



"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"
7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999

Agenda item X

Regional overview of implementation of the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in Eastern Europe

The National Reports upon which this overview is based can be consulted on the Ramsar Web site,
http://ramsar.org/cop7_natl_rpt_index.htm

Contracting Parties in the Eastern European region - Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia.

Contracting Parties yet to submit National Reports - Croatia

§I. Major achievements since COP6 and priorities for the next triennium

The following have been prepared based on the advice provided by the National Reports submitted for COP7 as summarised in Sections II and III.

A. Main achievements since COP6

The COP7 National Reports indicate that, during the 1997-1999 triennium, there has been significant effort within the Eastern European region in the following areas of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, with more than half of the Contracting Parties having taken positive action:

- A1. Wetland conservation and sustainable use issues have been incorporated by many Contracting Parties within wider environmental and nature conservation policy frameworks, e.g. National Biodiversity Strategies/Action Plans.
- A2. Most Contracting Parties require Environmental Impact Assessment for certain projects and programmes likely to impact on wetlands.
- A3. Wetland restoration and rehabilitation projects are being implemented by many Contracting Parties in the region (although other countries are giving highest priority to conservation and wise use of remaining wetlands).

- A4. There is an increasing number of Education and Public Awareness activities for wetlands, notably those led by NGOs.
- A5. National Ramsar Committees (or equivalent) have been established by a majority of Contracting Parties.
- A6. There are many examples of actions in favour of transboundary wetland management, including designation of Ramsar sites in transboundary locations.
- A7. There is a clear awareness of the need to strengthen coordination at a national level with other environment-related conventions.
- A8. Many important wetland conservation and wise use projects in the region are being supported by bilateral or multilateral donors.

B. Priorities for the next triennium

Comparison of the National Reports with the Strategic Plan suggests the following priorities for the 2000-2002 triennium. These are areas of the Strategic Plan where the COP7 National Reports indicate relatively low levels of activity for the Eastern European region during the 1997-1999 triennium.

- B1. Increase efforts for development and implementation of discrete National Wetland Policies (recognizing that these may be components of wider strategic and policy frameworks).
- B2. Promote actions to address the impact of toxic chemicals and pollution on wetlands.
- B3. Develop and implement demonstration projects on economic evaluation of wetland functions and benefits.
- B4. Develop and implement government-led education and public awareness programmes, including the incorporation of wetland issues in formal curricula.
- B5. Review wetland-related training needs and opportunities and seek to develop national and regional/subregional training programmes.
- B6. Make efforts to ensure that greater resources (from national and international sources) are made available for the development, implementation and monitoring of management plans for Ramsar sites.
- B7. Include under-represented wetland types in the Ramsar List.
- B8. Enhance participation of Ramsar sites in international twinning programmes.

Other areas of the Strategic Plan show less clear regional trends, with some Contracting Parties reporting significant achievements, and others indicating that no activities have been carried out.

This undoubtedly reflects the enormous variations in factors such as extent of national territory, extent of anthropogenic impacts on wetlands, and current economic situation. The latter factor is of special significance, in that some Contracting Parties with 'economies in transition' have a relatively favourable situation (for example, a number are candidate Member States of the European Union), whilst others face extremely difficult economic conditions, with low per capita GDP and little capacity for the public sector to invest in environmental protection and sustainable development.

§II. Description of activities undertaken

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1 To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

1. Within the Ramsar Eastern European Region, there are currently 18 Contracting Parties as listed on the first page of this overview. Georgia and Ukraine have both joined the Convention since COP6. Four States in the region are not yet Contracting Parties, namely Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Moldova (Note: other States of the former USSR which are not yet Contracting Parties are covered in the Asian Regional Overview). The Bureau is in regular contact with all four States and three of them participated in the 1998 Pan-European Regional Meeting (see below). There are strong grounds for believing that membership in the region will be universal within the lifetime of the 1997-2002 Strategic Plan.
2. The Pan-European Regional Meeting (mentioned above) was hosted by the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and held in Riga in June 1998. It was the third such meeting of the Convention (after Lelystad, The Netherlands, in 1992, and Varna, Bulgaria, in 1995). All but two Contracting Parties from Eastern Europe attended, thanks largely to generous financial support from Western European Contracting Parties (Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). The meeting was very successful, providing excellent networking opportunities and producing concrete conclusions and recommendations which deal with four main topics: transboundary cooperation, national and regional wetland policies, the role of restoration and rehabilitation in managing European wetlands, and building financial and technical capacity for wetland conservation and wise use. These conclusions, together with copies of the technical papers on which discussions were based, are available from the Ramsar Bureau.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2 To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.

National Wetland Policies/Strategies and their implementation

3. During 1998/99, the Ramsar Bureau, in close consultation with the Administrative Authority for each Contracting Party, has carried out a major review of wetland policy development and implementation in both Eastern and Western Europe. For Eastern Europe, a number of clear conclusions can be drawn.

4. Only four countries in the region (Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland and the Slovak Republic) have drawn up strategic or policy instruments related specifically to wetlands. In each case, the strategies have been drawn up and published by the Administrative Authority responsible for Ramsar implementation in the country concerned, with varying degrees of consultation with other bodies. A fourth Contracting Party, the Russian Federation, has drafted a "Strategy for Wetland Conservation in the Russian Federation" which was discussed at a major conference in February 1999, and will be further developed as a result.
5. More than 75% of all Eastern European Contracting Parties do not have any strategic or policy instrument dealing specifically with wetlands. However, all Contracting Parties have multiple legal and administrative instruments which deal in part with wetlands or are otherwise relevant to wetland conservation efforts. In the majority of cases, the preferred approach has been to include wetlands within National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Strategies and other similar instruments.
6. The situation in each Contracting Party (as provided to the Ramsar Bureau during the above-mentioned review or in the National Reports for COP7) is as follows (note: this is a summary of strategic and policy instruments related to wetlands, and not a complete listing of other instruments such as laws or regulations):
 7. **Albania:** National Biodiversity Strategy (in preparation), is expected to have a chapter on coastal wetlands.
 - Armenia:** a wetland policy will be prepared as part of the National Environmental Action Plan.
 - Bulgaria:** a National Action Plan for the conservation of the most important wetlands in Bulgaria was published in 1994.
 - Croatia:** wetlands are covered in the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity.
 - Czech Republic:** the National Biodiversity Strategy will include a chapter on wetlands.
 - Estonia:** a National Programme on the Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands was finalised in 1997; it is hoped that the National Environment Action Plan will include specific references to wetlands; a National Biodiversity Strategy is in preparation.
 - Georgia:** the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is expected to include wetlands.
 - Hungary:** the National Biodiversity Strategy will include a chapter on wetlands.
 - Latvia:** the National Environmental Policy Plan for Latvia and the National Environmental Action Program include elements relevant for wetlands. A National Biodiversity Strategy is being prepared.
 - Lithuania:** the Lithuanian Environmental Strategy, and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan include actions that apply specifically to wetlands.
 - Poland:** a Strategy for Wetland Protection in Poland has been developed under the National Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity, and published 1998.
 - Romania:** the National Biodiversity Strategy has a strong focus on wetlands.
 - Russian Federation:** a Draft Strategy for Wetland Conservation in the Russian Federation has been prepared.

Slovak Republic: a National Programme for Wetland Management was adopted in 1997; a section on wetlands is included in the National Biodiversity Strategy.

Slovenia: the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, together with other national policy instruments relevant for wetlands will be completed within about 5 years.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: the National Environmental Action Plan does not refer specifically to wetlands; elaboration of a separate wetland policy is under consideration.

Ukraine: multiple instruments, including National Biodiversity Strategy, are relevant to wetlands.

Yugoslavia: preparations for development of a National Wetland Strategy are underway.

8. Finally, the National Reports to COP7 emphasise that human and financial resource limitations are significant constraints on the implementation of all these strategic and policy instruments.

Reviews of legislation

9. For the region as a whole, the 1990s have been a period of rapid legislative change, deriving from the political transformations at the beginning of the decade. However, only Estonia and Georgia state explicitly in their National Reports that a review of legislation affecting wetlands has been carried out. A few Contracting Parties state clearly that no such review has been made, but most National Reports do not give clear advice on this issue. Many Contracting Parties list the main laws relevant to wetland conservation, but do not indicate the extent to which these are based on a comprehensive review of all legislation affecting wetlands, nor the degree to which efforts have been made to synthesise fragmented, and even contradictory, pieces of legislation affecting wetlands. A number of countries in the region have undertaken reviews of their legislation in preparation for harmonisation with European Union norms, but there is no indication that wetland issues have been a key consideration in such reviews.

Integrated approaches to wetland management

10. The National Reports highlight many important studies and pieces of new legislation which promote more integrated approaches, but the extent of implementation 'on the ground' is unclear. Some of the most noteworthy examples are outlined below.
11. An Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) study (including wetlands) has been completed in Albania and a similar project is being undertaken in Georgia. A major ICZM project covering the wetland-rich Baltic coastlines of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland has also been carried out. In Bulgaria, municipalities situated along the Black Sea coast have prepared Territorial Development Plans (TDP) financed by the World Bank, and an Environmental Impact Assessment for each TDP has been approved by the Ramsar Administrative Authority.
12. In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Local Development and the Ministry of Environment are working together to integrate ecological considerations more fully into territorial planning.

Poland and the Slovak Republic have both introduced a series of new legislation and regulations designed specifically to promote a more integrated approach to water and land-use planning. In the Russian Federation, a workshop in early 1998 developed a Strategy and Action Plan for integrating land use and conservation planning in the Lower Volga.

Wise use publications produced

13. Refer to paragraph 23, under General Objective 3, below.

Toxic chemicals and pollution

14. A number of Contracting Parties report legislative and institutional reforms, but in most cases, there is no specific information on the link between toxic chemicals and wetlands. Bulgaria reports that a new law on toxic chemicals is in preparation and that a special department of the Ministry of Environment and Waters has been established to implement international obligations linked to toxic chemicals and pollution. In the Czech Republic, the Water Act has been amended and a new Wastes Act adopted. The Slovak Republic has also introduced recent legislation on waste disposal and chemicals, whilst Georgia and Latvia have new legislation on water, and Romania has introduced a National Register of Potentially Toxic Substances. Poland reports a range of measures taken in the frameworks of the International Programme on Chemical Safety, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and the Basel Convention. A number of National Reports (e.g. Russian Federation and Ukraine) note that pollution has been reduced as a result of economic difficulties curtailing industrial and agricultural output. Other Contracting Parties report improvements due to construction of sewage treatment plants; for example, Lithuania reports a reduction of pollution in the Nemunas Delta Regional Park and Ramsar site. Pollution reduction in the Baltic has been a key focus of activities under the Helsinki Convention.

Economic valuation techniques

15. Sixteen out of 17 Contracting Parties indicate that economic valuation techniques are not widely used in relation to wetlands. Romania reports that within the Danube Delta (Ramsar Site = 647,000 ha), there are periodic value assessments of fish stocks, reed stocks, and tourism, and economic evaluations of pasture, reed cutting and ecotourism potential.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs)

16. All 17 Contracting Parties report that Environmental Impact Assessments are required under legislation for activities likely to have a significant effect on the natural environment, including wetlands. However, few National Reports advise on the extent to which EIA legislation takes into account the special characteristics of wetlands (e.g. in relation to catchment planning, or the cumulative impact of multiple small-scale developments on wetland functions and values).

Restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands

17. More than half of the Contracting Parties in Eastern Europe report that there are active restoration and rehabilitation projects for wetlands. Some of the remaining Parties indicate that restoration is a high priority, but insufficient financial resources are available for implementation. On the other hand, Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine note that priority is being given to the protection and conservation management of the many wetlands in their territories which still retain their basic ecological value.
18. In the Czech Republic, the Government established a Programme of Revitalization of River Systems in 1992, and funding has increased from US\$ 1 million in 1992 to US\$ 13 million in 1998. In Hungary, major restoration efforts have been made in Hortobágy National Park and Ramsar Site, with Danish and Dutch financial support, whilst other projects have been implemented at Kardoskút and Kiskunság Ramsar Sites. In Poland, the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management and the 'Ecofund' have supported many restoration projects in recent years, with the National Fund playing an especially important role in water quality rehabilitation. Several major polder restoration projects have been carried out (or are planned) in the Romanian part of the Danube Delta. In the Slovak Republic, restoration and rehabilitation is one of the four main principles guiding the National Programme on Wetland Management.

Encouraging active and informed action by local stakeholders

19. Lithuania reports that the duties of National Park, Regional Park, and Strict Nature Reserve staff include education and partnership activities within the local communities. For example, within the Nemunas delta Regional Park and Ramsar site, efforts are being made to encourage 'nature friendly' farming methods.

Private sector involvement

20. In spite of a protracted period of economic transition and the very recent emergence of the private sector in much of the region, about half of the Contracting Parties (8/17) report efforts to build new partnerships for wetland conservation and wise use. All of these efforts are in relation to private sector activities directly related to the management of specific wetlands, notably farming, fishpond production, reed cutting, water management, and ecological tourism. Usually, the focus has been on providing technical and (in some cases) financial assistance to promote the use of production/management techniques which are both profitable for the private landowners involved and benign/beneficial in terms of their impact on the ecological character of wetlands. There are clearly great variations between countries of the region in terms of degree of development of the private sector; yet even where the process is most advanced, the National Reports suggest that links have not yet been made between the wider corporate sector and the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3
To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels

Education and Public Awareness programmes (EPA)

21. More than 75% of Contracting Parties (13/17) report that there are no government-run national programmes for EPA focusing on wetlands. Conversely, 70% (12/17) National Reports make reference to NGO-led EPA programmes for wetlands. Amongst the government programmes including wetlands are: the Lithuanian Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan, adopted by the Government in 1998.

Wise Use as part of formal education curricula

22. The great majority (>80%) of National Reports indicate that wise use of wetlands is not included in formal education curricula. However, three Contracting Parties report that some progress has been made. Wetland issues are “quite well covered” in the secondary and tertiary curricula in Estonia, whilst in Latvia, wetland conservation and the principles of wise use are included in selected tertiary curricula. In the Slovak Republic, the environmental protection curricula for primary and secondary schools entered into force in 1996 and cover aspects of wetland conservation and wise use (e.g. the ecology text book for secondary schools includes wetland management and restoration).

Wise use publications produced

23. Refer also to paragraph 13, under General Objective 2, above. Please note that only publications which have a strong wise/sustainable use element are listed below. The national reports also list a wide range of other publications. For further details, refer to the national report and/or the Ramsar Administrative Authority for the relevant Contracting Party.

Albania: Conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Mediterranean basin - focus on the Kune-Vaini Lagoon (national report in the framework of the 1996-98 ‘MedWet2’ project supported by the European Commission’s LIFE programme).

Armenia: proceedings of the International Conference on Lake Sevan: Problems and Action Strategy.

Bulgaria: Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme newsletter.

Czech Republic: Sustainable use of fishponds in Trebonsko Protected Landscape Area and Biosphere Reserve; Wetlands of the Czech Republic - proceedings of the Ramsar 25th Anniversary Conference; Floodplain ecology and management.

Hungary: Nature conservation in fishponds; Conservation problems of Hungarian floodplains.

Latvia: Wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in Latvia.

Poland: Strategy of wetland protection in Poland; Restoration and management of fens; Economic and natural valuation of fishponds.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: reedbeds and fish traps.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Institutional coordination and cooperation

24. National Ramsar/Wetland Committees (or similar structures) have been established by 11 Contracting Parties in the region (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia). Detailed information on the structure and functioning of these committees can be obtained from the Ramsar Administrative Authority concerned or from the Ramsar Bureau. In most cases, the committees are composed of both governmental and non-governmental members. In a few cases, the committees are exclusively governmental, whilst in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the National Ramsar Committee is primarily an NGO body.
25. For the six Contracting Parties where no national committee exists, there are a variety of site-specific and project-specific working groups and consultative bodies which partly fill the role of inter-sectoral coordination on wetland issues. For example, decisions on the management of Armenia's largest wetland, Lake Sevan, are made by Inter-Ministerial Agreements.

Coordinated implementation of international conventions

26. All 18 Ramsar Contracting Parties in the Eastern European Region are also Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), and the World Heritage Convention (WHC). Nine are also Parties to CITES, five are also Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS or Bonn Convention), and two are also Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification. The National Reports to COP7 indicate that in most Contracting Parties, there is a common Government body (usually the Ministry of Environment or its equivalent) responsible for Ramsar, CBD, FCCC, and, where applicable, CMS, thereby facilitating exchange of information. Responsibility for WHC is more typically shared between Ministries or led by Ministries of Culture (or equivalent). No Contracting Party reports the existence of an overall coordination structure for international environment conventions at the national level. However, Georgia has established a Conventions Division within the Department of Biodiversity of the Ministry of Environment.

Training needs and opportunities

27. Whilst most Contracting Parties (12/17) report that some of their nationals have received wetland-related training in other countries (e.g. France, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, UK), only a small minority have either undertaken (or plan to undertake) a review of wetland training needs, or developed their own wetland-specific training activities. In the Czech Republic, the Wetland Training Centre established by Wetlands International has prepared a framework training strategy which focuses on sustainable management of river basins and wetland management planning (the latter in cooperation with the Wetland Advisory and Training Centre (WATC) in Lelystad, The Netherlands). Other courses may deal with wetland restoration, constructed wetlands and nutrient recycling, sustainable management of fishponds, monitoring techniques, and reedbed management. In the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Environment is responsible for developing and maintaining a database of

environmental study and training opportunities. Ukraine reports that whilst there are no training activities related to wetlands in general, relevant seminars have been held in the frameworks of specific international biodiversity projects, such as those dealing with the Danube Delta, Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

28. It is clear from the above that the provision of additional training opportunities, especially within the region, remains a high priority. Wetlands International, the Tour du Valat Biological Station (Camargue, France), and the Wetlands Advisory and Training Centre (WATC - Netherlands) prepared a series of recommendations on wetland training for the Pan-European Ramsar meeting held in Riga in June 1998. At the time of preparing this overview, the Ramsar Bureau is discussing with Wetlands International and other partners how the Convention can best help to turn these recommendations into concrete actions. Within the framework of the Danone/Evian Programme, the Ramsar Bureau is providing modest financial assistance to an Armenian graduate of the WATC course to set up a training programme in his own country.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

Status of management plans for Ramsar sites

29. Refer to the table summarising this information in Section §III and also to Ramsar COP7 DOCS. 13.3 and 15.2. It is clear from the table given in Section §III that development and implementation of management plans for existing Ramsar sites should remain a top priority for the foreseeable future in Eastern Europe. Much encouraging progress has been made, but the table shows that implementation has occurred at only one-fifth of the sites. The figures also appear to suggest that management actions are ongoing at certain sites, even though a management plan has not been fully developed. Similarly, many Contracting Parties report that some form of monitoring (e.g. biological surveys) are taking place in the absence of a complete management plan. The scarcity of human and financial resources are the most frequently mentioned limitations to effective management planning, whilst the need for training and improved access to relevant literature in local languages are likely to be important secondary factors.

Change in ecological character at Ramsar sites

30. These issues are considered in Ramsar COP7 DOCS. 13.3 and 15.2. In summary, three Contracting Parties (Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Yugoslavia) report negative changes to their Ramsar sites; five National Reports (Bulgaria, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) refer to positive changes; four Contracting Parties report that no changes have occurred since COP6; and the remaining five Contracting Parties (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland) report that changes (or potential changes) have been positive at some sites and negative at others. The most frequently mentioned causes of adverse change include eutrophication as a result of excess nutrients from sewage and agriculture; disruption of hydrological regime; illegal construction;

and over-growing of semi-natural wetlands (e.g. wet meadows) as a result of abandonment of traditional management. Positive changes have occurred as a result of increased management plan implementation, greater restoration efforts, and upgrading of waste water treatment. On the other hand, a number of Contracting Parties, especially in the east of the region, note that ‘positive’ changes for wetlands have stemmed largely from economic crisis. Many industries have been forced to close, whilst farmers are often unable to afford any fertilisers or herbicides/pesticides.

Montreux Record sites

31 These issues are considered in Ramsar COP7 DOCS. 13.3 and 15.2.

Sites referred to in COP6 Recommendation 6.17

32. These issues are considered in Ramsar COP7 DOCS. 13.3 and 15.2.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6

To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention’s criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and trans-frontier wetlands.

National inventories and directories of “important” wetlands

33. Half of the Contracting Parties (9/17) report having some form of national wetland inventory or directory, whilst the other half plan to undertake inventory work. However, the existing inventories in the region have often been carried out according to widely differing standards, definitions, and/or criteria, and there remains no overall inventory - even of internationally important wetlands - for the region as a whole. Wetlands International is currently working on a Pan-European wetland inventory, an activity which has also been identified as a major priority in the framework of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, and IUCN’s ‘Parks for Life’ programme, and which will undoubtedly help stimulate and coordinate efforts at the national level.

Estimates of wetland area and rates of loss and conversion

34. Whilst around two-thirds of Contracting Parties in the region report that they have reasonable estimates of the area covered by wetlands in their territories, almost none reports having any information concerning the rate at which wetlands are being lost or converted.

COP6 priorities for Ramsar listing and statements of intent

35. In the National Reports submitted for COP6 and/or during the Conference Plenary Sessions, the following Contracting Parties indicated plans for the designation of new Listed Sites: Bulgaria (2 new sites planned), Estonia (9 new sites planned), Hungary (40% increase in number and area), Lithuania (8 potential sites under consideration), Poland (3 new sites and 1

extension planned), Romania (1 new site planned, up to 30 could meet the Criteria), Russian Federation (29 potential Ramsar sites identified; 33 others under consideration), Slovenia (2 sites planned), Ukraine (participating at COP6 as a non-Contracting Party, had identified 22 candidate sites), and Yugoslavia (2 sites planned).

36. Since the COP6 National Reports were due (1 September 1995), new sites have been designated as follows: Albania (1 site), Bulgaria (1 new site, 1 extension), Czech Republic (1 site), Estonia (9 sites), Georgia (2 sites), Hungary (6 new sites, 2 extensions), Poland (3 new sites, 1 extension), Slovak Republic (5 sites), Ukraine (22 sites), Yugoslavia (2 sites). Of the remaining countries mentioned above, Romania, the Russian Federation and Slovenia indicate in their COP7 National Reports that progress continues to be made towards the designation of new sites. As of 15 February 1999, a total of 145 Ramsar sites have been designated by Contracting Parties in the Eastern European region.

Transfrontier sites

37. Nine Contracting Parties (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Yugoslavia) report that they have designated a combined total of 19 Ramsar sites in transboundary locations (13% of all sites in the region). In some cases (e.g. the Danube Delta shared by Romania and Ukraine, or the Dyje/Morava floodplains shared by the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic) both sides of the border are covered by Ramsar designations. In other cases, only a part of the wetland has been designated by one Contracting Party. The Russian Federation and the Slovak Republic have six Ramsar sites each which are located in transboundary wetlands. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovak Republic also share transboundary Ramsar sites with Austria (and therefore with the Western European Ramsar region). Austria, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic share a major wetland complex at the confluence of the Morava/March & Thaya/Dyje rivers, whilst Hungary and Austria share Lake Neusiedel/Fertö. Finally, the Russian Federation has designated Ramsar sites which are contiguous with wetlands in the territories of two Contracting Parties in the Ramsar 'Asia' Region, namely China (Lake Khanka and Torey Lakes) and Mongolia (Torey Lakes).
38. Nine Contracting Parties report plans for the designation of further Ramsar sites in transboundary locations. Of particular note is the initiative of Hungary, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine to designate a joint site in the upper part of the Tisza river, one of the most important tributaries of the Danube. This project was supported by a Ramsar Small Grants Fund allocation in 1997 and has been coordinated by a Hungarian NGO, in close cooperation with partners, including the Ramsar Administrative Authorities of all four Contracting Parties. It is hoped that in due course the project will lead to designation of the first quadri-partite Ramsar site in Europe.

<p>Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7 To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and</p>
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wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

Bilateral or multilateral activities for shared wetlands, watersheds and species

39. Except for the sites mentioned in paragraphs 37 and 38 above, and 41 below, the National Reports contain rather little detailed advice on bilateral or multilateral activities for shared wetlands or watersheds. However, relevant instruments and programmes include the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the River Danube (which entered into force in late 1998), the Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin, and the WWF Green Danube Programme; the Black Sea Environmental Programme; the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme established under the Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area; and the Mediterranean Wetlands initiative 'MedWet' established under the Ramsar framework.
40. In relation to shared wetland species, many countries in the region participate actively in bilateral or multilateral activities for shared wetland species. For example, five Ramsar Contracting Parties are also Contracting Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS or Bonn Convention), whilst nine are Contracting Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Regional instruments relevant to the conservation of wetland species include the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement under the Bonn Convention, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, and the CIS Agreement on Conservation and Wise Use of Migratory Birds and Mammals and their Habitats. Many countries in the region also contribute to the International Waterfowl Census organized by Wetlands International. Bulgaria is implementing a range of measures for globally endangered waterbird species in the framework of the bilateral Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme.

“Twinned” sites

41. Three Contracting Parties report that they have Ramsar sites which are twinned with Ramsar sites in the Western European Region. These are:
 - Lake Kolon at Izsák (Hungary) and Leighton Moss (UK)
 - Lake Engure (Latvia) and Lake Takern (Sweden)
 - Danube Delta (Romania) and Camargue (France)

In the case of Hungary and the UK, the twinning is organized within the EUROSITE framework. The Romania/France twinning programme is between the Regional Natural Park of the Camargue and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and benefits from funding provided by the Government of France, through the Ramsar Bureau. A number of technical exchanges have been arranged. Finally, the Latvian National Report states that the experiences gained during exchange visits with Sweden, “have been invaluable for both professional

biologists and students from Latvia visiting Lake Takern to involve in practical field activities and learn about its management and administration”.

Coordinated implementation of international conventions

42. Refer to paragraph 26, under General Objective 4, above.

Support from bilateral or multilateral donors

43. A number of projects supported by bilateral and multilateral donors relate to the existing and proposed transboundary Ramsar sites listed under General Objective 6, in paragraphs 48 and 49 above. The number of relevant activities in the region is enormous, with more than 80% (14/17) Contracting Parties reporting that external donor agencies are actively supporting their wetland conservation efforts. These agencies include major multilateral donors such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), The World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); European Union programmes such as LIFE, Phare and Tacis; bilateral governmental sources in Denmark, France, Japan, Monaco, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States; international NGOs such as BirdLife International, the European Nature Heritage Fund, the European Union for Coastal Conservation, EUROSITE, IUCN, Wetlands International, WWF International; and national NGOs such as BirdLife National Partners and WWF National Organizations. A number of the activities supported are transboundary in nature, covering wetlands and water resources in a wide geographical area (e.g. the Danube Basin, the Baltic coast, or the Black Sea and Sea of Azov). In 1997 and 1998, the Ramsar Small Grants Fund supported 12 projects in 10 Contracting Parties of the region.

Budgetary allocations for wetlands conservation and wise use outside the country and consultation between the development assistance agency and the Ramsar Administrative Authority

44. There are no such budgetary allocations or development assistance agencies located within Ramsar's Eastern European region.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8
To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

Budgetary allocations for wetlands conservation and wise use in the country

45. The majority of Contracting Parties in the region (12/17) report that their government budgets include funds for wetland conservation and wise use. However, of these, two-thirds indicate that these funds are part of a larger budget line and not specifically allocated or earmarked for wetlands. Albania, Armenia, Georgia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia report that there is no state budget allocation related to wetland conservation and wise use.

Annual and voluntary contributions

46. As of 15 February 1999, just over half of the Contracting Parties in Eastern Europe have met their responsibility to pay annual contributions to the Ramsar budget in full. Seven Contracting Parties have arrears for at least one year (not including 1999), totalling some CHF 200,000. The United Nations scale of contributions has altered radically for many States in the region since the political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This has led to a reduction in the burden on many Contracting Parties, but the National Reports make clear that a number of countries still face difficulties in making payments because of ongoing economic instability. The annual contributions invoiced in 1999 range from CHF 88.00 to CHF 43,516.00, reflecting the wide variations in GNP within the region. The median annual contribution invoiced in 1999 is approximately CHF 1,000.00
47. Latvia made a notable Additional Voluntary Contribution in 1998 through hosting the Pan-European Regional Meeting. In addition to bearing a number of direct costs (e.g. rental of meeting facilities and organization of an excursion and evening events), the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development also contributed substantial ‘in-kind’ assistance through provision of staff and office equipment. Slovenia hosted a Central European workshop on karst and other subterranean wetlands in September 1998. Several other Contracting Parties with relatively less difficult economic conditions than some in the region, have been able to cover at least part of their costs in attending Ramsar meetings. Finally, Hungary made contributions towards the costs of sponsored delegate travel for the Pan-European Regional Meeting and COP7.

Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

48. In this **optional** section of the National Report, Contracting Parties were asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

NGOs which have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in the country

49. All Contracting Parties in the region responded to this optional section, reflecting the rapid growth of the NGO sector in Eastern Europe. All Contracting Parties except Armenia reported the existence of NGOs which are active in wetland-related issues. These include international NGOs (e.g. the ‘Green Danube Programme’ of WWF International, and the Western Palearctic Waterfowl Census organized by Wetlands International) and national/local NGOs. The latter category are present in more than 90 percent of Contracting Parties.

Consultative mechanisms involving NGOs for wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation

50. There appears to be substantial scope for the development of consultative mechanisms, with only half of the National Reports indicating a structure for NGO-Government consultation, and only one-third reporting the existence of inter-NGO mechanisms.

NGO representative on official delegation to Ramsar COPs

51. Four Contracting Parties (23%) reported their plans to include an NGO member in their official delegation at COP7: Estonia, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Ukraine.

NGOs as part of site management committees

52. About one-third of Contracting Parties report that NGOs play an active role in Ramsar site management bodies.

Areas of Ramsar work where NGOs are most active

53. Wetland-related NGOs in Eastern Europe are closely involved with site management and protection, lobbying initiatives, restoration and, in particular, education and public awareness. A shortage of financial resources severely limits the possibilities for most NGOs.

Other comments and suggestions:

54. There are relatively few comments and suggestions made in this optional section of the National Reports. However, in relation to the Strategic Plan, a number of Contracting Parties highlight the difficulties of national implementation under very difficult economic circumstances - especially in the case of countries with very large territories. Several National Reports express appreciation of the role and work of the Ramsar Standing Committee, Ramsar Bureau, and NGO Partners, though some also stress the desirability of additional support and information in the framework of the Convention.

§III. Summary statistics

This Summary statistics section has been prepared based on the responses to each question asked in the National Reports prepared by each Contracting Party from the region. In Section I more detailed information is provided and the corresponding paragraphs are indicated in the “Nos” column below. In the table below the response of each Contracting Party to the key questions asked in the approved National Report format have been scored as either Y=Yes or N=No. In some cases the total of these responses may not be as great as the number of the National Reports submitted for this region because not every question was answered by all Contracting Parties.

This summary table is designed to give a clearer view at both the regional level of those areas of the Convention’s Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which have been addressed since the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties and conversely, where the National Reports indicate there has been little or no

activity. Those areas of activity where the National Reports have indicated little activity are shown in shaded cells.

No.	Strategic Plan General Objectives and (Actions)	Y	N
	General Objective 1 - Universal membership		
1, 2	Actions taken to encourage accession by non-Contracting Parties (Actions 1.1.1-2)	10	6
	General Objective 2 - Promoting the wise use of wetlands		
3 - 8	National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan in place (Action 2.1.2)	6	11
3 - 8	National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is being developed (Action 2.1.2)	3	14
3 - 8	Conservation and wise use of wetlands forms part (or will) of other national environmental / conservation planning initiatives (Action 2.1.2)	16	1
3 - 8	For countries with a Federal system of Government, there are Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state levels of Government (Action 2.1.2)	2	-
9	Review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands has been carried out (Action 2.1.1)	5	12
9	Legislative or similar amendments have been made (Action 2.1.1)	7	2
10-12	Efforts are being made to have wetlands managed as integrated components of land/water and coastal zone resources and environments (Action 2.2.2).	9	8
14	Actions taken to address the impacts of toxic chemicals and pollution on wetlands (Action 2.3.1)	2	14
13, 23	Production of "Wise Use" publication (Action 2.3.2)	8	8
15	Actions taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions (Actions 2.4.1, 2.4.3)	1	13
16	Environmental Impact Assessment is required for actions potentially impacting on wetlands (Actions 2.5.2, 2.5.3)	16	1
17, 18	Wetland restoration and rehabilitation is being undertaken to some extent (Actions 2.6.1- 3)	10	6
19	The participation of local stakeholders in the conservation and wise use of wetlands is being encouraged (Actions 2.7.1 - 4)	8	7
20	Private sector involvement in the conservation and wise use of wetlands is being encouraged (Actions 2.8.1-4)	8	7
	General Objective 3 - Raising awareness of wetland values and functions		
21	There exist government-run programmes for Education and Public Awareness in this country which include wetlands (Actions 3.2.1-2)	4	13
21	There exist non-government-run programmes for Education and Public Awareness in this country which include wetlands (Actions 3.2.1-2, 8.3.1)	13	2
22	Wetlands issues and Ramsar's Wise Use principles are included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. (Action 3.2.5)	3	10
	General Objective 4 - Reinforcing the capacity of institutions		
24, 25	Mechanisms are in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the institutions responsible for wetlands management (Actions 4.1.1-2, 8.1.9-10)	12	5
24, 25	A National Ramsar/Wetland Committee exists - government only (Actions 4.1.1-2, 8.1.9-10)	-	15
24, 25	A National Ramsar/Wetland Committee exists - it includes non-government representatives (it is cross-sectoral) (Actions 4.1.1-2, 8.1.9-10)	10	5
27, 28	A training needs analysis has been done or is underway (Action 4.2.1)	1	16

27, 28	A review of training opportunities has been completed (Action 4.2.2)	2	15
27, 28	Training modules or training programmes specifically for wetland managers have been completed, or are being developed (Action 4.2.3).	3	13
27, 28	Nationals of the country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country (Action 4.2.4).	12	4
General Objective 5 - Management of Listed sites			
29 - 32	See the table below and Ramsar COP7 DOCS. 13.3 and 15.2 - Proposal No.2		

Status of management plans for Ramsar sites

Contracting Party	Number of Ramsar sites	Plans being prepared (or updated)	Plans fully prepared	Plans being implemented	Plans include monitoring
Albania	1	0	1	0	1
Armenia	2	1	0	0	0
Bulgaria	5	1	4	0	4
Croatia #	4	-	-	-	-
Czech Republic	10	0	3	6	0
Estonia	10	7	2	1	8
Georgia	2	1	0	0	1
Hungary	19	13	0	6	7
Latvia	3	1	1	1	1
Lithuania	5	1	0	1	2
Poland	8	5	0	1	3
Romania	1	0	0	1	1
Russian Federation	35 (20 in Asia)	6	0	0	6
Slovak Republic	12	5	2	0	7
Slovenia	1	1	0	0	1
TFYR Macedonia	1	0	0	0	0
Ukraine	22	7	0	0	7
Yugoslavia	4	1	0	3	1
Totals	145 (141) #	50 (35%)	13(9%)	20(14%)	50 (35%)

Note: # = Croatia had not submitted its National Reports at the time of compiling this table and so the survey is based on 141 sites.

No.	General Objective 6 - Designation of Ramsar sites	Y	N
33	A national inventory of wetlands has been completed (Action 6.1.2)	9	8
33	A national inventory of wetlands is planned for the near future (Action 6.1.2)	10	6
35, 36	Actions been taken to list under-represented wetland types on the List or in response to the various related decisions from COP6 (Actions 6.2.1, 6.2.3)	6	10
37, 38	The country has sites included in the Ramsar list which are trans-frontier sites (Actions 6.2.5, 7.1.1)	10	4
	General Objective 7 - Mobilising international cooperation and financial assistance		
39, 40	Bilateral or multilateral activities have been taken, are underway, or are planned	14	2

	for the management of trans-frontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Actions 6.2.5, 7.1.1)		
41	Countries which have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others (Action 7.1.2).	5	11
26	Mechanisms in place to promote cooperative actions between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points for other international environment Conventions to which the country is a signatory (Actions 7.2.3-5, 7.2.7-8)	14	3
40	The country is cooperating as part of bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species (Action 7.2.5).	13	3
43	Multilateral and/or bilateral donors are supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in this country (Actions 7.3.3, 7.4.2, 7.4.4)	14	2
44	The government makes an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within the country (Action 7.4.1)	12	4
44	The country has a development assistance programme which includes funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries (Action 7.4.2) *	-	-
44	There is a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in the country, where one exists (Action 7.4.2) *	-	-

Note: *= Not applicable for Eastern European Countries