

Update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20 on *The Ramsar Convention's response to environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the damage of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) stemming from the Russian Federation's aggression*.

Background

1. This report provides an update on actions from March 2024 to October 2024 by the Secretariat pursuant to paragraph 18 of Resolution XIV.20 on *The Ramsar Convention's response to environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the damage of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) stemming from the Russian Federation's aggression*, which:

“REQUESTS the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands to coordinate actions with the Contracting Parties and relevant national and international organizations to conduct assessments of the Ramsar Sites in Ukraine affected by aggression of the Russian Federation, and advise on appropriate mitigation and restoration measures; and FURTHER REQUESTS the Secretariat to provide a report on the assessed damage and mitigation measures to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in addition to providing an update on the implementation of this Resolution to all intervening meetings of the Standing Committee”.

2. The previous update pursuant to Resolution XIV.20 was presented to Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting (SC63) in June 2024¹.

Coordination and consultation

3. The Secretariat has pursued coordination and consultation efforts as a member of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Environmental Assessments for Ukraine. In this role, the Secretariat co-organized an online seminar on use of Earth observation and remote sensing for assessing damage to ecosystems in Ukraine, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The seminar took place on 22 March 2024, with the participation of global experts and the support of other members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group. The seminar provided the opportunity to explore possibilities and limitations of available Earth observation

¹ See document SC63 Doc.24 *Update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20*, <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc63-doc24-update-secretariat-implementation-resolution-xiv20>.

approaches, tools and products for detecting impacts of armed conflict on ecosystems, as well as quantifying impacts on ecosystem extent and condition. A policy and technical brief that summarizes information from the webinar has been prepared and published by UNECE.²

Assessment of environmental damage to Ukraine’s Wetlands of International Importance resulting from the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine

4. The consultancy team in charge of conducting the assessment of environmental damage on Ukraine’s Wetlands of International Importance pursuant to paragraph 18 of Resolution XIV.20 developed the implementation phase from March to September 2024, in line with the assessment strategy and methodology that was reviewed and confirmed by the Advisory Board in March 2024. The Advisory Board³ was set up by the Secretariat to provide methodological, scientific and technical guidance, and review assessment outputs at the end of each phase of the mission.
5. A field mission was successfully implemented from 26 May to 5 June 2024, with the support of a national consultant. The field mission report was shared with the Advisory Board for review and finalized in June 2024.
6. The objective of the field mission was to undertake in-situ assessments of Wetlands of International Importance in Ukraine affected, or potentially affected, due to the war. Throughout the ten-day mission, the Consultants visited six Wetlands of International Importance: Kyliiske Mouth (number 113 on the List of Wetlands of International Importance), Sasyk Lake (no. 762), Northern Part of the Dniester Liman (no. 765), Shagany-Alibei-Burnas Lakes System (no. 763), Prypiat River Floodplains (no. 776) and Stokhid River Floodplains (no. 777). During each site visit, a range of conflict-related impacts were observed at first hand, and these were complemented by structured interviews with site managers and stakeholders which allowed for the exchange of relevant data and observations.
7. All sites visited by the Consultants were described by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine as “under threat of extension of military and occupation” (see Annex 1 of document SC62 Doc.24 Rev.1⁴). Due to security threats, no sites located in occupied areas or in the vicinity of the frontline could be visited. The sites that were visited also serve as “proxy sites” for sites which could not be visited. The visits yielded appropriate and representative baseline data. To complement the site visits, a workshop was organized in Kyiv on 31 May 2024. The workshop was attended by more than 100 professionals (in person or remotely), notably representatives of administrations of National Parks, Biosphere Reserves and managers of Wetlands of International Importance, along with representatives of other key stakeholders.
8. To ensure a high degree of confidence in the data gathered by the consultancy team throughout the field mission, field data has been corroborated and triangulated with Earth observations and data gathered through the completion of the initial desk study.
9. The Secretariat organized three meetings of the Advisory Board in the period from March to October 2024. The Advisory board reviewed the field mission report as well as Earth

² See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2024/05/informal-documents/policy-and-technical-brief-use-earth-observations>.

³ The composition of the Advisory Board was presented in document SC63 Doc.24, paragraph 11.

⁴ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc62-doc24-rev1-update-secretariat-implementation-resolution-xiv20>.

observation findings and will review the final assessment report by the end of October 2024. The assessment report will be presented to Contracting Parties at COP15. The report will be placed as an annex to the report on implementation of Resolution XIV.20 to COP15 that will summarize the assessment results and will advise on appropriate mitigation and restoration measures.

10. Pursuant to paragraph 19 of Resolution XIV.20, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America provided voluntary contributions towards the Secretariat's work in implementing the actions requested in Resolution XIV.20. These non-core contributions provided the funding to hire the consultants to conduct the assessment.