



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

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Resolution XII.10

Wetland City¹ Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention

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. FURTHER RECALLING Resolution XI.11 on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* which detailed the objectives, principles, opportunities and potential solutions for the wise use of urban wetlands and 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 (COP11) 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:
 - a. 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
 - b. through the watershed-related impacts of urban development, including increased demands for water, increased diffuse and point source pollution, the need for greater 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;

¹ A city as defined in this Resolution refers to a settlement which has its own governing system (i.e. a municipal authority or authorities).

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.;
8. FURTHER AWARE that Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention can assist cities, Contracting Parties and stakeholders in promoting awareness and attracting support for the wise use and conservation of wetlands and other sustainable development initiatives; and
9. 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

10. APPROVES the establishment of a voluntary Wetland City accreditation system, which is Annexed to this Resolution;
11. DECIDES to review implementation progress and financing of the framework and the voluntary accreditation system at COP13;
12. INVITES Contracting Parties to propose for accreditation as a Wetland City those cities in their territory which are located close to Ramsar Sites and/or other significant wetlands that satisfy the criteria outlined below;
13. REQUESTS Contracting Parties which are interested to submit proposals for candidate cities consistent with the attached framework for the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention;
14. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat, through their relevant Senior Regional Advisors, to submit the nominations received to the Independent Advisory Committee for its consideration;
15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and their agencies including local stakeholders, local governments, or relevant equivalents, non-governmental organizations and other partners to disseminate information on the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention through communication and awareness materials, events, celebrations and media channels;
16. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat to develop a global online network of cities which have obtained the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention; and
17. INVITES the International Organization Partners and other partners to promote the Ramsar Convention's branding through the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention, and promote local efforts to gain and maintain this branding, including through participation in and support to local management committees.

Annex

Framework for Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention

Introduction

1. At the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11), Resolution XI.11 was adopted on the *Principles for the sustainable planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands*. The Resolution 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 “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 (SC47), 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 SC48 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 Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention was developed.
5. This accreditation would encourage cities that are close to and depend on wetlands, primarily Wetlands of International Importance, but also 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.
6. The Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention 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 Wetland City accreditation would be approved as an accredited Wetland City by the Independent Advisory Committee, after being proposed by the Contracting Party on whose territory it stands and completing the accreditation procedure described below. Newly accredited cities join the global network of Wetland Cities established by this framework. Accreditation as a Wetland City of the Ramsar Convention is not intended to confer any legal rights or legal obligations on the city or the Contracting Party.
8. The aim of this Framework is to improve the local authority or authorities’ work with wetlands. This includes promoting conservation and wise use of wetlands within the local authorities’ boundaries, and when relevant, Ramsar Sites.

9. This framework establishes the procedure for the Wetland City accreditation and for its support and promotion. Each Contracting Party, as appropriate, is encouraged to consider local conditions when implementing the international criteria for the Wetland City accreditation.
10. The accredited Wetland Cities are intended to act as models for the study, demonstration and promotion of the Ramsar Convention's objectives, approaches, principles and resolutions.
11. An accredited Wetland City (urban or rural) is one 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 Wetland City accreditation may be a city or any 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 Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention must satisfy the national standards used to implement each of the following international criteria:
 - a. It has one or more Ramsar Sites or other significant wetlands fully or partly situated in its territory or in its close vicinity, which provide(s) a range of ecosystems services to the city;
 - b. It has adopted measures for conservation of wetlands and their services including biodiversity and hydrological integrity;
 - c. It has implemented wetland restoration and/or management measures;
 - d. It considers the challenges and opportunities of integrated spatial/land-use planning for wetlands under its jurisdiction;
 - e. It has delivered locally adapted information to raise public awareness about the values of wetlands, and encouraged the wise use of wetlands by stakeholders through, for example, establishing wetland education/information centres; and
 - f. It has established a local Wetland City of the Ramsar Convention committee with appropriate knowledge and experience on wetlands and representation of and engagement with stakeholders to support the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention submission and the implementation of proper measures for fulfilling the obligations under the accreditation.
14. Examples for satisfying the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention criteria may include the following approaches:
 - a. Appropriate standards regarding water quality, sanitation and management in the entire area under the city's jurisdiction;

- b. Sustainable agricultural, forest, fish, aquaculture, tourism and pastoral production systems contributing to the conservation of the Ramsar Site(s);
- c. Evaluations of the socio-economic and cultural values as well as the ecosystem services of the Ramsar Site(s) and other significant wetlands, and good practices to conserve them; and
- d. Where appropriate, plans for disaster prevention and management which address hazards which relate to the Ramsar Site(s) and other significant wetlands such as accidental pollution or flooding.

Accreditation procedure

15. A city will be recognized as a Wetland City of the Ramsar Convention by the Conference of the Parties, in accordance with the following procedure:
- a. Any Contracting Party that wishes to participate in the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention shall undertake a national review to determine which cities to propose to the Independent Advisory Committee based on the proposed cities' compliance with the criteria outlined in paragraph 13 of this Framework ;
 - b. Any proposals from Contracting Parties shall be submitted to the Independent Advisory Committee within one year of the closing of the previous meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
 - c. The Independent Advisory Committee shall review the applications and decide whether to accredit proposed cities, and report its decision at least 60 days in advance of the final full meeting of the Standing Committee prior to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
 - d. The Standing Committee shall review the report of the Independent Advisory Committee listing those cities approved for accreditation and transmit it to the Conference of the Parties;
 - e. The Secretary General shall provide the Contracting Party with an accreditation certificate, containing the Ramsar Convention logo, for the Wetland City, which is valid for six years; and
 - f. The status of each accredited Wetland City of the Ramsar Convention can be reviewed by the Independent Advisory Committee upon the relevant Contracting Party's request every six years.

Independent Advisory Committee

16. It is proposed that the composition of the Independent Advisory Committee shall be chosen by the Standing Committee from the following:
- 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 six Ramsar regions, selected by the regions;
 - 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;
 - h. The Ramsar Senior Advisor for the concerned region (rapporteur); and
 - i. The coordinator of the Regional Initiative concerned, if any.
17. The Independent Advisory Committee may develop its own work plan and procedures for completing accreditation decisions within the timeframe and using the criteria outlined in paragraphs 13 and 15 of this Framework.
 18. The accredited Wetland City of the Ramsar Convention and the Contracting Party concerned are encouraged to disseminate information on the Wetland City accreditation, 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.
 19. Any costs for preparing and approving the Wetland City accreditation shall not be borne by the core budget of the Secretariat.
 20. The benefits of the Wetland City accreditation are to support the implementation of the principles adopted in Resolution XI.11 by (i) delivering the wise use of wetlands and avoiding any further degradation or loss of wetlands as a result of urban development or management, and (ii) promoting the contribution that wetlands make to the social and environmental sustainability of a Wetland City.