



INTERFACE PROCEDURES

Between

**The Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
(Ramsar Secretariat)**

and

**The Joint Environment Unit (JEU) of the
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the
UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**

1. Introduction

The following document identifies areas of information exchange and possible actions related to resource mobilisation for responding to environmental emergencies and natural disasters with major environmental impacts affecting or involving Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention or other wetlands, upon request by a Ramsar Contracting Party.

The Governing Council Decision 26/15 of the UN Environment Programme on “Strengthening international cooperation on the environmental aspects of emergency response and preparedness”, adopted in February 2011 calls for increased effective and coordinated multilateral environmental emergency response. Interface Procedures between organizations support this Decision by outlining agreed roles and responsibilities.

The JEU is the integrated United Nations mechanism for mobilizing and coordinating assistance to countries facing environmental emergencies, including natural disasters with significant environmental impacts. The JEU can provide assistance upon request of affected Member States for emergencies such as chemical spills, industrial and technological accidents, forest fires and natural disasters with significant secondary risks to health, life and livelihoods.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention’s mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

In 2002, the Contracting Parties to the Convention adopted Resolution VIII.35 on “The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems”, requesting monitoring and assessment of the impact of drought and other natural disasters on the ecological character of wetlands and on the livelihoods of local communities.

In 2005, the Contracting Parties to the Convention adopted Resolution IX.9 on “The role of the Ramsar Convention in the prevention and mitigation of impacts associated with natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities” (see References). In line with this Resolution, paragraph 22, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat will cooperate with the Joint Environment Unit as described below under 2. and 3., especially regarding guidance on pre-disaster measures, impact prevention and minimization and on responses to be initiated immediately following the onset of an environmental emergency or natural disaster affecting or likely to affect wetlands.

In 2015, the Contracting Parties to the Convention adopted Resolution XII.13 on “Wetlands and disaster risk reduction” which emphasized the importance of conserving, restoring and of the wise use of wetlands for disaster risk reduction.

For the purposes of these Interface Procedures, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands will be henceforth referred to as “the Ramsar Secretariat”. Correspondingly, the Joint Environment Unit of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN Environment Programme will be henceforth referred to as the “Joint Environment Unit (JEU)”.

2. Areas of Collaboration

The JEU and the Ramsar Secretariat intend to strengthen coordination and collaboration in relevant areas, including the following:

a) Environmental emergency response:

- Upon receipt of an official request for assistance from an affected UN Member State and Ramsar Contracting Party in a wetland site: collaboration to coordinate possible actions and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Exchange of information in the case of an environmental emergency in a wetland site.
- Collaboration on possible deployment of an expert assessment mission/expert, as required:
 - If both parties agree that an expert assessment mission is required, subject to the consent/authorization of OCHA and the appropriate Ramsar Contracting Party and Secretariat, and if the allocation of costs is agreed, the JEU will coordinate the rapid dispatch of an expert/expert team for an assessment of the situation and provision of recommendations for emergency interventions in collaboration with national authorities.

b) Emergency preparedness

- Cooperation and technical support to provide advice pertaining to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as related to environmental emergency preparedness.
- Exchange of information and knowledge related to wetlands and disaster preparedness and response – promoting and raising awareness of each other’s products, activities and tools within each other’s communities. For JEU, promotion of Ramsar Convention activities can be undertaken through the Environmental Emergencies Centre (www.eecentre.org).

2.1. Responsibilities of the Ramsar Secretariat

Whenever the Ramsar Secretariat becomes aware of an environmental emergency as pertaining to their mandate it agrees to notify the JEU as soon as possible and agrees to share information that it may receive over the course of the emergency.

The Ramsar Secretariat will inform the JEU of any action taken within the framework of the Ramsar Convention in accordance with Resolution IX.9 on “The role of the Ramsar Convention in the prevention and mitigation of impacts associated with natural phenomena, including those induced or exacerbated by human activities” (see References).

Having received an official request for assistance from a Ramsar Contracting Party with regard to an environmental emergency or natural disaster with major environmental impacts affecting or involving wetlands, or to any other related incident, the Ramsar Secretariat may request the Joint Environment Unit to provide advice and/or assistance to the affected Party.

At the end of any mission involving the deployment of an expert/expert team resulting from a formal request by the Ramsar Secretariat, the Ramsar Secretariat agrees to reimburse the expenses incurred by the JEU in connection with such a mission as agreed at the time of planning for the mission.

2.2. Responsibilities of the JEU

Whenever the JEU becomes aware of an environmental emergency as pertaining to their mandate in a Ramsar Site or any other wetland, it agrees to notify the Ramsar Secretariat as soon as possible and agrees to share information that it may receive over the course of the emergency.

Whenever the Joint Environment Unit receives an official request for assistance from an UN Member State related to an environmental emergency or natural disaster with major environmental impacts affecting or involving wetlands, or to any other related incident, the Joint Environment Unit will promptly consult with the Ramsar Secretariat in order to coordinate possible actions and avoid duplication of efforts.

3. Contact information and exchange of information in case of an environmental emergency

During regular working hours, the preferred manner of notification is telephone and email, as appropriate. The given emergency telephone number is to be used in emergencies only and outside regular office hours.

These focal persons and given emergency telephone numbers are:

JEU		Ramsar Secretariat	
Mr. Brendan McDonald	Mr. Rene Nijenhuis	Dr Ania Grobicki	Ms Mireille Katz
Chief of Section	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	Acting Secretary General	Executive Assistant to the Secretary General
OCHA Emergency Preparedness and Environment Section (EPES)		Ramsar Convention Secretariat	
Phone:			
+41 22 917 2163	+41 22 917 1815	+41 22 999 0284	+41 22 999 0179
Email:			
mcdonaldb@un.org	nijenhuis@un.org	grobicki@ramsar.org	katz@ramsar.org
<u>For outside working hours</u> , please call the OCHA Geneva Duty Officer: Phone: +41 22 917 2010		<u>For outside working hours</u> , please call the Secretary General's mobile phone: +41 79 539 73 24	

The **OCHA Geneva Duty System**, reachable through the OCHA Geneva Duty Officer on above listed telephone number, monitors sudden-onset disasters and is tasked with alerting decision-makers, as well as collecting and sharing information in the immediate aftermath of a major sudden-onset disaster. The purpose of the OCHA Geneva Duty Team (Duty Officer and Duty Assistant) is to provide a single emergency contact to external counterparts and internally within OCHA, to monitor possible disasters outside working hours, and to effectively engage in the OCHA Initial Alert System in case of significant events. In the case of an environmental emergency, the OCHA Duty system would further alert the Joint Environment Unit to take relevant actions.

The **Virtual On-Set Operations and Coordination Centre (Virtual OSOCC)** is an OCHA-managed GDACS tool to facilitate information exchange during emergencies.

The primary purpose of Virtual OSOCC is to facilitate information exchange among disaster responders in order to establish a better situational awareness in the early stages of sudden-onset disasters, to inform deploying responders of the operational environment, and to track response to support decision-making and coordination.

The Virtual OSOCC is typically activated in major sudden-onset disasters and supports international coordination during the first weeks of the response.

Both parties will ensure collaboration and dialogue to the use of those tools to strengthen coordination in emergency situations between the parties and with the international environmental emergency response system.

4. Obligation, Review and Termination

This Interface Procedure constitutes an expression of a shared objective and vision. However, each party's actions will be considered to be that party's sole and separate action, for all purposes, and neither party shall claim to be acting on behalf of, or as agent for the other party to this Interface Procedure.

The extent to which the activities outlined in this Interface Procedures are implemented will be subject to the availability of resources. Financial implications of activities for the Ramsar Secretariat are subject to approval by the Secretary General and/or the Chair of the Ramsar Standing Committee as appropriate.

The term for this Interface Procedure is five (5) years. The agreement may be reviewed at the request of either party, and may be terminated by either party subject to 6 months' notice in writing. Each party is obligated to inform the other party of any changes in the contact details as stated under Paragraph 3 as needed.

**The JEU and the Ramsar Secretariat agree to all conditions and commitments
as identified in these Interface Procedures**

For the Ramsar Secretariat

 

Dr Ania Grobicki

Date

Acting Secretary General

Ramsar Convention Secretariat

For the JEU

 

Mr. Brendan McDonald

Date

Chief, Emergency Preparedness and Environment Section

Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit

Emergency Services Branch

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

References:

Ramsar Resolutions VIII.35, IX.9, and XII.13 links:

http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/res/key_res_viii_35_e.pdf

http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/res/key_res_ix_09_e.pdf

http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res13_drr_e_0.pdf