



15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands

**“Protecting wetlands for our common future”
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COP15 Doc.15

Report of the Secretariat on opportunities to further strengthen the Convention’s contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

Background

1. This report is presented pursuant to Resolution XIV.6 on *Enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* which, in paragraph 24, “REQUESTS the Secretariat in collaboration with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15) on the opportunities for the Convention to further strengthen its contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as they relate to wetlands”.
2. UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 on *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* recognizes that natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity add to and exacerbate the challenges which humanity faces, and that social and economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet’s natural resources; and expresses determination to conserve and sustainably use oceans and seas, freshwater resources, as well as forests, mountains and drylands and to protect biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife.
3. Wetlands provide a wide range of benefits and services essential to society, and to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs, as summarized in, inter alia, the Convention’s report *Wetlands and the SDGs: Scaling up wetland conservation, wise use and restoration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*¹ published in 2018. The Convention’s mission 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”.
4. As stated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs, implementation, follow-up and review of the Agenda is country-led, should build on existing platforms and processes, where these exist, and benefits from the active support of multilateral institutions. The

¹ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/wetlands-sdgs>.

commitment of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands to designate Wetlands of International Importance and to conserve and use wisely all their wetlands is therefore a critical contribution in achieving the SDGs, and the Convention provides a ready platform to support implementation of the SDGs, as illustrated by Annex 3 of the Fourth Strategic Plan for 2016-2024 of the Convention (2022 update)² which identifies how implementation of the actions and achievement of the goals and targets of the Strategic Plan contribute to individual SDGs and their Targets.

5. This report provides a brief overview of the Convention's mandate in contributing to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs, as defined in Resolutions of the COP and decisions of the Standing Committee, and actions undertaken and progress made, as presented in reports to COP or Standing Committee prepared by subsidiary bodies and the Secretariat and based on National Reports submitted by Contracting Parties. Based on this, opportunities for the Convention to further strengthen its contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs are identified, with emphasis on a limited number of areas in which concrete and practical actions can make a direct contribution.

Contributions by the Convention to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

6. The Fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024 provides a comprehensive framework that has guided the Convention's efforts to support the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the SDGs. In Resolution XIV.4 on the review of the Plan and the framework for its successor, Contracting Parties decided that the Convention's Fifth Strategic Plan should be informed by, inter alia, the SDGs, and encouraged the Strategic Plan Working Group to use the thematic Annexes to the Fourth Strategic Plan in the framing and development of the draft Fifth Strategic Plan.
7. Resolution XIV.6, in paragraphs 48 to 55, establishes more specific priorities and instruction. The Resolution, inter alia, calls on Contracting Parties to strengthen their efforts to complete their national wetland inventories and to report on wetland extent in order to report on SDG indicator 6.6.1; strengthen mechanisms to enhance effective coordination among national and subnational statistical authorities responsible for reporting on the SDGs and in particular indicator 6.6.1; and instructs the Secretariat to continue working actively with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and to collaborate with UNEP as co-custodian of Indicator 6.6.1, and with other relevant UN agencies on water-related indicators; and to support Contracting Parties in relation to national wetland inventory.
8. Resolution XIV.6 further encourages Contracting Parties to strengthen mainstreaming at national and subnational levels and promote national level synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and enhance coherent national implementation to support achievement of wetland-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. Resolution XIV.16 specifically addresses integration of wetland protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management into national sustainable development strategies.
9. A number of Resolutions, including XIV.6 and XIV.16, call for actions from Contracting Parties, the CEPA Oversight Panel and the Secretariat to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs through CEPA activities. A common thread across these Resolutions is to use CEPA for raising the profile of wetlands and awareness of the importance of their conservation, restoration and wise use to address the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs, and to strengthen mainstreaming

² See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/4th-strategic-plan-2016-2024-2022-update>.

efforts at national and subnational levels. The new approach to CEPA (Resolution XIV.4, Annex 4) identifies specific considerations to assist Contracting Parties in applying the new CEPA approach and includes the following in relation to Goal 1 of the Fourth Strategic Plan of the Convention: “1. Wetland benefits are featured in national/local policy strategies and plans relating to key sectors ... Contracting Parties to continue to contribute wetland input to the debate on global policy issues, including the Sustainable Development Goals...”

Wetland data, tracking and reporting

10. In 2017 the IAEG-SDGs appointed the Convention as co-custodian of Indicator 6.6.1 “Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time”, using data from the Convention’s National Reports. Through this mechanism, national validated data using accepted international definitions of wetlands is provided to measure the extent of water-related ecosystems under SDG 6.
11. National wetland inventories (NWIs) are the recommended means to gather robust national wetland extent data encompassing inland, human-made and marine/coastal wetlands. In line with Resolution XIV.6, the Secretariat actively support efforts by Contracting Parties to complete their NWIs and to report on wetland extent as a contribution to SDG Indicator 6.6.1. An NWI support mechanism has been developed, based on identification of needs³, with progress reported in documents SC63 Doc.10 and SC64 Doc.10⁴. This supports Contracting Parties in developing NWIs that are both institutionally and scientifically robust, applicable in the context of the Convention and immediately relevant to other policy frameworks, and appropriate to the technical capacity and financial context of the country. During the 2022-2025 triennium, 30 Contracting Parties were selected to join a three-year in-person training programme, conducted in the official languages of the Convention, led by the Secretariat and supported by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development and several other partner organisations (see document SC64 Doc.10 and information document SC64 Inf.2). Additional guidance and online training courses are being developed to be made available to all Contracting Parties.
12. In their National Reports submitted for COP15, 56% of Contracting Parties provided data for reporting on SDG Indicator 6.6.1. This is a slight increase from 52% at COP14. However, 9% of Contracting Parties that have submitted National Reports for COP15 do not report on extent of all wetlands within their territory but rather report on the extent of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) as a proxy. Therefore, the figures that are collected in the National Reports do not allow for robust reporting of country data for Indicator 6.6.1 for the year 2025 into the global SDG database.

Scientific and technical support

13. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has produced a body of scientific and technical analysis as well as management and policy advice which supports Contracting Parties in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs. This addresses, inter alia, climate change resilience and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable agriculture, wetlands as other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and integrating multiple wetland values into decision-making, and also includes a number of

³ See information document SC63 Inf.2 at <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc63-inf2-national-wetland-inventories-synthesis-13-depth-interviews-further>.

⁴ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc63-doc10-urgent-challenges-wise-use-wetlands-receive-enhanced-attention-update-wetland> and <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc64-doc10-urgent-challenges-wise-use-wetlands-receive-enhanced-attention-update-wetland>.

products addressing specific wetland types, such as peatlands and blue carbon ecosystems. The Global Wetland Outlook provides a global overview of wetland status, trends and their implications.

14. The STRP also provides scientific and technical advice in relation to national wetland inventory, including in the context of the Secretariat's NWI support mechanism, and through specific products and tools such as Technical Report 10 on *The use of Earth observation for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring*⁵. The STRP is further supporting the development of an indicator framework for the Convention's Fifth Strategic Plan, including to promote its relevance to tracking and reporting under other global frameworks including the SDGs and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness

15. A number of contributions to the 2030 agenda and the SDGs are made by the Convention through the CEPA (communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness) Programme. World Wetlands Day continues to be the Convention's most significant CEPA activity. This annual campaign brings attention to the values and benefits of healthy wetlands and invites people to take action through speaking out for wetlands and volunteering. As such the World Wetlands Day campaign provides an excellent platform to showcase how wetlands support the achievement of a number of SDGs. Each World Wetlands Day the Secretariat develops a campaign in support of various themes linked to the SDGs, and disseminates campaign materials to Contracting Parties, international and national NGOs and community organizations. Campaign themes for the past years have included: "protecting wetland for our common future"; "wetlands and human wellbeing"; and "wetlands action for people and nature". In 2025, 1,948 events took place worldwide featuring activities such as symposiums and clean-up initiatives, while communication outreach reached 6.72 billion potential users. Additional information on activities to raise the visibility of the Convention is contained in the Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention, document COP15 Doc.8.2.
16. One hundred and forty-nine Contracting Parties have designated CEPA Focal Points to ensure visibility for the Convention and its conservation and wise use goals, to support the achievement of global goals through establishing and maintaining contacts, networks and mechanisms and to serve as an active spokesperson for the Convention and wetlands. A key responsibility of CEPA Focal Points is to work across ministries to realize synergies in wetland conservation and wise use for the achievement of different SDGs. The CEPA Oversight Panel provides guidance to Contracting Parties on how to communicate more effectively the value and importance of wetlands and their contribution to global goals. An important role of the Panel is to liaise with other MEAs to improve CEPA synergies among Conventions.
17. The Secretariat has also prepared a new suite of digital CEPA resources⁶ for Contracting Parties and civil society to use to build awareness of the role of wetlands in achieving global aims in areas such as biodiversity, climate, water and human wellbeing. These digital assets are supported by an updated CEPA Handbook⁷ that provides guidance to CEPA practitioners on how the Convention's CEPA Programme supports implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan

⁵ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/ramsar-technical-report-10-use-earth-observation-wetland-inventory-assessment-monitoring>.

⁶ See <https://www.ramsar.org/new-cepa-resources>.

⁷ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/handbook-6-people-wetlands-convention-wetlands-cepa-programme>.

and the various SDGs that are linked to healthy wetland ecosystems. Training courses and webinars organized through the Secretariat's capacity-building programme for Contracting Parties and with the STRP provide learning opportunities and guidance on how the conservation and wise use of wetlands can provide benefits and positive outcomes for people and planet in support of achieving the SDGs. Contributions towards delivery on the SDGs are also made through the initiative to celebrate "Women Changemakers in the World of Wetlands"⁸, implemented in 2024 and again in 2025, as well as through the work of the Youth Working Group established pursuant to Resolution XIV.12 on *Strengthening Ramsar connections through youth*.

18. Through the Wetland City Accreditation scheme, cities are encouraged to implement conservation and wise use plans for urban wetlands, contributing to numerous SDG targets at local and regional levels. There are currently 74 Accredited Wetland Cities which have wetland management plans in place that specifically call for increased public awareness of wetlands and public participation in municipal planning and decision-making.

National planning and implementation

19. National Reports submitted for COP13, COP14 and COP15 show that almost all Contracting Parties have taken some steps to incorporate wetland conservation, wise use or restoration into water management strategies, biodiversity action plans, and climate change strategies and plans, thereby contributing to several SDGs. Almost half of Contracting Parties have identified contributions made towards specific SDGs and targets, including:
 - SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation): Wetlands are widely recognized as critical for water retention, purification and supply management. National strategies often refer to wetlands as key components of integrated water resources management.
 - SDG 13 (Climate action): Wetland ecosystems are increasingly included in national climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Several Parties have reported initiatives to use wetlands for carbon sequestration and flood mitigation.
 - SDG 14 (Life below water): Several reports emphasize the restoration of coastal wetlands including mangroves, and the development of integrated coastal zone management plans, reducing impacts of erosion and storm surges and promoting sustainable fisheries.
 - SDG 15 (Life on land): Many Contracting Parties report on wetland efforts directly contributing to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management.
 - Several National Reports also highlight the role of wetlands in supporting local livelihoods, particularly through sustainable fisheries, agriculture and ecotourism.
20. A comparison of National Reports from COP13, COP14 and COP15 shows increasing specificity in reporting on contributions to delivering on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs. This illustrates a shift from policy intent to implementation, with earlier Reports primarily recognising wetland conservation as an important objective, and later Reports providing more detailed accounts of policy implementation and more explicit identification of relevance to individual SDG targets. Examples are provided in Table 1 below.
21. Contracting Parties have made progress in integrating wetland conservation and management into national or sub-national sustainable development plans and frameworks or sectoral plans. Overall, around a third of Parties have mentioned national sectoral or sustainable development

⁸ See <https://www.ramsar.org/our-work/activities/gender-wetlands/meet-inaugural-cohort-women-changemakers-world-wetlands>.

policies that explicitly include wetland management and conservation considerations as examples of integrated or cross-sectoral planning and monitoring mechanisms in their National Reports.

22. National reports also indicate increasing consideration of the economic value of wetlands to advance wetland management and sustainable development, and some Contracting Parties are exploring the consideration of economic values of wetlands within national planning and decision-making processes. However, challenges remain, including in relation to coordination and information sharing across ministries and sectors.

Table 1. Examples of wetland actions contributing to delivering SDGs reported by Contracting Parties in their national reports to COP13, COP14, and COP15

Contracting Party	Key initiatives	Impact	SDG contributions
Australia	Murray-Darling Basin Plan	Allocated environmental water flows to restore 20,000 hectares of wetlands, leading to a 40-60% increase in populations of key waterbird and fish species, highlighting science-based ecosystem restoration.	2, 3, 6, 14, 15
Bangladesh	Haor Ecosystem Management Initiative	Improved sustainable fisheries management on 80,000 ha of seasonal wetlands, increasing household incomes by 30-45% while maintaining ecosystem integrity.	1, 2
China	Sponge City Initiative	Integrated wetland conservation into urban planning in 30 cities, reducing peak flooding in Wuhan by 45% and creating urban green spaces for 2 million residents, demonstrating nature-based solutions for urban resilience.	6, 11, 13
Colombia	National Policy for Inland Wetlands	Integrates wetland management into 18 regional development plans, including quantifiable targets for restoration and sustainable use	6, 15, 11
Costa Rica	National Wetland Policy and National Wetland Fund	Restored coastal mangroves, which now sequester 5.1 million tonnes of carbon annually and reduce the impact of storm surges by 60%, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Has mobilized USD 12 million over five years to finance 45 community-based wetland management projects.	13, 14, 17
Fiji	Integrated Coastal Management Framework	Strengthens coastal protection and supports ecotourism initiatives, generating USD 3 million annually.	8, 14
Finland	National Parks and Health Programme	Integrated wetland conservation with public health goals, resulting in a 25% reduction in stress levels and improved mental wellbeing among national park visitors, demonstrating the role of nature in human health.	3, 6, 15
India	Wetland Mitigation Banking System	Has generated USD 30 million for wetland restoration while ensuring that infrastructure development prioritizes wetland conservation.	9, 15, 17
Ireland	Natural Capital Accounting for Sustainable Environments	Aims to embed the Natural Capital Approach and Natural Capital Accounting in Irish Policy for the Benefit of People and Planet.	15, 17
Japan	Wetland Restoration for Disaster Risk Reduction	Restored coastal wetlands that now protect 15 coastal communities from tsunamis and storm surges, reducing property damage by 40% during the 2018 typhoon season, contributing to disaster resilience.	3, 13

Contracting Party	Key initiatives	Impact	SDG contributions
Mexico	Payment for Ecosystem Services programme	Has protected 180,000 ha of wetlands while providing a sustainable income for 24,000 local community members.	1, 15, 17
Netherlands	Room for the River Programme	Reconnected rivers to their floodplains, creating 4,000 ha of wetlands, reducing flood risk for 4 million people and increasing biodiversity, demonstrating integrated water management for climate resilience.	11, 13, 15
Peru	High Andean Wetlands Conservation Programme	Restored 50,000 ha of peatlands, benefiting 250,000 people by improving water regulation for downstream agriculture and integrating traditional knowledge into wetland conservation.	2, 6, 15
Philippines	Integrated River Basin Management and Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting Law	Integrates mangrove restoration into disaster risk reduction strategies, reducing flood damages by USD 25 million annually. Integrates the natural environment into governmental and economic planning by gathering comprehensive data on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and resource depletion to guide evidence-based policy decisions.	6, 13, 14, 15, 17
South Africa	Working for Wetlands Programme	Restored 1,200 wetlands, reducing sediment loads by 30-40%, improving dry season water flows and creating 25,000 jobs, linking ecological restoration to poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods.	6, 8, 15
Uganda	Wetland Sector Strategic Plan and Community-Based Wetland Management	Restored 70,000 ha of wetlands in the Lake Victoria Basin, resulting in a 35% increase in fish stocks, the return of 12 locally extinct bird species, and benefiting 45,000 households, linking wetland conservation with livelihood support. Wetland restoration in the Rwizi catchment has improved water security for over 300,000 people and increased household income by 35%	1, 2, 6, 15

Opportunities for the Convention to further strengthen its contribution

23. Efforts to protect, wisely use and restore wetlands will continue to support implementation of the 2030 agenda and SDGs. Opportunities for strengthening the contribution of the Convention may be identified based on priorities and needs expressed in the Convention's Strategic Plan and COP resolutions, progress made and challenges identified in National Reports, as well as ongoing activities by subsidiary bodies as well as the Secretariat. Three distinct but mutually reinforcing themes provide particular opportunity: improving wetland inventory and reporting; promoting consideration of wetlands in national and sub-national sustainable development and sectoral plans; and CEPA activities. Contracting Parties may consider supporting resource mobilization to effectively address these.

Wetland inventory and reporting

24. Data on wetland biodiversity, extent, condition and changes over time is fundamental to effective wetland conservation and wise use. It is also the basis for increasing consideration of wetlands within sustainable development planning, by informing our understanding of the multiple benefits that wetlands bring to society and by enabling valuation of wetland ecosystem services. National Reports indicate that challenges remain in relation to application of wetland

data in planning, as well as in relation to monitoring to measure progress, including against SDG indicators. Strengthening national wetland inventory and reporting on wetland extent is therefore an important foundational element to strengthening the contribution of the Convention to delivery on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs.

25. More robust reporting on wetland extent in National Reports is needed, based on fully developed NWIs that encompass all wetlands. Resolution XIV.6 encourages Contracting Parties to strengthen their efforts to complete their NWIs and report on SDG indicator 6.6.1. In this regard globally available datasets that provide broad-scale information on wetlands (such as the UN Environment Programme's Freshwater Ecosystems Explorer⁹) are useful, and could provide a basis for Tier-1 NWIs that serve as the starting point for more refined, detailed and more locally relevant wetland inventories. This would provide nationally produced wetland extent data for inland, human-made and marine/coastal inventories, thus providing the expected data for SDG indicator 6.6.1 for which the Convention is a co-custodian, with UNEP.
26. The Secretariat's NWI support mechanism¹⁰ provides a means to support such efforts and can, subject to availability of resources, support Contracting Parties facing particular capacity and financial constraints to develop at least Tier 1 NWIs by the end of the 2025-2027 triennium, and may also support updating and strengthening of existing NWIs if resources permit. Development of a partnership initiative on the use of Earth observation in wetland inventory, monitoring, assessment and conservation, in line with the recommendations arising from the Earth observation consultation undertaken in 2024¹¹ will greatly support such efforts.

Wetlands in sustainable development and sectoral plans

27. Better integration of wetland conservation and wise use into national policy consideration will support national efforts to achieve numerous SDGs. Guidance on integrating wetland conservation, restoration and wise use into national sustainable development strategies is being prepared by the STRP in the context of its work plan for 2023-2025 (Task 4.3). This will be presented as a Briefing Note, including review of wetlands in sustainable development strategies under different economic development contexts; identification of key enablers and underlying enabling conditions which support integration of wetlands in sustainable development strategies; and review of experiences from other MEAs. This guidance will support further action by Contracting Parties.
28. Environmental economic accounts for wetlands provide an opportunity to mainstream wetlands as national assets, by providing information on the impacts of the economy on the environment and the contribution of the environment to the economy. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) provides a framework for this, following an accounting structure similar to the System of National Accounts (SNA). In developing NWIs, Contracting Parties may consider requirements for the application of wetland data in SEEA, thereby promoting the integration of wetlands into statistical systems and the development of environmental economic accounts for wetlands. Building close coordination and collaboration with national statistics offices is important in this regard.
29. Training conducted in the context of the Secretariat's NWI support mechanism may address environmental-economic accounting as an important application of NWIs, including for example in the context of Module 3 of the training programme, subject to availability of resources.

⁹ See <https://www.sdg661.app/>.

¹⁰ See document SC63 Doc.10 for more information.

¹¹ See document COP15 Doc.11 *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)*, Annex 2.

Establishing links or collaboration between the Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting and the STRP, in the context of its work plan for 2025-2028, may help overcome some of the unique challenges in developing wetland economic accounts.

CEPA

30. CEPA implementation at the national level can be strengthened by continuing to support CEPA Focal Points through information sharing and capacity development. Key to improved CEPA implementation at the national level will be the provision of support and encouragement to Contracting Parties and CEPA Focal Points in developing national CEPA Action plans. COP15 National Reports indicate 32% of Contracting Parties have CEPA Actions Plans in place. In an effort to support Parties in developing CEPA Action Plans during coming triennia, the Secretariat will develop a guidance document and an online training course, and share examples and best practices.
31. Further development of cross-sectoral wetland committees can help realize synergies across programmes of work and in the implementation of various MEAs, by identifying and emphasizing wetland benefits in national and local policies and plans in key sectors, and in broader sustainable development plans. Currently 46% of Contracting Parties have national wetland committees in place. During the coming triennia, the CEPA Oversight Panel may be tasked with providing recommendations on how Contracting Parties can be encouraged and supported in establishing functional wetland committees.