



Ramsar STRP working group.
Photo: Ramsar Secretariat.

Introduction to the Briefing Notes series

Welcome to the Ramsar Convention's Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes series. This series is prepared and produced by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971). Briefing Notes enable the STRP to rapidly share relevant, credible and interesting scientific and technical information and advice on wetlands with a broad audience.

About the STRP and Ramsar's scientific and technical work programme

A key role of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is to provide scientific and technical advice and support for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands by responding to requests from Contracting Parties, Ramsar Site managers, and the Secretariat on issues related to the wise use of wetlands and the designation and management of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). Requests for such support may be formally communicated to the STRP in Resolutions of the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP) or through decisions of the Standing Committee; alternatively, urgent or less formal requests may be communicated to the STRP on an *ad hoc* basis through the Secretariat for immediate consideration.

The work programme of the STRP is broad and diverse, covering several Thematic Work Areas. The range and number of Thematic Work Areas that is being considered by the STRP at any particular time depends on the priorities and needs of the Convention, particularly the needs of those responsible for Convention implementation such as Ramsar Administrative Authorities and Ramsar Site managers. Work priorities for the STRP are decided every three years at each Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Larger tasks and projects within the STRP work programme often run over several years. Such larger projects can involve, for example, the preparation of scientific and technical guidance for the Convention on aspects of wetland management. Generally this guidance would be formally adopted by the Convention through Resolutions of the COP.

Another example of a larger task is the collation and synthesis of large amounts of data to prepare global or regional status and trends reports related to wetlands. Many collaborating organizations, wetland scientists, and policy experts can be involved in such a larger STRP project, and often there are repeated consultations with end users to design, test, and finalize a product.

The STRP pursues a number of avenues through which to formally communicate its findings, advice, recommendations, and guidance to its various audiences. These include:

Purpose of this BN

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to introduce the scientific and technical Briefing Note series by providing an overview of the purpose of the series, the target audiences, and the types of topics to be addressed. The document also provides information on how Briefing Notes are prepared, reviewed and published, as well as where to find all of the Notes in the series.

Related documents and information

Information about the STRP, including its *modus operandi*, membership, current work plan and newsletters can be found at www.ramsar.org/STRP-main.

A full list of current Ramsar Briefing Notes can be found www.ramsar.org/BN.

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See end page for author details.



The head table at a recent STRP meeting at the Secretariat facilities. Photo: Ramsar Secretariat

- preparation of scientific and technical guidance documents, which may be annexed to draft Resolutions and submitted by the Standing Committee to the COP for consideration and adoption;
- preparation of COP Information Papers containing background and supporting information for scientific and technical guidance documents;
- presentation of regular reports on STRP activities, progress and opinions to the COP and to the Standing Committee of the Convention;
- preparation of internal reports and memos in response to requests for *ad hoc* advice;
- publication of Ramsar Technical Reports, which generally provide substantial scientific detail and depth on a range of specific wetland-related topics; and
- publication of STRP Briefing Notes, which are the subject of this document.

What is the purpose of STRP Briefing Notes?

Briefing Notes were introduced in the 2009-2012 cycle as another category among the STRP's products. Their primary purpose is to enable the STRP to rapidly share relevant, credible and interesting scientific and technical information on wetlands with a relatively broad audience. The intention of publishing in an organized series is to ensure easier and longer-term access to this information for future reference.

Briefing Notes are not intended to provide formal guidance related to Convention implementation. They are

The STRP uses Briefing Notes to:

- share information on current STRP work in progress, particularly where work is part of a longer STRP task which might be proceeding in phases over several years;
- share STRP views on an emerging issue of importance or urgency for the Convention in the future, or of general interest, or
- bring relevant scientific and technical information related to wetlands to the attention of Contracting Parties, wetland managers, and policy makers, without necessarily being limited to the schedule of COPs for dissemination of such information.

usually shorter than Ramsar Technical Reports, being either a true "note" of perhaps 2 to 5 pages, or alternatively a longer information document of around 5 to 15 pages. While Briefing Notes are reviewed by the STRP for scientific correctness, they are generally presented in less technical language than the Ramsar Technical Reports in order to make them more accessible to a wide audience.

What can be covered in Briefing Notes?

A broad range of topics and issues can be covered in Briefing Notes, although generally the content would be relevant in some way to current STRP work priorities or to current and future implementation of the Convention. As examples, Briefing Notes might provide:

- a report or update on the results of initial scoping of a larger STRP task, including characterization of end users or target audiences for the final scientific product, terms of reference for technical work to be carried out, and results of exploratory review of scientific literature;
- an annotated bibliography of current scientific references and useful information on an issue of general interest to the Ramsar Convention, such as water resources management;
- a thematic collation of STRP work and Ramsar documents produced to date on a specific topic or issue, such as invasive alien species;
- a review and synthesis of relevant scientific information on an issue of specific interest to the Ramsar Convention, such as the potential impacts of sea level rise on coastal wetlands;

- advice and recommendations from the STRP on an emerging and/or urgent issue relevant to the Convention, such as the status of and responses to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI);
- background and supporting information for a scientific or technical draft Resolution which is being submitted to the COP for consideration (in which case the Briefing Note might also be assigned a COP Information Document number in order to identify it in the package of documents for a specific COP).

What is the status of a Briefing Note vis-à-vis the Convention’s “official” documentation?

Briefing Notes are part of Ramsar’s suite of communication products and as such they are facilitated by and issued through the Ramsar Secretariat. Briefing Notes are not adopted or otherwise approved by the Contracting Parties of the Convention, but the information and advice contained in a Briefing Note might support or lead to a formal decision on that topic or another Convention document which is then adopted or endorsed by the Parties. Each Briefing Note carries a standard disclaimer to highlight that the views contained in the document are those of the authors and the STRP and do not represent an officially-adopted view of the Ramsar Convention or its Secretariat.

Who prepares Briefing Notes and how are they reviewed?

Briefing Notes can be issued at any time in the STRP work cycle. Their preparation and publication are not



STRP members in the field. *Photo: Ramsar Secretariat.*

Who are the target audiences for STRP Briefing Notes?

Depending on the content and focus of any particular Briefing Note, target audiences might include:

- Ramsar’s Contracting Parties;
- Ramsar Site managers and managers of other wetlands, including those wetlands with or without some other form of protected area designation;
- Wetland scientists, instructors and students;
- Wetland CEPA (Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness) practitioners;
- Other scientific organizations interested in wetlands or in ecology more generally;
- Interested civil society organizations and members of the public.

constrained to fit within COP schedules or other internal Convention administrative cycles.

The preparation of a Briefing Note will usually be agreed and initiated by the STRP, either at a meeting or workshop of the full Panel or through electronic discussion via the STRP Support Service. The rationale, objectives, target audience, scope and content of a particular Briefing Note, once agreed, will be included in the STRP work programme and authors will be assigned to prepare the text.

Not only the appointed STRP members are involved in discussing a Briefing Note, however; wherever relevant and possible, people within the supporting STRP network are encouraged to contribute their views and expertise, including representatives of STRP observer organizations, STRP National Focal Points, and invited experts.

Authors of Briefing Notes could be Panel members, or they could be members of a working group established for a specific STRP task. On occasion, the STRP might commission a Briefing Note from an invited expert outside the Ramsar networks, if the necessary expertise is not available within the STRP’s scientific networks or in the current Panel.

Working drafts of Briefing Notes are generally circulated within STRP networks for comments and to obtain further inputs. Once the authors have prepared a final draft, the Briefing Note is reviewed internally by STRP members, who

provide their review comments to the authors. The final content of a Briefing Note is approved and signed off by

Current scientific and technical Briefing Notes can be viewed or downloaded at <http://www.ramsar.org/BN>.

a small internal editorial panel comprising the STRP Chair and the responsible Thematic Work Area lead or task lead, assisted by the Convention's Deputy Secretary General. The

Ramsar Secretariat under-takes the editorial check and final layout, and then releases the final Briefing Note.

Where are current Briefing Notes published and how can I access them?

Briefing Notes are published in English in electronic (PDF) format. When resources permit, they will be published also in French and Spanish (the other official languages of the Ramsar Convention) and in printed form. A full list of current Briefing Notes and all those available for download is available from the Ramsar Secretariat and on the Ramsar website www.ramsar.org/BN.

The lifespan of Briefing Notes will vary, depending upon the content and topic of each. In cases where a Briefing Note's content may be completely superseded by new work, the original Briefing Note will be retired or withdrawn and this will be noted in the list. The original Briefing Note will be archived and will remain available on request from the Secretariat.

In some cases, a Briefing Note may be updated with new information and issued in a revised version. This too will be noted in the list and in the revised Briefing Note in order for readers to follow the "paper trail" as a topic or issue is developed further.

Acknowledgements

Rebecca Lee (STRP member 2009-2012), and Monica Zavagli, Dwight Peck, Nick Davidson and Sandra Hails (all of the Ramsar Secretariat) provided much advice and assistance in developing the Briefing Note concept, generating ideas for layout, and reviewing this Note. Their support and enthusiasm are gratefully acknowledged.

Briefing Notes series

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A full list of current Briefing Notes can be found at www.ramsar.org/BN. Information about the STRP can be found at: www.ramsar.org/STRP-main/. For more information about Briefing Notes or to request information on how to correspond with their authors, please contact the Ramsar Secretariat at strp@ramsar.org.

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Citation: MacKay, H. 2012. *Introduction to the Ramsar Briefing Notes series*. Ramsar Scientific and Technical Briefing Note no. 1. Gland, Switzerland: Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

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The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) – called the Ramsar Convention – is an intergovernmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories.

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