



**12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to
the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Ramsar COP12 DR10

Draft Resolution XII.10

Ramsar Wetland City¹ Accreditation (RWCA)

Submitted by Tunisia and the Republic of Korea

1. RECALLING the commitments made by Contracting Parties to achieving the wise use of all wetlands in their territory and to maintaining the ecological character of designated sites for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance;
2. RECALLING also that Resolution X.27 on *Wetlands and urbanization* underlined the importance of wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments, and of their wise use;
3. FUTHER RECALLING that Resolution XI.11 on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* requested the Convention to explore establishing a “wetland city accreditation” scheme, which may in turn provide positive branding opportunities for cities that demonstrate strong and positive relationships with wetlands;
4. RECALLING that the Information Document 23 submitted to the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties entitled *Background and context to the development of principles and guidance for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* noted that more than 50% of the Earth’s population now resides in cities, towns and urban settlements; that this shift to a predominantly urban population is predicted to continue at rates up to almost 4% per annum, with the rate of increase in urban populations being greatest in the least developed nations; that some estimates suggest that by 2030 80% of the human population will dwell in urban areas; and that whilst cities currently only occupy 2% of the Earth’s surface, they use 75% of the world’s natural resources and generate 70% of all the waste produced globally;
5. NOTING also that with the increasingly rapid urbanization, wetlands are being threatened in two principle ways:
 - i. through direct planned or unplanned conversion of wetlands to urban areas, leading to acute problems associated with polluted drainage, direct habitat loss, overexploitation of wetland plants and animals by urban and peri-urban residents, and the increased prevalence of non-native invasive species, uncontrolled waste disposal etc.; and
 - ii. through the watershed-related impacts of urban development, including increased demands for water, increased diffuse and point source pollution, the need for greater

¹ A city as defined in this draft resolution refers to a town or a village which has its own governing system (i.e. municipal authorities).

agricultural production, demands on the extractive industries to supply materials to support the development of urban infrastructure, and the water requirements of energy production to support the burgeoning urban population;

6. CONSIDERING that with the growing impact of urbanization on wetlands the importance of urban and peri-urban wetlands for biodiversity as well as the quality of urban life becomes even more significant;
7. AWARE of the huge potential of urban areas in terms of education and public awareness related to wetlands conservation, including through wetland education centres, guided tours for the public in general and schools in particular, and various communication means such as World Wetlands Day celebration, production of film documentaries, media events, etc.; and
8. TAKING into account the recommendations of workshops considering a city accreditation mechanism held in Morocco in 2012 and in the Republic of Korea and in Tunisia in 2014;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. APPROVES the development of a voluntary Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation (RWCA) system, which is attached as Annex 1 of this Resolution;
10. INVITES Contracting Parties to encourage Cities in their territories which are close to Ramsar Sites and request them to voluntarily submit nominations to the Ramsar Administrative Authority, who will review the nominations and select one per triennium to submit to the Ramsar Secretariat. The Ramsar Secretariat will then forward the nomination to the Independent Advisory Committee for assessment;
11. INVITES the Standing Committee to approve the detailed accreditation procedures and documentation to be proposed by the Independent Advisory Committee, including the application form to be completed by candidates for the RWCA at the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee;
12. REQUESTS Contracting Parties interested to submit a nomination to follow the attached framework for the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation ;
13. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat, through their relevant Senior Regional Advisors, to assess the eligibility of the nominations received and submit them to the Independent Advisory Committee for consideration by the Standing Committee;
14. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to decide on the recommendations put forward every three years by the Independent Advisory Committee, including on eventual proposals for withdrawal of the RWCA;
15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and their agencies including the local governments, non-governmental organizations and other partners to disseminate information on the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation through communication and awareness materials, events, celebrations and media channels; and INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat to, in a step by step process, set up a global online network of Cities having obtained the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation; and

16. INVITES, on request of Contracting Parties, the Convention's International Organization Partners and other partners to encourage Cities to promote their branding through the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation, and promote local efforts to gain and maintain it, including through participation in and support to local management committees, subject to availability of resources.

Annex 1

Framework for Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation (RWCA)

Introduction

1. At COP 11 Resolution XI.11 was adopted on the *Principles for the sustainable planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* which recognizes that the Principles can also be applied to spatial planning and management in rural areas, as appropriate, and it urges Contracting Parties and other governments to act upon these Principles, further disseminate them to other interested parties (including through translation into local languages), and seek to ensure that they are taken up by the sectors and levels of government responsible for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban environments.
2. Resolution XI.11 also asked the Convention to explore establishing a “Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation” system, which may in turn provide positive branding opportunities for cities that demonstrate strong and positive relationships with wetlands.
3. During the 47th meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee, the Republic of Korea presented a report on the workshop it organized on Ramsar city accreditation. Through Decision SC47-27, the Standing Committee asked the Secretariat to prepare a document for the 48th Meeting of the Standing Committee taking into account this report. In addition, it invited Tunisia, WWF, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Republic of Korea to prepare a draft resolution related to wetland city accreditation.
4. It is within this context that this Framework for the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation was developed.
5. This accreditation would encourage cities that are close to and depend on wetlands, primarily Wetlands of International Importance, as well as other wetlands, to establish a positive relationship with these wetlands through increased participation and awareness and consideration of wetlands in local planning and decision making.

Ramsar Wetland City

6. The Ramsar Wetland City is so labelled in order to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands and regional and international co-operation, as well as to generate sustainable socio-economic benefits for the local populations.
7. A candidate City for the RWCA would be approved as a ‘Ramsar Wetland City’ by the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention, following nomination by the Contracting Party on whose territory it stands, after passing the accreditation procedure described below. The new Ramsar Wetland City joins the global network of Ramsar Wetland Cities established by this framework. The Ramsar Wetland City continues to come under the sole sovereignty of the Contracting Party in which it is located, and is thus subject to the legislation of that Party alone.
8. The aim of this Framework for the RWCA is:

- a) To improve the effectiveness of the management of wetlands in the proximity of each Ramsar Wetland City and to reinforce mutual understanding, communication and cooperation at regional and international levels on wetlands; and
 - b) To contribute to the broad recognition of the links between Cities, local governments and wetlands, and to encourage and increase the number of examples of positive connections between human settlements and their wetlands.
9. This framework establishes the procedure for the RWCA and for the support and promotion of the Ramsar Cities. Each Contracting Party, as appropriate, is encouraged to develop and apply national criteria for the RWCA, which take their particular situation into account.
 10. The recognized Ramsar Wetland Cities are intended to act as models for the study, demonstration and promotion of the Ramsar Convention objectives, approaches, principles and resolutions.

Definition

11. The RWCA is assigned to a City (urban or rural) which, through its inhabitants, its local government and its resources, continuously promotes the conservation and wise use of any Ramsar Site(s) and other wetlands within or nearby the limits of the City, respecting its physical and social environment and its heritage, while supporting the development of a sustainable, dynamic and innovative economy as well as educational initiatives in connection with these wetlands.
12. An eligible City for the RWCA may be a city, village, and other type of human settlement according to the definitions given by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, with its own governance system.

Criteria

13. To be formally accredited, a candidate for the RWCA must meet all of the following seven criteria:
 - a) To have one or more Ramsar Sites fully or partly situated in their territory or in its close vicinity, and to be able to demonstrate how it depends on those wetlands;
 - b) To have established an operational interpretation/information centre or equivalent system with sufficient information or activities about wetlands and their resources, open to both the local population and visitors;
 - c) To have created a Local Management Committee (minimum 4 persons from institutions dealing with wetlands) to support the RWCA submission;
 - d) The Ramsar Site(s) related to the candidate Ramsar Wetland City must have an up-to-date Ramsar Information Sheet and must not be listed on the Ramsar Convention's Montreux Record;
 - e) Each of the concerned Ramsar Sites must have a management plan which has been prepared using a participatory approach, and which is being actively implemented;

- f) The candidate Ramsar City must have a land-use plan or its equivalent which ensures the long-term conservation of the Ramsar Site(s) and of other wetlands situated fully or partly on its territory; and
 - g) The candidate Ramsar City must justify that in at least the two years before its request for RWCA, it has celebrated the World Wetlands Day or organized a public information event on wetlands
14. In addition, a candidate Ramsar Wetland City is to commit itself to maintain, or develop in the near future (preferably within a 3 year period):
- a) Appropriate standards regarding water quality , sanitation and management in the entire area under its jurisdiction;
 - b) Sustainable agricultural, forest, fish and pastoral production systems contributing to the conservation of the Ramsar Site(s);
 - c) Methods to evaluate the socio-economic and cultural values as well as the ecosystem services of the Ramsar Site(s), and good practices to conserve them; and
 - d) Where appropriate, a plan for disaster prevention and management which addresses hazards which relate to the Ramsar Site(s) such as accidental pollution or flooding.

Accreditation procedure

15. A City is accredited as a “Ramsar Wetland City” by the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention, at its final full meeting prior to each Conference of the Parties. Candidate Cities for accreditation are recommended by the Independent Advisory Committee, in accordance with the following procedure:
- a) The accreditation request must be submitted, after consultation with local populations, by the Local Management Committee for the RWCA (see paragraph 13.c above) to the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority of the Contracting Party concerned;
 - b) Each Contracting Parties can submit no more than one Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation request per triennium, i.e the one they consider the best candidate;
 - c) After reviewing whether the City meets the criteria above, the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority submits to the Ramsar Secretariat the accreditation request, (in the format approved by the Standing Committee and supported by the appropriate documentation) not later than one year before each Conference of the Parties;
 - d) The Independent Advisory Committee studies their validity and submits its recommendations to the final full meeting of the Standing Committee prior to the Conference of the Parties, at least 60 days in advance;
16. If the Standing Committee approves the accreditation, the Secretary General informs the relevant Contracting Party of the decision. The Contracting Party receives an accreditation certificate for the Ramsar Wetland City, which is valid for six years. The status of each Ramsar City is reviewed by the Independent Advisory Committee every six years for renewal if the Cities wish to do so.

Independent Advisory Committee

17. It is proposed that the composition of the Independent Advisory Committee shall be as follows:
- a) A representative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), who shall act as Chair of the Committee;
 - b) A representative of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) ;
 - c) A representative of the Ramsar Convention's International Organization Partners;
 - d) A Standing Committee member representative from each of the five Ramsar regions, selected by the Standing Committee;
 - e) One representative of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention;
 - f) A representative of the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel of the Ramsar Convention;
 - g) The Ramsar Secretary General or his/her designated representative; and
 - h) The Ramsar Senior Advisor for the concerned region (rapporteur).
18. The Committee must develop its own rules and regulations, terms of reference, roadmap, and monitoring and evaluation system, subject to the approval of the Standing Committee.

Publicity

19. The Ramsar Wetland City, the Contracting Party concerned, the Ramsar Secretariat, non-governmental organizations and any relevant partners (social, economic and commercial, tourist, cultural etc ...) are encouraged to disseminate information on the RWCA, both locally and more widely, through events or national or international celebrations (World Wetlands Day, World Water Day, International Day for Biological Diversity, etc.) and through diverse media channels.
20. The Ramsar Secretariat will, in a step by step process, set up a global network of Ramsar Wetland Cities, managed via the Internet, subject to availability of resources.

Accreditation costs

21. The Local Management Committee for the RWCA of Ramsar Wetland Cities which are in a position to do so should contribute towards the costs of the Ramsar accreditation, using either their own resources or those obtained by themselves for this purpose, in accordance with the criteria adopted by the Ramsar Standing Committee.