



How States may join the Ramsar Convention

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

According to Article 9.2 of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), "Any member of the United Nations or of one of the Specialized Agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency or Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may become a Party to this Convention" (the so-called Vienna Formula). Unfortunately, supranational bodies, such as the European Commission, are thus not eligible to join the Convention, but may nevertheless develop bilateral working agreements with the Convention Secretariat.

In order for a country to accede to the Convention, signatures and the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession are to be made with the Depository for the Ramsar Convention, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France, with a copy to the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs at the same address. The instrument of ratification or accession must be signed by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (A copy of all such communications to UNESCO should be sent to the Ramsar Secretariat.) UNESCO will then officially notify the Ramsar Secretariat and all other Contracting Parties of the new Party's accession.

Example of document of accession to the Ramsar Convention

I, [name], [title]
in the Government of [name of the country]
do hereby certify that the State of
[name of the country]
accedes to the
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
especially as Waterfowl Habitat
of 2 February 1971
as amended by the Protocol of 3.12.82,
and accepts the amendments to Articles 6 and 7 of that Convention (1987).
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have signed and sealed
this Instrument of Accession
DONE at [name of capital city], [date].
[title and signature]

Designating wetlands for the Ramsar List

The document of adhesion to the Convention sent by the Head of State or Foreign Office to UNESCO must be accompanied by the designation of **at least one wetland site** for the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Thereafter, each Party “shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in the List” (Article 2.1). The designation of the first and subsequent Ramsar sites do not require ratification by parliaments, but are administrative decisions taken by the appropriate government agency according to existing procedures in each country. Such designation(s) should include:

- a) a completed **Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)** for each site, which can be obtained from the Ramsar Web site at www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm or requested from the Secretariat; and
- b) a **map** clearly showing the boundaries of each designated site.

Sites designated for the Ramsar List do not have already to be established as legally protected areas before designation. Listing under the Ramsar Convention elevates the sites to a higher status (recognized as places of “international importance”), focuses more attention upon them, and should contribute to their long-term conservation and wise use – whether or not Ramsar status conveys additional legal protection in-country depends upon the national and local policy and legislation concerning Ramsar sites, which varies from country to country. Human uses of wetlands are compatible with listing under Ramsar, provided that they are in line with the Ramsar concept of “wise use” and do not lead to a negative change in ecological character. Member States do not surrender sovereignty over their Ramsar sites in any way.

Wetlands should be added to the Ramsar List if they meet any of nine Criteria for being considered internationally important. The listing must be made by the national government, which is then implicitly making a commitment to ensure that the ecological character of the site will be maintained. Local officials and citizens’ groups wishing to nominate wetlands for inclusion in the Ramsar List should make contact with their country’s “Administrative Authority”, the agency within the national government that has been charged by the head of state or foreign office with responsibility for implementing the Convention. Different countries have evolved their own procedures for proceeding to a Ramsar designation and these vary greatly from country to country. A list of the Administrative Authorities is available at www.ramsar.org/about/about_admin_auth.htm and from the Ramsar Secretariat.

The cost of joining the Convention

At each ordinary meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopts a budget (in Swiss francs) for the next triennium. Contracting Parties contribute to this budget a percentage that is based upon the United Nations scale of assessments adopted for each year by the UN General Assembly, with the exception that the Conference of the Parties has established a **minimum** level of contributions at 1,000 Swiss francs (ca. € 630 in September 2007) for all Parties to cover basic expenses of invoicing and administration.

For further information, please contact:
The Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland
(tel. +41 22 999 0170, fax +41 22 999 0169, e-mail ramsar@ramsar.org, Web www.ramsar.org)