

Terminology in daily use by the Ramsar Convention

GLOSSARY

Administrative Authority = the agency within each Contracting Party charged by the national government with implementation of the Ramsar Convention within its territory

Attributes of wetlands = attributes of a wetland include biological diversity and unique cultural and heritage features. These attributes may lead to certain uses or the derivation of particular products, but they may also have intrinsic, unquantifiable importance (adopted by Resolution VI.1)

Brisbane Initiative = recommendation of the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (1996) calling for the establishment of a network of Ramsar-listed and other wetlands of international importance for migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Change in ecological character = "the human-induced adverse alteration of any ecosystem component, process, and/or ecosystem benefit/service" (Resolution IX.1, Annex A)

Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands = a seven-page document adopted by COP10 in Changwon, Republic of Korea (Resolution X.3) intended "to transmit key messages concerning wetland-related issues to the many stakeholders and decision-makers beyond the Ramsar community who are relevant to the conservation and wise use of wetlands, to inform their actions and decision-making"

Compensation = meaning not yet precisely fixed; cited in Article 4.2 of the Convention as required in the event of a Contracting Party's deleting a Ramsar Site or restricting its boundaries

Contracting Parties = countries that are Member States to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 160 as of November 2011. Membership in the Convention is open to all states that are members of the United Nations, one of the UN specialized agencies, or the International Atomic Energy Agency, or is a Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat = the official name of the Convention; the abbreviated name "Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)" is more commonly used

Ecological character = "the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time" (the latest definition, Resolution IX.1 Annex A)

Ecosystem approach = "a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way" (Convention on Biological Diversity)

Ecosystem services = "the benefits that people receive from ecosystems, including provisioning, regulating, and cultural services" (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment)

Evian Initiative = a suite of communications and capacity building activities managed by the Ramsar Secretariat with funding from the Danone Group

Functions of wetlands = activities or actions which occur naturally in wetlands as a product of interactions between the ecosystem structure and processes. Functions include flood water control; nutrient, sediment and contaminant retention; food web support; shoreline stabilization and erosion controls; storm protection; and stabilization of local climatic conditions, particularly rainfall and temperature (adopted by Resolution VI.1)

International Organization Partners = the five officially recognized non-governmental organizations which assist in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention: BirdLife International, IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature, IWMI - International Water Management Institute, Wetlands International, and WWF International

List of Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar List") = the list of wetlands which have been designated by the Contracting Parties in which they reside as internationally important according to one or more of the criteria that have been adopted by the Conference of the Parties

Mediterranean Wetlands Committee = committee of governments and NGOs established by the Ramsar Standing Committee's 19th meeting (1996) which, under the aegis of the Ramsar Secretariat, provides guidance to all interested parties, and in particular to the Ramsar Secretariat and the MedWet Coordinator, on practical measures and actions for implementation of the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy

Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy = plan of objectives and actions, endorsed by the Venice Declaration (Mediterranean Wetlands Conference, Venice, June 1996), aimed at achieving the goal of: "to stop and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands as a contribution to the conservation of biodiversity and to sustainable development in the region"

MedWet = the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative, administered by the MedWet Secretariat based in Athens, Greece

Montreux Record = the list of Ramsar Sites where change in ecological character has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur as a result of technological development, pollution, or other human interference (established by Resolution 5.4). Montreux Record sites require priority national and international conservation attention and receive preference for application of the Ramsar Advisory Mission.

National Focal Points = individuals nominated by Contracting Parties to provide the Administrative Authority's point of contact with the Ramsar Secretariat and to represent the Party in association with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and Ramsar CEPA Programme.

National Ramsar Committee = the body established in many Contracting Parties to assist the official Administrative Authority in implementation of the Convention within the country, usually including scientific and technical experts and representatives of NGOs and stakeholders as well as personnel from other government sectors. Sometimes called "National Wetland Committees".

National Wetland Policies = one of the most important tools under the Convention for ensuring the wise use and integrated management of Ramsar and other wetlands within each Contracting Party (may also be called Strategies, Plans, etc.)

1% threshold = Criterion 6 of the Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance for the Ramsar List: "where data on populations are available, [the site] regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird".

Paris Protocol = an amendment to the text of the Ramsar Convention providing an amendment procedure (Article 10 bis) and additional language versions of the Convention, adopted by an Extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Paris in 1982

Products of wetlands = products generated by wetlands include wildlife resources; fisheries; forest resources; forage resources; agricultural resources; and water supply. These products are generated by the interactions between the biological, chemical and physical components of wetlands (adopted by Resolution VI.1)

Ramsar = city in Iran, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, where the Convention on Wetlands was agreed on 2 February 1971; thus the Convention's informal nickname, "Ramsar Convention on Wetlands"

Ramsar Advisory Mission = the method by which, at the invitation of Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Secretariat, with consultant experts as appropriate, can assess the situation at a threatened Ramsar Site, frequently a Montreux Record site, and make recommendations for improvement

Ramsar Criteria = Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance, used by Contracting Parties and advisory bodies to identify wetlands as qualifying for the Ramsar List on the basis of representativeness or uniqueness or of biodiversity values

Ramsar List = the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Ramsar regions = Africa, Asia, Europe, Neotropics, North America, and Oceania

Ramsar Sites = wetlands designated by the Contracting Parties for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance because they meet one or more of the Ramsar Criteria

Ramsar Sites Database = repository of ecological, biological, socio-economic, and political data and maps with boundaries on all Ramsar Sites

Ramsar Site Information Service = an on-line service provided by Wetlands International (<http://ramsar.wetlands.org>) in order to make the Ramsar Sites Database accessible to and searchable by the public

Regina Amendments = series of amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of the Ramsar Convention, approved by the 4th Meeting of the COP held in Regina, Canada, May 1987; entered into force in May 1994

Regional Initiatives = "Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention" are associations of governments, organizations, and individuals which are wholly independent of the Convention's official bodies but which cooperate to advance the implementation of the Convention within the specificities of regional issues and conditions. Created by Resolution VII.19 (1999) and presently governed by guidelines in Resolution XI.5 (2012), the programme now has 4 centres for regional training and capacity building and 11 networks facilitating regional cooperation that have been approved by the Standing Committee.

Scientific and Technical Review Panel = the Convention's subsidiary scientific advisory body, established in 1993, consisting of 6 regional and 6 thematic STRP members elected by the SC and representatives from the five International Organization Partners, in addition to invited observers from other MEAs and organizations; advises the Secretariat and the Standing Committee on a range of scientific and technical issues

Small Grants Fund = a fund established in 1990 and maintained from the Convention's core budget and voluntary contributions for the support of projects from developing countries and countries

with economies in transition which have as their objectives the implementation of the Strategic Plan, preparation for joining the Convention, or emergency assistance to threatened Ramsar Sites

Standing Committee = a committee of Ramsar Contracting Parties, established in 1987, that guides the work of the Convention and the Secretariat in the periods between triennial meetings of the COP. The members are chosen by the COP on a proportional basis among the Ramsar regions and also include the Parties that are current hosts of the most recent and the next meetings of the COP. Switzerland (host of the Secretariat) and The Netherlands (host of Wetlands International), as well as the five International Organization Partners, are Permanent Observers on the SC.

Sustainable utilization of a wetland = "Human use of a wetland so that it may yield the greatest continuous benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspiration of future generations" (Recommendation 3.3, 1987)

Tour du Valat = the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, located in the Camargue, in southern France, one of the world's foremost wetlands research institutions

Urgent national interests = meaning not yet precisely fixed; cited in Article 2.5 of the Convention as the only circumstance under which any already-designated site should be deleted from the Ramsar List or its boundaries restricted. Resolution VIII.20 offers guidance to Parties in interpreting the term.

Values of wetlands = the perceived benefits to society, either direct or indirect, that result from wetland functions. These values include human welfare, environmental quality, and wildlife support (adopted by Resolution VI.1).

Wetland Conservation Award = Ramsar Awards established in 1996 to recognize and honor, every three years, individuals, organizations, and government agencies that have made a significant contribution to wetland conservation and sustainable use in any part of the world, conferred at each triennial meeting of the COP

Wetlands for the Future Initiative = a funding programme established in 1995, operated by the US State Department, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Ramsar Secretariat to provide matching funds for training and capacity-building projects in the Neotropical region

Wetlands International = the leading global non-profit wetland conservation organization, partner with the Convention in many activities

Wise Use Guidelines = Guidelines on the Implementation of the Wise Use Concept (adopted as an annex to Recommendation 4.10), since elaborated many times and partially superseded by specialized guidance on various aspects of the concept

Wise use of wetlands = "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development" (latest definition, Resolution IX.1 Annex A, 2005. The pioneering definition of 1987 read: "Sustainable utilization of wetlands for the benefit of mankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem" (Recommendation 3.3)

World Wetlands Day = the 2nd of February each year (i.e., the anniversary of the signing of the Convention in 1971), established by the Standing Committee in 1996 as the official occasion for activities and celebrations within each Contracting Party aimed at alerting the public to the values and benefits of wetlands and the role of the Convention in maintaining them