the Proceedings contain:

- a Conference Report on the plenary sessions;
- the Resolutions adopted by the Conference;
- lists of the participants and observers;
- the National Reports submitted by the Parties; and
- other documentation provided to the COP for consideration or information.



COP10 was held in Changwon in Korea with the theme Healthy Wetlands Healthy People

The Proceedings of all of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties have been published on the Ramsar website, with additional materials, including photographs, for recent meetings.

National Reports

Recommendation 2.1 (1984) urged Parties to submit detailed National Reports to the Secretariat prior to each ordinary meeting of the Conference, and this tradition has continued unbroken to this day. The Ramsar Convention enjoys the highest percentage of National Reports received of all the environment-related conventions – 97% of current Parties submitted their reports for COP7 in 1999 (not counting recently-joined Parties), 95% for COP8 in 2002, 85% for COP9 in 2005, 91% for COP10 in 2008 and for COP11 in 2012, and 87% for COP12 in 2015.

The National Reports are submitted in one of the three official languages and become part of the public record. They are studied and summarized by the Secretariat in the form of regional overviews of implementation, which are submitted to the COP as official working documents. The texts of the National Reports themselves are published on the Ramsar website, and their contents are analyzed into a database which allows the production of statistical reports on the progress of the Convention over a wide range of variables.

National Reports provide a valuable overview of national experiences; continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Convention; a means of sharing information relating to wetland conservation

measures that have been taken, any problems that may have arisen, and appropriate solutions to such problems; and a means of identifying emerging problems and trends at regional and global scales.

Ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

1. Cagliari, Italy, 1980
2. Groningen, Netherlands, 1984
3. Regina, Canada, 1987
4. Montreux, Switzerland, 1990
5. Kushiro, Japan, 1993
6. Brisbane, Australia, 1996
7. San José, Costa Rica, 1999
8. Valencia, Spain, 2002
9. Kampala, Uganda, 2005
10. Changwon, Republic of Korea, 2008
11. Bucharest, Romania, 2012
12. Punta del Este, Uruguay, 2015
- [13. Dubai, United Arab Emirates (scheduled for 2018)]

Extraordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

1. Paris, France, 1982
2. Regina, Canada, 1987

3.2 The Standing Committee

The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention is the intersessional executive body which represents the COP between its triennial meetings, within the framework of the decisions made by the COP. The Contracting Parties that are members of the SC are elected by each meeting of the COP to serve for the three years until the next one. The SC was established by Resolution 3.3 of the 1987 Conference of the Contracting Parties. Its tasks were first set out in the *Framework for Implementation of the Ramsar Convention* (Resolution 5.1, 1993) and updated by Resolution XI.19 (2012), but are presently defined by Resolution XII.4 *The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention*. This states:

“Within the policies agreed by the Conference of the Parties, the functions of the Standing Committee will be to:

- 1) Carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may

be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval and noting that the Standing Committee is not mandated either to take decisions that would normally be taken by the Conference of the Contracting Parties or to amend any decision taken by the Conference of the Parties;

- 2) Make preparations on issues, including *inter alia* draft Resolutions and Recommendations, for consideration at the next COP;
- 3) Supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Parties, the implementation of activities by the Secretariat, the execution of the Secretariat's budget, and conduct of the Secretariat's programmes;
- 4) Provide guidance and advice to the Secretariat on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Secretariat;
- 5) Act as Conference Bureau at COPs in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
- 6) Establish sub-groups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of its functions;
- 7) Promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- 8) Approve the work plan of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
- 9) Adopt for each triennium the Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use and decide on the allocation of funds;
- 10) Review each triennium the criteria for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award established by Resolution VI.18 and select the laureates; and
- 11) Report to the COP on the activities which it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference."

The Standing Committee normally meets once each year, traditionally at the offices of the Secretariat in



The Standing Committee oversees Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat, on behalf of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (the COP), between its three-yearly meetings.

Switzerland (though SC41 in 2010 was generously hosted by Georgia). In addition, it meets just prior to each meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, at which time it transforms itself into the Conference Committee for the duration of the COP; and then again at the end of the COP, when the newly elected members choose their Chair and Vice Chair and set the date for their first full intersessional meeting.

There are presently 16 regional and two *ex officio* members of the Standing Committee, chosen on a proportional basis from the Ramsar regions:

- a) one representative for regional groups with 1 to 12 Contracting Parties,
- b) two representatives for regional groups with 13 to 24 Contracting Parties,
- c) three representatives for regional groups with 25 to 36 Contracting Parties,
- d) four representatives for regional groups with 37 to 48 Contracting Parties,
- e) five representatives for regional groups with 49 to 60 Contracting Parties.

In addition to the Regional Representatives, the host countries of the most recent and the upcoming meetings of the COP are full members. The host country of the Ramsar Secretariat (Switzerland), as well

as representatives of the six International Partner Organizations, are welcomed as permanent observers. All other Contracting Parties are always entitled to participate in Standing Committee meetings and working groups as observers, and non-member countries as well as non-governmental organizations may participate as observers in the absence of objections.

The composition of the Standing Committee for 2015-2018 is:

- **Africa:** Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia (Alternate members: Botswana, Central African Republic, Egypt, Mali, Uganda)
- **Asia:** Iraq, Nepal, Republic of Korea (Alternate members: Bahrain, Japan Viet Nam)
- **Europe:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Romania (Alternate members: France, Russian Federation, Ukraine)
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Colombia, Honduras, Suriname (Alternate members: Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba)
- **North America:** United States of America (Alternate member: Canada)
- **Oceania:** Fiji (Alternate member: Palau)

- **COP12 host country:** Uruguay
- **COP13 host country:** United Arab Emirates
- **Permanent observers:** Switzerland, BirdLife International, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), and WWF International.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Standing Committee for 2016-2018 are Uruguay and Australia, respectively.

Subsidiary bodies of the Standing Committee, 2016-2018

- Sub-Group on Finance, currently chaired by Senegal (established by Decision SC16-1, 1995)
- Sub-Group on COP13, chaired by United Arab Emirates (Decision SC51-18)
- Management Working Group (Resolution IX.24, Decision SC34-3)
- Transition Committee of the MWG (Resolution X.4)
- CEPA Oversight Panel (Resolution IX.18, Decision SC34-12)

The core budget of the Convention includes provisions for assisting Regional Representatives from less developed countries to attend the meetings of the Standing Committee.

3.3 The Secretariat

The **Ramsar Convention Secretariat** carries out the day-to-day coordination of the Convention's activities. It is located in the headquarters facilities of IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature in Gland, Switzerland, and Secretariat staff are legally considered to be employees of IUCN.

The Secretariat is headed by a Secretary General who answers to the Standing Committee and who supervises the work of a small number (currently 22) of policy/technical, communications, and administrative staff funded by the core budget. The policy and technical staff in the Secretariat comprises the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General and four Senior Regional Advisors to assist the Parties (in Africa, the Americas, Asia-Oceania, and Europe); four interns serve as Assistant Advisors for the regions. The communications team is



The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is located in the headquarters of IUCN in Gland, Switzerland

responsible for promoting the Convention and the activities of its Secretariat staff, partners, and collaborators through news releases, educational and awareness-raising products, publications, and official documentation. Ramsar staff members work in several languages (notably the Convention's three official languages, English, French, and Spanish) and provide expertise in a range of disciplines. Additional staff are employed as necessary through non-core funding. Secondments are occasionally provided to the Secretariat by the Parties or other organizations, and consultants are recruited from time to time as needed.

The functions of the Secretariat are to:

- maintain the List of Wetlands of International Importance (§4.3) and note all additions and changes to the List and the Ramsar Sites Information Service;
- assist in convening and organizing the Conference of the Parties, the meetings of the Standing Committee and the STRP, and Ramsar regional meetings;
- provide administrative, scientific and technical support to Contracting Parties, especially in relation to the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan and decisions of the COP;
- assist in recruiting new Contracting Parties;
- disseminate the decisions, Resolutions and Recommendations of the COP and the Standing Committee;
- provide secretariat functions for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel;
- seek financial contributions for the Small Grants Fund (§4.4.5), circulate an annual call for applications, evaluate the project proposals received from Contracting Parties, and disseminate project evaluations to potential donors, and to evaluate proposals received for the Wetlands for the Future assistance programme;
- administer projects funded with earmarked contributions;
- keep the Contracting Parties, the Ramsar community, and the public informed of developments related to the Convention;

- inform and advise inquirers about matters concerning the Convention and wetlands;
- organize Ramsar Advisory Missions at the request of Contracting Parties (§4.3.6) and contribute to follow-up of RAM reports; and
- develop avenues of cooperation with other conventions, intergovernmental institutions, and national and international NGOs.

3.4 The Administrative Authorities and diplomatic notifications

The head of state or government or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of each Contracting Party designates a national agency to act as the implementing agency, or “Administrative Authority”, of the Convention in that country, and an individual within that “AA” is normally identified as the National Focal Point, or “NFP”. The Administrative Authority is the channel for communications between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Contracting Party and the main agency responsible for the application of the treaty. It is expected that the Administrative Authority will consult and cooperate with as many other government agencies and non-governmental institutions in the same country as possible in order to ensure the best possible results in achieving the goals of the Ramsar Convention (see also §3.8, National Ramsar Committees).

Formal communications concerning Convention business are transmitted by the Secretariat through diplomatic notifications sent to either the permanent mission to the United Nations in Geneva or the embassy in Bern as determined by each Contracting Party. Copies of all formal notifications are normally sent to the Administrative Authority in each Contracting Party.

3.5 The Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Ramsar Convention was established by Resolution 5.5 (1993) as a subsidiary body of the Convention to provide scientific and technical guidance to the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Secretariat. Its individual members, who are not paid for their services, are appointed by the Management Working Group of the Standing



Archipel Bolama-Bijagos Ramsar Site in Guinea-Bissau. The Convention established six geographical regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Oceania.

Committee based upon nominations from the Administrative Authorities of Contracting Parties, but they serve in their own capacities as experts in the scientific and technical areas covered by the STRP's Work Plan and not as representatives of their countries or governments. Resolution XII.5 (2015) approved a new framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance under the Convention, replacing the earlier *modus operandi* established under Resolution XI.18 (2012).

During the triennium 2016-2018, the STRP is chaired by Prof. Royal C. Gardner (regional technical expert for North America) and vice-chaired by Dr. Channa Bambaradeniya (regional technical expert for Asia). The Panel consists of six scientific members from the academic community, six regional technical expert members (chosen from each of the six Ramsar regions and charged with networking with the scientific communities in their regions); six additional technical expert members (chosen for their expertise in the priority areas of work for the triennium); one observer from each of the six International Organization Partners (see §3.9 below), and observers from selected scientific and technical organizations and networks, as set out in Annex 2 of Resolution XII.5 (currently more than 50 organizations are listed but not all are represented at each STRP meeting). The progress of the STRP, which meets annually, is facilitated

within the Secretariat by the Deputy Secretary General and the Scientific and Technical Support Officer.

The STRP's Work Plan for each triennium is built around a list of thematic work areas approved by the Conference of the Parties, taking into account the Strategic Plan and relevant COP Resolutions. The STRP members and observers are assisted in their work by a network of STRP National Focal Points who advise them directly on STRP matters and provide a liaison between the STRP and the networks of other relevant experts within each of their countries.

3.6 The Ramsar Convention budget

The Conference of the Contracting Parties reviews the financial regulations of the Convention and adopts a core budget for the next triennium at each of its ordinary meetings. The Convention uses the Swiss franc as its working currency. Draft budget proposals are prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Finance Sub-Group of the Standing Committee and submitted to the full Standing Committee for endorsement prior to ordinary meetings of the Conference. Budgets adopted at COP11 (2012) and COP12 (2015) included "core" and "non-core" components. The core budget,

funded by assessed contributions from the Parties (see below), covers the following costs:

- functioning of the Convention Secretariat (see list of activities in §3.3);
- some of the costs of the meetings of the Standing Committee and STRP, including the costs of participation of members from less economically developed countries;
- a contribution to IUCN for costs incurred in hosting the Secretariat offices;
- a contribution to support Ramsar Regional Initiatives; and
- modest funding for the Convention's CEPA support activities.

Travel costs of COP delegates from less developed countries are chiefly met by voluntary contributions from other Contracting Parties.

The costs of organizing and hosting meetings of the Conference of Parties are not covered within the core budget.

The “non-core” budget includes provisions to be funded exclusively by voluntary contributions and so is, in effect, a list of unfunded priorities. For the 2016-2018 triennium these include: Ramsar Advisory Missions (§4.3.6), the Ramsar Sites Information Service, the Ramsar Small Grants Fund, Arabic translation services, pre-COP13 regional meetings, COP13 delegate travel for eligible countries, and additional support for CEPA, STRP and Ramsar Regional Initiatives.

The budget is approved by consensus among the Contracting Parties present and voting at an ordinary meeting of the Conference. (If a formal vote is required, Article 6.5 stipulates that a two-thirds majority is needed for adoption.) Each Contracting Party contributes to the core budget a percentage based upon that which it contributes to the United Nations budget, using the scale approved by the UN General Assembly, but with a minimum contribution of 1,000 Swiss francs for those Parties whose calculated shares would be less than that amount.

The core budget for the triennium 2016-2018 is Swiss francs 5,081,000 (ca. US\$ 4.9 million or € 4.7 million at December 2015 exchange rates) per calendar year.



The Upper Navua Conservation Area Ramsar Site in Fiji. The Upper Navua River cuts a deep gorge in the central highlands of Viti Levu, the main island. The Site hosts important fauna and flora.

In addition to the annual dues paid by member countries to cover the core budget, the Ramsar Secretariat receives voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties, NGOs, and other donors to implement special projects or carry out contractual agreements. These may be items from the non-core budget listed above, but also include, for example, the Wetlands for the Future initiative (§4.4.5) and Swiss Grant for Africa.

3.7 The Ramsar regions

The Convention's system of regionalization came into effect with the adoption of Resolution 3.3 (1987) on the establishment of a Standing Committee to oversee the implementation of the Convention between triennial meetings of the Conference of the Parties. Regionalization is a significant factor in the operation of the Convention, in terms of the structure of the Standing Committee, the organization of Secretariat staff and duties, and the ways in which Contracting Parties cooperate through regional representation and meetings.

This system was reviewed at COP7 (1999), so that now, for technical and administrative purposes, the Ramsar Convention has established six regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean (formerly Neotropics)
- North America (Canada, Mexico, and the United States)
- Oceania

A full list of countries assigned to each region (both those that are Parties and countries which have not

yet joined) was first determined by Resolution VII.1 (1999), updated by Resolution XI.19 (2012), and superseded by Resolution XII.4 (2015), which, *inter alia*, renamed the Ramsar “Neotropics” region as “Latin America and the Caribbean” to reflect established usage under other multilateral agreements. Annex 2 to Resolution XII.4 assigns Parties and countries eligible to join the Convention to one of the six regional groupings, but the text of the Resolution clarifies that “those Contracting Parties which are geographically near to the boundaries of the allocated region, as given in Annex 2, can at their own request, based on the existence of similar natural conditions, participate within a neighbouring alternative region, while remaining a member of their geographical region, upon formal notification of this intent to the COP.”

At the Ramsar Secretariat, there are four “Regional Advisory Teams”, each consisting of a Senior Advisor and an Intern/Assistant Advisor, covering: Africa, Asia-Oceania, Europe, and the Americas (Latin America and the Caribbean and North America).

Regional meetings

Since 1991, the Ramsar Secretariat has organized regional and subregional “pre-COP” meetings in preparation for meetings of the Conference of the Parties. These meetings give Parties from the regions and subregions an opportunity to network and discuss common problems, solutions and progress, as well as to prepare common region-specific responses, when appropriate, to the issues and documents to be considered at the COP. Funding to cover the meeting costs, especially for travel and subsistence expenses, is sought by the Secretariat on a case-by-case basis from voluntary contributions by the Parties, development assistance agencies, and interested NGOs.

Ramsar Regional Meetings in preparation for COP12

Region	Dates	Location
Regional meeting for Africa	17-21 November 2014	Hammamet, Tunisia
Regional meeting for the Americas	27-31 October 2014	Bogota, Colombia
Regional meeting for Asia	3-7 November 2014	Siem Reap, Cambodia
Regional meeting for Europe	20-24 October 2014	Kufstein, Austria
Regional meeting for Oceania	18-20 August 2014	Nadi, Fiji

3.8 National Ramsar Committees

Recommendation 5.7 of the COP and the Strategic Plan 2016-2024 (paragraph 26) both encourage Contracting Parties to establish National Ramsar Committees (or National Wetland Committees) which can provide a broader focus at national level for the implementation of the Convention, involving relevant government agencies from various sectors and ministries, scientific and technical institutions, regional and local authorities, local communities, NGOs, and the private sector. They deal with such issues as: national wetland policies; management of Ramsar Sites; application of the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Mission mechanisms (§4.3.5 and 6); inclusion of new sites in the Ramsar List; submissions to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund (§4.4.5); and fundraising through other mechanisms such as the Global Environment Fund and the Green Climate Fund.

In addition, National Committees may provide expert input to National Reports for meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, and review implementation of Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Most importantly, National Committees provide a mechanism for spreading the Convention's approach to wetland and water issues beyond the individuals and branches of government that are officially charged with its implementation. Ideally, National Committees should include as many sectors of government and representatives of stakeholders as possible.

A large number of Contracting Parties have already established National Ramsar Committees, though they vary considerably in form from one country to another. For example, some committees consist of representatives of several relevant government agencies and appropriate non-governmental organizations, sometimes also including academics and other individuals with relevant expertise,

while others may be organized as governmental committees (including regional governments in federal States) or as essentially non-governmental advisory bodies.

A study by Marcela Bonells and Monica Zavagli, *National Ramsar/Wetlands Committees across the six Ramsar regions: diversity and benefits* (2011), examines a number of illustrative case studies and provides further detail (www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/strp/NRC_final_en.pdf).

3.9 Cooperation with other organizations

The Ramsar Convention, through the Secretariat and its other bodies, maintains close working links with other international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to achieve a strategic alliance for wetland conservation. The links with other environment-related conventions have been reviewed above (§1.12).

International Organization Partners

The Convention works especially closely with six global non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Four of them have been associated with the treaty since its beginnings and, in Resolution VII.3 (1999), were confirmed in the formal status of International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Convention. In Resolutions IX.16 (2005) and XII.3 (2015), the Parties judged that IWMI and WWT, respectively, also met the qualifications for Ramsar IOP status that were outlined in 1999 and endorsed the addition of those organizations as the fifth and sixth official partners of the Convention. The six IOPs are:

- BirdLife International (formerly ICBP)
- IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)



The Convention works closely with six global International Organization Partners.

- Wetlands International (formerly IWRB, the Asian Wetlands Bureau, and Wetlands for the Americas)
- The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)
- WWF International

The IOPs provide invaluable support for the work of the Convention at global, regional, national, and local levels, chiefly by providing expert technical advice, field level implementation assistance, and financial support, both from their headquarters units and from their national and regional offices and affiliates and their expert networks. In addition, they themselves embody the philosophy of the Ramsar Convention and its wise use concept and support the use of the Ramsar guidelines in their own work around the world. The IOPs also participate regularly as observers in all meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

Other non-governmental organizations and related bodies

In many countries, there is also an “NGO constituency” around the Ramsar Convention that works with the government and is active in promoting and implementing the goals of the treaty. The Ramsar Secretariat tries to maintain as much contact as possible with the many local, national, and international NGOs (in addition to the six partners listed above) that are in sympathy with Ramsar principles and whose work intersects with the Convention’s objectives.

Specifically, the Ramsar Secretariat presently benefits from formal cooperative agreements of various kinds with the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS), the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Charles Sturt University, Conservation International, Ducks Unlimited, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the International Ocean Institute (IOI), the Society for Ecological Restoration, the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Stetson University College of Law, University of Senghor, Wetland Link International, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

An increasing number of national and international NGOs make a point of participating in the meetings of the Ramsar Conference of the Parties, which are perceived as good opportunities for networking

and influencing government policy and action; at COP10 in Korea (2008), 25 international NGOs and more than 170 national NGOs were present as observers, with similar figures for COP11 in 2012.

External support agencies and the private sector

The Ramsar Secretariat maintains active contacts with a number of external support agencies, such as the World Bank and the regional development banks, and has been given observer status with the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). All of them provide funding both for wetland projects and for projects that affect wetlands. Contacts are also maintained with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and with the European Commission. Financial assistance for projects, meetings, reports, and Ramsar-related work on the ground in the developing world has frequently been provided by a number of national development assistance agencies with which the Secretariat also maintains close contacts.

Since 1998, the private sector Danone Group has been providing generous financial support to the Convention’s communications, public awareness, and training activities under the Danone Fund for Water and many subsequent joint projects, in particular in support for the annual World Wetlands Day activities. Beginning in 2007, the Star Alliance airlines group, through its Biosphere Connections initiative, has provided subsidized air travel to participants in meetings of the Ramsar Convention and IUCN.

4 Assisting the Contracting Parties

This section describes the assistance available to Contracting Parties to meet their commitments under the Convention.

4.1 The Ramsar Handbooks

Over the years, the Conference of the Contracting Parties has adopted a considerable body of scientific, technical, and policy guidance to assist the Parties in addressing the issues embodied in the Convention's "three pillars": the conservation of Wetlands of International Importance, the wise use of all wetlands, and international cooperation. Beginning in 2000, all of the guidance then existing was gathered into a series of nine handbooks that blended the official guidelines themselves with illustrative materials and case studies meant to provide additional practical help to implementation, entitled *The Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands*. The fourth edition, 21 volumes covering all official guidance documents mentioned below through COP10 in 2008, was released on CD-ROM in July 2011 – the list of titles can be found in Appendix 4 – and a fifth edition, incorporating new materials from COP11 in 2012 and COP12 in 2015, is in preparation.

4.2 The wise use of wetlands

Under Article 3.1 of the Convention, Contracting Parties agree to **“formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory”**. Through this concept of “wise use”, which was pioneering when the Convention was drafted (though now more familiar under international environmental law as “sustainable use”), the Convention continues to emphasize that human use of wetlands and wetland products and services on a sustainable basis is entirely compatible with Ramsar principles and wetland conservation in general. The Ramsar wise use concept applies to all wetlands and water resources in a Contracting Party's territory, not only to those sites designated as Wetlands of

International Importance. Its application is crucial to ensuring that wetlands continue to play their vital roles in supporting sustainable human development, biological diversity, and major earth system processes such as the global water cycle and the global carbon cycle.

As the term “wise use” gained currency within the Ramsar community and was used elsewhere for different purposes, the Conference of the Parties recognized the need for greater precision and adopted a definition at its 3rd meeting in Regina, Canada, in 1987. This definition was revised in Resolution IX.1 Annex A (2005) as follows:

“Wise use of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development.”

To assist the Parties in implementing the wise use concept, the Wise Use Working Group established at Regina developed *Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept*, which were adopted by the 4th Conference of the Parties in Montreux, Switzerland, in 1990.



Women in India collecting leaves and flowers of lotus to sell. Wetlands are essential for the sustainable livelihood of millions of people around the world.

The original 1987 definition of the wise use of wetlands established the important Ramsar principle that its purpose was “for the benefit of mankind”:

“The wise use of wetlands is their sustainable utilization for the benefit of mankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem” (Recommendation 3.3, 1987, now superseded).

At the same time, the accompanying definition of “sustainable utilization” of a wetland contained the now-classic formulation of sustainability:

“Human use of a wetland so that it may yield the greatest continuous benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.”

Also at the 4th meeting, the Wise Use Project was instituted, funded by the Netherlands, and an international panel of experts began work which culminated in the *Additional guidance for the implementation of the wise use concept*, adopted by the 5th Meeting of the Parties in 1993, as well as the book of principles and case studies entitled *Towards the wise use of wetlands*, edited by T.J. Davis (Ramsar, 1993).

The pioneering “Wise Use Guidelines” emphasized the importance for Contracting Parties to:

- **adopt national wetland policies**, involving a review of their existing legislation and institutional arrangements to deal with wetland matters (either as separate policy instruments or as part of national environmental action plans, national biodiversity strategies, national development plans, or other national strategic planning);
- **carry out** national wetland inventories, wetland monitoring, research, training, education and public awareness; and
- **take action at wetland sites**, involving the development of integrated management plans

covering every aspect of the wetlands and their relationships with their catchments.

The Ramsar Secretariat assists the Contracting Parties in implementing the original *Guidelines and Additional guidance* and their subsequent commitments on the wise use of wetlands by:

- providing expertise, either through Ramsar technical personnel and its network or through external consultants;
- making available the further guidelines adopted by the Conference of the Parties on many aspects of wetland conservation and wise use;
- funding projects through the Ramsar Small Grants Fund, Wetlands for the Future, and Swiss Grant for Africa; and
- seeking third-party funding for wise use projects.

The original *Wise use guidelines* and *Additional guidance* documents were ground-breaking in their time, but they have since been largely superseded by the wide array of related guidance that has subsequently been adopted by the Conference of the Parties, and Resolution IX.1 Annex A, **A Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character** (2005; Ramsar Handbook 1), represents an attempt to provide a coherent context for all of these various aspects.

4.2.1 Establishment of national wetland policies

a) Institutional and organizational arrangements

Since the 1st meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Cagliari, 1980), the Parties have recognized that National Wetland Policies are a key feature in the implementation of the wise use concept. To assist them in developing their Policies, the Conference of the Parties has adopted **Guidelines for developing and implementing National Wetland Policies** (Resolution VII.6, 1999; Handbook 2), which outline a broad-based multisectoral consultative process of policy development to resolve conflicting interests and to help build ownership in the National Wetland Policy amongst all stakeholders.

b) Legislation

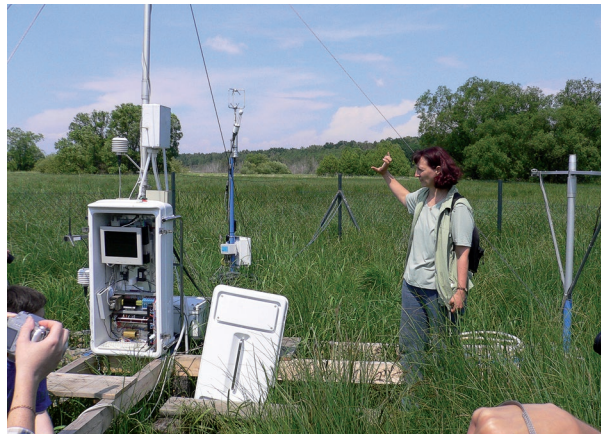
Since Recommendation 4.4 in 1987, the Conference of the Contracting Parties has encouraged Parties to review their legal mechanisms to ensure that the country's national, provincial, and local laws and institutions impacting upon the conservation and wise use of wetlands and wetland products do not conflict with one another or leave gaps. The ***Guidelines for reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands*** (which the Parties adopted by Resolution VII.7 in 1999), developed by IUCN's Environmental Law Centre and other experts, provide a step-by-step blueprint for the establishment of a review team and its progress through the various stages required to assess the effectiveness of existing wetland-related legal and institutional measures for promoting wetland conservation and wise use, including identifying sectoral legal and institutional measures which directly or indirectly affect wetlands.

4.2.2 Knowledge of wetlands and their values

To manage wetlands effectively it is necessary to have adequate knowledge of their functioning. Inventory, assessment, monitoring, research, and training activities help in this respect.

a) Inventory

In Resolution VII.20 (1999), the Contracting Parties confirmed the importance of a comprehensive national wetland inventory as the vital basis for many activities necessary for achieving the wise use of wetlands, including policy development, identification and designation of Ramsar Sites, documentation of wetland losses, and identification of wetlands with potential for restoration. The ***Framework for Wetland Inventory***, adopted by the COP in Resolution VIII.6 (2002) and the subsequent ***Framework for processes of detecting, reporting and responding to***



- 1 - Ranger patrol boat at the Kopački Rit Ramsar Site and Nature Park, Croatia.
- 2 - Climate related monitoring station in a fen of the Třeboň mires Ramsar Site and Biosphere Reserve, Czech Republic.
- 3 - Bird counts at a reservoir lake in Livanjsko Polje Ramsar Site, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Portland Bight Wetlands and Cays Ramsar Site in Jamaica. Photo credit Ted Lee Eubanks

change in wetland ecological character (Resolution X.16, 2008; both in Handbook 15) provide guidance for designing site-based, provincial, national or regional wetland inventories.

b) Monitoring

Monitoring is the process of measuring change in ecological character in any wetland over a period of time. It can be carried out at different levels of intensity, depending on available funding or technology. Monitoring methods include simple field observations, quantitative sampling techniques such as the gathering of wetland plant material, and, where changes in social values and uses are concerned, participatory observation.

The ***Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, monitoring, and assessment*** adopted by Resolution IX.1 (2005; Handbook 13) noted that “the delivery of the conservation and wise use of wetlands, in line with the commitments embodied in the Ramsar Convention, entails:

- a) establishing the location and ecological characteristics of wetlands (baseline inventory);
- b) assessing the status, trends and threats to wetlands (assessment);
- c) monitoring the status and trends, including the identification of reductions in existing threats

and the appearance of new threats (monitoring); and

- d) taking actions (both *in situ* and *ex situ*) to redress any such changes causing or likely to cause damaging change in ecological character (management).”

Monitoring using remote sensing methods such as satellite imagery can now be used for many wetland types. For example, the Global Mangrove Watch is developing detailed maps of mangroves worldwide, showing the changes over time from 2005 to 2015. Other tools being developed include the tracking of changes in water quality in inland water bodies. Finally, for a single wetland site the use of drones to take regular aerial photographs is useful for measuring change in ecological character and the impact of restoration.

4.2.3 Action at particular wetland sites

Maintenance of the ecological functioning of a wetland requires an integrated, catchment approach to management, incorporating the different uses and activities that are compatible with sustainability. Such management must take an interdisciplinary approach drawing upon the principles of hydrology, biology, economics, policy, and social sciences. Global concerns must also be considered, namely, for example, transboundary wetland systems, shared species, invasive alien species, and global climate change.

To achieve the wise use of a wetland so that present and future generations may enjoy its benefits, a balance must be attained that ensures maintenance of the wetland type. Activities may vary between strict protection with no resource exploitation; a small amount of resource exploitation; large-scale sustainable resource exploitation; or active intervention in the wetland, including restoration. Management can be adapted to suit local conditions and remain sensitive to local cultures, indigenous peoples and local communities.

Management planning for Ramsar Sites

Recognizing that for the conservation of wetlands and the wise use of their resources, an overall agreement is essential among the various managers, owners, occupiers and other stakeholders, and that the management planning process provides the mechanism to achieve this agreement, the Contracting Parties adopted a first set of

Guidelines on management planning at COP5 in 1993 (Resolution 5.7). Subsequently those have been updated in the ***New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands*** (Resolution VIII.14, 2002, Handbook 18), which provide additional guidance on environmental, social and economic impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis, zonation and multiple use, design and maintenance of buffer zones, and the application of the precautionary approach. In 2008 the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), WWF and IUCN published *Wetland Management Planning – a guide for site managers*, a practical guide to Ramsar’s management planning based on Resolution VIII.14 (2002), available at www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/wurc_mgt_planning2008.pdf.

Participation in management

In the ***Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities’ and indigenous peoples’ participation in the management of wetlands*** (Recommendation 6.3, 1996), the Contracting Parties acknowledged that local and indigenous people have a particular interest in ensuring that the wetlands within their region are managed wisely and, in particular, that indigenous people may have distinct knowledge, experience and aspirations in relation to wetland management. They also noted that the wise use of wetlands will benefit the quality of life of local and indigenous people who, in addition to their involvement in site management, should derive the benefits that result from conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

Additional guidance that has been made available for the use of Contracting Parties and others includes guidelines and frameworks on the allocation and management of water, river basin management, environmental impact assessment, addressing change in the ecological character of wetlands, and integrated coastal zone management, as well as such cross-cutting wetland-related issues as human health, climate change, highly pathogenic avian influenza, and poverty reduction.

4.3 Listed sites

At the time of joining the Convention, each Contracting Party undertakes to designate at least one site for inclusion in the **List of Wetlands of International Importance** (the “Ramsar List”). The inclusion of a site in the Ramsar List confers

upon it the prestige of international recognition and embodies the government’s commitment to take all steps necessary to ensure the maintenance of the ecological character of the site. While inscription on the Ramsar List acknowledges the international importance of the site, Article 2.3 of the Convention established that “the inclusion of a wetland in the List does not prejudice the exclusive sovereign rights of the Contracting Party in whose territory the wetland is situated.”

Following accession, Contracting Parties are expected to designate additional “suitable” wetlands for the List (Article 2.1) or extend the boundaries of those already included. They select wetlands within their territories on the basis of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology, as measured by reference to the Convention’s Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance. The information on each listed site is included in the Ramsar Sites Database and can be searched using the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS), maintained by UNEP-GRID under contract with the Ramsar Secretariat (<https://rsis.ramsar.org>).

The 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (May 1999) first adopted a ***Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)***, now in its 5th edition as of 2012 (Resolution XI.8, annex 2).

The Vision for the List adopted under the framework, as amended by Resolution IX.1 (2005), is:



The inclusion of a Site on the Ramsar List confers upon it the prestige of international recognition and embodies the government’s commitment to maintain its ecological character.

To develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services.

The *Strategic Framework* established five general objectives for the List as well as a concrete “short-term target”: “To ensure that the List contains at least 2,500 sites covering 250 million hectares by 2015”. As of December 2015, the List contained 2,220 sites covering 214 million hectares.

Wetlands to be added to the Ramsar List must be designated **by the national government**, specifically by the agency within the national government that has been authorized to represent the nation in implementing the Ramsar Convention, i.e., the “Administrative Authority” (§3.4). Thus, by designating a new Ramsar Site, the national government is making a commitment to “promote the conservation” of the site. The various Parties have their own procedures for the nomination of potential Ramsar Sites within their countries prior to the national decision to designate them, and individuals and NGOs wishing to have wetlands added to the Ramsar List should contact the Administrative Authority in their country at an early stage. All potential Ramsar Sites need to have a completed Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS).

At the time of its accession to the Convention, a new Party must send by diplomatic channels directly to the Director-General of UNESCO (with a copy to the Ramsar Secretariat) the information about at least one wetland that meets the Criteria for inclusion in the Ramsar List, with a map with boundaries clearly delineated. UNESCO, the Ramsar Convention’s Depositary, forwards this information to the Ramsar Secretariat with official notification of the new Party’s accession. **But all subsequent designation letters for wetlands to be added to the Ramsar List should be sent by the Administrative Authority directly to the Ramsar Secretariat** – following the Party’s accession, UNESCO is not involved in designations for the Ramsar List in any way.

Exceptionally, a Contracting Party may, because of its “**urgent national interests**”, delete or restrict the boundaries of a wetland already

included in the List (Article 2.5 of the Convention). The Convention provides, however, that such deletions or restrictions should be compensated for by the designation as a Ramsar Site of another wetland with similar habitat values, either in the same area or elsewhere (Article 4.2). In practice, only a handful of boundary restrictions have occurred, and for the only sites ever deleted from the Ramsar List, the “urgent national interests” clause was not invoked – they were three which had been designated prior to the adoption of the Criteria and were then found not to fulfil any of them. (Three new sites were designated in compensation.) Resolutions VIII.20 (2002) and IX.6 (2005) offer guidance on interpreting these issues.

As mentioned above, Contracting Parties select wetlands for designation by reference to the **Criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance** (§4.3.3), whereby a wetland to be designated must meet at least one of the nine criteria. The Convention’s **Classification System for Wetland Type** (§4.3.4) is used to identify the different wetland types within each site to be recorded by the Ramsar Sites Information Service in a simple and consistent manner.

Sites on the List at which changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur can be placed by the Contracting Party concerned on a special register known as the **Montreux Record** (§4.3.5), a list of Ramsar Sites requiring priority conservation attention. These sites may benefit from the application of the **Ramsar Advisory Mission** mechanism (§4.3.6), by which the Ramsar Secretariat organizes technical missions to seek solutions and provide advice to the relevant authorities. **Article 3.2** of the Convention (§4.3.7) commits the Parties to making themselves aware of potential changes to the ecological character of listed sites and reporting these to the Ramsar Secretariat without delay.

Designating a wetland for the Ramsar List does not in itself require the site previously to have been declared a protected area. In fact, listing a site under the Ramsar Convention can help to provide the necessary protection to ensure its long-term sustainability, especially if it is subject to intensive use by human communities – either to extract resources or to benefit from the natural functions of the wetland. This can best be achieved

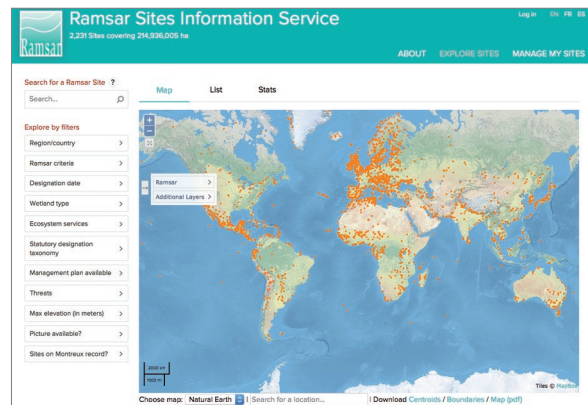
by preparing and implementing an appropriate management plan, with the active participation of all stakeholders. Resolution XII.15 (2015) encouraged Parties “to promote and support the Ramsar Site authorities responsible for management to develop an integrated planning, management and evaluation system which promotes the wise use of all their Sites in close alignment with the targets of the Strategic Plan 2016-2024”. and approved a Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT) to assist Parties in meeting their commitments under the Convention.

4.3.1 The Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS)

The **Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance** is kept up to date by the Ramsar Secretariat and provides the site name, date of designation, location, total area, and central geographical coordinates of each Ramsar Site. This information can be accessed for all Ramsar Sites using the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) website at <https://rsis.ramsar.org>. The original **Ramsar Information Sheets** (RISs) (§4.3.7) submitted by the Parties with each Ramsar Site designation (or their most recent updates) and site maps can also be downloaded for most sites in PDF format from the RSIS.

The List of Wetlands of International Importance and the Montreux Record (§4.3.5) are based upon information stored in the database of Ramsar Sites, maintained by the Ramsar Secretariat and made available on an open access basis through the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS). The RSIS is used to:

- enable the Secretariat to respond rapidly to reports of changes in ecological character at listed sites;
- prepare briefs for Secretariat staff and consultants engaged in special projects;
- provide information for Secretariat technical staff and others working on wise use and management plan projects;
- process inquiries and data requests from Contracting Parties, partner organizations, researchers, and the public;
- prepare site-based texts and illustrations for Ramsar and other publications;



The Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) at <https://rsis.ramsar.org> presents information on more than 2,200 Ramsar Sites.

- provide essential data to everyone conducting research on one or many wetlands or developing global or national inventories of wetlands.

The RSIS has been developed in such a way that a broad array of site information, statistical analyses, and maps can be searched for and viewed directly.

4.3.2 The Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

The **Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (“RIS”)** is the means by which Contracting Parties present information on wetlands designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and by which the List is kept up to date. The items to be reported on by means of the Information Sheet – including factual data on surface area, altitude, wetland types, location, legal jurisdiction, etc.; justifications for the Criteria cited for determining international importance; and an array of additional data on, *inter alia*, hydrological values, flora and fauna, land uses, socio-cultural factors, conservation measures, and potential threats – were approved in 1990 by the Conference of the Parties (Recommendation 4.7) and have been updated regularly since then. The information presented in the Information Sheets is entered into the Ramsar Sites Database (§4.3.3) and forms a basis both for monitoring and analysis of the ecological character of the site and for assessing the status and trends of wetlands regionally and globally.

At COP11 in 2012 the Parties adopted a new RIS format particularly for use in on-line submission of data by the Parties, which is available on the RSIS website (<https://rsis.ramsar.org>). An off-line

Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance

Group A. Sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types

Criterion 1: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.



Black-faced spoonbill at Hachigoro Toshima, Japan

Group B. Sites of international importance for conserving biological diversity

Criteria based on species and ecological communities

Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.

Criterion 3: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.

Criterion 4: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.

Specific criteria based on waterbirds

Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.

Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.

Specific criteria based on fish

Criterion 7: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.

Criterion 8: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.

Specific criterion based on other taxa

Criterion 9: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.



Young moose in the Biebrzanski National Park and Ramsar Site in Poland

version of the RIS is also available, so that all the data on a particular site can be gathered remotely, before it is compiled online. The information on the process of compiling an RIS, and access to the offline RIS form, are at: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/how_to_use_the_offline_ris_word_form.pdf.

All maps of proposed Ramsar Sites are now expected to be provided in the format of a Geographical Information System (GIS) shape file, to be made available electronically on the RSIS database, rather than on paper.

The Convention recognizes that some Contracting Parties might have insufficient data or resources to complete the RIS fully, and for many but not all data fields they are encouraged to provide the best information available, to be improved over time. In other cases, the Secretariat's regional advisory teams, when receiving RISs for which the data or maps may be inadequate, will work with the Party's Administrative Authority to bring the information and presentation up to the standard stipulated by the Conference of the Parties in its Resolutions, **before the new site is actually added to the Ramsar List.**

Up-to-date RIS data. In Resolution VI.13 (1996), the Parties urged that the RISs for all Ramsar Sites should be updated and resubmitted to the Secretariat at least every six years, in order to maintain a certain currency in the data available to the public from the Ramsar Sites Database and to serve as a management tool for the detection and monitoring of changes at the sites over time.

4.3.3 Criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance

The text of the Convention (Article 2.2) states that:

“Wetlands should be selected for the List on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology” and indicates that ***“in the first instance, wetlands of international importance to waterfowl at any season should be included”***.

The process of adopting specific criteria for the identification of internationally important wetlands began in 1974, but the first official Criteria were agreed at COP1 in 1980. In 1987 and 1990,

the Conference of the Parties revised the Criteria further, and at COP6 in 1996 the Parties added new Criteria based on fish and fisheries; at COP9 (2005) a ninth Criterion was added to cover other wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

Recognizing that cases may arise where a Ramsar Site was designated for the List prior to the adoption of the latest version of Criteria and may no longer meet any of those current Criteria, or where a Ramsar Site has subsequently lost the ecological values for which it was originally designated, the practice has been that the Secretariat, in consultation with the Contracting Party concerned, evaluates what measures might be necessary to extend, enhance or restore the wetland's functions and values to the degree that it would qualify for inclusion in the List. Where there is no possibility of extension or enhancement/restoration of its functions or values, the Contracting Party concerned may instruct the Secretariat to remove the site from the List, and the Party then applies the provisions for compensation, as provided in Article 4.2 of the Convention. This has occurred at only three sites (all in the territory of the same Contracting Party), where wetlands listed in the Convention's earliest days, prior to the existence of any designation guidance or criteria, were found not to meet the subsequently adopted criteria. The Parties adopted ***Guidance for the consideration of the deletion or restriction of the boundaries of a listed Ramsar Site*** annexed to Resolution IX.6 (2005), which recommends a careful eight-step process that Parties should undertake if deletion or restriction should ever become necessary.

4.3.4 Classification System for Wetland Type

The Ramsar Information Sheet asks for details of all wetland types present within the designated Ramsar Site boundaries, ranked in order of their predominance within the site. A prescribed “Classification System for Wetland Type” was approved by the 1990 Conference of the Contracting Parties (Recommendation 4.7) and subsequently amended.

The categories listed in the classification were not intended to be scientifically exhaustive, but only to provide a broad framework for the rapid identification of the main wetland habitat types represented at each site, with the “dominant wetland type” clearly indicated. Forty-two wetland types are identified in the system, grouped into the categories “marine/coastal”, “inland”, and “human-made”.

Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type



Bijagos Islands, Guinea-Bissau

The codes are based upon the Ramsar **Classification System for Wetland Type** as approved by Recommendation 4.7 and amended by Resolutions VI.5 and VII.11 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The categories listed are intended to provide only a broad framework to aid rapid identification of the main wetland habitats represented at each site.

Marine/Coastal Wetlands

- A Permanent shallow marine waters** in most cases less than six metres deep at low tide; includes sea bays and straits.
- B Marine subtidal aquatic beds**; includes kelp beds, sea-grass beds, tropical marine meadows.
- C Coral reefs.**
- D Rocky marine shores**; includes rocky offshore islands, sea cliffs.
- E Sand, shingle or pebble shores**; includes sand bars, spits and sandy islets; includes dune systems and humid dune slacks.
- F Estuarine waters**; permanent water of estuaries and estuarine systems of deltas.
- G Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats.**
- H Intertidal marshes**; includes salt marshes, salt meadows, saltings, raised salt marshes; includes tidal brackish and

freshwater marshes.

- I Intertidal forested wetlands**; includes mangrove swamps, nipah swamps and tidal freshwater swamp forests.
- J Coastal brackish/saline lagoons**; brackish to saline lagoons with at least one relatively narrow connection to the sea.
- K Coastal freshwater lagoons**; includes freshwater delta lagoons.
- Zk(a) Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems**, marine/coastal

Inland Wetlands

- L Permanent inland deltas.**
- M Permanent rivers/streams/creeks**; includes waterfalls.
- N Seasonal/intermittent/irregular rivers/streams/creeks.**
- O Permanent freshwater lakes** (over 8 ha); includes large oxbow lakes.
- P Seasonal/intermittent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha); includes floodplain lakes.**
- Q Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes.**
- R Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes and flats.**
- Sp Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools.** ▶



Yatsuhigata Tidal Flats, Tokyo Bay, Japan

- Ss Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools.**
- Tp Permanent freshwater marshes/pools;** ponds (below 8 ha), marshes and swamps on inorganic soils; with emergent vegetation water-logged for at least most of the growing season.
- Ts Seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes/pools** on inorganic soils; includes sloughs, potholes, seasonally flooded meadows, sedge marshes.
- U Non-forested peatlands;** includes shrub or open bogs, swamps, fens.
- Va Alpine wetlands;** includes alpine meadows, temporary waters from snowmelt.
- Vt Tundra wetlands;** includes tundra pools, temporary waters from snowmelt.
- W Shrub-dominated wetlands;** shrub swamps, shrub-dominated freshwater marshes, shrub carr, alder thicket on inorganic soils.
- Xf Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands;** includes freshwater swamp forests, seasonally flooded forests, wooded swamps

on inorganic soils.

- Xp Forested peatlands;** peat swamp forests.
- Y Freshwater springs; oases.**
- Zg Geothermal wetlands**
- Zk(b) Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, inland**

Note: **“floodplain”** is a broad term used to refer to one or more wetland types, which may include examples from the R, Ss, Ts, W, Xf, Xp, or other wetland types. Some examples of floodplain wetlands are seasonally inundated grassland (including natural wet meadows), shrublands, woodlands and forests. Floodplain wetlands are not listed as a specific wetland type herein.

Human-made wetlands

- 1 Aquaculture** (e.g., fish/shrimp) ponds
- 2 Ponds;** includes farm ponds, stock ponds, small tanks; (generally below 8 ha).
- 3 Irrigated land;** includes irrigation channels and rice fields.
- 4 Seasonally flooded agricultural land** (including intensively managed or grazed wet meadow or pasture).
- 5 Salt exploitation sites;** salt pans, salines, etc.
- 6 Water storage areas;** reservoirs/barrages/dams/impoundments (generally over 8 ha).
- 7 Excavations;** gravel/brick/clay pits; borrow pits, mining pools.
- 8 Wastewater treatment areas;** sewage farms, settling ponds, oxidation basins, etc.
- 9 Canals and drainage channels, ditches.**
- Zk(c) Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, human-made**



Cobourg Peninsula, Australia

4.3.5 The Montreux Record

The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List. The Conference of the Parties has adopted working definitions of “ecological character” and “change in ecological character” (see the glossary at Appendix 6).

The Montreux Record was established by Recommendation 4.8 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1990). Resolution 5.4 (1993) determined that the Montreux Record should be employed to identify priority sites for positive national and international conservation attention. As they expressed it in Resolution VIII.8 (2002), the Parties believe that “the voluntary inclusion of a particular site on the Montreux Record is a useful tool available to Contracting Parties in circumstances where:

- a) demonstrating national commitment to resolve the adverse changes would assist in their resolution;
- b) highlighting particularly serious cases would be beneficial at national and/or international level;
- c) positive national and international conservation attention would benefit the site; and/or
- d) inclusion on the Record would provide guidance in the allocation of resources available under financial mechanisms.”

Resolution VI.1 (1996) established more precise procedures for the use of the Montreux Record mechanism, with guidelines on the steps to be taken for including Ramsar Sites on the Record and removing Sites from it. This guidance was updated by Resolution XII.6 (2015). Sites may be added to and removed from the Record only with the approval of the Contracting Parties on whose territory they lie. As of January 2016, 47 Ramsar Sites were present in the Montreux Record – 32 Sites which had been listed on the Montreux Record had since been removed from it (though one of those had been placed upon it again).

At the request of the Contracting Party concerned, the Secretariat may send a technical mission, known as the “Ramsar Advisory Mission”, to

The RAM in action

The Srebarna Ramsar Site on the Danube river floodplain includes a freshwater lake and reedbeds with many globally threatened species. During the late 20th century, water abstraction, the abandonment of traditional land-use practices and increased fertilizer and pesticide use in the surrounding agricultural area caused eutrophication, lowering of the water level, and a decline in biodiversity. A first Mission, composed of two Ramsar experts, visited the site in 1992 and provided advice on improving the link between the lake and the Danube River, and elaborating a site management plan (RAM 28, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ram28f_srebarna_bulgaria.pdf). To sustain the international support for the needed restoration and management activities, the Bulgarian authorities inscribed Srebarna on the Montreux Record, and this triggered significant activities and international assistance through USAID. A further visit in 1998, conducted jointly with the World Heritage Centre (since it is also a World Heritage site), IUCN and Ramsar, noted considerable progress but provided additional advice and recommended that the Site remain on the Record for a time, and in 2001 a follow-up Mission was able to verify the positive results and recommend removing the Site from the Montreux Record (RAM 47, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ram47e_srebarna_bulgaria.pdf). Thanks to the Convention’s support mechanism and international solidarity, the ecological character of the Srebarna wetland was restored.

analyze the situation at one or more particular Montreux Record sites, provide advice on the measures to be taken, and assess the desirability of removing a Site from the Montreux Record when measures have been implemented successfully.

4.3.6 The Ramsar Advisory Missions

Special attention is given to assisting member States in the management and conservation of listed Sites whose ecological character is threatened. This is frequently carried out through the **Ramsar Advisory Mission**, a technical assistance mechanism formally adopted by Recommendation 4.7 in

1990. (The Ramsar Advisory Mission mechanism was formerly known as the Monitoring Procedure and the Management Guidance Procedure.)

The main objective of this mechanism is to provide assistance to developed and developing countries alike in solving the problems or threats that make inclusion in the Montreux Record necessary.

In most cases, the application of this mechanism consists of a visit by a team of two or more experts who will produce a report on their findings and recommendations. Upon receiving a request from a Contracting Party, the Secretariat agrees upon the terms of reference for the mission with the concerned authorities and determines the type of expertise that will be required for the visiting team. Subsequently, the team's draft report is submitted

for comment to the competent authorities who have requested the mission, and its final report then becomes a public document, which can provide the basis for conservation action at the site. In some cases, the recommendations of Ramsar Advisory Mission reports have provided the framework for financial assistance from the Small Grants Fund and external support agencies.

Between 1988 and 2015, the Ramsar Advisory Mission mechanism was applied on 79 occasions at Ramsar Sites or groups of Sites. Early missions sometimes consisted of a brief visit by one member of the Secretariat's technical staff, but over the years the missions have tended to become more formal and frequently more detailed, involving multi-disciplinary teams, sometimes in collaboration with other bodies such as the World Heritage

Applications of the Ramsar Advisory Mission mechanism between 2009 and 2015

	Site Name	Country	Date
60	Alagol, Ulmagol & Ajigol Lakes	Islamic Rep. of Iran	May 2009
61	Ramsar in Greenland	Denmark	Jun 2009
62	Marromeu Complex	Mozambique	Aug 2009
63	Bahía de Panamá y San San-Pond Sak	Panama	Nov 2008
64	Åkersvika	Norway	April 2010
65	Laguna del Tigre	Guatemala	May 2010
66	Cayo-Loufoualeba	Congo	June 2010
67	Marismas Nacionales and Laguna Huisache Caimanero	Mexico	June 2010
68	S'Albufera de Mallorca	Spain	Oct 2010
69	Humedal Caribe Noreste	Costa Rica	Nov 2010
70	Doñana	Spain	Jan 2011
71	Embouchure de la Moulouya	Morocco	Oct 2010
72	Refugio de Vida Silvestre del Río San Juan	Nicaragua	March 2011
73	Palo Verde	Costa Rica	April 2011
74	Cabo Pulmo	Mexico	Nov 2011
75	Indus Dolphin Reserve and Taunsa Barrage	Pakistan	Oct 2012
76	Mývatn-Laxá region	Iceland	Aug 2013
77	Humedal Caribe Noreste	Costa Rica	Aug 2014
78	Parc national des Virunga	Dem. Republic of Congo	Mar 2014
79	Nordre Tyrifjord Wetland System	Norway	Jul 2015

Convention, IUCN, and UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.

The Secretariat has no core budget line for such missions but maintains a separate non-core budget account to receive voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties and NGOs to defray the costs of Ramsar Advisory Missions to countries that are unable to cover the expenses.

A complete list of Ramsar Advisory Missions is available on the Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/list_of_ramsar_advisory_missions_o.pdf). Copies of most of the individual RAM reports can also be obtained from the same address.

4.3.7 Article 3.2

Article 3.2 of the Convention requires the Parties “to arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be

passed without delay” to the Ramsar Secretariat. Moreover, when the Secretariat has been notified by a third party (e.g., a national or local NGO) of such a change or potential change, the staff treats such information as an Article 3.2 notification and contacts the Administrative Authority of the Party involved, seeking clarification of the situation and offering advice if needed. The Secretariat also reports back to the original informant, as appropriate, about the responses received from and actions taken by the Administrative Authority. (Further clarification on Article 3.2 commitments was provided by the Parties in Resolution VIII.8, 2002.)

In addition, in accordance with **Article 8.2** of the Convention, the Ramsar Secretariat has the responsibility to inform the other Contracting Parties of “any alterations to the List or changes in character of wetlands included therein”, and to arrange for these matters to be discussed at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties. All substantive Article 3.2 reports and responses to them are therefore communicated by the Secretary General to the COP, which may wish to offer its own advice in the form of a COP Resolution or Recommendation.



A Ramsar Advisory Mission in July 2015 to the Nordre Tyrifjord Wetlands System Ramsar Site in Norway.

4.4 International cooperation

In the context of international cooperation, the Ramsar Convention has a central role to play, providing the single most important framework for intergovernmental cooperation on wetland issues. Article 5 of the Convention on Wetlands establishes that “the Contracting Parties shall consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.”

In order to assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of this obligation of the Convention, the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (May 1999) adopted the **Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention** (Resolution VII.19; Handbook 20).

4.4.1 Cooperation with and between Contracting Parties

By setting international standards for wetland conservation and providing an international forum for discussion of global wetland issues, the Ramsar Convention facilitates a continuous flow of information on wetland matters between Contracting Parties. The Secretariat functions as the focal point for contacts between and among Contracting Parties by:

- promoting and organizing activities under Article 5 of the Convention, which concerns shared wetlands and water systems (Appendix 1);
- organizing and co-organizing regional meetings and technical workshops, as well as meetings of the COP; and
- facilitating (and sometimes financially assisting) regional multi-Party wetland initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention, known as Ramsar Regional Initiatives (§4.4.4).

4.4.2 Transboundary wetland conservation

Article 5 of the Convention calls upon Contracting Parties to consult with one another in the case of shared wetlands or water systems. Individual

action by States may be insufficient for the conservation and management of wetlands because many wetlands and watercourses cross national boundaries; many wetland species are migratory; the management of wetlands often requires exchange of experiences between countries; and development assistance is often required for wetland conservation actions in developing countries.

Transboundary Ramsar Sites. Increasingly, Ramsar Contracting Parties are designating their new and existing Ramsar Sites also as **Transboundary Ramsar Sites**, meaning that an ecologically coherent wetland extends across national borders and the Ramsar Site authorities on both or all sides of the border have formally agreed to collaborate in its management, and have notified the Secretariat of this intent. As of December 2015 there were 16 Transboundary Ramsar Sites (14 bilateral and 2 trilateral), comprising 36 individual Ramsar Sites that are denoted by a superscripted “TRS” in the Ramsar List. The full list of Transboundary Ramsar Sites is available at: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/list_of_transboundary_sites.pdf

Examples include:

- the Domicia-Baradla Cave System, designation on 14 August 2001 of Baradla Cave System and related wetlands (Hungary) and on 2 February 2001 of Domicia (Slovak Republic), the first such TRS;
- the Trilateral Ramsar Site Floodplains of the Morava-Dyje-Danube Confluence trilateral designation on 30 June 2004, composed of the national designations: Donau-March-Auen, Untere Lobau (Austria), Moravské luhy (Morava flood plains) (Slovak Republic), Mokrady dolního Podyjí (floodplain of lower Dyje River) (Czech Republic);
- the Vallée de la Haute-Sûre, bilateral designation on 23 March 2004 (Belgium and Luxemburg);
- the Upper Tisza Valley, bilateral designation on 4 December 2004 of Felső-Tisza (Upper Tisza) (Hungary) and Tisa River (Slovak Republic);
- the Niimi-Saloum TRS, comprising Gambia’s Niimi National Park and Senegal’s Delta du Saloum (2008);



Wadden Sea is a Transboundary Ramsar Site covering 13 Ramsar Sites in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

- the Kotra Ramsar Site in Belarus and Cepkeliai in Lithuania in 2010; and
- a series of three transboundary Ramsar sites along the lower Danube River, first designated by Bulgaria (1975 & 2002) and Romania (2012), and added to the TRS list in 2013.

4.4.3 Transboundary species conservation

Article 5 of the Convention states that “Contracting Parties shall endeavour to coordinate present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna”. Many species of migratory birds follow flyways (migratory routes) along which are situated wetlands which they use as resting and feeding areas. Achieving the effective conservation of these species requires cooperation between States sharing wetland systems or situated along a flyway. The Secretariat works to facilitate such cooperation.

Recommendation 4.12 (1990) of the Conference of the Parties recognizes the flyway concept for the conservation of wetland bird species, and encourages Contracting Parties to:

- participate in internationally coordinated waterfowl surveys, and undertake special surveys within their territories to identify wetlands of

international importance for waterfowl at any time in the annual cycles of these species;

- enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements for the conservation of migratory waterfowl;
- cooperate with other Contracting Parties situated along the same flyway with regard to financial assistance and the sharing of expertise.

Several cooperative flyway programmes have been developed for the management of shared wetland species or the conservation of individual species. Leading examples are:

- the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (1986, revised 2012) between Canada, the United States and Mexico;
- the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network established along the east and west coasts of North and South America in 1986;
- the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (1996), established under the aegis of the Convention on Migratory Species; and
- the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (2002), and its predecessor the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy (1996).

The Secretariats of the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation and Joint Work Plan with a view to enhancing synergy between the two treaties, and a renewed Joint Work Plan with the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) is in preparation.

4.4.4 Ramsar Regional Initiatives

The MedWet Initiative

Resolution VIII.30 (2002) provided **Guidance for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands**, based upon the successful example of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (www.medwet.org). These have since been updated by further COP Resolutions and MedWet is now one of 15 Ramsar Regional Initiatives (see below). MedWet is a coordination mechanism for wetland activities in the Mediterranean Basin, designed to involve 26 Parties to the Ramsar Convention and all other major stakeholders. Its Mission is “to ensure the effective conservation of wetlands and the wise use of their resources, values and services within the framework of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands”. Initiated in 1991, MedWet was formally recognized by the Convention in 1996 and has served as a model for other Regional Initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention. For 12 years its secretariat was based in Athens, Greece, moving to its present location in Arles, France, in 2014.

Other Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Following on from the success of MedWet and the development of the CREHO Ramsar Center in Panama (§4.5.2 below), the Parties, meeting in Valencia in 2002, established Guidelines in Resolution VIII.30 and encouraged the proposal of additional initiatives for endorsement and possible financial support. Through Resolutions at each of the next four COPs – namely Resolutions IX.7 (2005), X.6 (2008), XI.5 (2011), and XII (2015) – the Parties formally endorsed a variety of regional cooperation platforms as “Ramsar Regional Initiatives”. As of 2016 there are four **Ramsar Regional Centres for training and capacity building**: the Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) in Panama; the Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central



The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) brings together 26 Mediterranean and peri-Mediterranean Contracting Parties to the Convention.

Asia (RRC-CWA), in the city of Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran; the Ramsar Regional Center for East Asia (RRC-EA) in Suncheon, Republic of Korea; and the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA) in Kampala, Uganda.

In addition, eleven **networks for regional or subregional cooperation** on wetland conservation are endorsed as Ramsar Regional Initiatives. These cover: the Niger river basin, the West African coastal zone, the High Andes, the Plata river basin, the Caribbean, American mangroves and coral reefs, the East-Asian Australasian flyway, the Mediterranean, the Carpathians, the Nordic-Baltic region, and the coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

The Convention’s core budget for 2016-2018 includes 120,000 Swiss francs annually for support to Ramsar Regional Initiatives (e.g., assistance with start-up costs), with allocations approved by the Standing Committee. *Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives* (www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/operational-guidelines-2013-2015.pdf) were endorsed by the Standing Committee at its 46th meeting (2013). Ramsar Regional Initiatives are governed independently and are not authorized to represent the Convention. They are required to submit annual reports to the Secretariat for review by the Standing Committee. Further information on the Regional Initiatives can be found at www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-regional-initiatives.

4.4.5 Small projects assistance programmes

Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use

The Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) was established by the Conference of the Parties in 1990 (at that time under the name “Wetland Conservation Fund”). The SGF is intended to provide financial assistance in the form of small grants (maximum Swiss francs 40,000 per project) for projects in less developed countries, and at present funding is provided for activities related to the implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan 2009-2015, including requests for emergency assistance.

Between 1991 to 2014 the Fund provided a total of more than 8 million Swiss francs to over 240 projects from 110 countries. As it is included as a “non-core” budget line in the Convention’s 2016-2018 budget, the SGF relies entirely upon voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties and other donors for its operations. In addition, in some cases projects submitted to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund have been taken over for direct funding support by individual organizations and donor agencies.

Applications have to be endorsed by the Administrative Authority of the Convention in each country. Each proposed project is evaluated by the technical staff of the Secretariat and recommendations for approval are submitted for the

Small Grants Fund (SGF): Effective site management in Moldova

A recent Small Grants Fund project carried out by BIOTICA Ecological Society, in cooperation with the Ministry of Ecology in the Republic of Moldova, was aimed at developing a management plan and implementing the wise use approach in the Unguri-Holosnita Ramsar Site, on the banks of the Dniester River near the border with Ukraine. The project helped local authorities and stakeholders to raise awareness about the outstanding natural and historical heritage values of the site and to promote the Ramsar Convention on a broader scale, influencing national environment policies.

Wetlands for the Future Fund (WFF): Capacity building and environmental awareness raising for mangroves and coral reefs in Mexican Ramsar Sites

A recent WFF project in Mexico brought together stakeholders in the Cuencas y Corales de la Zona Costera de Huatulco and Playa Barra de la Cruz Ramsar Sites. Over 300 people from governmental organizations, NGOs, the tourism sector and communities attended 10 capacity building workshops. Participants learned about the Ramsar Convention and the importance of wetlands, and they identified environmental needs and solutions for each sector.

Using feedback from the workshops, awareness-raising videos and brochures were made highlighting the importance of mangroves, coral reefs and of the Sites in general. The communities and tourism partners also designed and produced signs for an interpretive trail. Furthermore, a long-term agreement outlining cross-sectoral mechanisms to mitigate the degradation of these wetlands was signed at a session of the State Council for the coastal wetlands of Oaxaca, demonstrating the commitment of all stakeholders to the conservation and wise use of the Sites.

consideration of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat also prepares a portfolio describing each of the positively-evaluated proposals from each cycle and distributes that to potential donors. The portfolio for 2014 can be seen at www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ramsar_sgf_portfolio_2014_20.pdf.

In principle, there is an annual call for proposals and completed applications in English, French or Spanish must be received by the Ramsar Secretariat by 30 June of each year, though emergency assistance may be requested at any time. In practice, no new calls for SGF proposals have been made since the 2010-2011 project cycle because of a lack of voluntary contributions to the SGF in recent years and the high number of strong proposals that remain unfunded. At the time of writing (December 2015), the Standing Committee is reviewing the status and operation of the Fund.

Wetlands for the Future

Since 1996, the Ramsar Secretariat, the United States State Department, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service have collaborated on a special initiative, the Wetlands for the Future Fund (WFF), to benefit Latin American and Caribbean institutions and individuals through capacity building and training in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. This initiative promotes the implementation of the concept of “wise use” by strengthening the capacity of countries to manage their wetland resources in perpetuity and contributing to the integration of wetland conservation and management with the development process.

All proposed activities must be in line with the principles, recommendations and guidelines of the Ramsar Convention. Following proposal evaluations by Ramsar Secretariat staff, projects are chosen jointly by the Secretariat, the US State Department and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and administered by the Secretariat. Further information is available at: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/wff/wff_pub2010_e.pdf

From its inception in 1996 to 2015 the Fund has supported 290 projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, 83 of which have supported activities within Ramsar Sites in the region.

The Swiss Grant for Africa

The Swiss Grant for Africa (SGA) administered by the Ramsar Secretariat is a generous contribution offered by the Federal Government of Switzerland over and above the annual dues provided to the Convention's core budget, in order to support wetland conservation and wise use and the implementation of the Convention in Africa. This annual contribution dates back to 1989 following the establishment of the Convention Secretariat in Switzerland in 1988.

The Swiss Grant is extremely useful in financing suitable emergency action or specific activities in needed areas of wetland conservation and wise use. It is also particularly helpful in promoting the Convention in the Africa region. The fund is administered under the supervision of the Senior Advisor for Africa in the Ramsar Secretariat, in collaboration with the Swiss authorities. The Small Grant application tools are used for this initiative.

Swiss Grant for Africa (SGA) : Identifying wetland habitats to maximize effectiveness of the Great Green Wall Initiative in Sudan

The Great Green Wall Initiative was conceived as a set of cross-sectoral actions and interventions aimed at the conservation and protection of natural resources with a view to achieving development and, particularly, alleviating poverty. This ongoing initiative is country driven and supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with substantial funding for its implementation. SGA supported Sudan through its national wetland inventory to better implement this transboundary GEF project, allowing the mainstreaming of wetland issues within national and regional planning.

The inventory identified 30 distinct types of water-dominated habitats such as swamps, bogs, flood plains, major wadis and man-made wetlands. These habitats have a permanent supply of water due to geological, ecological or man-made factors.

The study sought to understand direct and indirect impacts on these wetlands, and assess

the institutional structures for managing them. The findings included that the functions and values of wetlands are still not yet well understood in Sudan, resulting in limited recognition of the importance of their role in ecosystem services.

Despite the large extent of environmental legislation, wetlands are not specifically protected from encroachment on their boundaries, pollution or extractive use of their resources. In an arid country like Sudan, wetlands provide hugely important benefits of both an economic and social nature for communities, livelihoods and agricultural and forestry development, beside their critical role in maintaining the quality and diversity of the natural environment. Wetlands could play a crucial role in peace building and avoidance of conflict. The study gives a number of recommendations regarding management arrangements and the need to formulate national wetlands policies.

4.4.6 Project support and external support agencies

The Ramsar Secretariat has a mandate to initiate and maintain contacts with external support agencies, both to make them aware of the need for wetland conservation and wise use as an integral part of their projects, and to solicit greater support from them for projects aimed at the environmentally sound management of wetlands. For example, implementing the recommendations of a Ramsar Advisory Mission report may call for considerable investment, requiring external support in the case of less developed countries. It is desirable, therefore, that donor governments and organizations pay particular attention to these needs if the benefits gained by application of the Mission are to be secured.

The Secretariat places a high priority on working with donor agencies to assist in wetland work in developing countries. In Africa, for example, Ramsar staff have worked with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on multinational wetland projects involving the Lake Chad Basin Commission's five member states, the Niger Basin Authority's nine states, and the range states of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). In addition, Ramsar has been involved in wetland projects in Africa that have benefited from bilateral assistance from agencies in Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the European Union. At the same time, Ramsar is also working with African projects that have received financial and in-kind assistance from the Convention's International Organization Partners (BirdLife International, IUCN, the International Water Management Institute, Wetlands International, and WWF International), as well as from Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental (OMPO), the Macarthur Foundation, the MAVA Foundation, the Fondation internationale du Banc d'Arguin (FIBA), and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

4.5 Reserves and training

4.5.1 Reserves

Article 4.1 of the Convention provides that "each Contracting Party shall promote the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl by establishing nature

reserves on wetlands, whether they are included in the List or not, and provide adequately for their wardening".

Recommendation 4.4 (1990), recognizing the value of establishing nature reserves at wetlands of diverse types and sizes, and the value of reserves in promoting conservation education and public awareness of the importance of wetland conservation and the goals of the Convention, urges Contracting Parties to: establish national networks of nature reserves covering both listed and non-listed wetlands; establish an adequate legal framework, or review existing legal mechanisms, for the definition, establishment and effective protection of wetland nature reserves; develop conservation education programmes linked to wetland reserve networks; include wetland reserves in national inventories detailing their location and values; and develop and implement integrated management plans for wetland reserves.

4.5.2 Training

Article 4.5 of the Convention states that "Contracting Parties shall promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening". Trained personnel, particularly in the fields of management, education and administration, are essential for the effective conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. In establishing training programmes, attention should be given to:

- the definition of training needs;
- "training needs analysis" to determine the differing needs between regions, countries and sites;
- the target audience (from awareness programmes for the general public and policy makers to professional training for those directly involved in administering and practicing wetland management);
- the subject (furnishing wetland managers and administrators with the professional knowledge needed for establishing, defending and implementing the concept of the wise use of wetlands).

The types of training of particular relevance for professionals involved in wise use practices include: courses on integrated management (bringing together specialists from different

fields to generate a common understanding and approach); courses on wetland management (including information on the most up-to-date techniques); courses for field staff such as wardens and rangers (covering a basic understanding of the wise use concept, enforcement of legislation, and public awareness); and “training of trainers” who can replicate the courses or workshops elsewhere. Training activities should be catalytic, involving governmental and non-governmental organizations, transferring knowledge gained, for example, from the regional level to potential trainers at the local level.

The Ramsar Secretariat places a high priority on assisting the Parties in wetland training and capacity building. In Africa, for example, the Secretariat has organized or contributed to wetland wise use training workshops and seminars, at the regional level, held in Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia, and at the national level, in Angola, Benin, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania. In addition, a number of other such workshops have been funded through the Ramsar Small Grants Fund, and, in the Neotropics region, the Convention’s Wetlands for the Future programme is focused entirely upon assisting in wetland training and capacity building.

There are also four Ramsar Regional Centres dedicated to training and capacity building (§4.4.4). They are:

- Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO), in the City of Knowledge, Panama City, Panama (www.creho.org);
- Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia (RRC-CWA), in Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran;
- Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA), in Suncheon, Republic of Korea (www.rrc-ea.org);
- Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), in Kampala, Uganda

The Ramsar Center Japan (RCJ) is not directly associated with the Convention but carries out a

programme of awareness raising in Asia, particularly by organizing the triennial Asian Wetland Symposium. Ms Reiko Nakamura, who created the RCJ in 1990, was one of the winners of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award at COP9 in 2005.

4.6 Communicating the Ramsar message

Communicating the Ramsar message about the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their natural resources is achieved at an international level by the activities of the Secretariat and the partner organizations and at national and local level by the activities of the Contracting Parties and local NGOs.

An essential function of the Secretariat is to foster communication about wetland conservation in general and the promotion of the Convention in particular, through:

- frequent information and news releases made available to the public over the Internet and by other means;
- informational publications and other promotional materials bearing the Ramsar logo;
- the preparation and delivery of lectures and addresses at national and international meetings and articles in relevant publications;
- contributions to the literature of other organizations; and
- financial assistance for the relevant publications of other bodies, which will normally include the Ramsar logo on them.

A set of Ramsar **Fact Sheets** is available from the Ramsar website: www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-fact-sheets, as is the leaflet “Introducing the Convention on Wetlands” www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/introducing_ramsar_web_eng.pdf. These provide an attractive summary of the basic information about Ramsar. The promotional materials distributed free of charge for World Wetlands Day are available at www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day. *Ramsar’s liquid assets: 40 years of the Convention on Wetlands* (2010) is a 32-page retrospective look to celebrate the 40th

anniversary. Links to electronic versions of these materials can be found amongst the References in Appendix 3.

4.6.1 The Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) programme

At the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP7), Resolution VII.9 adopted the first programme of actions for promoting **communication, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA)** under the Convention.

The important role played by CEPA in the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan 2016-2024 was reiterated during COP12 in Resolution XII.9, with the over-arching goal:

“People taking action for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.”

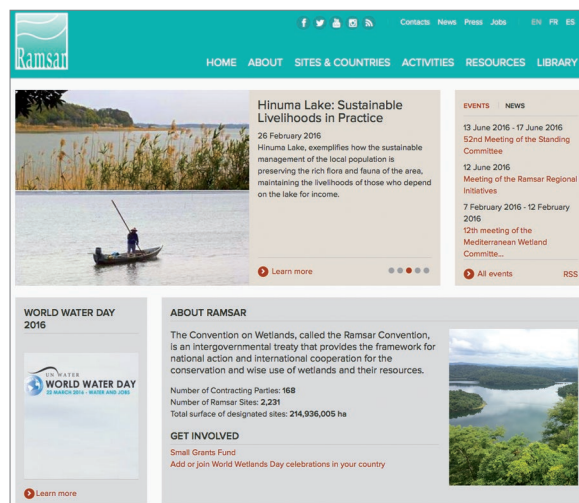
The Contracting Parties have named government and non-governmental **National CEPA Focal Points** who are expected to form part of a global network of experts to share information, promote the dissemination of resource material, and support the development or expansion of programmes that can provide opportunities for individual, group and community participation in wetland and water resource management.

To facilitate this work, there are dedicated CEPA pages on the Ramsar website detailing activities and resources available (www.ramsar.org/activity/the-ramsar-cepa-programme) and a Secretariat-facilitated e-mail discussion group to provide for the exchange of news, views, announcements and advice on wetland-related CEPA issues.

The **CEPA Oversight Panel** was established at COP9 through Resolution IX.18, to monitor and inform on CEPA issues within the Convention and the implementation of the CEPA programme, advising the Standing Committee and Secretariat on priorities at national and international level including CEPA priorities of STRP.

4.6.2 Ramsar and the Internet

The **Ramsar website**, first established in February 1996, is maintained by Secretariat staff. A completely new version of the website, using an updated platform offering more features and



A new version of the Ramsar website, www.ramsar.org, was launched in October 2014.

greater flexibility, was launched in October 2014. It is intended to fulfil three purposes:

- **Information about Ramsar:** to inform the public about the Ramsar Convention and its “wise use” principles, its structures, history, objectives, and methods;
- **Documentation:** to make available all of the Convention’s documents, including the treaty, current lists of Contracting Parties, Ramsar Sites, etc.; the texts of all of the Convention’s Resolutions, criteria, guidelines, manuals, application forms; full texts of all of the Convention’s books and other publications; the National Reports and COP documentation prepared for the Conference of the Parties; agenda papers prior to all major meetings, for public comment; cooperation agreements with other organizations, and so on, most of these in the Convention’s three official languages;
- **Up-to-the-minute news:** to offer to colleagues and the public a “clearing house” of the most up-to-date news of the activities of the “Ramsar family”, i.e. the Convention’s Parties and the Secretariat, the six International Organization Partners, related conventions, Ramsar Sites, and Ramsar Regional Initiatives, including reports of meetings, position announcements and staff news, stories on the accomplishments of NGOs and organizations with whom we have memoranda of cooperation, many of these with photographs, as well as links to other Ramsar-related on-line resources.

Electronic mailing lists. Since June 1997, the Secretariat has maintained a public e-mail mailing list, called the **Ramsar Forum**, to provide an e-mail mechanism for the exchange of news, announcements, and requests for information and advice on Ramsar-related issues. As of January 2016, there were 2,000 Forum members around the world. To join the Ramsar Forum, go to www.ramsar.org/the-ramsar-secretariat.

The **Ramsar Exchange**, a non-public companion to the Forum, is a suite of three administrative lists created in 1997 to facilitate official communications among those who are formally involved in the Convention. The English, Spanish (“Intercambios”), and French (“Reseau”) language versions include as members all National Focal Points and Heads of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities. The Exchange lists are not open to the public.

The **Ramsar CEPA List** is the Secretariat’s public e-mail discussion group (with separate spaces for discussion in English, French and Spanish) whose members include both the designated CEPA National Focal Points from the Parties and interested members of the public. As of January 2016 there were about 1,150 members of the List. To join, go to www.ramsar.org/activity/join-the-cepa-network.

Social media: The Convention’s presence on social media is increasingly raising the visibility of Ramsar and promoting wise use of wetlands.

- The Ramsar **Facebook** page www.facebook.com/RamsarConventionOnWetlands was launched in mid-2011 and by January 2016 had received more than 140,000 “likes”.
- Ramsar’s **Twitter** feed at <https://twitter.com/RamsarConv> had over 5,000 followers in January 2016.
- The Ramsar **Instagram** page www.instagram.com/ramsar_convention_on_wetlands/ was started in February 2014 and had over 500 followers by December 2015;
- Hundreds of videos, both by the Convention itself and by third parties, are available either on **YouTube** (www.youtube.com, search under “Ramsar Convention”) or from the Ramsar website at www.ramsar.org/resources/videos, where the most important videos can be downloaded.

4.6.3 World Wetlands Day and WWD materials

The 2nd of February each year is World Wetlands Day (WWD), marking the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 (it was formally signed the next day).

Established to raise awareness about the value of wetlands for humanity and the planet, WWD was celebrated for the first time in 1997 and has grown remarkably since then. Each year, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.

Each year a theme is selected to focus attention and help raise public awareness about the value of wetlands. Countries organize a variety of events to raise awareness, such as lectures, seminars, nature walks, children’s art contests, sampan races, community clean-up days, radio and television interviews, and letters to newspapers. Many Contracting Parties use the day to designate new Ramsar Sites or to launch national wetland policies and programmes.

Since 1998 the Ramsar Secretariat, with generous financial support from the Danone Group Evian Fund for Water, has produced a range of outreach materials which include logos, posters, factsheets, handouts and guidance documents to support



A wetland clean-up in Oman on World Wetlands Day. World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February.



Winners of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards 2015 at COP12 in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

country activities organized to celebrate WWD. These materials are available to freely download in English, French and Spanish on the World Wetlands Day website (www.worldwetlandsday.org) launched in 2015. All the materials are also available in their design files for event organizers to customize and adapt them to their local languages and contexts. A few print copies are available to countries upon request to the Secretariat.

Starting in 2015 a Wetlands Youth Photo Contest, that runs for a month from 2 February, was introduced as a part of a new approach to target young people and get them involved in WWD. Thanks to Star Alliance Biosphere Connections, the prize awarded to the winner of the photo contest is a chance to visit the Ramsar Site of their choice, anywhere in the World.

Since 1997 the Ramsar website has posted reports from about 100 countries of their WWD activities. In 2016 a map of events was introduced to help countries promote their activities and to facilitate reporting after WWD. Visit www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day.

World Wetlands Day themes

- 2016** Wetlands For Our Future: Sustainable Livelihoods
- 2015** Wetlands For Our Future
- 2014** Wetlands and Agriculture: Partners for Growth
- 2013** Wetlands Take Care of Water
- 2012** Wetland Tourism: A great experience
- 2011** Forests for water and wetlands

- 2010** Caring for wetlands – An answer to climate change
- 2009** Upstream, Downstream: Wetlands connect us all
- 2008** Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People
- 2007** Fish for tomorrow?
- 2006** Livelihoods at Risk
- 2005** There's Wealth in Wetland Diversity – Don't Lose It
- 2004** From the mountains to the sea – Wetlands at work for us
- 2003** No wetlands – no water
- 2002** Wetlands: Water life and culture
- 2001** A wetland world – A world to discover
- 2000** Celebrating our wetlands of international importance
- 1999** People and wetlands – the vital link
- 1998** Importance of water to life and role of wetlands in water supply
- 1997** WWD celebrated for the first time

4.6.4 The Wetland Conservation Awards

The **Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award** (www.ramsar.org/activity/the-ramsar-awards) was established in 1996 to recognize and honour, every three years, individuals, organizations, and government agencies that have made a significant contribution to wetland conservation and sustainable use in any part of the world. In all of the award cycles, from 1999 through to 2015, the three Awards were each accompanied by an “Evian Special Prize” of US\$ 10,000, generously donated by the Danone Group.

1999: In ceremonies in San José, Costa Rica, at Ramsar COP7 in 1999, the prize for individuals was shared by Vitaly G. Krivenko (Russian Federation) and Victor Pulido (Peru); the prize for non-governmental organizations was shared by the Lake Naivasha Riparian Association (Kenya) and the Society for the Protection of Prespa (Greece); the prize in the government/non-government coalition category was won by the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program (Canada).

2002: In ceremonies in Valencia, Spain, at Ramsar COP8 in 2002, the Awards went to Banrock Station Wines (Australia), the Chilika Lake Development Authority (India), and The NGO Trinational Initiative for the Morava-Dyje Floodplain (Austria and the Czech and Slovak Republics), and additional Recognitions of Excellence were conferred upon Dr Monique Coulet of France and Dr Max Finlayson of Australia.

2005: At COP9 in Kampala, Uganda, in 2005, the Ramsar Award for Management went to Dr Sh.A. Nezami Baloochi, Department of the Environment of the Province of Gilan, Islamic Republic of Iran; the Award for Science, to Prof Shuming Cai, of the Chinese Academy of Science; and the Award for Education was shared between Ms Reiko Nakamura, founder of the Ramsar Center Japan in 1990, and The Wetlands Centre in Australia.

2008: At COP10 in Changwon, Korea, the award in the Science category was bestowed upon Mr David Pritchard; in the Management category, upon Mr Denis Landenbergue of WWF International; and in the Education category, upon Dr Sansanee Choowaew of Mahidol University in Thailand. In addition a Recognition of Excellence was conferred upon Dr Jan Kvets of the Czech Republic.

2012: At COP11 in Bucharest, Romania, the award winners were: in the Education category, The Wisconsin Wetlands Association, USA; in the Management category, Ms Augusta Henriques, Secretary General of TINIGUENA, Guinea Bissau; and in the Science category, Prof Tatsuichi Tsujii of Japan. A Recognition of Achievement was conferred upon Mr Thymio Papayannis, Greece, and a 40th Anniversary Honorary Ramsar Award was given to Dr Luc Hoffmann, one of the founders of the Ramsar Convention.

2015: At COP12 in Punta del Este, Uruguay, Ramsar Awards were presented in the Wise Use category to Ms Giselle Hazzan, Manager, Ein Afek Nature Reserve (EANR), Israel; in the Innovation category to Oceanium, Senegal, represented by its Director, Mr Jean-Christophe Henry; and in the Young Wetland Champions category to Fundación Humedales Bogotá, Colombia, represented by its Director, Jorge Emmanuel Escobar Moreno. In addition Awards for Merit were presented to Prof William Mitsch (USA), Prof Gea Jae Joo (Republic of Korea) and Tour du Valat research centre (France), represented by its Director General, Mr Jean Jalbert.

4.6.5 Ramsar Technical Reports and Briefing Notes

Ramsar Technical Reports are designed to publish, chiefly through electronic media, technical notes, reviews and reports on wetland ecology, conservation, wise use and management, as an information support service to Contracting Parties

and the wider wetland community in support of implementation of the Convention.

In particular, the series includes the detailed technical background reviews and reports prepared by the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) at the request of Contracting Parties, which would previously have been made available in most instances only as "Information Papers" for a meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP), in order to ensure the increased and longer-term accessibility of such documents. All Ramsar Technical Reports are peer-reviewed by the members and observers appointed to the STRP.

The list of available RTRs can be found at www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-technical-reports.

The **Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes series** was inaugurated in January 2012 in order to share relevant, credible and interesting scientific and technical information on wetlands with a broad audience. Briefing Notes are reviewed by STRP members and a small internal editorial panel and are published by the Ramsar Secretariat in English in electronic (PDF) format. When resources permit, they are published in French and Spanish as well.

The list of the Briefing Notes can be found at www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-briefing-notes.

4.6.6 Ramsar Publications

A number of other Ramsar publications are available for download from the Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org/resources/publications) and, in some cases, on CD-ROM from the Secretariat, including the *Proceedings of the 9th, 10th and 11th meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, *Towards the wise use of wetlands* (1993), *The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: its history and development* (1993), *The Legal development of the Ramsar Convention* (1995), *Economic valuation of wetlands: a guide for policy makers and planners* (1997), *Wetlands, biodiversity and the Ramsar Convention* (1997), and *Ecosystems and human-well-being: wetlands and water synthesis* (2005).

5 How States may join the Ramsar Convention

According to Article 9.2 of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), “Any member of the United Nations or of one of the Specialized Agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency or Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may become a Party to this Convention”. Unfortunately, supranational bodies, such as the European Commission, are thus not eligible to join the Convention, but may nevertheless develop bilateral working agreements with the Convention Secretariat.

5.1 The instrument of accession

In order for a country to accede to the Convention, signatures and the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession (with an obligatory first Ramsar Site designation) are to be made through diplomatic channels to the Depositary for the Ramsar Convention, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France, with a copy to the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs at the same address.

The instrument of ratification or accession must be signed by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (A copy of all communications to UNESCO should be sent to the Ramsar Secretariat.) UNESCO will then formally notify the Ramsar Secretariat and all other Contracting Parties of the new Party’s accession.

5.2 Designating wetlands for the Ramsar List

The document of adhesion to the Convention sent by the Head of State or Foreign Office to UNESCO must be accompanied by the designation of **at least one wetland site** for the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Thereafter, each Party “shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in the List” (Article 2.1). The designation of the first and subsequent Ramsar

Sites do not require ratification by parliaments, but rather they are administrative decisions taken by the appropriate government agency according to existing procedures in each country. Such designation(s) should include:

- a) a completed **Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands** (RIS) for each site, which can be obtained from the Ramsar website at www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/key_ris_e.pdf or requested from the Ramsar Secretariat; and
- b) a **map** showing the boundaries of each designated site.

Please note: All subsequent designations of wetlands for the Ramsar List should be sent directly to the Ramsar Secretariat, not to UNESCO. Subsequent designations do not require the signature of the Head of State or Ministry of Foreign Affairs but must be signed by the head of the “Administrative Authority”, the government agency that has been officially named to represent the national government in implementing the Ramsar Convention.

It is important to be aware that sites designated for the Ramsar List do not have already to be established as legally protected areas before designation. Listing under the Ramsar Convention elevates the sites to a higher status (recognized as places of “international importance”), focuses more attention upon them, and should contribute to their long-term conservation and wise use. Whether or not Ramsar status conveys additional legal protection in-country depends upon the national and local policy and legislation concerning Ramsar Sites, which varies from country to country. Human uses of wetlands are compatible with listing under Ramsar, provided that they are in line with the Ramsar principle of “wise use” (sustainable use) and do not lead to a negative change in ecological character. Member States do not surrender sovereignty over their Ramsar Sites in any way.

Example of document of accession to the Ramsar Convention

I, [name], [title]
in the Government of [name of the country]
do hereby certify that the State of
[name of the country]
accedes to the
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
especially as Waterfowl Habitat
of 2 February 1971
as amended by the Protocol of 3.12.82,
and accepts the amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of that Convention (1987).

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have signed and sealed
this Instrument of Accession
DONE at [name of capital city], [date].
[title and signature]

Please note that it is important that the instrument should include a phrase similar to “as amended by the Protocol of 1982 and the amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of 1987”.

Wetlands should be added to the Convention’s List of Wetlands of International Importance if they meet any of nine Criteria for being considered internationally important (www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ramsarsites_criteria_eng.pdf). The listing has to be made by the national government, which is then implicitly making a commitment to ensure that the ecological character of the site will be maintained. Local officials and citizens’ groups wishing to nominate wetlands for inclusion in the Ramsar List should make contact with their country’s Administrative Authority, the agency (as mentioned just above) within the national government that has been charged by the head of state or foreign office with responsibility for implementing the Convention within the country. Different countries have evolved their own procedures for proceeding to a Ramsar designation and these vary greatly from country

to country. The profiles of individual Contracting Parties on the Ramsar website contain details of the relevant Administrative Authority in each country.

5.3 The cost of joining the Convention

At each ordinary meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopts a budget (in Swiss francs) for the next triennium. Contracting Parties contribute to this budget a percentage that is based upon the United Nations scale of assessments adopted for each year by the UN General Assembly, with the exception that the Conference of the Parties has established a **minimum** level of contributions at 1000 Swiss francs (ca. US\$ 1,000 or EUR 920 in January 2016) for all Parties to cover basic expenses of invoicing and administration.

Appendix 1

Text of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat

Ramsar, 2.2.1971 as amended by the Protocol of 3.12.1982 and the Amendments of 28.5.1987

The Contracting Parties,

Recognizing the interdependence of Man and his environment;

Considering the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes and as habitats supporting a characteristic flora and fauna, especially waterfowl;

Being convinced that wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable;

Desiring to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future;

Recognizing that waterfowl in their seasonal migrations may transcend frontiers and so should be regarded as an international resource;

Being confident that the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna can be ensured by combining far-sighted national policies with coordinated international action;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

- 1 For the purpose of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.
- 2 For the purpose of this Convention waterfowl are birds ecologically dependent on wetlands.

Article 2

- 1 Each Contracting Party shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance, hereinafter referred to as "the List" which is maintained by the bureau established under Article 8. The boundaries of each wetland shall be precisely described and also delimited on a map and they may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands, especially where these have importance as waterfowl habitat.

- 2 Wetlands should be selected for the List on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology. In the first instance wetlands of international importance to waterfowl at any season should be included.
- 3 The inclusion of a wetland in the List does not prejudice the exclusive sovereign rights of the Contracting Party in whose territory the wetland is situated.
- 4 Each Contracting Party shall designate at least one wetland to be included in the List when signing this Convention or when depositing its instrument of ratification or accession, as provided in Article 9.
- 5 Any Contracting Party shall have the right to add to the List further wetlands situated within its territory, to extend the boundaries of those wetlands already included by it in the List, or, because of its urgent national interests, to delete or restrict the boundaries of wetlands already included by it in the List and shall, at the earliest possible time, inform the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8 of any such changes.
- 6 Each Contracting Party shall consider its international responsibilities for the conservation, management and wise use of migratory stocks of waterfowl, both when designating entries for the List and when exercising its right to change entries in the List relating to wetlands within its territory.

Article 3

- 1 The Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory.
- 2 Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay to the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8.

Article 4

- 1 Each Contracting Party shall promote the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl by establishing nature reserves on wetlands, whether they are included in the List or not, and provide adequately for their wardening.
- 2 Where a Contracting Party in its urgent national interest, deletes or restricts the boundaries of a wetland included in the List, it should as far as possible compensate for any loss of wetland resources, and in particular it should create additional nature reserves for waterfowl and for the protection, either in the same area or elsewhere, of an adequate portion of the original habitat.
- 3 The Contracting Parties shall encourage research and the exchange of data and publications regarding wetlands and their flora and fauna.
- 4 The Contracting Parties shall endeavour through management to increase waterfowl populations on appropriate wetlands.

- 5 The Contracting Parties shall promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening.

Article 5

The Contracting Parties shall consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.

Article 6

- 1 There shall be established a Conference of the Contracting Parties to review and promote the implementation of this Convention. The Bureau referred to in Article 8, paragraph 1, shall convene ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties at intervals of not more than three years, unless the Conference decides otherwise, and extraordinary meetings at the written requests of at least one third of the Contracting Parties. Each ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties shall determine the time and venue of the next ordinary meeting.
- 2 The Conference of the Contracting Parties shall be competent:
 - a) to discuss the implementation of this Convention;
 - b) to discuss additions to and changes in the List;
 - c) to consider information regarding changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 3;
 - d) to make general or specific recommendations to the Contracting Parties regarding the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna;
 - e) to request relevant international bodies to prepare reports and statistics on matters which are essentially international in character affecting wetlands;
 - f) to adopt other recommendations, or resolutions, to promote the functioning of this Convention.
- 3 The Contracting Parties shall ensure that those responsible at all levels for wetlands management shall be informed of, and take into consideration, recommendations of such Conferences concerning the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna.
- 4 The Conference of the Contracting Parties shall adopt rules of procedure for each of its meetings.
- 5 The Conference of the Contracting Parties shall establish and keep under review the financial regulations of this Convention. At each of its ordinary meetings, it shall adopt the budget for the next financial period by a two-thirds majority of Contracting Parties present and voting.

- 6 Each Contracting Party shall contribute to the budget according to a scale of contributions adopted by unanimity of the Contracting Parties present and voting at a meeting of the ordinary Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Article 7

- 1 The representatives of the Contracting Parties at such Conferences should include persons who are experts on wetlands or waterfowl by reason of knowledge and experience gained in scientific, administrative or other appropriate capacities.
- 2 Each of the Contracting Parties represented at a Conference shall have one vote, recommendations, resolutions and decisions being adopted by a simple majority of the Contracting Parties present and voting, unless otherwise provided for in this Convention.

Article 8

- 1 The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources shall perform the continuing bureau duties under this Convention until such time as another organization or government is appointed by a majority of two-thirds of all Contracting Parties.
- 2 The continuing bureau duties shall be, *inter alia*:
 - a) to assist in the convening and organizing of Conferences specified in Article 6;
 - b) to maintain the List of Wetlands of International Importance and to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any additions, extensions, deletions or restrictions concerning wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 5 of Article 2;
 - c) to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 3;
 - d) to forward notification of any alterations to the List, or changes in character of wetlands included therein, to all Contracting Parties and to arrange for these matters to be discussed at the next Conference;
 - e) to make known to the Contracting Party concerned, the recommendations of the Conferences in respect of such alterations to the List or of changes in the character of wetlands included therein.

Article 9

- 1 This Convention shall remain open for signature indefinitely.
- 2 Any member of the United Nations or of one of the Specialized Agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency or Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may become a Party to this Convention by:
 - a) signature without reservation as to ratification;
 - b) signature subject to ratification followed by ratification;
 - c) accession.

- 3 Ratification or accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of ratification or accession with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter referred to as “the Depositary”).

Article 10

- 1 This Convention shall enter into force four months after seven States have become Parties to this Convention in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 9.
- 2 Thereafter this Convention shall enter into force for each Contracting Party four months after the day of its signature without reservation as to ratification, or its deposit of an instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 10 bis

- 1 This Convention may be amended at a meeting of the Contracting Parties convened for that purpose in accordance with this Article.
- 2 Proposals for Amendment may be made by any Contracting Party.
- 3 The text of any proposed amendment and the reasons for it shall be communicated to the organization or government performing the continuing bureau duties under the Convention (hereinafter referred to as “the Bureau”) and shall promptly be communicated by the Bureau to all Contracting Parties. Any comments on the text by the Contracting Parties shall be communicated to the Bureau within three months of the date on which the amendments were communicated to the Contracting Parties by the Bureau. The Bureau shall, immediately after the last day for submission of comments, communicate to the Contracting Parties all comments submitted by that day.
- 4 A meeting of Contracting Parties to consider an amendment communicated in accordance with paragraph 3 shall be convened by the Bureau upon the written request of one third of the Contracting Parties. The Bureau shall consult the Parties concerning the time and venue of the meeting.
- 5 Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Contracting Parties present and voting.
- 6 An amendment adopted shall enter into force for the Contracting Parties which have accepted it on the first day of the fourth month following the date on which two thirds of the Contracting Parties have deposited an instrument of acceptance with the Depositary. For each Contracting Party which deposits an instrument of acceptance after the date on which two thirds of the Contracting Parties have deposited an instrument of acceptance, the amendment shall enter into force on the first day of the fourth month, following the date of the deposit of its instrument of acceptance.

Article 11

- 1 This Convention shall continue in force for an indefinite period.
- 2 Any Contracting Party may denounce this Convention after a period of five years from the date on which it entered into force for that Party by giving written notice thereof to the Depositary. Denunciation shall take effect four months after the day on which notice thereof is received by the Depositary.

Article 12

- 1 The Depositary shall inform all States that have signed and acceded to this Convention as soon as possible of:
 - a) signatures to the Convention;
 - b) deposits of instruments of ratification of this Convention;
 - c) deposits of instruments of accession to this Convention;
 - d) the date of entry into force of this Convention;
 - e) notification of denunciation of this Convention.
- 2 When this Convention has entered into force, the Depositary shall have it registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being duly authorized to that effect, have signed this Convention.

DONE at Ramsar this 2nd day of February 1971, in a single original in the English, French, German and Russian languages, all texts being equally authentic which shall be deposited with the Depositary which shall send true copies thereof to all Contracting Parties.*

** Pursuant to the Final Act of the Conference to conclude the Protocol, the Depositary provided the second Conference of the Contracting Parties with official versions of the Convention in the Arabic, Chinese and Spanish languages, prepared in consultation with interested Governments and with the assistance of the Bureau.*

Appendix 2

Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention

1st meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Cagliari, Italy, November 1980)

- Recommendation 1.1 Recruitment of new Parties to the Convention
- Recommendation 1.2 Assisting developing countries to contribute to the Convention
- Recommendation 1.3 Increasing the number of sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance
- Recommendation 1.4 Developing guidelines on selection of sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance
- Recommendation 1.5 National inventories of wetlands
- Recommendation 1.6 Assessment of wetland values as part of the planning process
- Recommendation 1.7 Elaboration of a protocol to establish an amendment procedure for the Convention
- Recommendation 1.8 Elaboration of a protocol to amend the Convention with a view to extending its effectiveness
- Recommendation 1.9 Call for a meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties subsequent to the entry into force of the protocol proposed under Recommendation 1.7
- Recommendation 1.10 Establishment of a permanent secretariat for the Ramsar Convention
- Recommendation 1.11 Thanks to the Italian hosts

2nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Groningen, Netherlands, May 1984)

- Recommendation 2.1 Submission of national reports
- Recommendation 2.2 Amendment of the Convention
- Recommendation 2.3 Action points for priority attention
- Recommendation 2.4 Possibilities of financial or other support for the interim secretariat
- Recommendation 2.5 Designation of the Wadden Sea for the List of Wetlands of International Importance

- Recommendation 2.6 Conservation and management of Sahel wetlands
- Recommendation 2.7 Conservation of Djoudj National Bird Park, Senegal
- Recommendation 2.8 Establishment of a protected area in the River Senegal Basin in Mauritania
- Recommendation 2.9 Conservation action and protection of wetlands not designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance
- Recommendation 2.10 Thanks to the Government of the Netherlands

3rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Regina, Canada, May-June 1987)

- Resolution 3.1 Secretariat matters
- Resolution 3.2 Financial and budgetary matters
- Resolution 3.3 Establishment of a Standing Committee
- Resolution 3.4 Provisional implementation of the amendments to the Convention
- Recommendation 3.1 Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance and guidelines on their use
- Recommendation 3.2 Need for further studies of flyways
- Recommendation 3.3 Wise use of wetlands
- Recommendation 3.4 Responsibility of development agencies towards wetlands
- Recommendation 3.5 Tasks of the Bureau in respect to development agencies
- Recommendation 3.6 Further Contracting Parties in Africa
- Recommendation 3.7 Further Contracting Parties in Central America, the Caribbean and South America
- Recommendation 3.8 Conservation of Azraq Ramsar Site
- Recommendation 3.9 Change in ecological character of Ramsar Sites
- Recommendation 3.10 Further Contracting Parties in Asia and the Pacific
- Recommendation 3.11 Thanks to the Canadian hosts

4th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Montreux, Switzerland, June-July 1990)

- Resolution 4.1 Interpretation of Article 10 bis paragraph 6 of the Convention
- Resolution 4.2 Working languages of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

- Resolution 4.3 Wetland Conservation Fund
- Resolution 4.4 Implementation of Article 5 of the Convention
- Resolution 4.5 Accession requirements

Four additional Resolutions were adopted by the 4th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties:

- Annex to Document 4.12: Resolution on the framework for the implementation of the Convention and priorities for attention 1991-1993
- Annex to Document 4.13: Resolution on financial and budgetary matters
- Annex to Document 4.14: Resolution on the Standing Committee
- Annex to Document 4.15: Secretariat matters
- Recommendation 4.1 Wetland restoration
- Recommendation 4.2 Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance
- Recommendation 4.3 National reports
- Recommendation 4.4 Establishment of wetland reserves
- Recommendation 4.5 Education and training
- Recommendation 4.6 Establishment of national scientific inventories of potential Ramsar Sites
- Recommendation 4.7 Mechanisms for improved application of the Ramsar Convention
- Recommendation 4.8 Change in ecological character of Ramsar Sites
- Recommendation 4.9 Ramsar Sites in the territories of specific Contracting Parties
- Recommendation 4.9.1 Doñana National Park, Spain
- Recommendation 4.9.2 Everglades, USA
- Recommendation 4.9.3 Azraq Oasis, Jordan
- Recommendation 4.9.4 Conservation of the Leybucht, Federal Republic of Germany
- Recommendation 4.9.5 Greek Ramsar Sites
- Recommendation 4.10 Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept
- Recommendation 4.11 Cooperation with international organizations
- Recommendation 4.12 Cooperation between Contracting Parties for the management of migratory species

Recommendation 4.13 Responsibility of multilateral development banks (MDBs) towards wetlands

Recommendation 4.14 Thanks to the Swiss hosts

5th meeting of the Conference of the Parties
(Kushiro, Japan, June 1993)

Resolution 5.1 The Kushiro Statement and the framework for the implementation of the Convention

Resolution 5.2 Financial and budgetary matters

Resolution 5.3 Procedure for initial designation of sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Resolution 5.4 Record of Ramsar Sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur (the Montreux Record)

Resolution 5.5 Establishment of a Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Resolution 5.6 Wise use of wetlands

Resolution 5.7 Management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands

Resolution 5.8 Future funding and operation of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Fund

Resolution 5.9 Application of the Ramsar criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance

Recommendation 5.1 Ramsar Sites in the territories of specific Contracting Parties

Recommendation 5.2 Guidelines for interpretation of Article 3 (“ecological character” and “change in ecological character”)

Recommendation 5.3 Essential character of wetlands and the need for zonation related to wetland reserves

Recommendation 5.4 Relationship between the Ramsar Convention, the Global Environment Facility, and the Convention on Biological Diversity

Recommendation 5.5 Inclusion of conservation and wise use of wetlands in multilateral and bilateral development cooperation programmes

Recommendation 5.6 The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Ramsar Convention

Recommendation 5.7 National Committees

Recommendation 5.8 Measures to promote public awareness of wetland values in wetland reserves

Recommendation 5.9	Establishment of Ramsar guidelines on wetlands of international importance as fish habitat
Recommendation 5.10	25 th anniversary wetland campaign for 1996
Recommendation 5.11	New Bureau headquarters in Switzerland
Recommendation 5.12	Thanks to the Japanese hosts
Recommendation 5.13	Promotion and strengthening of the Ramsar Neotropical Region
Recommendation 5.14	Collaboration for Mediterranean wetlands
Recommendation 5.15	Working languages of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Brisbane, Australia, March 1996)

Resolution VI.1	Working definitions of ecological character, guidelines for describing and maintaining the ecological character of listed sites and operation of the Montreux Record
Resolution VI.2	Adoption of specific criteria based on fish for identifying wetlands of international importance
Resolution VI.3	Review of the Ramsar criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance and the accompanying guidelines
Resolution VI.4	Adoption of population estimates for operation of the specific criteria based on waterfowl
Resolution VI.5	Inclusion of subterranean karst wetlands as a wetland type under the Ramsar classification system
Resolution VI.6	The Wetland Conservation Fund [now renamed the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF)]
Resolution VI.7	The Scientific and Technical Review Panel [STRP]
Resolution VI.8	Secretary General matters
Resolution VI.9	Cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity
Resolution VI.10	Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies: the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP
Resolution VI.11	Consolidation of recommendations and resolutions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Resolution VI.12	National Wetland Inventories and candidate sites for listing

Resolution VI.13	Submission of information on sites designated for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VI.14	The Ramsar 25 th Anniversary Statement, the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, and the Bureau Work Programme 1997-1999
Resolution VI.15	Amendment of the Rules of Procedure as of the 7 th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Resolution VI.16	Accession procedures
Resolution VI.17	Financial and budgetary matters
Resolution VI.18	Establishment of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award
Resolution VI.19	Education and public awareness
Resolution VI.20	Thanks to the people and governments of Australia
Resolution VI.21	Assessment and reporting on the status of wetlands
Resolution VI.22	Consideration of overall cost reduction and in particular of possible relocation of the Ramsar Bureau and its operations
Resolution VI.23	Ramsar and water
Recommendation 6.1	Conservation of peatlands
Recommendation 6.2	Environmental impact assessment
Recommendation 6.3	Involving local and indigenous people in the management of Ramsar wetlands
Recommendation 6.4	The “Brisbane Initiative” on the establishment of a network of listed sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway
Recommendation 6.5	Establishment of further wetland manager training programmes
Recommendation 6.6	Establishment of regionally based Ramsar Liaison Officers
Recommendation 6.7	Conservation and wise use of coral reefs and associated ecosystems
Recommendation 6.8	Strategic planning in coastal zones
Recommendation 6.9	Framework for National Wetland Policy development and implementation
Recommendation 6.10	Promotion of cooperation on the economic valuation of wetlands
Recommendation 6.11	Continuing collaboration for Mediterranean wetlands
Recommendation 6.12	Conservation and wise use in private and public funded activities

- Recommendation 6.13 Guidelines on management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands
- Recommendation 6.14 Toxic chemicals
- Recommendation 6.15 Restoration of wetlands
- Recommendation 6.16 Conservation and wise use of wetlands in bilateral and multilateral development cooperation programmes
- Recommendation 6.17 Ramsar Sites in the territories of specific Contracting Parties, also including:
- Recommendation 6.17.1 Greek Ramsar Sites
- Recommendation 6.17.2 National Reserve of Paracas and the national strategy for the conservation of wetlands in Peru
- Recommendation 6.17.3 Azraq Oasis, Jordan
- Recommendation 6.17.4 Australian Ramsar Sites
- Recommendation 6.17.5 The Lower Danube Basin
- Recommendation 6.18 Conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Pacific Islands region

7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(San José, Costa Rica, May 1999)

- Resolution VII.1 Regional categorization of countries under the Convention, and composition, roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, including tasks of Standing Committee members
- Resolution VII.2 Composition and *modus operandi* of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
- Resolution VII.3 Partnerships with international organizations
- Resolution VII.4 Partnerships and cooperation with other Conventions, including harmonized information management infrastructures
- Resolution VII.5 Critical evaluation of the Convention's Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) and its future operations
- Resolution VII.6 Guidelines for developing and implementing National Wetland Policies
- Resolution VII.7 Guidelines for reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands
- Resolution VII.8 Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands

Resolution VII.9	The Convention's Outreach Programme, 1999-2002
Resolution VII.10	Wetland Risk Assessment Framework
Resolution VII.11	Strategic framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VII.12	The sites in the Ramsar List: official descriptions, conservation status and management planning, including the situation of particular sites in the territory of specific Contracting Parties
Resolution VII.13	Guidelines for identifying and designating karst and other subterranean hydrological systems as Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VII.14	Invasive species and wetlands
Resolution VII.15	Incentive measures to encourage the application of the Wise Use Principles
Resolution VII.16	The Ramsar Convention and impact assessment: strategic, environmental and social
Resolution VII.17	Restoration as an element of national planning for wetland conservation and wise use
Resolution VII.18	Guidelines for integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management
Resolution VII.19	Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention
Resolution VII.20	Priorities for wetland inventory
Resolution VII.21	Enhancing the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands
Resolution VII.22	Collaborative structure for Mediterranean wetlands
Resolution VII.23	Defining Ramsar Site boundaries
Resolution VII.24	Compensation for lost wetland habitats and other functions
Resolution VII.25	Measuring environmental quality in wetlands
Resolution VII.26	Creation of a Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere
Resolution VII.27	Work Plan
Resolution VII.28	Financial and Budgetary Matters
Resolution VII.29	Thanks to the host

Resolution VII.30	Status of Yugoslavia in the Ramsar Convention
Recommendation 7.1	A global action plan for the wise use and management of peatlands
Recommendation 7.2	Small Island Developing States, island wetland ecosystems, and the Ramsar Convention
Recommendation 7.3	Multilateral cooperation on the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific region
Recommendation 7.4	The Wetlands for the Future Initiative

8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Valencia, Spain, November 2002)

Resolution VIII.1	Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands
Resolution VIII.2	The Report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) and its relevance to the Ramsar Convention
Resolution VIII.3	Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation, and mitigation
Resolution VIII.4	Wetland issues in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
Resolution VIII.5	Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions
Resolution VIII.6	A Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory
Resolution VIII.7	Gaps in and harmonization of Ramsar guidance on wetland ecological character, inventory, assessment, and monitoring
Resolution VIII.8	Assessing and reporting the status and trends of wetlands, and the implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention
Resolution VIII.9	“Guidelines for incorporating biodiversity-related issues into environmental impact assessment legislation and/or processes and in strategic environmental assessment” adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and their relevance to the Ramsar Convention
Resolution VIII.10	Improving implementation of the Strategic Framework and Vision for the List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VIII.11	Additional guidance for identifying and designating under-represented wetland types as Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VIII.12	Enhancing the wise use and conservation of mountain wetlands

Resolution VIII.13	Enhancing the information on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)
Resolution VIII.14	New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands
Resolution VIII.15	The “San José Record” for the promotion of wetland management
Resolution VIII.16	Principles and guidelines for wetland restoration
Resolution VIII.17	Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands
Resolution VIII.18	Invasive species and wetlands
Resolution VIII.19	Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites
Resolution VIII.20	General guidance for interpreting “urgent national interests” under Article 2.5 of the Convention and considering compensation under Article 4.2
Resolution VIII.21	Defining Ramsar Site boundaries more accurately in Ramsar Information Sheets
Resolution VIII.22	Issues concerning Ramsar Sites that cease to fulfil or never fulfilled the Criteria for designation as Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VIII.23	Incentive measures as tools for achieving the wise use of wetlands
Resolution VIII.24	UNEP’s Guidelines for enhancing compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, and Guidelines for national enforcement, and international cooperation in combating violations, of laws implementing multilateral environmental agreements
Resolution VIII.25	The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008
Resolution VIII.26	The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 during the triennium 2003-2005 and National Reports for Ramsar COP9
Resolution VIII.27	Financial and budgetary matters
Resolution VIII.28	Modus operandi of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
Resolution VIII.29	Evaluation of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) and establishment of a Ramsar Endowment Fund
Resolution VIII.30	Regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention

Resolution VIII.31	The Convention's Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003-2008
Resolution VIII.32	Conservation, integrated management, and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems and their resources
Resolution VIII.33	Guidance for identifying, sustainably managing, and designating temporary pools as Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VIII.34	Agriculture, wetlands and water resource management
Resolution VIII.35	The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems
Resolution VIII.36	Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) as a tool for management and wise use of wetlands
Resolution VIII.37	International cooperation on conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region
Resolution VIII.38	Waterbird population estimates and the identification and designation of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution VIII.39	High Andean wetlands as strategic ecosystems
Resolution VIII.40	Guidelines for rendering the use of groundwater compatible with the conservation of wetlands
Resolution VIII.41	Establishment of a Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia
Resolution VIII.42	Small Island Developing States in the Oceania Region
Resolution VIII.43	A subregional strategy of the Ramsar Convention for South America
Resolution VIII.44	New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Africa
Resolution VIII.45	Operation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the effectiveness of Ramsar Convention Resolutions and Recommendations
Resolution VIII.46	Thanks to the people and governments of Spain

9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Kampala, Uganda, November 2005)

Resolution IX.1	Additional scientific and technical guidance for implementing the Ramsar wise use concept
Resolution IX.1, Annex A	A Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character

Resolution IX.1, Annex B	Revised <i>Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance</i>
Resolution IX.1, Annex C	An Integrated Framework for the Ramsar Convention's water-related guidance
Resolution IX.1, Annex Ci	River basin management: additional guidance and a framework for the analysis of case studies
Resolution IX.1, Annex Cii	Guidelines for the management of groundwater to maintain wetland ecological character
Resolution IX.1, Annex D	Ecological "outcome-oriented" indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution IX.1, Annex E	An Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring (IF-WIAM)
Resolution IX.1, Annex Ei	Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity
Resolution IX.2	Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention
Resolution IX.3	Engagement of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in ongoing multilateral processes dealing with water
Resolution IX.4	The Ramsar Convention and conservation, production and sustainable use of fisheries resources
Resolution IX.5	Synergies with other international organizations dealing with biological diversity; including collaboration on, and harmonization of, national reporting among biodiversity-related conventions and agreements
Resolution IX.6	Guidance for addressing Ramsar Sites or parts of sites which no longer meet the Criteria for designation
Resolution IX.7	Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution IX.8	Streamlining the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention 2003-2008
Resolution IX.9	The role of the Ramsar Convention in the prevention and mitigation of impacts associated with natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities
Resolution IX.10	Use of the term and status of the "Ramsar Secretariat"
Resolution IX.11	Revised <i>modus operandi</i> of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

Resolution IX.12	Financial and budgetary matters
Resolution IX.13	Evaluation of the Ramsar Endowment Fund as a mechanism to resource the Small Grants Fund
Resolution IX.14	Wetlands and poverty reduction
Resolution IX.15	The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution IX.16	The Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs)
Resolution IX.17	Review of the decisions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Resolution IX.18	Establishment of an Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention
Resolution IX.19	The importance of regional wetland symposia in effectively implementing the Ramsar Convention
Resolution IX.20	Integrated, cross-biome planning and management of wetlands, especially in small island developing states
Resolution IX.21	Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands
Resolution IX.22	Ramsar Sites and systems of protected areas
Resolution IX.23	Highly pathogenic avian influenza and its consequences for wetland and waterbird conservation and wise use
Resolution IX.24	Improving management of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution IX.25	Thanks to the host country

10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Changwon, Republic of Korea, November 2008)

Resolution X.1	The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015
Resolution X.2	Financial and budgetary matters,
Resolution X.3	The "Changwon Declaration" on human well-being and wetlands
Resolution X.4	Establishing a Transition Committee of the Management Working Group
Resolution X.5	Facilitating the work of the Ramsar Convention and its Secretariat
Resolution X.6	Regional initiatives 2009-2012 operating within the framework of the Convention
Resolution X.7	Optimizing the Ramsar Small Grants Fund during the period 2009-2012

Resolution X.8	The Convention's Programme on communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) 2009-2015
Resolution X.9	Refinements to the modus operandi of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP)
Resolution X.10	Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention
Resolution X.11	Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions
Resolution X.12	Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector
Resolution X.13	The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution X.14	A Framework for Ramsar data and information needs
Resolution X.15	Describing the ecological character of wetlands, and data needs and formats for core inventory: harmonized scientific and technical guidance
Resolution X.16	A Framework for processes of detecting, reporting and responding to change in wetland ecological character
Resolution X.17	Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment: updated scientific and technical guidance
Resolution X.18	The application of response options from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) within the Ramsar Wise Use Toolkit
Resolution X.19	Wetlands and river basin management: consolidated scientific and technical guidance
Resolution X.20	Biogeographic regionalization in the application of the Strategic Framework for the List of Wetlands of International Importance: scientific and technical guidance
Resolution X.21	Guidance on responding to the continued spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza
Resolution X.22	Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways
Resolution X.23	Wetlands and human health and well-being
Resolution X.24	Climate change and wetlands
Resolution X.25	Wetlands and "biofuels"
Resolution X.26	Wetlands and extractive industries

Resolution X.27	Wetlands and urbanization
Resolution X.28	Wetlands and poverty eradication
Resolution X.29	Clarifying the functions of agencies and related bodies implementing the Convention at the national level
Resolution X.30	Small Island States and the Ramsar Convention
Resolution X.31	Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems
Resolution X.32	Thanks to the host country, the Republic of Korea

11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

(Bucharest, Romania, July 2012)

Resolution XI.1	Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat
Resolution XI.2	Financial and budgetary matters
Resolution XI.3	Adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 for the 2013-2015 triennium
Resolution XI.4	The status of sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution XI.5	Regional initiatives 2013-2015 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution XI.6	Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions
Resolution XI.7	Tourism and wetlands
Resolution XI.8	Streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and subsequent updates (with revised RIS and Strategic Framework)
Resolution XI.9	An Integrated Framework for avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses
Resolution XI.10	Wetlands and energy issues
Resolution XI.11	Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands
Resolution XI.12	Wetlands and health: taking an ecosystem approach
Resolution XI.13	An Integrated Framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication
Resolution XI.14	Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Resolution XI.15	Agriculture-wetland interactions: rice paddy and pest control
Resolution XI.16	Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention
Resolution XI.17	Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015
Resolution XI.18	Adjustments to the modus operandi of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) for the 2013-2015 triennium
Resolution XI.19	Adjustments to the terms of Resolution VII.1 on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention
Resolution XI.20	Promoting sustainable investment by the public and private sectors to ensure the maintenance of the benefits people and nature gain from wetlands
Resolution XI.21	Wetlands and sustainable development
Resolution XI.22	Thanks to the host country, Romania

12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties
(Punta del Este, Uruguay, June 2015)

Resolution XII.1	Financial and budgetary matters
Resolution XII.2	The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024
Resolution XII.3	Enhancing the languages of the Convention and its visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions
Resolution XII.4	The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention
Resolution XII.5	Proposed new framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention
Resolution XII.6	The status of Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance
Resolution XII.7	Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution XII.8	Regional initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution XII.9	The Ramsar Convention's Programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) 2016-2024

Resolution XII.10	Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention
Resolution XII.11	Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention
Resolution XII.12	Call to action to ensure and protect the water requirements of wetlands for the present and the future
Resolution XII.13	Wetlands and disaster risk reduction
Resolution XII.14	Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands
Resolution XII.15	Evaluation of the management and conservation effectiveness of Ramsar Sites
Resolution XII.16	Thanks to the Host Country, Uruguay, and the “Declaration of Punta del Este”

Appendix 3

References

References are to the Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org) and to Ramsar print publications, especially the fourth edition of *The Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands* (2011), www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/hbk4-01.pdf.

Guidelines on the wise use of wetlands

- **Avian influenza and wetlands:** *Guidance on control of and responses to highly pathogenic avian influenza* (2008). Handbook 4: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/lib/hbk4-04.pdf.
- **CEPA:** *Programme on communication, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA) 2016-2024 of the Convention on Wetlands* (2015). www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res09_cepa_e_o.pdf.
- **Coastal zone management:** *Principles and guidelines for incorporating wetland issues into Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)* (2002). www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/guide-iczm.pdf; Handbook 12, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/lib/hbk4-12.pdf.
- **Energy sector:** *Guidance for addressing the implications for wetlands of policies, plans and activities in the energy sector* (2012). www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/guide/guide-energy-e.pdf.
- **Groundwater management:** *Guidelines for the management of groundwater to maintain wetland ecological character* (2005). www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/guide/guide-groundwater-e.pdf; Handbook 11, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/lib/hbk4-11.pdf.
- **Impact assessment:** *Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment: updated scientific and technical guidance* (2008). Handbook 16, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/lib/hbk4-16.pdf.
- **International cooperation:** *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (1999). www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/guide/guide-cooperation.pdf; Handbook 20, www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/lib/hbk4-20.pdf.
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- **The Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes series:** www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-briefing-notes.

The Convention's processes

- The **Strategic Plan 2016-2024:** www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/4th_strategic_plan_2016_2024_e.pdf.

- **The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance**

Current list of Wetlands of International Importance: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sitelist.pdf

Current list of Montreux Record sites: [https://rsis.ramsar.org/rsis-search/?language=en&f\[o\]=montreuxListed_b%3Atrue&pagetab=1](https://rsis.ramsar.org/rsis-search/?language=en&f[o]=montreuxListed_b%3Atrue&pagetab=1).

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Information Sheet for Ramsar Wetlands: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res08-e-anx1.pdf

The Convention's bodies

- **The Contracting Parties**

Current list of Contracting Parties to the Convention: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/contracting_parties_list_e.pdf

List of Administrative Authorities in the Contracting Parties: www.ramsar.org/search-contact/field_tag_roles/head-of-administrative-authority-961.

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National Reports: www.ramsar.org/library/field_document_type/national-reports-532.

Key contacts for all of the Convention's bodies: www.ramsar.org/search-contact.

- **The Conference of the Contracting Parties**

Proceedings of the meetings of the COP: www.ramsar.org/library/

field_tag_body_event/conference-of-contracting-parties-366.

Resolutions and Recommendations of the COP: Refer to Document Types: Resolutions and Recommendations under individual meetings of the COP in the Ramsar Library, www.ramsar.org/library.

Rules of procedure for the Conference of the Contracting Parties (as of 2015): www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ramsar_rules_of_procedure_e.pdf.

- **The Standing Committee**

The present composition of the Standing Committee: www.ramsar.org/about/current-members.

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- **The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)**

Framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention (2015): www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res05_new_strp_e_o.pdf.

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The Convention's CEPA Programme, 2016-2024: www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res09_cepa_e_o.pdf.

The Convention's CEPA website: www.ramsar.org/activity/the-ramsar-cepa-programme.

Members of the CEPA Oversight Panel: www.ramsar.org/activity/the-cepa-oversight-panel.

Current list of the CEPA government and non-government National Focal Points: www.ramsar.org/search-contact/field_tag_roles/cepa-government-focal-point-962;

www.ramsar.org/search-contact/field_tag_roles/cepa-ngo-focal-point-963.

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Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands (& provisionally for 2016-2018): www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/operational-guidelines-2013-2015.pdf.

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- **Ramsar Advisory Missions**

Reports of RAM missions: www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-advisory-missions and www.ramsar.org/library/field_document_type/ramsar-advisory-missions-553.

- **The Ramsar Culture Network:** www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-culture-network.

- **Wetland Conservation Award**

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Joint website of the biodiversity-related conventions: www.cbd.int/brc.

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“Introducing the Convention on Wetlands” (2014): www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/introducing_ramsar_web_eng.pdf.

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- **Recent World Wetlands Day information brochures**

2008: “Healthy wetlands, healthy people” info sheets: www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day-2008.

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Appendix 4

5th Edition Ramsar Handbooks

SUB-SERIES I: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON WETLANDS

- Handbook 1: An Introduction to the Convention on Wetlands
- Handbook 2: The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024
- Handbook 3: International cooperation
- Handbook 4: Ramsar Regional Initiatives
- Handbook 5: Partnerships

SUB-SERIES II: WISE USE OF WETLANDS

- Handbook 6: Wise use of wetlands, sustainable development and poverty eradication
- Handbook 7: Freshwater-related guidance
- Handbook 8: Wise use of wetlands in the coastal zone and small islands
- Handbook 9: Wetland cities
- Handbook 10: Wetlands and health
- Handbook 11: Wetlands, including peatlands, climate change and disaster risk reduction
- Handbook 12: Implementing CEPA with participatory skills
- Handbook 13: Strategic environmental assessment
- Handbook 14: Wetlands and culture

SUB-SERIES III: WETLAND CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

- Handbook 15: National wetland policies, laws and institutions
- Handbook 16: Designating Ramsar Sites
- Handbook 17: Addressing change in wetland ecological character
- Handbook 18: Managing wetlands
- Handbook 19: Avian influenza and wetlands
- Handbook 20: Inventory, assessment and monitoring
- Handbook 21: Wetland education centres

The Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th ed. (2010)

Convention pillar 1: Wise Use

- **Handbook 1: Wise use of wetlands.** Concepts and approaches for the wise use of wetlands.
- **Handbook 2: National Wetland Policies.** Developing and implementing National Wetland Policies.
- **Handbook 3: Laws and institutions.** Reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- **Handbook 4: Avian influenza and wetlands.** Guidance on control of and responses to highly pathogenic avian influenza.
- **Handbook 5: Partnerships.** Key partnerships for implementation of the Ramsar Convention.
- **Handbook 6: Wetland CEPA.** The Convention's Programme on communication, education, participation, and public awareness (CEPA) 2009-2015.
- **Handbook 7: Participatory skills.** Establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands.
- **Handbook 8: Water-related guidance.** An Integrated Framework for the Convention's water-related guidance.
- **Handbook 9: River basin management.** Integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management.
- **Handbook 10: Water allocation and management.** Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands.
- **Handbook 11: Managing groundwater.** Managing groundwater to maintain wetland ecological character.
- **Handbook 12: Coastal management.** Wetland issues in Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- **Handbook 13: Inventory, assessment, and monitoring.** An Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment, and monitoring.
- **Handbook 14: Data and information needs.** A Framework for Ramsar data and information needs.
- **Handbook 15: Wetland inventory.** A Ramsar framework for wetland inventory and ecological character description.
- **Handbook 16: Impact assessment.** Guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment.

Convention pillar 2: Ramsar sites designation and management

- **Handbook 17: Designating Ramsar Sites.** Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance.
- **Handbook 18: Managing wetlands.** Frameworks for managing Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.
- **Handbook 19: Addressing change in wetland ecological character.** Convention pillar 3: International cooperation.
- **Handbook 20: International cooperation.** Guidelines and other support for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Companion document

- **Handbook 21: The Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2009-2015.** Goals, strategies, and expectations for the Ramsar Convention's implementation for the period 2009 to 2015.

Appendix 5

Ramsar FAQs: trivia questions on the Convention on Wetlands

Historical

Where does the name “Ramsar Convention” come from?

The Convention on Wetlands – formally entitled “The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat” – was signed at an international conference in Caspian seaside town of Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, and the treaty has been known informally by that name ever since. The name should be written Ramsar Convention, not RAMSAR.

Which nations signed the Final Act in Ramsar, 2 February 1971, recommending the Ramsar treaty to their governments?

- Signatory nations: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (Federal Republic), India, Iran, Ireland, Jordan, Netherlands, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, USSR, and the UK
- Intergovernmental organizations participating in the Ramsar conference: FAO and UNESCO
- Participating NGOs: CIC, IBP, ICBP, IUCN, IWRB and WWF

Where was the original 1971 Ramsar conference meant to be held, before Ramsar, Iran, was substituted because of its better facilities?

- Babolsar, Iran

Who are now considered the “Founding Fathers of the Convention”?

- Luc Hoffmann
- G. V. T. Matthews
- Eric Carp
- Eskander Firouz

Which international non-governmental organizations played an instrumental role in the evolution of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands?

- IWRB (International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau), now Wetlands International, and
- IUCN--International Union for the Conservation of Nature, with major support from
- WWF, the World Wide Fund for Nature

Which six international NGOs have been officially recognized as “International Organization Partners” of the Ramsar Convention?

- BirdLife International
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

- IUCN-The World Conservation Union
- Wetlands International
- Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)
- WWF International

What was the first Ramsar Wetland of International Importance?

- Cobourg Peninsula, Northern Territory, Australia, designated 08/05/74

Who have been awarded the title “Wetland Person of International Importance”?

- Thymio Papayannis, Greece, May 2001
- Eckhart Kuikjen, Belgium, 26 November 2002
- Veit Koester, Denmark, December 2002
- Clayton Rubec, Canada, 4 November 2008
- Makoto Komoda, Japan, 15 May 2009
- Herbert Raffaele, USA, 13 July 2012

The Present (accurate as of 10 December 2015)

Which Contracting Parties have the most Wetlands of International Importance?

- | | |
|------------------|-----|
| • United Kingdom | 170 |
| • Mexico | 138 |
| • Spain | 74 |
| • Sweden | 66 |
| • Australia | 65 |
| • Norway | 63 |
| • Netherlands | 56 |
| • Italy | 52 |
| • Algeria | 50 |
| • Japan | 50 |
| • Finland | 49 |
| • China | 47 |
| • Ireland | 45 |

Which Contracting Parties have the most surface area (in hectares) designated for the Ramsar List?

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| • Bolivia | 14,842,405 ha |
| • Congo | 13,758,741 ha |
| • Canada | 13,086,771 ha |
| • Chad | 12,405,068 ha |
| • Russian Federation | 10,323,767 ha |
| • Mexico | 8,643,580 ha |
| • Australia | 8,320,157 ha |
| • Sudan | 8,189,600 ha |
| • D. R. of Congo | 7,435,624 ha |
| • Brazil | 7,225,687 ha |
| • Peru | 6,784,042 ha |
| • Guinea | 6,422,361 ha |

What are the largest Wetlands of International Importance?

• Ngiri-Tumba-Maindombe, D. R. of Congo	6,569,624 ha	24/07/08
• Queen Maud Gulf, Northwest Territories, Canada	6,278,200 ha	24/05/82
• Grands affluents, Congo	5,908,074 ha	13/12/07
• Sudd, Sudan	5,700,000 ha	06/06/06
• Okavango Delta System, Botswana	5,537,400 ha	09/12/96
• Plaines d'inondation des Bahr Aouk et Salamat, Chad	4,922,000 ha	01/05/06
• Delta Intérieure du Niger, Mali	4,119,500 ha	01/02/04
• Malagarasi-Muyovozi Wetlands, Tanzania	3,250,000 ha	13/04/00
• Pantanal Boliviano, Bolivia	3,189,888 ha	17/09/01

What are the smallest Wetlands of International Importance?

• Ganghwa Maehwamarum Habitat, Rep. Korea	1 ha (0.30)	13/10/08
• Mare Aux Cochons High Altitude Freshwater Wetlands, Seychelles	1 ha (0.315)	02/02/10
• Ile Alcatraz, Kamsar/Boke, Guinea	1 ha (1.0)	18/11/92
• Somerset Long Bay Pond, Bermuda, UK	1 ha (1.1)	11/05/99
• Gulf of Tubli, Bahrain	2 ha	27/10/97
• Hungry Bay Mangrove Swamp, Bermuda, UK	2 ha	11/05/99
• Lover's Lake, Bermuda, UK	2 ha	11/05/99
• Warwick Pond, Bermuda, UK	2 ha	11/05/99
• Odaesan National Park Wetlands, Rep. Korea	2 ha	13/10/08

Note: Ramsar Site areas are rounded up or down to the nearest hectare.

What is the southernmost Ramsar site?

Argentina, Glaciar Vinciguerra y turberas asociadas (16/09/09): 54°45'S 068°20'W

Appendix 6

Glossary of Ramsar Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Terminology

ACRONYMS

AAs	Administrative Authorities, Ramsar implementing agencies
AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement
BBOP	Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme
BLG	Biodiversity Liaison Group (CBD, CITES, CMS, IPPC, ITPGRFA, Ramsar, and World Heritage)
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group of the Arctic Council
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEC	IUCN Commission on Education and Communications
CEM	IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management
CEPA	Communication, capacity building, education, participation, and awareness
CI	Conservation International
CICOS	Commission Internationale du Bassin Congo-Ougangui-Sang
CIESIN	Center for International Earth Science Information Network
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Contracting Parties
COP12	12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
CP	Contracting Party, or member state, of the Convention
CSAB	Chairs of Scientific Advisory Bodies
CSD	UN Commission on Sustainable Development
CST	Committee on Science and Technology of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DSG	Deputy Secretary General
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
EKBY	The Greek Wetland / Biotope Centre
EMG	UN Environmental Management Group
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	European Space Agency
EWS	Early warning system
GAPP	Global Action Plan for Peatlands
GBF	Global Biodiversity Forum
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO BON	Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network
GGAP-CoCo	Coordinating Committee for the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands
GISP	Global Invasive Species Programme
GPA	UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities
GRASP	UNEP Great Apes Survival Partnership

GTOS	Global Terrestrial Observing System
GWP	Global Water Partnership
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
ICBP	International Council for Bird Preservation (now BirdLife International)
ICEL	International Council of Environmental Law
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
ICF	International Crane Foundation
ICLEI	Local Governments for Sustainability
ICN	Instituto de Conservação da Natureza, Portugal
ICRI	International Coral Reef Initiative
ICZM	Integrated coastal zone management
IEEP	Institute for European Environmental Policy
IHE	UNESCO Institute for Water Education
IHP	UNESCO International Hydrological Programme
IMCG	International Mire Conservation Group
INBO	International Network of Basin Organizations
IOI	International Ocean Institute
IOPs	International Organization Partners of the Convention
IPBES	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	UN/WMO Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
IPS	International Peat Society
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
ISEE	International Society for Ecological Economics
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
IUCN	IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWRB	International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (now Wetlands International)
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JAXA	Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JLG	Joint Liaison Group (of the Rio Conventions)
KIWC	Kushiro International Wetlands Centre
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
MA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
MAB	UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOC, MOU	Memorandum of Cooperation, of Understanding
MR	Montreux Record
MWO	Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory
NBA	Niger Basin Authority
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NFPs	National Focal Points
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRs	National Reports prepared by Contracting Parties in advance of each Ramsar COP
NRC	National Ramsar Committee / National Wetland Committee
NWPs	National Wetland Policies (or Strategies or Plans, etc.)
OAS	Organization of American States
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RAM	Ramsar Advisory Mission

RBA	River Basin Authority
RIS	Information Sheet for Ramsar Wetlands
RRI	Ramsar Regional Initiative
RSIS	Ramsar Sites Information Service
SBSTA	UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SBSTTA	CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SC	Ramsar Standing Committee
SC51	51 st meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SG	Secretary General
SGA	Ramsar's Swiss Grant for Africa
SGF	Ramsar Small Grants Fund
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SRAs	Ramsar "Senior Regional Advisors" for Africa, the Americas, Asia–Oceania and Europe (based at the Ramsar Secretariat)
SSC	IUCN Species Survival Commission
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility
STRP	Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
STRP6	6 th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel
SWS	Society of Wetland Scientists
TDV	Tour du Valat
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TOR	Terms of reference
TRS	Transboundary Ramsar Site
UNCCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WAZA	World Association of Zoos and Aquariums
WCEL	IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law
WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas
WDPA	World Database on Protected Areas
WFF	Wetlands for the Future Fund
WHC	UNESCO World Heritage Convention
WHO	World Health Organization
WI	Wetlands International
WLI	Wetland Link International
WRI	World Resources Institute
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002
WWD	World Wetlands Day (2 February annually)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

GLOSSARY

Administrative Authority = the agency within each Contracting Party charged by the national government with implementation of the Ramsar Convention within its territory

Article 3.2 Files = a list of Ramsar Sites where information was received by the Secretariat from the Administrative Authorities about human-induced negative changes having occurred, occurring or likely to occur. The Secretariat regularly reports to Standing Committee on the list of these Sites.

Attributes of wetlands = attributes of a wetland include biological diversity and unique cultural and heritage features. These attributes may lead to certain uses or the derivation of particular products, but they may also have intrinsic, unquantifiable importance (adopted by Resolution VI.1)

Brisbane Initiative = recommendation of the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (1996) calling for the establishment of a network of Ramsar-listed and other wetlands of international importance for migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Change in ecological character = “the human-induced adverse alteration of any ecosystem component, process, and/or ecosystem benefit/service” (Resolution IX.1, Annex A)

Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands = a seven-page document adopted by COP10 in Changwon, Republic of Korea (Resolution X.3) intended “to transmit key messages concerning wetland-related issues to the many stakeholders and decision-makers beyond the Ramsar community who are relevant to the conservation and wise use of wetlands, to inform their actions and decision-making”

Compensation = meaning not yet precisely fixed; cited in Article 4.2 of the Convention as required in the event of a Contracting Party’s deleting a Ramsar Site or restricting its boundaries

Contracting Parties = countries that are Member States to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 169 as of January 2016. Membership in the Convention is open to all states that are members of the United Nations, one of the UN specialized agencies, or the International Atomic Energy Agency, or are Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat = the official name of the Convention; the abbreviated name “Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)” is more commonly used

Ecological character = “the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time” (the latest definition, Resolution IX.1 Annex A)

Ecosystem approach = “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way” (Convention on Biological Diversity)

Ecosystem services = “the benefits that people receive from ecosystems, including provisioning, regulating, and cultural services” (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment)

Evian Initiative = a suite of communications and capacity building activities managed by the Ramsar Secretariat with funding from the private sector Danone Groupe

Functions of wetlands = activities or actions which occur naturally in wetlands as a product of interactions between the ecosystem structure and processes. Functions include flood water control; nutrient, sediment and contaminant retention; food web support; shoreline stabilization and erosion controls; storm protection; and stabilization of local climatic conditions, particularly rainfall and temperature (adopted by Resolution VI.1)

International Organization Partners = the six officially recognized non-governmental organizations which assist in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention: BirdLife International, IUCN–International Union for Conservation of Nature, IWMI – International Water Management Institute, Wetlands International, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and WWF International

List of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar List”) = the list of wetlands which have been designated by the Contracting Parties in which they reside as internationally important according to one or more of the criteria that have been adopted by the Conference of the Parties

Mediterranean Wetlands Committee = committee composed of governments, IGOs and NGOs established by the Ramsar Standing Committee’s 19th meeting (1996) which provides guidance to the MedWet Initiative and its partners, and in particular to the MedWet Coordinator and Ramsar Secretariat, on practical measures and actions for implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan in the Mediterranean region

Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy = plan of objectives and actions, endorsed by the Venice Declaration (Mediterranean Wetlands Conference, Venice, June 1996), aimed at achieving the goal of: “to stop and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands as a contribution to the conservation of biodiversity and to sustainable development in the region”

MedWet = the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative, established in 1991 and formally recognized as Ramsar’s first Regional Initiative in 1999 (Resolution VII.22), led by an appointed coordinator with a small secretariat, and currently hosted by France (located in Arles)

Montreux Record = a list of Ramsar Sites for which the relevant Contracting Parties have advised the Ramsar Secretariat that change in ecological character has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur as a result of technological development, pollution, or other human interference (established by Resolution 5.4). Montreux Record Sites require priority national and international conservation attention and receive preference for application of the Ramsar Advisory Mission.

National Focal Points = individuals nominated by Contracting Parties to provide the Administrative Authority’s point of contact with the Ramsar Secretariat and to represent the Party in association with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and Ramsar CEPA Programme.

National Ramsar Committee = the body established in many Contracting Parties to assist the official Administrative Authority in implementation of the Convention within the country, usually including scientific and technical experts and representatives of NGOs and stakeholders as well as personnel from other government sectors. Sometimes called “National Wetland Committees”.

National Wetland Policies = one of the most important tools under the Convention for ensuring the wise use and integrated management of Ramsar and other wetlands within each Contracting Party (may also be called Strategies, Plans, etc.)

1% threshold = Criterion 6 of the Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance for the Ramsar List: “where data on populations are available, [the site] regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird”.

Paris Protocol = an amendment to the text of the Ramsar Convention providing an amendment procedure (Article 10 bis) and additional language versions of the Convention, adopted by an Extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Paris in 1982

Products of wetlands = products generated by wetlands include wildlife resources; fisheries; forest resources; forage resources; agricultural resources; and water supply. These products are generated by the interactions between the biological, chemical and physical components of wetlands (adopted by Resolution VI.1)

Ramsar = city in Iran, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, where the Convention on Wetlands was agreed on 2 February 1971; thus the Convention’s informal nickname, “Ramsar Convention on Wetlands”

Ramsar Award = see Wetland Conservation Award

Ramsar Advisory Mission = the method by which, at the invitation of Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Secretariat, with consultant experts as appropriate, can assess the situation at a threatened Ramsar Site, frequently a Montreux Record Site, and make recommendations for improvement

Ramsar Criteria = Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance, used by Contracting Parties and advisory bodies to identify wetlands as qualifying for the Ramsar List on the basis of representativeness or uniqueness or of biodiversity values

Ramsar List = the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Ramsar regions = Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Oceania

Ramsar Sites = wetlands designated by the Contracting Parties for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance because they meet one or more of the Ramsar Criteria

Ramsar Sites Database = repository of ecological, biological, socio-economic, and political data and maps with boundaries on all Ramsar Sites, maintained by Wetlands International in Wageningen, the Netherlands, under contract to the Convention

Ramsar Sites Information Service = an on-line service (<https://rsis.ramsar.org>) provided by Wetlands International until 2015 and since then by the Ramsar Secretariat, to make the Ramsar Sites Database accessible to and searchable by the public

Regina Amendments = series of amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of the Ramsar Convention, approved by the 4th Meeting of the COP held in Regina, Canada, May 1987; entered into force in May 1994

Scientific and Technical Review Panel = the Convention's subsidiary scientific advisory body, established in 1993, which advises the Secretariat and the Standing Committee on a range of scientific and technical issues. The STRP is made up of 18 members with appropriate scientific and technical knowledge, plus Observers representing the International Organization Partners (IOPs), scientific and technical expert(s) recommended by Contracting Parties and other organizations recognized by the COP.

Small Grants Fund = a fund established in 1990 and maintained from the Convention's core budget and voluntary contributions for the support of projects from developing countries and countries with economies in transition which have as their objectives the implementation of the Strategic Plan, preparation for joining the Convention, or emergency assistance to threatened Ramsar Sites

Standing Committee = a committee of Ramsar Contracting Parties, established in 1987, that guides the work of the Convention and the Secretariat in the periods between triennial meetings of the COP. The members are chosen by the COP on a proportional basis among the Ramsar regions and also include the Parties that are current hosts of the most recent and the next meetings of the COP. Switzerland (host of the Secretariat) and The Netherlands (host of Wetlands International), and the six International Organization Partners, are Permanent Observers on the SC.

Sustainable utilization of a wetland = "Human use of a wetland so that it may yield the greatest continuous benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspiration of future generations" (Recommendation 3.3, 1987)

Swiss Grant for Africa = a fund offered by the Federal Government of Switzerland since 1989, administered by the Ramsar Secretariat, to support wetland conservation and wise use and the implementation of the Convention in Africa

Tour du Valat = a research centre for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands, located in the Camargue, France's first Ramsar Site.

Urgent national interests = meaning not yet precisely defined; cited in Article 2.5 of the Convention as the only circumstance under which any already-designated Site should be deleted from the Ramsar List or its boundaries restricted. Resolution VIII.20 offers guidance to Parties in interpreting the term.

UN-Water = the United Nations' inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater related issues, including sanitation

Values of wetlands = the perceived benefits to society, either direct or indirect, that result from wetland functions. These values include human welfare, environmental quality, and wildlife support (adopted by Resolution VI.1).

Wetland Conservation Awards = Awards established in 1996 to recognize and honour, every three years, individuals, organizations, and government agencies that have made a significant contribution to wetland conservation and sustainable use in any part of the world, conferred at each triennial meeting of the COP

Wetlands for the Future Fund = a funding programme established in 1995, operated by the US State Department, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Ramsar Secretariat to provide matching funds for training and capacity-building projects in Latin America and the Caribbean

Wetlands International = the leading global non-profit wetland conservation organization, partner with the Convention in many activities and contractual provider of Ramsar Sites Database services

Wise Use Guidelines = Guidelines on the Implementation of the Wise Use Concept (adopted as an annex to Recommendation 4.10), since elaborated many times and partially superseded by specialized guidance on various aspects of the concept

Wise use of wetlands = “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development” (latest definition, Resolution IX.1 Annex A, 2005. The pioneering definition of 1987 read: “Sustainable utilization of wetlands for the benefit of mankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem” (Recommendation 3.3)

World Wetlands Day = the 2nd of February each year (i.e., the anniversary of the agreement of the Convention text in 1971), established by the Standing Committee in 1996 as the official occasion for activities and celebrations within each Contracting Party aimed at alerting the public to the values and benefits of wetlands and the role of the Convention in maintaining them.

Ramsar Handbooks, 5th edition

N	Title	Relevant 4 th edition Handbooks	Key Resolutions	4 th Strategic Plan targets
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SUB-SERIES I: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON WETLANDS

1	An Introduction to the Convention on Wetlands	The Ramsar Convention Manual		
2	The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024	21 The Ramsar Strategic Plan	XII.2	
3	International cooperation	20 International cooperation		4.18
4	Ramsar Regional Initiatives	Covered in 20 International cooperation	XII.8; XI.5	4.15
5	Partnerships	5 Partnerships	XII.3; XII.7; XI.6; X.12	4.17

SUB-SERIES II: WISE USE OF WETLANDS

6	Wise use of wetlands, sustainable development and poverty eradication	1 Wise use of wetlands	XI.13; XI.20; XI.21 X.3; IX.1	1.1; 1.3; 3.10; 3.13; 4.14
7	Freshwater-related guidance	8 Water-related guidance 9 River basin management 10 Water allocation and management 11 Managing groundwater	XII.12; X.19; IX.1; VIII.1	1.2; 3.9; 4.14
8	Wise use of wetlands in the coastal zone and small islands	12 Coastal management	XII.14; VIII.4	4.14
9	Wetland cities		XII.10; XI.11	
10	Wetlands and health		XI.10; XI.12; XI.15	3.12
11	Wetlands, including peatlands, climate change and disaster risk reduction		XII.11; XII.13; XI.14; X.24	3.12; 4.14
12	Implementing CEPA with participatory skills	6 Wetland CEPA 7 Participatory skills	XII.9; VIII.36; VII.8	3.11; 4.16
13	Strategic environmental assessment	16 Impact assessment	X.17	4.14
14	Wetlands and culture		IX.21; VII.8	3.10

SUB-SERIES III: WETLAND CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

15	National wetland policies, laws and institutions	2 National wetland policies 3 Laws and institutions	VII.6; VII.7	
16	Designating Ramsar Sites	17 Designating Ramsar Sites	XI.8	2.6; 4.14
17	Addressing change in wetland ecological character	19 Addressing change in wetland ecological character	X.16	2.5; 2.7; 4.14
18	Managing wetlands	18 Managing wetlands	XII.15; VIII.14	4.14
19	Avian influenza and wetlands	4 Avian influenza	X.21; IX.23	1.4; 4.14
20	Inventory, assessment and monitoring	13 Inventory, assessment and monitoring 14 Data and information needs 15 Wetland inventory	X.14; X.15; IX.1 Annex E; VIII.6	3.8; 4.14
21	Wetland education centres	Handbook on the Best Practices for Planning, Design and Operation of Wetland Education Centres		3.11; 4.14



Convention on Wetlands
Convention sur les zones humides
Convención sobre los Humedales

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