



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

**“Protecting wetlands for our common future”
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23-31 July 2025**

COP15 Doc.23.13

Note from the Secretariat:

At its 64th meeting, the Standing Committee in Decision SC64-31 iv) instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2 on RIS updating to COP15 for its consideration, with all proposed amendments in square brackets.

Draft resolution on [updates to] Ramsar Information Sheets

1. RECALLING Article 3.2 of the Convention, which requires information on changes or likely changes to the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance to be passed without delay to the Bureau, or Secretariat, of the Convention;
2. ALSO RECALLING Resolution 5.3 on *Procedure for initial designation of sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, which requests Contracting Parties to submit completed information sheets for listed Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar Sites”), and Resolution XI.8 on *Streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and subsequent updates*, through which the Parties adopted the *Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS)* – 2012 revision;
3. FURTHER RECALLING Resolution VI.13 on *Submission of information on sites designated for the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance*, which urges Contracting Parties to revise the data provided in Ramsar Information Sheets every six years for monitoring purposes, and Resolution XIV.13 on *The status of Sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, which requests Parties to update, as a matter of urgency, the RIS for their Ramsar Sites at least once every six years;
4. NOTING the adoption of the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands* through Resolution VII.11 (1999) and the adoption of revisions through, *inter alia*, Resolution XIII.12 on *Guidance on identifying peatlands as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) for global climate change regulation as an additional argument to existing Ramsar criteria* and Resolution XIV.18 on *Waterbird population estimates to support new and existing Ramsar Site designations under Ramsar Criterion 6 – use of alternative estimates*;

5. FURTHER NOTING the Ramsar Regional Center East Asia (RRC-EA) practitioner's guide for *Ramsar Site Designation and Updating of Ramsar Information Sheets*¹;
6. AWARE of the various time, capacity, and resource components associated with collating and reporting information on Ramsar Sites, both at the time of their listing and during subsequent updates, and of the particular challenges for countries with limited capacity or economic limitations, and thus the need for reporting requirements to be highly prioritized, streamlined and efficient;
7. NOTING the importance of data collated in Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), [some of which is available elsewhere,] to inform reporting on targets and indicators outlined in the Strategic Plan;
8. HIGHLIGHTING the critical importance of monitoring changes in ecological character and ensuring that is given consideration in any changes to timing of RIS updates; and
9. ALSO AWARE that well-organized data and information submitted through the RIS may be useful for the delivery of ecologically sound and cost-effective wetland management measures, which are necessary for the continued provision of ecosystem services to human populations and direct economic benefits;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. [DECIDES to establish][REQUESTS the Standing Committee to establish, at its 66th meeting,] [an RIS working group][a working group on RIS updating], [PLACEHOLDER ON THE ADOPTION OF THE TORs][with new terms of reference based on those in Annex 1 of document SC64 Doc.26²];
11. DECIDES that the RIS working group is to conduct the following work in the 2025-2028 triennium [for adoption at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP16), and in so doing to take][taking] into account [the report of the Working Group on RIS Updating][the proposals and challenges identified by Contracting Parties listed in Annex 2 of document SC64 Doc.26³]:
 - a. Conduct a Party-led prioritization of the essential data required for RIS [updates], and subsequent update to the RIS format, with the aim of [reducing the administrative and technical burden on the Parties and] enabling the timely submission of data and information [, based on the following guidelines:
 - i. Reducing the administrative and technical burden on Parties, taking into consideration existing capacity;
 - ii. Distinguishing compulsory and optional fields in the RIS format; and identifying fields that can be removed, divided or combined or added;

¹ See <http://rrcea.org/ramsar-site-designation-and-updating-of-ris/?ckattempt=1>.

² Secretariat note: The terms of reference at Annex 1 of document SC64 Doc.26 are included in square brackets as Annex 1 of the present document. The Secretariat also notes the guideline for non-permanent subgroups and working groups at Annex 1 of Resolution XIV.3 on *The effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention on Wetlands*, that a working group "must define its terms of reference for presentation to an upcoming Standing Committee".

³ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc64-doc26-report-working-group-ris-updating>.

- iii. Distinguishing fields that require update, especially critical ones (e.g. factors with adverse effect), from those which do not (e.g. climate or site boundaries);
 - iv. Identifying fields for which the RIS format wording requires updating or clarification and, where possible, improve their definition and description;
 - v. Considering an improvement of the cycle for updates; and
 - vi. Considering advice from the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) on the scientific and technical aspects of the prioritization and subsequent update of the RIS format, and ensuring that important historical data is not lost as a result of updating the RIS format];
- b. Based on the outcomes of the prioritization exercise and subsequent update of the RIS format, [conduct][consider] an update of the relevant sections of the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands (2022 update)*⁴ following agreement at the appropriate meeting of the COP to the outcomes of the Working Group;
 - c. Provide guidance on completeness of data to be submitted for an RIS update and provide context for how the submitted information will be utilized; [and
 - d. Provide proposals for changes, both through the submission of recommendations to Standing Committee and the provision of a draft resolution for COP16;]
12. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to [identify and recommend to the Standing Committee means to enable the automated transfer of data to RIS from external sources for specific fields, including species lists;][, based on the outcomes of the working group on RIS updating:
- a. Identify and recommend to the Standing Committee means to enable the automated transfer of data to RIS from external sources for specific fields, including species lists;
 - b. Improve the user-friendliness of the online and offline templates and database filters for the RSIS; and
 - c. Allow for the upload of bulk updates of offline inputs;]
13. INVITES Contracting Parties to [utilize][consider] the Ramsar Regional Center East Asia (RRC-EA) practitioner's guide for *Ramsar Site Designation and Updating of Ramsar Information Sheets*⁵ as a [reference][starting point][guidance] for how a Contracting Party can update RIS, and INVITES the RRC-EA to work with Contracting Parties to improve the guide, in line with the agreed updated RIS format;] and
14. REQUESTS the STRP to consider the recommendations of the working group and provide advice on maintaining the scientific integrity of RIS data collection in this and any future work of a working group on RIS updating.

⁴ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/strategic-framework-guidelines-future-development-list-wetlands-international-importance-2>.

⁵ See <http://rrcea.org/ramsar-site-designation-and-updating-of-ris/?ckattempt=1>

[Annex 1 Working Group on RIS Updating: Terms of reference

1. Background

- 1.1 In Decision SC62-53 the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit a report to SC63 on the challenges and opportunities related to the submission and updating of Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), including:
- a. systemic, procedural and other technical challenges and options; and
 - b. financial challenges, needs and opportunities.

In doing so the Secretariat was instructed to obtain and collate input in consultation with Contracting Parties, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and other stakeholders. The Secretariat was also instructed to develop an approach to undertake the task in consultation with Contracting Parties through written procedures and online session(s).

- 1.2 Through a notification sent on 17 October 2023, the Secretariat invited Contracting Parties to provide information on challenges and opportunities related to the submission and updating of RIS. Submissions were made by 11 Parties. The Secretariat presented an overview of challenges identified and proposals made by Contracting Parties to the STRP during its 26th meeting (STRP26) in February 2024, for discussion and to consult the Panel on possible actions. The Panel's input is reflected in SC63 Doc.22.
- 1.3 The report of the Secretariat to SC63 (SC63 Doc.22) on the challenges and opportunities related to the submission and updating of RIS provided an overview of the RIS update process, the Secretariat's work to improve this process, and the importance of the network of Wetlands of International Importance to global conservation efforts. The report also outlined the consultation process undertaken by the Secretariat, which identified challenges, proposals and actions relating to the RIS update process, across the following themes:
- a. RIS review process
 - b. RIS updating cycle
 - c. RIS format
 - d. Capacity
- 1.4 In response to SC63 Doc.22, the Standing Committee, through Decision SC63-33, established a working group to further elaborate on the priority actions presented in document SC63 Doc.22, in consultation with the Secretariat and the STRP, to inform the preparation of a draft resolution on strengthening future processes on updating the RIS. The working group was instructed to provide a report to SC64, which will contain an update on its work, and propose next steps.

2. Purpose and mandate

- 2.1 The purpose of the Working Group on RIS Updating, established by SC63, is to:
- Assess and prioritise the challenges and opportunities provided in the report to SC63, with reference to the written and verbal comments provided by Parties to the Working Group.
 - Assess the feasibility, resourcing, legal, procedural and staffing implications for each option.
 - Rank feasible options for recommendation to Standing Committee.
 - Identify feasible options to reform the RIS update process and RIS format, to:

- Simplify and improve the efficiency of the RIS update process.
 - Make the RIS update process more useful and relevant to Parties and the Secretariat.
 - Update the RIS format with a focus on relevance of information, simplicity, and capacity implications for Contracting Parties.
 - Consult with Parties and the Secretariat to identify the key barriers to the preparation, update and review of RIS, and use this to inform the outputs of the working group.
- 2.2 Based on the results of the prioritisation and consultation, the WG will
- Submit a report to SC64 containing an update on the work to date and recommending the next steps in the process for Standing Committee's endorsement.
 - The report to SC64 will also contain guidance to the Secretariat on updating of the standard operating procedure for RIS review (RIS Review SOP).
 - Propose updates (if necessary) to the Strategic Framework that give effect to the options identified by the WG.
 - Propose a process to update the RIS template, for completion in the 2025-2028 triennium.
 - Develop a draft resolution on strengthening future processes on updating the RIS.
 - Identify a process to work through the backlog of RIS updates that are currently sitting with the Convention's Secretariat.

3. Composition and regional representation

- 3.1 The Working Group will have at least one member from each region of the Convention.
- 3.2 The initial composition of the Working Group is Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Chair of the STRP. Other Contracting Parties will be able to join at any point during the Working Group's tenure by expressing their interests to the Working Group Chair and/or the Secretariat.
- 3.3 The Management Working Group and Subgroup on Finance will be updated as appropriate.
- 3.4 The Working Group may invite external parties, as appropriate, to observe and attend meetings as required.

4. Structure, meetings and Secretariat support

- 4.1 The Working Group will appoint among itself a Chair (Australia), and a Vice Chair (Rwanda) and any other roles that it deems necessary.
- 4.2 The Working Group will hold meetings using means that allow the full and active participation of all members and/or regions in the Group. These may be face-to-face (in association with other meetings of the Convention), hybrid or virtual, the latter using an agreed platform to which all members have access.
- 4.3 The Working Group will take decisions by consensus.
- 4.4 The Chair and Vice Chair will liaise and work closely with other bodies of the Convention and relevant working groups and/or external parties as necessary.

- 4.5 The Secretariat will provide secretariat services for the Working Group (meeting invitations and minutes) and act as a point of contact.
- 4.6 The Secretariat through a notification, shall inform all Contracting Parties of the upcoming meetings of the Working Group.
- 4.7 If necessary, the Working Group may engage consultancy services to support or conduct the above activities, subject to the available resources.

5. Working schedule

- 5.1 A working schedule is provided below, but may change to accommodate the needs and schedules of the working group and its members:

| Date | Purpose |
|----------------|--|
| August 2024 | <p><i>Second meeting of the Working Group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>to establish TORs, and prioritise the work of the WG</i> - <i>Allocate responsibilities to fill out each theme in the table</i> - <i>Approve a consultation exercise and decide on the key themes</i> <p><i>Update table of challenges and opportunities for prioritisation exercise.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare consultation survey for Parties</i></p> |
| September 2024 | <p><i>Third meeting of the Working Group</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Approve updated table template</i> - <i>Approve consultation survey</i> - <i>Discuss request for funding from Subgroup on Finance</i> <p><i>Draft report for SC64 for WG review</i></p> |
| October 2024 | <p><i>Fourth meeting of the Working Group</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Decide key focus of draft resolution</i> <p><i>Consultation survey open (2-3 weeks)</i></p> <p><i>Written input from Secretariat on feasibility of options</i></p> <p><i>Theme leads draft input to table</i></p> <p><i>Report to SC64 (21/10/24)</i></p> |
| November 2024 | <p><i>Fifth meeting of the Working Group</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Review consultation results</i> - <i>Discuss Secretariat input</i> - <i>Review updated table</i> <p><i>Draft resolution (21/11/24)</i></p> |
| December 2024 | <i>Finalise updated table and draft priorities and circulate for comment</i> |
| January 2025 | <p><i>Sixth meeting of the Working Group, at SC64</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Update attendees on progress</i> - <i>Prioritise key actions from the table</i> <p><i>Standing Committee 64</i></p> <p><i>Seek SC64 decisions to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Direct the Secretariat to prepare and consult on a RIS Update SOP,</i> - <i>Allow the WG to start drafting an updated RIS Template, for completion in the 2025-2028 Triennium</i> - <i>Direct and fund the Secretariat to commence a ‘congestion busting’ exercise to update unprocessed RIS.</i> |
| February 2025 | <p><i>Seventh meeting of the Working Group</i></p> <p><i>TBC - commence update of RIS Update SOP</i></p> <p><i>TBC - commence update of RIS Template</i></p> |

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|-------------------|--|
| | <i>TBC - commence congestion-busting of RIS updates by the Secretariat</i> |
| <i>March 2025</i> | <i>Eighth meeting of the Working Group</i> |
| <i>April 2025</i> | <i>Ninth meeting of the Working Group</i> |
| <i>May 2025</i> | <i>Tenth meeting of the Working Group</i> |
| <i>June 2025</i> | <i>Finalise intersessional work</i> |
| <i>July 2025</i> | <i>COP15</i> |

5.2 A detailed workplan will be developed in line with these TORs, through the WG.

6. Budget

Funding may be required to support several of the Working Group's tasks, either with the approval of the subgroup on Finance, or through voluntary contributions.]