

**Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies  
in partnership with multilateral environmental agreements  
and other international institutions**

**Actions requested**

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the progress in implementing Resolution XIV.6 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*.

**Background**

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat pursuant to paragraph 21 of Resolution XIV.6 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*.
2. This report covers the main activities undertaken since the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee in 2023 (SC62), and the results achieved.

**Biodiversity**

*Convention on Biological Diversity*

3. The Convention on Wetlands is the designated lead partner on wetlands and work on inland water biodiversity for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD; Decision III/21). Efforts by the Secretariat are focused on facilitating the alignment of the objectives of the two Conventions and enhancing synergies in implementation, with particular focus on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).
4. The 6th Joint Work Plan (JWP6) between CBD and the Convention on Wetlands has been developed by the Secretariats of the two Conventions, building on the findings and recommendations of a review of the 5th Joint Work Plan (documents CBD/SBI/3INF/33 and SC59 Doc.16.1). Contracting Parties and Observers were invited to submit views on JWP6 through a notification sent on 5 February 2024 (a notification was sent by the CBD Secretariat to CBD Contracting Parties and Observers on 2 February). The final JWP6, incorporating comments provided, will be presented to the Standing Committee in the information document SC63 Inf.1, and will also be presented to meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the CBD in May 2024.
5. The Secretariat participated in the twenty-fifth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 25) of the CBD, from 15 to 19 October 2023, in

Nairobi, Kenya. Interventions were made in relation to biodiversity and climate change, identifying scientific and technical needs to support implementation of the KM-GBF including through the CBD Programmes of Work, and invasive alien species. In December 2023 the Secretariat made a submission to the CBD Secretariat on existing tools and guidance developed under the Convention on Wetlands that can support the implementation of the KM-GBF (CBD Notification SCBD/SSSF/JL/MK/91372).

6. The Secretariat supported the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in preparation of a briefing paper<sup>1</sup> for Contracting Parties on *Upscaling wetland conservation, restoration and wise use through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)*, developed in collaboration with the six International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Convention. The briefing paper was shared with Contracting Parties through a notification on 23 November 2023 and posted on the NBSAP Forum, along with other relevant tools developed under the Convention.
7. The Secretariat supported the STRP in its work to identify options and recommendations for appropriate reflection of wetlands within the indicators and monitoring framework of the KM-GBF (Task 5.2), including through hiring a consultant to support analysis. The Secretariat is also facilitating ongoing work of the STRP pursuant to Standing Committee Decision SC62-50 in relation to the Convention's wetland classification system and mapping it against the Global Ecosystem Typology of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
8. The Secretariat participated in a virtual meeting of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG) on 30 August 2023 which addressed, *inter alia*, the multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) day at the Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) and the Bern III Conference on Cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions for the implementation of the KM-GBF (Bern III Conference). The Secretariat supported a joint statement of the BLG to UNEA-6.

#### *Convention on Migratory Species*

9. The Secretary General participated in the Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS COP14), held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from 12 to 17 February 2024 under the theme "Nature knows no boundaries". The Secretary General contributed to the high-level segment dialogue highlighting the interlinkages between wetlands and migratory species conservation. At a side event on 14 February, the Convention on Wetlands joined CMS, the World Heritage Convention (WHC), IUCN, Birdlife and other partners to launch the Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity. The initiative aims to ensure that ecological connectivity is maintained, enhanced, and restored in places of importance for migratory species of wild animals, including through designation and strengthened management of Wetlands of International Importance.
10. The Secretariat participated virtually in three meetings of the CMS/WHC/IUCN Flyways Working Group, on 4 August 2023, 20 November 2023 and 5 February 2024, which contributed to the development of a project which will map ecological networks for migratory birds at flyway scale and identify priorities for conservation through internationally designated areas such as Wetlands of International Importance.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework-upscaling-wetland-conservation-restoration>.

11. On 15 February the Secretariat provided opening remarks at the CMS COP14 side event “The World Coastal Forum: an update”. Prior to CMS COP14, the Secretary General delivered a video message to the World Coastal Forum 2023 Conference, held in Yancheng City, People’s Republic of China, from 25 to 27 September 2023.

*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*

12. The Secretariat participated in the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), held in Geneva, Switzerland, in November 2023. The Secretariat made interventions concerning wetland-dependent species.

*Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage*

13. The Secretariat participated in the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee meeting in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in September 2023. The Committee reviewed the state of conservation of nine World Heritage sites also designated as Wetlands of International Importance, and decided to maintain Virunga National Park on the List of World Heritage in Danger. New properties inscribed to the List include the Congo Forest Massif of Odzala-Kokoua, a Wetland of International Importance. The Secretariat participated as a panellist in a side event on leveraging World Heritage sites to meet the biodiversity challenge of the decade.

*Carpathian Convention*

14. The Secretary General attended the seventh Conference of the Parties (COP7) of the Carpathian Convention, in Belgrade, Serbia, from 11 to 13 October 2023. Among the decisions that marked the celebration of the Carpathian Convention’s 20th anniversary in 2023 was the establishment of a transboundary Wetland of International Importance in the Đerdap gorge (Iron Gate) National Park, along the Danube River in Serbia and Romania.

*Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*

15. The Secretariat participated virtually in the Tenth session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 10), held in Bonn, Germany, from 28 August to 2 September 2023. The meeting focused on the review of the summary for policymakers of the thematic assessment of invasive alien species and their control. The Secretariat submitted a statement encouraging the IPBES Expert Group on Invasive Alien Species and their Control to incorporate wetland-specific guidelines from the Convention. Relevant to the work of the Convention, IPBES approved a scoping process for a second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the undertaking of two fast-track methodological assessments on monitoring biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people and on integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and ecological connectivity. The Secretariat have nominated Prof. Siobhan Fennessy, Vice-Chair of the STRP, as an expert in the scoping process for the second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

**Climate change**

*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*

16. Efforts by the Secretariat are focused on raising awareness about the vulnerability of wetlands and their ecosystem services to climate change, their critical role in reducing climate change

and its impacts, and opportunities to leverage commitments and actions under the Convention on Wetlands in delivering climate outcomes. This includes advocating for greater recognition of the importance of wetlands and their role in the climate and hydrological cycles, and scaling up wetland protection and restoration, including through the inclusion of wetland actions in climate change strategies and plans.

17. Ahead of the 28th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP28), a brief on the Convention on Wetlands and *Harnessing Wetland Wise Use, Protection and Restoration in Delivering Climate Change Outcomes*<sup>2</sup> was prepared and shared with Contracting Parties through a notification on 20 November 2023. The brief provides a resource for Contracting Parties in relation to climate change negotiations, associated planning and coordination at the national level, and communication and outreach activities.
18. The Secretariat collaborated with Wetlands International and other partners in the Global Peatlands Initiative in the preparation of a brief on *Wetlands and Methane: Key Messages*<sup>3</sup>, published in July 2023. The brief provides information on wetlands' methane emissions and overall contributions to the global greenhouse gas budget, providing a resource that can support Contracting Parties as well as other stakeholders in climate action and awareness raising.
19. The Secretariat participated in UNFCCC COP28, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 November to 13 December 2023. The Secretary General contributed to 13 events of strategic importance to wetlands with a potential to raise the profile of the Convention on Wetlands, including a high-level ministerial dialogue on wetlands in montane areas and climate risks jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment of Azerbaijan and the Secretariat on 6 December. The Secretariat co-convened or contributed to a number of events in collaboration with organizations including the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), WWF, IUCN, Wetlands International, UNEP, UNECE Water Convention, IAEA, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), as well as Contracting Parties including Azerbaijan, Germany, Slovenia, and UAE.
20. A first-ever COP ministerial roundtable on the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems was organized on 10 December 2023 by the COP28 Presidency with the support of Freshwater Challenge international partners in close collaboration with the Secretariat. Over 40 countries joined this landmark event. The Freshwater Challenge, launched at the UN 2023 Water Conference with six champion countries, aims to restore over 300,000 kilometres of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands by 2030.
21. Prior to the opening of COP28, the Secretary General visited two Wetlands of International Importance, Wadi Wurayah National Park (WWNP) and Alqurm Wa Lehhfaiiah Protected Area in Khor Kalba, highlighting the importance of wetland conservation. A webpage<sup>4</sup> published in November 2023 provides an overview of the Secretariat's engagement in and contributions to COP28. The webpage was also promoted on social media, ensuring that the Convention's position and recommendations reached a wider audience across various online platforms. In

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/brief-ramsar-convention-wetlands-unfccc-cop28>.

<sup>3</sup> See *Wetlands and methane: Key Messages* at <https://www.wetlands.org/publication/wetlands-and-methane-technical-report>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.ramsar.org/news/climate-change-wetlands>.

addition, the Secretary General co-authored an article titled “Wetlands hold answers to climate mitigation and adaptation”<sup>5</sup>, further contributing to the discussions surrounding COP28.

22. References to biodiversity, ecosystems, nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches are made in key outcomes of COP28 including the Global Stocktake, the Global Goal on Adaptation and Loss and Damage. However, progress remains very uneven in relation to integration of wetland actions in climate change related strategies and plans such as Nationally Determined Contributions, as called for in Resolutions adopted by Convention on Wetlands COP13 in 2018, with many NDCs incorporating actions for mangrove protection for adaptation but very few quantitative targets, such as for reduction in emissions from peatlands through protection and restoration. In this regard, the Secretariat has continued to liaise with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on ongoing work to analyse the inclusion of wetlands targets and actions in NDCs, building on the initial analysis<sup>6</sup> presented during a side event during Convention on Wetlands COP14.

#### *Global Consultation on Nature-based Solutions*

23. The Secretariat contributed to the Intergovernmental Consultations on Nature-based Solutions convened by UNEP pursuant to UNEA Resolution 5/5. The Secretariat made a written submission<sup>7</sup> to draw attention to Resolution XIV.17 on *The protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of wetland ecosystems in addressing climate change* and other relevant outputs of the Convention, and participated in person in the final global consultations in Nairobi from 11 to 13 October 2023. Among the outputs of this consultation is the *Resource Guide for Nature-based Solutions*<sup>8</sup> which includes a compilation of examples of nature-based solutions featuring notable examples of wetland and peatland restoration that were provided by our Secretariat.

#### *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

24. The Secretariat participated in the 60th session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC-60), held in Istanbul, Türkiye, from 16 to 19 January 2024. The meeting addressed lessons learned from the sixth assessment cycle and options for the Programme of Work in the seventh assessment cycle, including the Seventh Assessment Report (AR7). Relevant to the Convention, it was confirmed that a Special Report on Climate Change and Cities will be provided in early 2027. The Secretariat have nominated Matthew Simpson, STRP Observer, as an expert to participate in the Scoping Meeting for the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities.

#### *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*

25. The Secretariat participated in the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to the UNCCD (CRIC 21). Interventions were made in relation to Strategic Objectives 2 and 4 of UNCCD, on the importance of wetlands and the relevance of national wetland inventories in informing area-based conservation and restoration as well as reporting on wetland extent. The report of the meeting reflects the relevance of the indicators

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://asiatimes.com/2023/11/wetlands-hold-answers-to-climate-mitigation-adaptation/>.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2865en/cc2865en.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/42339/Wetlands.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>8</sup> See [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44254/AP2\\_CCS\\_NbS\\_ResourceGuide.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44254/AP2_CCS_NbS_ResourceGuide.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

of the Convention on Wetlands for complementing Strategic Objective 4, and some parties requested that the Secretariat of the UNCCD explores options for collaboration.

## **Pollution**

26. Many types of waste and chemical pollutants are a critical threat to wetlands, passing through and accumulating in wetlands. Aligning efforts with international processes on pollution has become an important area for enhancing synergies and partnership.
27. Pursuant to UNEA Resolution 5/14, two sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC) were held in 2023. The Secretary General participated in the third meeting of INC (INC-3) in Nairobi from 13 to 19 November 2023, and held bilateral meetings with the Chair of the INC and the Executive Secretary of the INC Secretariat to discuss how existing MEAs including the Convention on Wetlands could support the INC process. To raise awareness on the interconnectivity of plastic pollution and wetlands, the Secretariat published a news story on its website ahead of the second meeting of INC, held in Paris, France from 29 May to 2 June 2023, and published a brochure<sup>9</sup> for INC-3.
28. The Secretariat continues its engagement in ongoing work of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG). The Secretary General participated in the 29th Senior Officials Meeting of the EMG held virtually on 10 October 2023, which endorsed the “UN system – common approach towards a pollution-free planet” and established the Issue Management Group on Pollution to facilitate a coordinated approach to the implementation of the common approach. The Issue Management Group will convene its first meeting in 2024.
29. The Secretariat participated in the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Geneva, from 30 October to 3 November 2023, at which a decision on mercury and the KM-GBF was adopted. Parties to the Minamata Convention recognized that mercury pollution impacts ecosystems, such as wetland ecosystems, and is a direct driver and underlying cause of global loss of biodiversity.

## **Water**

30. Building on the Secretary General’s statements at the UN Water Conference in March 2023, the Secretariat has increased its engagement in international efforts related to water, including its participation in UN-Water. Leading up to the next UN Water Conference to be held in 2026, this includes contributions to preparation of the World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia, in May 2024 in close collaboration with the Indonesian government; World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, in August 2024 with SIWI and other international partners; and the One Water Summit in New York, United States of America, in September 2024 under the leadership of France and Kazakhstan. Through these efforts the Secretariat seeks to promote integration of wetlands in water-related policies and efforts, and to increase financial resources for scaling up wetland protection and restoration.
31. The Secretariat collaborates with the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention) to promote joint approaches on transboundary river basins and wetland systems, including through interventions in UNECE Water Convention meetings such as the 18th meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) from 19 to 21 June 2023 and the Global Workshop on Droughts in Transboundary Basins from 26 to 27 February 2024, both in Geneva.

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<sup>9</sup> See [https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/Wetlands\\_Plastic\\_Pollution\\_e.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/Wetlands_Plastic_Pollution_e.pdf).

32. The Secretariat participated in the 19th Ordinary Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 14 to 18 August 2023. The Addis Ababa Declaration adopted at the meeting recognizes wetlands and water as critical elements in addressing the triple planetary crisis.
33. The Secretariat has continued to attend the monthly meetings of the international partners of the Freshwater Challenge as an observer, as well as other related preparatory meetings, to follow up and advise on the development of the initiative.

### **Sustainable development**

34. The Secretariat participates in the meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) as co-custodian of SDG Indicator 6.6.1 “change in extent of water-related ecosystems over time” and maintains regular contact with the UNEP expert team in charge of 6.6.1 co-custodianship. The Secretariat participated in online meetings of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs on 10 October and 5 December 2023 to discuss SDG data and metadata submissions. The Secretariat is further enhancing support to Contracting Parties on the development of national wetland inventories that will strengthen reporting on SDG indicator 6.6.1 through National Reports submitted by Contracting Parties (see document SC63 Doc.10 for further details).

### **International financial institutions**

35. The Secretariat continues to cultivate strategic relationships with international financing organizations to raise awareness of the investment required by Contracting Parties to implement the objectives of the Convention. The Secretariat participated virtually in the 66th Council Meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which took place from 5 to 9 February 2024.
36. The Secretary General met Mr Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson of GEF, on the sidelines of CMS COP14, where they agreed to enhance cooperation between the Secretariats of the GEF and the Convention.
37. As a member of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) engagement committee, the Secretariat is participating in GCF’s evidence review on water. As a part of this activity, the Secretariat participated and presented in the GCF Independent Evaluation Unit’s Learning Talk on the review, which took place on 16 October 2023.
38. The Secretariat has continued to participate in the stakeholder meetings of the Asian Development Bank’s Regional Flyway Initiative, which took place twice during this reporting period, on 3 October 2023 and 25 January 2024. The Secretariat provides technical advice in identifying priority sites in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.
39. Through the financial support of the Republic of Korea, a Wetland Finance Support Officer will join the Secretariat in 2024, strengthening engagement with international financing institutions as well as management of the Secretariat’s small grant programmes.

## Collaboration with international partners

40. The Secretariat continues collaboration with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) under the memorandum of understanding signed in 2022. The Secretariat participates in Steering Committees of two UNEP projects on MEA synergies, “Leveraging transformational change through coherent and synergistic implementation of Environmental Treaties”, a new project launched by UNEP in 2023, and “EU-GPGC Scaling-up Actions to Realize Synergies for Biodiversity”, which is focused on technical tools such as DaRT. The Secretariat also participates in the InforMEA Steering Committee.
41. The Secretariat, as well as three delegates representing Contracting Parties to the Convention (Belgium, Gabon and Mexico) nominated by members of the Standing Committee, participated in the Bern III Conference, held from 23 to 25 January 2024 in Bern, Switzerland. The Secretariat supported preparations for the Bern III Conference, including through contributions to a side event held on 18 October 2023 during SBSTTA-25 and through participation in virtual preparatory meetings organized by UNEP on 19 December 2023 and 15 January 2024. The Secretariat also convened an online briefing session for the Convention’s Contracting Party representatives attending Bern III, on 16 January 2024.
42. The Secretary General attended UNEA-6, held in Nairobi from 19 February to 1 March 2024, participating as a panellist in the High-level Dialogue on Strengthening the Science-policy Interface for Effective Implementation of Environmental Commitments, organized as part of the MEA day on 29 February. With the CBD Secretariat, the Secretariat organized a joint side event at the MEA pavilion on 1 March 2024 to enhance awareness of the need for action to halt wetland loss and scale up protection and restoration towards achievement of global biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development targets; to sensitize Contracting Parties and other stakeholders about the Joint Work Plan of CBD and the Convention on Wetlands; and support inclusion of wetland targets and measures in NBSAPs. The Secretariat also co-organised a side event with the Governments of Costa Rica and Slovenia, IUCN and the UNECE Water Convention on 27 February to make the case for transboundary ecosystem restoration to address the planetary crises. In advance of the session the Secretariat made submissions on draft resolutions highlighting the relevance of the Convention.
43. The Secretariat works closely with UNEP and FAO in the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, in which the Convention is a Global Partner. The Secretariat participated in a workshop organized jointly by CBD and FAO on Developing a Roadmap for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 2, which was held from 22 to 24 November 2023 at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.
44. The Secretariat collaborated with FAO on World Wetlands Day Celebration hosted by FAO in Rome on 2 February 2024, in which the FAO Deputy Director General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Convention participated as speakers. FAO is also making a contribution towards the work of the Convention by co-leading Task 3.3 under the STRP Work Plan: “Agriculture and wetlands: maintaining and restoring the ecological character of wetlands in agricultural settings”.
45. The Secretary General met the newly appointed Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation on 8 February 2024 to discuss collaborative activities towards strengthening robust data for wetland restoration.



46. The Secretariat works closely with the International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Convention, including through quarterly meetings. This has facilitated IOP input towards a number of activities, including events organized in the context of MEA COPs and UNEA-6 as well as World Wetlands Day. The IOPs are also, individually as well as collectively, making contributions towards relevant STRP Tasks.
47. The Secretariat continues to collaborate closely with IUCN to support the operations of the Secretariat under the service agreement between the Convention and IUCN. Regular meetings and alignment of processes and policies continue in the different areas under the service agreement, such as finance and accounting, information technology, facility management and human resources.
48. The Secretariat will continue working to enhance the Convention's visibility and synergies in partnership with multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions, guided by COP resolutions and SC Decisions, and seeking to strategically prioritize such efforts based on expected impact and with consideration of the Secretariat's capacity.