

**Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general,  
and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular,  
during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995  
for Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998**

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**Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority**

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### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1**

#### **To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.**

Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention. 1.1

None

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2**

#### **To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.**

Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so: 2.1

It is planned to develop a National Wetland Strategy/Action Plan as part of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project, *Conservation of Wetland and Coastal Ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region*, a joint project of Medwet-UNDP-EEAA. The project development process is in the final stages and the project is expected to be launch at the beginning of 1999.

a. What are/will be its main features?

One of the main aims of the strategy/action plan is to improve compliance to the RAMSAR Convention in Egypt. The strategy/action plan will address the necessary legislative, institutional and policy actions along with the co-ordination measures for improved management and conservation of Egyptian wetlands, as well as the necessary implementation programs.

b. Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

All key line ministries will be involved in the wetland strategy/action plan formulation process in order to develop consensus and high level support for the adoption and implementation of the strategy/action plan at the national level.

c. How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

Wetland conservation and improved compliance to international environmental conventions (i.e. RAMSAR) has been given national priority and highlighted in the National Biodiversity Strategy to be submitted to the Biodiversity Convention and in the National Environmental Strategy under discussion.

If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so? 2.2

If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with : 2.3

- a. a single Government Ministry,
- b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or
- c. a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government? Yes/No 2.4

If yes, please give details.

No

Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these. 2.5

No. Such a review has not been carried out as of yet, but should be part of the Wetland Strategy/Action Plan development process.

Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels: 2.6

- a. national

An Egyptian Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) strategy has been formulated. This strategy is the basis of a national programme of short and long-term actions to enhance coastal zone management in Egypt and includes the following components:

- Shore protection
- Coastal land use planning
- Coastal and marine water quality management
- Preservation of coastal and marine resources and habitats

Wetlands have been considered as part of this strategy, particularly coral reefs and mangroves.

- provincial .b

Coastal zone management planning has been identified as a priority in number of Governorates. Some steps have been taken to devise coastal zone management plans for the

Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea. Islands, coral reefs and mangroves have been considered within these plans.

c. local

Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines? Yes/No 2.7

No

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then “to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands” (Operative paragraph 9). 2.8

Law 4/1994 for the Environment has provisions for protection of the environment from water pollution from ships and land based sources. This includes: oil pollution, pollution by sewage waste and garbage and hazardous materials and wastes. Failure to comply with the law can result in fines in the range of US\$20,000 to US\$100,000. The law came into force in 1998 after a 3 year grace period and violators are to be fined in accordance with the articles of the legislation.

In addition, the following contingency measures have to been taken to respond to environmental accidents and disasters:

A National Disaster Contingency Plan is under production and includes responses to environmental disasters, including clean-ups of toxic chemicals and oil spills.

A National Oil Spill Contingency Plan has been produced covering all coastlines of Egypt, specifically targeting the protection of wetlands and their resources (e.g. coral reefs, mangroves, sea grass beds, Mediterranean lagoons, Suez Canal and the Bitter Lakes).

Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions. 2.9

None

Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No 2.10

Yes. According to Law 4/1994 all new development projects are required to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for submission and review by the EEAA. Wetlands are not specified as an area of special concern, but are included under the law. EIAs must be conducted for coastal tourism developments and should assess the impacts on coastal and marine habitats, particularly coral reefs and mangroves. EIAs are also required by the EEAA for developments inside the Protected Areas and their buffer zones, which includes inland and coastal wetlands.

Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? 2.11  
Yes/No.

Yes

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

Wetland restoration and rehabilitation was considered a national priority by the Environmental Action Plan produced in 1992. Several wetlands were identified as “Blackspots” in need of urgent action, especially Lakes Maryut and Manzalla. Funds were mobilised for restoration and rehabilitation of both lakes, Maryut and Mazalla, although additional funds are still needed. Wetland restoration and rehabilitation was further highlighted as a priority in the National Environmental Strategy which is under discussion.

Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed 2.12 participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

Local communities, especially fisherman (particularly Fishing Cooperatives) have had a voice in wetland management issues, although greater local community participation needs to be mobilised.

While women would be beneficiaries of cleaner, healthier wetlands, they are not specifically targeted.

Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector 2.13 in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

There has been encouragement of private sector conservation and wise use of wetlands with regard to coral reefs and mangroves along the Red Sea. There are guidelines which investors must follow and comply with when establishing coastal developments and facilities. Some investors have devised and implemented private initiatives to protect and sustainability use coastal and marine resources.

Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use? Yes/No

Yes.

If yes, please provide details.

While not wetland specific, there have been a number of studies which have reviewed economic incentives and disincentives for environmental management, particularly related to Protected Areas, pollution and coastal development (i.e. tourism).

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3**

**To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels**

Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4) 3.1

The Nature Conservation Section conducts conservation education and public awareness programs which focus on wetlands. The programs to date have targeted decision makers, scientists, children and the general public. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) provided small grants through their "Across the Waters" program to promote wetland conservation awareness in Egypt. With funding from the Ramsar Small Grants Fund educational materials were produced about several Egyptian wetlands and their value. It is hoped to expand and build upon these initiatives and develop a national wetland education and public awareness program which will target all stakeholders (decision makers, on-line Ministries, businesses, NGOs, local communities).

Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar's Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details. 3.2

There has been no specific inclusion of Ramsar's Wise Use principles in environmental education programs at the national level. However, there has been advances made in Egypt in environmental education at the primarily, secondary and tertiary levels with wetland related issues addressed to some extent by these programs, such as water pollution. Education with regards to wetlands is mostly at the tertiary level as part of university science and environment programs.

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4**

**To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.**

Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and *modus operandi*. 4.1

It is planned to set-up a National Advisory Committee for Natural Heritage (NAC) which would be a cross-sectional committee containing representatives from pertinent on-line Ministries, NGOs, research institutions and national experts as a forum to establish communication and other cross-sectional linkages to facilitate the implementation of programs and policies in the field of nature conservation. It is planned to establish a Wetlands Subgroup from this committee for consultation on wetlands issues and to guide development of the national wetland strategy/action plan.

Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken: 4.2

a. a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

No

b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?

No

c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

No

d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

Yes. The Ramsar Small Grants Fund funded in 1996-7 a small project to conduct in-country training in wetland conservation and management.

The Dutch government funded in 1997 two Egyptians to attend a wetland management training course in the Netherlands.

The European Union (EU) has been funding through its support program to the South Sinai Protected Areas training of rangers in coral reef and mangrove management. These program have included training in-country and abroad.

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5  
To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).**

Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans: 5.1  
being prepared? .a

It is proposed as part of the GEF Medwet-UNDP-EEAA project to develop a management plan for Lake Burullus.

b. fully prepared?

c. being implemented?

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

1) Lake Burullus - J. Brackish coastal lagoon

2) Lake Bardawil - J. Saline coastal lagoon

Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a 5.2  
monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

Wetland monitoring is one of the main focuses of the GEF Medwet-UNDP-EEAA project and will be included in the management programs for Lake Burullus and the Zaranik Lagoon (Lake Bardawil).

Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) 5.3 at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

There has been no known recent changes in the ecological character of Lake Burullus. The Kafir El Sheikh Governor has prohibited reclamation of the lake, which is an important action to maintain the lake's ecosystems. Furthermore, the recent designation of Lake Burullus as a Protected Area will help to control development which could alter or detrimentally impact the character of the wetland.

There has been no known recent changes in the ecological character of Lake Bardawil, except at the Zaranik Lagoon. The outlet to the lagoon was closed on a temporary basis and has yet to be re-opened and is detrimentally impacting the salt marsh and fish stocks at the lagoon.

There are potential major ecological changes at Egyptian RAMSAR sites in the future as a result of on-gong projects and policies:

Lake Burullus will probably be effected by water economisation policies, particularly the reduction of rice growing in the Delta. This would entail less fresh water inflow into the lake, which would potentially lead to a corresponding increase in salinity. The building of the Coastal Highway along the sand bar of Lake Burullus will open the area up for agriculture and tourism development, which might increase fresh water inflow into the lake and cause pollution unless mitigation measures are taken to treat the drainage water. The commutative potential impacts of both projects on the lake ecosystem are unknown, but should be studied as part of the monitoring program of the GEF Medwet-UNDP-EEAA project.

Lake Bardawil could potentially be impacted by the North Sinai Development Project, which is a large-scale agriculture reclamation project in North Sinai. There is also increasing pressure to establish tourism developments along the lake shore. It is unclear what measures are being taken to insure that contaminated drainage water will not be discharged into the lake. The inflow of fresh water along with contaminants will change the ecology of Lake Bardawil which is currently the least polluted wetland in Egypt and in the Mediterranean region as a whole. It is probable that the inflow of fresh water will change the lake from a saline to brackish lagoon, as well as lead to the deterioration of water quality following the trends of other wetlands along Egypt's Mediterranean coast. The potential impacts of the North Sinai Development Project and tourism development should be studied as part of the monitoring program of the GEF Medwet-UNDP-EEAA project.

In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance 5.4 Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?

It has been noted with concern that both Egyptian Ramsar sites have been listed on the Montreux Record. The Government of Egypt (GOE) would like to remove these sites from the Montreux Record and has taken some steps in this regard, such as the listing of Lake



Burullus as a Protected Area and the development of projects to enhance the status and management of the sites. However, there is insufficient national capacity and resources to address the underlying issues. It was requested that a Management Guidance Procedure Mission from the Secretariat visit Egypt to advise on and recommend potential actions. This mission did not take place due to problems with scheduling; however, it is still desired that such a mission visit the country. It is hoped that through the GEF Medwet-UNDP-EEAA project there will be improvements in the management of Ramsar sites in Egypt leading to the removal of these sites from the Montreux Record.

For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, “Ramsar 5.5 sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties”, please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6**

**To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention’s criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.**

Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No. 6.1

No, there is no national inventory of wetlands in Egypt as such.

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

No

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains.

Does there exist a list or directory of “important” wetlands for your country or 6.2 region? Yes/No.

There is no directory of “important” wetlands as such, but there are several documents which identify wetlands of international and national importance.

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for “important” were used, and the types of information it contains.

The EEAA in cooperation with the European Union (EU) conducted a National Protected Area Identification Mission which identified habitats of national importance, including inland and coastal wetlands to be included under Law 102/1883 for the Natural Protectorates. There was a number of criteria applied to evaluate sites of importance, such as biodiversity value, landscape value and representative habitats.

The EEAA in cooperation with BirdLife International is producing a Important Bird Areas of Egypt Directory (IBA) which identifies habitats of importance for avifauna, including wetlands. The Directory contains basic information about each site, species of importance, threats and recommended conservation measures. The criteria applied to evaluate the sites was the same as that used for other IBAs being produced in Africa.

The study *Ornithological Studies In Egyptian Wetlands 1989/90*, Meininger, P.L. and Atta, G.A.M. FORE-report Nr. 94-01, The Netherlands, 1994, details the findings of waterbird counts of Egyptian wetlands in 1989-90 and identified wetlands of importance for avifauna in relation to international and regional waterbird population estimates.

If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at 6.3 present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

No

If this information is available, please indicate what definition of “wetland” was used.

Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and 6.4 Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

- a. meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
- b. meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
- c. are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
- d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
- e. are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
- f. are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

No

If yes, please describe these actions.

If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further 6.5 specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

No

Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are 6.6 transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

None

Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be 6.7 listed (Refer also to 7.1).

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7**

**To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.**

Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are 7.1 under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

Egypt is participating in the International Coral Reef Initiative.

Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or 7.2 internationally? Yes/No.

No

If yes, please give details.

Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, 7.3 describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

- a. Convention on Biological Diversity
- b. Framework Convention on Climate Change
- c. Convention to Combat Desertification
- d. Convention on Migratory Species
- e. World Heritage Convention

In addition to the RAMSAR convention, the Nature Conservation Sector, EEAA is the focal point for the Biodiversity Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). In terms of the other conventions, there is no dialogue or cooperative actions to date.

Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities 7.4 directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No.

Yes

If yes, please provide details.

The European Union (EU)-EEAA is conducting surveys of migrating birds, particularly storks and birds of prey in South Sinai in Autumn 1998-Spring 1999, to gather baseline information for habitat and species management programs.

There is a Mediterranean Sea Turtle Conservation Project underway funded by a Darwin Initiative grant. Surveys are being undertaken of nesting sites for sea turtles along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast. The project will also include programs for sea turtle conservation.

Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which 7.5 contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No.

Yes

If yes, please provide details.

There is only two projects which specifically aim to improve implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Egypt:

There is an European Union-EEAA (EU) institution building project for the Nature Conservation Sector, which aims to enhance the sector's capacities to manage Protected Areas, including the two Ramsar sites and improve implementation of international conventions for the conservation of nature, which includes Ramsar.

One of the aims of the planned GEF Medwet-UNDP-EEAA project, is to enhance compliance to the RAMSAR convention in Egypt and improve management of RAMSAR sites.

There are many donor - Egyptian government supported projects which have positive implications for coastal and inland wetlands, e.g. capacity building, controlling pollution, improving natural resource management, etc.. At the forefront of these are:

The European Union-EEAA (EU) project for support to Protected Areas in South Sinai seeks to enhance conservation and wise use of coastal and marine resources, including islands, coral reefs and mangroves.

The USAID-EEAA funded project aiming to promote Sustainable Tourism includes support to Protected Areas in the Red Sea to enhance the conservation and wise use of island, coral reef and mangrove habitats.

The GEF World Bank-Ministry of Tourism-EEAA-Red Sea Governorate Egyptian Red Sea Coastal and Marine Management Project aims to enhance the conservation and wise use of coastal and marine resources, including islands, coral reefs and mangroves.

An Italian-EEAA funded project to support the Wadi El Rayan Protected Area in El Fayoum seeks to improve the management of Wadi El Rayan Lake.

An GEF UNDP-EEAA project and CIDA-Ministry of Public Works project aims to improve the environmental quality of Lake Manzalla.

Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No. 7.6

No

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details. 7.7

No

Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No 7.8

No

If yes, what is that process.

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8**  
**To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.**

Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No. 8.1

No

If yes, please provide details.

If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future. 8.2

As far as it is known, Egypt is fully paid with regards to its annual contribution to the convention.

## Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

These are **optional** questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this **optional** section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in 9.1 your country?

Four

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

International

BirdLife International, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

Regional

Center for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)

National

Hurgaha Environmental Protection Community Association (HEPCA)

Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation: 9.2

- a. to each other? Yes/No
- b. to the government? Yes/No

No

If yes in either case, please give details.

Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No 9.3

No

Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1). 9.4

Yes, WWF funded wetland education and public awareness projects in North Sinai and Aswan through its small grants programme.

BirdLife International will develop and implement programs to promote awareness of the importance of conserving Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Egypt, which includes wetlands.

Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details 9.5

No

Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active. 9.6

To raise awareness of wetlands values and functions

#### **Final comments:**

General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan. 10.1

Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by: 10.2

- a. The Ramsar Standing Committee
- b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- c. The Ramsar Bureau
- d. The Ramsar NGO partners

Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future. 10.3

It is recommended that Ramsar provide more financial and technical support to nations to assist them with the implementation of the convention and management of Ramsar sites.