

THE THIRD NATIONAL REPORT OF HUNGARY
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(RAMSAR, IRAN, 1971)

DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN 30 JUNE, 1995 AND 30 JUNE, 1998

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

CONTRACTING PARTY:

HUNGARY

DESIGNATED RAMSAR ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY:

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OF THE MINISTRY FOR ENVIRONMENT

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Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

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

Since all neighbouring countries of Hungary are Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, there were no such actions taken in Hungary.

For the purpose of designation of transboundary wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance and extending the already existed ones, co-operation process was started with the governments of Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine. (see section 6.7)

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

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

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

a, What are/will be its main features?

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.

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)?

The text of the Ramsar Convention was adopted with amendments such as the Hungarian Act XLII of 1993 under the title “The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat adopted on 3 December 1982, 1987 and its amendments adopted between 3 December, 1982 and 28 May, 1987”.

Although single comprehensive wetland policy or strategy has not been prepared for the country, nature conservation and other environment-related legislation and national programmes do include the conservation concept of wetlands as follows:

After having long discussion period with other responsible authorities, organisations and the wide public, the Hungarian Parliament has accepted the **Act on Environmental Protection No. LIII. of 1995**. This law has been in force since 1 January, 1996. The act is a framework law for the protection of the environmental elements by enforcing the principles of precaution, prevention and restoration. The aims of the Act are to establish a harmonic relationship between man and his environment, to protect the elements and processes of the environment, and, to ensure *the environmental conditions for a sustainable development*. The Act provides suitable scope for asserting the constitutional rights for a sound environment in accordance with the precautionary

principle and equitable bearing of burdens. The purposes of Act on Environmental Protection are as follows:

mitigation of use, load and contamination of the environment, the prevention of causing damage to it and the improvement and restoration of the damaged environment;

protection of human health and the improvement of the environmental conditions associated with the quality of life;

conservation and maintenance of natural resources and the rational and efficient management thereof in a manner ensuring their renewal;

co-ordination of the Government's other duties with the requirements of environmental protection;

international co-operation in the field of environmental protection;

invitation and participation of the public in activities directed at the protection of the environment, particularly in exploring and getting acquainted with the state of the environment, and in carrying out the tasks of governmental agencies and local governments in connection with environmental protection;

co-ordination of the economy and of the socio-economic development with the environmental requirements;

establishment and development of the institutional system of environmental protection; and

establishment and development of a public administration serving the protection and conservation of the environment.

In addition the act states that other regulations should be established in order to preserve and maintain the biological diversity, and sustainable use of the environment (namely to provide for nature conservation, hunting, fishing and fishery activities). A National Environmental Programme should be established in order to translate the objectives of the act into measures and implement them. The National Environmental Programme should include a separate chapter on nature conservation (see Nature Conservation Master Plan).

A fundamental step was made in the Hungarian nature conservation legislation during its history in 1996, when the Parliament has accepted without a negative vote the **Act on Nature Conservation No. LIII. of 1996**. The process of drafting the *Nature Conservation Act* involved the analysis of 20 nature conservation laws from other countries, which were all translated into Hungarian. The *Nature Conservation Law* of 1982 was also analysed. The Act on Nature Conservation has been in force since 1 January, 1997. Details of the Act are as follows:

The Parliament of the Republic of Hungary, recognising that the country's natural heritage forms a specific and irretrievable part of the national wealth, and that its conservation for the present and future generations, the maintenance, management and development of the countryside, the economic and wise use of natural resources, the safeguarding of biodiversity and the establishment of a harmonic relation between man and nature, which is the basic condition for the survival of mankind, all require that provisions for the conservation of nature be made in compliance with our international obligations, adopts the following Act. Purposes of this Act are:

a) to make provision for the general conservation of natural values and areas, their natural systems and biodiversity as well as for the promotion of their scientific cognition and sustainable use; to meet the society's need for a healthy and aesthetic natural environment;

b) to foster the traditions of nature conservation and improve its achievements; to protect, conserve, maintain and enhance Hungary's natural values and areas.

Parts of the act elated to wetlands:

Article 2

(1) The provisions of this law shall be observed while-

a) evaluating, safeguarding, maintaining, restoring and developing any natural values or areas;

b) sustaining the functions of and conserving the flora and fauna as well as their habitats, biodiversity, the natural systems and natural resources, in accordance with the international conventions to which the Republic of Hungary has acceded;

c) defining the rights and liabilities of the Government, natural or legal persons as well as other organisations in relation to nature conservation.

- d) enforcing the interests of nature conservation, and especially during the formation of economic, financial or educational policies or control systems;
 - e) exercising any registering, preventing, planning, managing, regulatory or authoritative functions in relation to nature conservation;
 - f) supporting research, demonstrations, and instructional, educational, propagating or scientific activities in relation to nature conservation;
 - g) determining nature conservation liabilities;
 - h) establishing and developing the institutional system of nature conservation.
- (2) The task of nature conservation is-
- a) to identify which natural values and areas deserve strict protection out of geological, hydrological, botanical, zoological, scenic, cultural, historical or any other public interest;
 - b) to determine the dangers threatening protected natural values or areas;
 - c) to prevent or avert any damage to protected natural values and areas, and to reduce or to eliminate damage already occurred;
 - d) to conserve protected natural values and areas for the present and future generations, and, if necessary, to restore them or ensure their maintenance.

Article 3

- (1) Within this Act shall fall all natural values and areas, all activities connected with them and all tasks of nature conservation resulting from international conventions or cooperation, except if otherwise provided by international conventions.
- (2) The provisions of Act No. LIII. of 1995 on the General Environmental Protection Rules (Environmental Law, hereafter E.L.) shall be applied to all issues connected with nature conservation that are not covered by this Act.

Article 4

- (d) “near-natural “ conditions means the conditions of habitats, landscapes, and communities whose evolution has been slightly influenced by man (creating conditions similar to natural ones), but the processes that take place in them are mostly characterised by self-regulation and they re able to survive without direct human manipulation.

Article 14

It shall be prohibited to introduce non-native fish species into natural or near-natural waters, or to transfer such species from fish farms into any other wetland.

Article 15

- (1) The following types of areas qualify as natural areas if they meet the conditions specified under Article 4 paragraph d) above
- (a) arable land used as forest, grassland or reed bed;
 - (b) land withdrawn from cultivation, except if facilities are to be Sited on it or if it is exploited as a mine when this Act comes into force on the basis of a validly approved technical mining working plan;
 - (c) land unsuitable for agricultural or forest use.
- (2) The Minister and the Minister of Agriculture shall, when they think fit, but not later than 2 years after this Act comes into force, announce by Joint Decree the register of natural areas subject to paragraph (1) above.

Article 16

- (1) In the course of agricultural, forest, reed, fish farm and game management (hereafter management), it shall be ensured that sustainable use is practised, which includes long-term orientation, application of nature-friendly techniques and the protection of biodiversity.
- (2) Management shall be exercised without causing permanent damage to the soil, the superficial or subsurface geomorphological values or the natural flora and fauna, destroying the protected living organisms or communities, or considerably decreasing their biodiversity.
- (3) Wherever the habitat conditions make it possible, afforestation shall be exercised primarily with native tree species, in a natural species composition and using nature-friendly techniques.
- (4) Grassland management shall be exercised primarily by grazing and/or cutting regimes adjusted to the type of grassland, and by a moderate, nature-friendly use of chemicals.
- (5) The natural or near-natural shoreline of watercourses and lakes shall be conserved as wetland habitats. In the course of constructing waterworks, nature-friendly methods shall take priority.

Article 17

- (1) Subject to Article 8 paragraph (1) above, all activities shall be exercised with due regard to preserving natural values and areas and to the protection of the habitats of wild organisms and their biodiversity.
- (2) In the course of using natural areas, special attention shall be paid to the habitat type, the diversity of characteristic wild organisms and the maintenance of biodiversity.
- (3) Waters, reed beds and other wetland habitats in a natural or near-natural state as well as the natural vegetation of lands whose low fertility is unfavourable for cultivation shall be preserved in the course of the following activities: using arable land, using and employing land unsuitable for cultivation, planning and executing amelioration, exercising any other agricultural activities, water management and water regulation.
- (3) Experimental, temporary or final authorisation of the marketing or application of plant protecting agents, bioregulators and other pesticides as well as chemicals that favourably influence the soil's fertility shall be granted by the conditions laid down in another provision of law; the approval of the Ministry is necessary for such an authorisation.
- (4) In natural areas, chemicals that favourably influence the soil's fertility may only be used in justified cases - subject to another provision of law - based on the results of soil tests and in a nature-friendly manner.
- (5) In natural areas, in order to protect natural values and biodiversity, the Directorate (the National Park Directorate, hereafter the Directorate) may - by the provisions of a separate law - initiate the restriction or prohibition of the application of certain plant protecting agents and chemicals that favourably influence the soil's fertility.

Article 18

- (1) In natural or near-natural wetland habitats, the water reserve ecologically necessary for the subsistence of natural values as well as for the conservation and maintenance of natural systems shall not be artificially abstracted.
- (2) The volume of this ecological water reserve shall be determined by the Water Directorate, assisted by the Directorate as a professional authority. The Directorate may also initiate the determination of the volume of the ecological water reserve.
- (3) In natural areas - with the exception of the populated interior area of settlements - it is prohibited to locate new buildings or any artificial facilities within 50 metres of the shoreline of natural or near-natural watercourses and wetlands, within 100 metres of the shoreline of lakes and ponds and in the flood-plain of watercourses. Any construction in water, the construction of facilities which serve shipping and the construction of fishing facilities at fish farms shall take place

with the approval of the Directorate (Article 21 paragraph (3) section b) below), in such manner and in such cases as specified by another provision of law.

(4) It shall be prohibited to release or deposit - with the exception of chemicals used to prevent damages caused by flood - chemicals and plant protecting agents dangerous to water and aquatic organisms and specified in another provision of law within 1 000 metres of the shoreline of natural and near-natural watercourses and wetlands.

Article 21

(1) In natural areas, the authorisation of the Directorate shall be required for-

- a) the changing of the type of cultivation of grasslands and reeds;
- b) the burning of grasslands, reeds or any other aquatic vegetation;

(2) In natural areas, the approval of the Directorate (acting as the co-operating authority) shall be required for-

a) using arable land for other purposes than cultivation; re-utilising land withdrawn from cultivation;

b) conducting geological research, establishing mining scapes and approving technical mining plans for the following activities: researching, exploring and exploiting or suspending the exploitation of mineral resources, and closing mines as well as restoring the landscape after mining,

c) approving the working plans of fisheries.

(3) In natural and near-natural areas, the authorisation of the Directorate as the co-operating authority shall be required for-

a) modifying wetland habitats, and especially the shorelines of watercourses and lakes, or the conditions of natural waterside communities (plant associations);

b) reconstructing or transforming existing buildings, structures or facilities as well as for locating and constructing any water facility, port or facility serving fishing within 50 metres of the shoreline of watercourses and wetland habitats, or within 100 metres of the shoreline of lakes.

(4) The consent of the Minister shall be required for approving those parts of district game management plans which effect natural areas.

(5) Further provisions - in addition to the provisions under Articles 6-21 - apply to natural values and natural areas under special protection.

Article 23

(1) Natural values and areas shall receive special protection by the declaration of protected status.

(2) By virtue of this law, all springs, bogs, caves, sink-holes of sinking streams, salt lakes tumuli and earthen fortifications are protected. The natural areas declared protected under this paragraph qualify as protected areas of national importance (Article 24 paragraph (1) below).

(3) For the purposes of paragraph (2):

a) "cave" means any natural cavity in the Earth's crust where the longitudinal axis exceeds 2 metres and the current volume or the volume after extracting the natural speleothem (cave fill) is large enough for a person to enter;

b) "spring" means any natural issue of water from the earth provided that its discharge exceeds 5 l/min, even if it becomes temporarily dry.

c) "permanent or temporary sink-hole" means any cleft in karst which conducts a permanent or temporary watercourse underground.

(4) The Minister shall, within 3 years of the date of this Act coming into force, publish the register of bogs, salt lakes, tumuli and earthworks subject to paragraph (2) above, and revise it annually. The inventory is only a reference work, and does not concern the protection provided under paragraph (2) above, which comes into force when this Act is enacted.

(5) In case the protection of a natural value or natural area can only be ensured by taking special measures, the natural value or natural area in question shall be declared strictly protected.

Article 38

(1) The authorisation of the nature conservation authority shall be required in protected natural areas especially for:

- a) conducting research, collecting or carrying out experiments;
- b) ploughing, renewing, overseeding, irrigating, grazing or cutting grasslands;
- c) restoring the area or changing its character or use;
- d) changing the purpose of non-arable lands or the branch of cultivation of arable lands;
- e) cutting or planting any tree, group or row of trees which do not fall under the laws on forest or forest conservation;
- f) burning or eradicating reeds or any other aquatic vegetation, burning grasslands, fallows, stubbles or straw and setting fire in forests with the exception of designated campfire-places;
- g) applying plant protecting agents, bioregulators or other pesticides, as well as chemicals that favourably influence the soil's fertility;
- h) angling;
- i) organising communal or mass sport events, sport races including motorsport and other technical sport events;

(2) The approval of the forestry authority as a co-operating authority shall also be required in the process subject to paragraph (1) section e) above;

(3) In the course of preventing an animal or plant epidemic or quarantine obliged disease, instead of instituting the procedure subject to paragraph (1) section g), the type of preparation to be applied shall be announced to the nature conservation authority.

(4) The management plan may define those conditions of the activities to be exercised in the protected natural area whose accomplishment grants exemption from the obligation to require an authorisation specified under Article 38 paragraph (1) above.

Article 39

(1) The nature conservation authority shall act as a co-operating authority in any authoritative procedure having direct effect to or directly concerning protected natural areas, and in particular in-

- a) dividing any parcel, or changing its shape or extent;
- b) parcelling out, utilising land, building, constructing facilities or commencing operations;
- c) constructing linear structures or performing earthworks;
- d) operating in water, constructing facilities in water or utilising water;
- e) authorising the construction of any premises serving for industrial, agricultural or service activities;
- f) procedures of forestry, hunting and fishing authorities;
- g) approving landscape development plans or technical mining plans concerning the establishment or modification of mining areas, the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources, the utilisation of waste stockpile, the suspension of exploitation or the closing of any mine; authorising the construction and operation of mining facilities and the use of certain machines or installations within mines; furthermore, in water laws procedures in relation with mining;

- h) converting the use of arable lands;
- i) approving the transportation or storage of hazardous substances specified in another provision of law;

(2) In authoritative procedures for defining limits applied in environmental protection and specified in another provision of law, the Directorate shall act as a co-operating authority, provided that the procedure concerns any protected natural area.

Upon requirements stated in both Act on Environmental Protection of 1996 and Act on Nature Conservation of 1997, the Parliament has accepted the National Environmental Programme for the period of 1997-2002 on 16th of September, 1997. The programme contains several parts dealing with different elements of the environment (soil, water etc). A chapter of "waters" deals with environmental aspects of surface and subterranean water systems in Hungary. The Nature Conservation Master Plan is also included as a separate section in the National Environmental Programme. Parts of Nature Conservation Master Plan related to wetland habitats describe and evaluate the state of the Hungarian wetlands and identify the objectives as follows:

Wetland habitats

As a consequence of Hungary's geographical position, geomorphology and centripetal river network, 96 percent of its surface water reserves come from neighbouring countries, and this has a determinative effect on the quantitative and qualitative parameters of these waters. Water demands often significantly differ from available water reserves both in space and time. In addition to the above, significant factors influencing the quantity and quality of current water reserves include climate, the operation practice of water reservoirs recently established in the countries north of Hungary (upstream), the more and more intensive exploitation of subsurface waters and the quality of sewage and used water running into surface waters.

The network of watercourses is relatively thin and their water discharge is fluctuating, in some cases extremely so. It is noteworthy that before river regulations in the last century, 24 percent of what is Hungary today was a flood plain, whereas today the flood plain of embanked rivers covers 150,000 hectares; along the river stretches without dikes approximately 70,000 hectares, and along brooks and streamlets some 430,000 hectares are temporarily flooded. The decrease of water quantity in standing water bodies is getting more and more severe, sometimes disastrously so. The yield of usable surface and subsurface waters has decreased significantly and their quality has greatly deteriorated. This situation has been exacerbated by the regional amelioration program supported by substantial state subsidies, because the program neglected to regularly retain and store big water yields and even in drought-stricken zones aimed at draining waters without offering any practical opportunity of replenishment.

There are numerous wetland habitats, especially in the lowland plains, which have preserved several elements of the original scenery, fauna and flora of primordial wetlands. It is and will be a priority task of nature conservation and water management to register and first of all save the unique (e.g. lowland *Sphagnum* bogs) or internationally rare (e.g. oxbow lakes hollowed out by floods, saline lakes and rivulets in the Great Plain) types which have survived in a near-natural state.

The various wetland habitats constitute a characteristic and determinative part of the ecological (green) corridor system. Bog meadows, bogs, fens, marshes and marsh meadows, representing a transitional stage between water bodies and terrestrial habitats, are *highly sensitive and valuable even in international comparison*. Their state has changed unfavourably. Bogs, fens, marshes and permanently or temporarily flooded wetland habitats are particularly endangered today by the combined effects of drying up, eutrophication and the formerly only technically planned interventions (drainage, embankments, reservoirs radically affecting ground water levels, concrete bedding, disconnection of oxbow lakes, etc.).

Nature conservation target and tasks:

- The flora and fauna of wetland habitats particularly endangered by drying and eutrophication (saline lakes, small watercourses, bogs, fens, marshes, oxbows rich in natural values, springs, near-natural fishponds and reedbeds) must be conserved. In order to sustain internationally important wetland habitats, the ecologically necessary amount of water is to be ensured.
 - The decrease of wetland habitats preserving natural or near-natural state must be halted at the latest by the turn of the millennium.
 - The inventory and classification of all Hungarian wetland habitats are to be made. The nature conservation guidelines of the different wetland habitats must be elaborated, with special regard to small watercourses and mountain brooks.
 - Special attention is to be paid to the protection of the Danube, Drava and Tisza rivers, their tributaries, flood plains and oxbows and to their wise (multifold) use in line with the principle of sustainable development. The gradual implementation of oxbow restoration programs must be started without delay, first on the lower sections of the River Tisza, the Körös rivers and the River Danube.
 - Activities aimed at the transformation of wetland habitats of natural standing and flowing waters and extensive water systems are to be avoided. Special attention is to be paid that interventions at these places do the least possible damage to the flora and fauna and that the near-natural state, variegated structure and species diversity of wetland habitats, an integral part of the original Hungarian landscape scenery, be the least damaged.
 - Wetland habitats dried up or threatened by drying up must be restored by regular water replenishment, with special regard to the protection of the unique (e.g. lowland Sphagnum bogs) or internationally rare (e.g. oxbow lakes hollowed out by floods, saline lakes and rivulets in the Great Plain) types which have survived in a near-natural state. The restoration of wetland habitats must be a priority task of nature conservation and water management. The alkaline lakes in the Kiskunság must be restored and their continuous water supply is to be ensured.
- Furthermore, the *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* will include a chapter on wetlands prepared by the Planning Team on Inland Water and Freshwater Resources Management. It is expected to be finalised by 31, December, 1998 and approved by the Hungarian Parliament or the Government.

Wise use of wetlands

The *Nature Conservation Act of 1996* provides for the sustainable use of natural resources. In addition, Article 71 of the Act provides for the use of economic incentives for 'nature-friendly management' and habitat restoration activities.

Local participation

A decree under the *Nature Conservation Act* will provide for compensation mechanisms and will define the types of agreements that will be possible with local owners.

2.2 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?

Since the Act on Nature Conservation has been in force since 1997, it has been too short a period for evaluation of the progress that has been made on its implementation.

2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with : a. a single Government Ministry, b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or

c. a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

The responsible governmental body for the implementation of the Act is the Ministry for Environment. For implementation of the wetland policy the executive plan of the National Environmental Programme has been elaborated and approved indicating the time schedule of the measures, responsible ministerial bodies (in the case of surface and subterranean waters they are the Ministry for Environment together with Ministry for Transport, Telecommunication and Water Management). Although privatisation process still has some negative effects to wetlands, the most important Sites are already under protection. The National Ramsar Committee and the Nature Conservation Advisory Board (of the Authority for Nature Conservation) assist the implementation of the policy as cross-sectoral bodies.

2.4 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?

The Republic of Hungary has no federal system of government.

2.5 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.

I. In general

There are many different laws in the Republic of Hungary relating to wetlands that set out the utilisation and regulate all kind of activities being carried out on this type of habitat. In general, most of the acts and decrees state at the very beginning that they were created by the Hungarian Republic recognising the fact that living creatures are essential parts of the World's renewable natural resources and the of the whole ecosystem. Moreover, the Parliament is aware that species, special habitats, landscape and natural movements of water, and the ecosystem in general also bear intrinsic, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, genetic, and economic values and people of Hungary are to save them for the next generations. A total of 4 acts deal with issues that may have impact on wetland as follows:

Act on Environmental Protection (No LIII of 1995)

Act on Water Management (No LVII of 1995)

Act on Game Management, Game Protection and Hunting (No LV of 1996)

Act on Fishing and Angling (No XLI of 1997)

1. Act on Act on Environmental Protection (No LIII of 1995)

See 2.1

2. Act on Water Management (No LVII of 1995)

This legislation specifies the basic rights and obligations related to the use of waters, further the maintenance of the exploitation and prevention of damage, according to the requirements of environmental protection also occupies a considerable part, which attempts to prevent, minimise and eliminate contamination arising from human activity.

3. Act on Game Management, Game Protection and Hunting (No LV of 1996)

The Act was issued in unified structure with the executive decree No 30/1997 (IV.30) of the Ministry for Agriculture. In the interest of nature conservation and rational exploitation of the game population, the Act obliges the person entitled to hunting to conserve the game population in his hunting ground and its biological diversity. Furthermore, the above mentioned person must take care of the game and its habitat. The Act also regulates to permission the release of bred game and non-indigenous species into Nature.

4. Act on Fishing and Angling (No XLI of 1997)

Although nature conservation and fishery activities have many issues in common (conservation and maintenance of the quality of water, maintenance of wetlands in a natural status) Hungary has problems arising between the aforementioned fields, due to the contradiction that fishery activity aims to make a profit that is definitely not an objective of nature conservation. No sooner was the concept of nature conservation developed than such problems have arisen a hundred years ago.

The very first legal instrument, namely the act on fishing activity, was formulated in 1888 and was modified in 1925. A modern and widely accepted act was formulated and accepted in 1977. As an addition, the list of protected and strictly protected species was included in the law of 1977. Furthermore, fishing times and the size of fish to be caught have been limited. The rules were intended to promote the reproductive potential of wetlands. The Act on Fishing and Angling (No. XLI of 1997) is enacted for the specification of the fishing conditions, in the interests of conservation and permanent revival of the natural diversity of the fauna and flora, further the harmonisation of exercising the right to fish with the requirements of the market and protection of aquatic wildlife and natural environments of waters. The section referring to biodiversity declares that the authorised person is obliged to protect the fish population and the aquatic biocoenosis and habitat within his fishing waters, and to promote natural feeding and reproduction of fish, including the saving of young fish in the event of flooding. The Act binds to permission the release of reared and non-indigenous animals into Nature.

2.6 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:

a. national

b. provincial

c. local

a, The Authority for Nature Conservation has been working on that the responsible governmental bodies consider the wetland conservation in general and wetland reconstruction in particular high priority.

b, and c,

Biharugra Fishponds Ramsar Site

At Biharugra Fishponds Ramsar Site responsible national park directorate discusses continuously in measures implemented by the fishery company.

Lake Balaton Ramsar Site

For Lake Balaton Ramsar Site there is no nature conservation management plan. Protected parts of the lake are under assessment and detailed nature conservation management plans are in preparation.

Gemenc, Béda-Karapanca Ramsar Sites

A large-scale revitalisation project was launched in 1997 aiming to restore and reconstruct the previous (natural) water regime, floods and in order to keep a high level of water on the flood-plain system.

Hortobágy Ramsar Site

When the restoration project was elaborated of the swamps of Egyek-Pusztakócs part of the Ramsar Site, the flood retention point of view was also taken into account, consequently the wetland system also serves as a water reservoir.

At Lake Tisza (former names are Tiszafüred or Kisköre water reservoir, hereafter Lake Tisza) water part of the Ramsar Site of Hortobágy, irrigation and possible water reservoir points of view were taken into account. Management of the wetland is carried out by consulting water management authorities and water users.

2.7 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?

Since 1994, the Authority of Nature Conservation has been producing books on management practices of various nature conservation issues. The very first two publications were dealing with flora of the Hungarian Great Plain, and the state and future prospects of the agriculture on the Great Plain, respectively.

Since 1995 the following publications has been published by the Authority:

I. Keszthely, I. Csapody, L. Halupa: Guidelines for management of protected forests, Budapest, 1995 (in Hungarian)

J. Kelemen (ed.): Nature conservation management of grasslands, Budapest, 1977

J. Kelemen, P. Warner : Nature Conservation Management of Grasslands of Hungary, 1996

E. Láng (ed) : National Biodiversity Monitoring System, Volume 1-10., Budapest, 1997

The next publication of the *nature conservation guide series* is expected to be published in 1999 dealing with management of wetlands. Kiskunság National Park Directorate has published „Habitat maintenance and management of core areas of Kiskunság National Park” in 1995, which is also available in English.

Further publications (see also references):

János Tardy (in press): Nature Conservation Index of Hungary.

Nechay, G. és Faragó, S.(szerk.): The Convention on biological diversity of UN. 1992, Budapest, ENSZ Környezet és Fejlesztés Konferenciájának Magyar Nemzeti Bizottsága (In Hungarian)

Nechay, G. (szerk.): Caring for the Earth, Hungarian edition, KTM, Budapest, 1992.

Nechay, G. (eds): Hungary: first national report on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, KTM, Budapest, 1998.

Ö. Rádai (ed.): River Corridors-Élvízfolyosók Magyarországon. (In English and Hungarian) IUCN-Magyarország, Budapest

IUCN-Magyarország (1995): Nature Conservation on fishponds (In Hungarian) Budapest

IUCN-Magyarország: (1997): National Ecological Network (ed: F., Németh, in Hungarian)

IUCN (1997): Fishing for a Living: The Ecology and Economics of Fishponds in Central Europe.

IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge

WWF-Hungary has published several booklets dealing with management of grasslands, floodplains and also dealing with relationship between agriculture and nature conservation, possibilities for maintaining the biological diversity as follows (all are in Hungarian):

D., Dobrosi, L., Haraszthy, G., Szabó (1993): Conservation problems of Hungarian floodplains

F., Márkus (1994): Environmental impacts of pesticides in Hungary

F., Márkus (1993): Extensive agriculture and its nature conservation importance in Hungary

L., Haraszthy (1995): Possibilities to conserve the biological diversity in Hungary

F., Márkus, Sz., Nagy (1995): Harmonisation of nature conservation and agricultural policy in Hungary.

2.8 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).

In Hungary the decree of Government (1988) regulates the utilisation of chemicals. Using chemicals on wetlands are regulated both by the Act on Environment Protection No. LIII. of 1996 of 1995 and the Act on Nature Conservation No. LIII. of 1996 the latter one particularly articles 18 and 38, section1, respectively.

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

The Act on Regional Development and Physical Planning No. XXI. of 1996 states that the point of view of environmental protection, nature conservation and landscape conservation should be incorporated into any process of development planning. The National Regional Development Council as one of the most important body for planning process include all representative of ministries including the Hungarian Ministry for Environment as well. In development planning processes the National Ecological Network shall play a fundamental role. The basic principles of NEECONET will be elaborated by the Ministry for Environment with significant inputs of other ministries. For elaboration of the NEECONET a nature conservationists-economists expert team was appointed in 1998.

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

The very first need for environmental impact assessment has been expressed by the Act No. II. of 1976. Afterwards, Decree of Government No. 86. of 1993 (VI.4.) has also expressed the necessity of impact assessments. Later on it was amended by the Decree of Government No. 67 of 1994 (V.4.). Having incorporated the requirements concerning the matter of Act on Environmental Protection, a unified Decree of Government no. 162 of 1995 (XII. 12.) sets the regulation for activities related to environmental impact assessment and authorisation procedure in connection with the issue. In accordance of the Decree of Government, a total number of 112 activities are listed that must have environmental impact assessment prior to carrying out the activity. Activities include establishing facilities (buildings, companies, factories, etc.) changing of technology, expanding or finishing industrial activities, or basic amendments of them. An Environmental impact assessment has to be carried out in two stages as follows:

Preliminary environmental assessment. It should be elaborated on the base of predicted impacts of the planned activity to the environment.

Detailed environmental assessment. Based upon the preliminary one, this assessment must examine all kind of impacts that may effect the surroundings. Field investigations are needed for it. The planned technology should be compared with those that are considered to be the most efficient one. Impacts that may be expected from the activity should be assessed from the point of view of public health, economy and socio-economic aspects.

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

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.

As the Nature Conservation Authority considers wetland restoration a high priority one among the activities, it aims to identify a list of wetlands in need of restoration. This process is carried out by consulting other relevant organisations, mainly with national park directorates. Following the steps that have been made in wetland restoration in the past years (on Lake Velencei, Ócsa Ramsar Site, Dinnyés-Fertő and Lake Fertő Ramsar Sites) the following wetland restorations have been made since 1995:

In Hortobágy Ramsar Site a large-scale restoration began that may have international recognition. At the first stage, the Jusztus-Feketerét has been restored, then swamps of Egyek-Pusztakócs were restored with a Danish support and as the final part, restoration has begun at Zám puszta with a Dutch fund. In the latter case the fund is available for the rehabilitation of former seasonally inundated wetland (total area is approximately 200 ha) using a water supply system that makes use of the original natural flow-paths.

At Lake Fehér at Kardoskút Ramsar Site surrounding lands have been bought in order to restore the wetland system. There is also a plan and fund available to create a visitor and exhibition centre which fit to the objectives of Ramsar Strategic Plan.

At saline lakes of Kiskunság restoration projects include creation saline lakes, wet grasslands since 1990. The following localities have been rehabilitated within the framework of the project: Kelemenszék (in 1991), Büdösszék (in 1995), Fehér-szék (in 1997).

2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to "encourage active and informed 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).

At Lake Velencei, Dinnyés, Ócsa, Rétszilás Fishponds and Old Lake (Tata) Ramsar Sites

The responsible national park directorate considers it an important issue to involve local communities thus maintain good relationship with educational organisations, and local governments as well.

Biharugra Fishponds Ramsar Site

An information booklet will be published on the values, functions and practical information of the area. This is aimed to achieve better understanding of the wetland Site among local inhabitants and visitors.

At Kis-Balaton Ramsar Site

An extremely good relationship is between Balaton Uplands NP Directorate and Kis-Balaton Regional Association. Local NGOs play significant role in scientific surveys of the Ramsar Site. Involvement of local communities is in progress, a good example for it is harvesting the reed by manpower and establishing recreational centre on an island near the wetland Site.

Balaton Ramsar Site

Since Lake Balaton is not under protection except a few small bays of it, involving local communities into nature conservation activities is rather difficult. Good relationship may be expected from the connection to certain angling clubs based on mutual benefits.

Gemenc

A study path and some birdwatching towers have been built on the Ramsar Site in order to strengthen the awareness of the wetland Site.

Béda-Karapanca

A few bird watching towers has been built on the Ramsar Site with the same purpose that those of Gemenc.

Pacsmag Fishponds

An educational centre is operated throughout the year by a local NGO (local organisation of BirdLife Hungary).

Szaporca

Fishery activities and measures of the fishery company are planned in co-operation with responsible national park directorate.

Lake Tisza (Tiszafüred or Kisköre water reservior)

Since the Ramsar Site is also important for tourism and recreational points of view, Association of Local Governments of Lake Tisza is interested in conservation the wetland Site.

On Ágota-puszta wetland Site a wetland restoration project has been finished in 1997. During the project a local group of National Foundation of Children and Youth has been involved. A birdwatching tower has also been constructed.

Lake Fertő

Around the Ramsar Site, NP directorate manages the grasslands in co-operation with farmers. Farmers can use grasslands for grazing in an extensive way.

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

Rétszilas Fishponds

Although the fishpond system is privately owned the wise use concept is being implemented on the Ramsar Site. An exhibition and visitor centre are under construction that will not only exhibit the traditional fishery activities but also the fauna and flora of the nature reserve as well as the Ramsar Site. NP directorate offers advice for the fishery company continuously.

Saline lakes of Kiskunság, Pusztaszer, Mártély and Lake Kolon Ramsar Sites

On the Ramsar Sites of Kiskunság National Park Directorate, the relationship and the co-operation is excellent with local governments, particularly on the field of eco-tourism and educational and public awareness campaigns.

Lake Balaton, Kis-Balaton Ramsar Sites

Involvement of private sector in management of wetland sites is carried out by two ways: harvesting reed and grazing grassland around and inside the Ramsar Sites.

Gemenc

The water management authority is involved in the implementation of the wetland restoration project.

Hortobágy

Around the Ramsar Site management measures are carried out with the involvement of farmers and landowners. Farmers are far interested in nature conservation measures due to the benefits of spring flooding to the meadows.

On the territory of NP directorate, at Kecskéri-puszta Nature Reserve an 8 ha swamp has been restored by a private fishery company and a local NGO (NIMFEA Nature Conservation Society). Fishery activities are carried out as a part of nature conservation management of the wetland.

Lake Fertő

Although almost the total territory is state-owned, farmers and fishermen play role in management of the wetland.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

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

3.1 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)

Among the governmental activities, the Ministry for Environment is the responsible body to develop and implement projects aiming at educational and public awareness campaigns on wetland conservation. However, there is no such project focusing exactly on wetlands. Among PR activities of the Ministry for Environment, project on Outstanding Days should be noted. In accordance with the tradition and international requirements, world days, including World Wetland Day is celebrated every year.

The National Environmental Strategy was initiated by 13 NGOs in June, 1997. The strategy has been elaborated and approved and it contains guidelines, guidance for education in the point of view of ecosystem and conservation.

3.2 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.

The National Educational Master Plan deals with environmental issues, however the extent of nature conservation and protection of wetlands are far from the required level. The Master plan has been elaborated by the Ministry responsible for education for the primary, secondary levels of the educational system.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

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

4.1 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.

Based on Recommendation c. 5.7. of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) Authority of Nature Conservation has established the Hungarian Ramsar Committee in 1995. The committee is composed of ministerial bodies that are concerned in conservation, management of wetland, scientific institutions and NGO-s. Terms of reference of the committee are listed below.

Reasons for establishing the committee:

requirements arising from increased need for understanding related to the implementation of Ramsar Convention, in response and putting together responsible bodies into an organisation;
to promote the distribution of decisions taken by Conferences of the Contracting Parties in Hungary;
to help the work on implementation of the decisions of the Ministry for Environment.

The aims of operation of the committee:

implementation of the above-mentioned objectives;
to promote better understanding of the Convention;
to create forum on which both governmental and non-governmental organisations may provide inputs for conservation of the wetlands;
to create possibilities for ongoing consultation with the Secretariat (Ramsar Bureau);
to develop guidelines for the ownership of wetland Sites on a strategic way;
to elaborate and put forward for approval of the strategy for wise use and conservation of wetlands;
evaluation of reports, reviews and plans related to Hungarian Ramsar Sites,
to introduce and assist for the implementation of management practices recommended by the Convention;
to prepare the introduction of zonation system recommended and approved by the Convention;
to identify and evaluate wetlands that may be designated for the list of International Importance;
to help to formulate unified position for matters related to the Convention;
to assist and support the Hungarian Chair of the Ramsar Standing Committee;
to assist the Hungarian member in the STRP.

The Committee is more an informal body holding its meeting twice or three times a year, the last one was held in November, 1997.

The other cross-sectoral committee that should be noted is the Nature Conservation Advisory Board of Authority for Nature Conservation.

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

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.

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

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

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

and b) There were no such actions taken in Hungary.

c) A „training for trainers” course was held in 1995 by the Kiskunság National Park Directorate.

d) Staff members were participating on the International Course on Wetland Management, namely one from the Ministry for Environment, two from Hortobágy and Duna-Ipoly NP Directorates. A staff member has participated on a study tour in Canada on which he was asked to lead a wetland monitoring project. Following are listed the study tours and conferences on which staff members of national park directorates participated:

Conference on River Dráva;

Conference on River Dráva and Mura, presentation on principles of oxbow lake rehabilitation;

Workshop on wetlands organised by the Academy of Sciences, Pécs;

Study tour in Camargue, France (supported by FNNP);

Conference of International Mire Conservation Group in Norway, 1995;

Study tour and working in British Columbia, Canada;

Raising Public Awareness for Nature Conservation organised by ECNC, 1995;

1996, Tiszafüred Meeting of STRP;

Research Management and Nature Conservation in Aggtelek, Hungary, 1996;

NATO Advanced Research Workshop Contribution of National Parks and Protected Areas to Heritage Conservation (Cracow, 1996);

Water Quality and Environmental Management (University of Kossuth, 1996, in the framework of the 1st International ICER TEMPUS Ph.D. Seminar);
Hungarian Managers Visit to UK National Parks;
Study tour in Spain organised by EUROPARC;
EUROSITE Matra Workshops in Czech Republic, 1998.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all Sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

5.1 Of the Ramsar Sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:

a. being prepared?

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.

Under preparation for 13 Ramsar Sites

and c) Completely prepared and being implemented for 6 Sites (see attachment)

Among the 19 Hungarian Ramsar Sites in total 6 have thoroughly elaborated nature conservation management plan that are based on EUROSITE guidelines on management planning. Since EUROSITE guidelines are quite similar to those of Ramsar, there was no reason to formulate management plan based on Ramsar guidelines. For the Dinnyés Fertő, Saline lakes of Kiskunság, Mártély, Pusztaszer and Lake Kolon Ramsar Sites nature conservation management plans have been prepared in 1996 therefore they are now under implementation. For Lake Fertő, a detailed MP has been prepared in 1997, thus they have already one year experience of implementation.

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

All of the prepared and being implemented nature conservation management plans of Ramsar Sites include monitoring schemes and those of under preparation will include such activities. In addition for two Ramsar Sites (Gemenc and Lake Fertő) there are water quality monitoring surveys. Moreover, at Pacsmag Fishponds Ramsar Site there is a monitoring scheme of waterbirds and passerines (including census and ringing). In order to monitor the ecological character, a complex monitoring has been implemented since 1993 at Kis-Balaton Ramsar Site. At Ramsar Sites of Béda-Karapanca and Gemenc: waterbird and raptor census, moreover fish monitoring and water plant monitoring schemes are being carried out. At lake Balaton an intensive monitoring survey is carried out to investigate the changes in water quality. In total there are 29 sampling plots on the lake. In 1994 a rather intensive hydrobiological activity has been observed with high algae content. Neither in 1995 nor in 1996 has not been observed such movements, thus water quality has been improved a bit.

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

If Yes, please give details.

Lake Velencei, Dinnyés Fertő, Ócsa, Rétszilás Fishponds and Old Lake (Tata)

During the past triennium there has not been negative ecological change taken place on these Ramsar Sites. However, as a result of proper management measures of water level, wetland restoration (small-scale) works and harvesting of reed in accordance with nature conservation point of view positive ecological changes occurred.

Kardoskút

The wetland has been designated as a Ramsar Site since 1979. On the buffer zone of the Ramsar Site there are still agricultural canals that were created in the end of the sixties. By filling up these canals a significant positive change would be happen on the wetland Site.

Bodrogzug

Neither positive nor negative ecological changes has taken place in the Ramsar Site. The management planning process which is underway will include a monitoring scheme for the wetland Site.

Gemenc, Béda-Karapanca, Pacsmag Fishponds, Szaporca

One of the most important adverse factor is the drying out of the floodplains (Gemenc, Béda-Karapanca) along the main water course due to the deepening of riverbeds, rapid process of succession (as a consequence of shortage of water and nutrient rich water), intensified activities of forestry. Succession of vegetation is slowly approaching its final, climax stage at Szaporca, thus turning the habitats less diverse. At Pacsmag fishponds reedbeds are expanding and deposition of sediment may have impacts to the ecological character.

Hortobágy

Having finished the wetland restoration project of the Egyek-Pusztakócs swamp in 1997, flooding of the all swamp areas of Hortobágy that are designated to the List of Wetlands of International Importance became possible creating positive impact on the ecological character of the habitats.

Saline lakes of Kiskunság, Pusztaszer, Mártély, Lake Kolon at Izsák

No changes took place on these Sites.

Kis-Balaton

The filling up section 1 resulted adverse habitat changes since 1992. Some parts of the system is less diverse in terms of biology than it was before 1992.

Lake Fertő

A wetland restoration project launched in 1989 resulted significant positive changes on the south-eastern part of the lake. The agricultural canals network has been designed in the way that no polluted water (either fertilizer or chemical polluted) is allowed to enter the lake. On the catchment of the only inlet watercourse of Lake Fertő (called streamlet Rákos) a water purification station was built and a biological filter is being built at Sopronkőhida town with American support.

5.4 In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar Sites where the Management Guidance 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?

Hungary has no Ramsar Site that is on the Montreux Record.

5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar 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.

Since COP6 that was held in 1996, Brisbane, Hungarian authorities has had taken further steps for the extension of seasonally designation of two Ramsar Sites. Although at the Lake Balaton there are a great number of tourism and economic interests, discussions are still going on for achieving the Ramsar status on year-round basis. Fulfilling the requirements stated in Recommendation 6.17, Hungary has announced the full-year Ramsar status for Lake Old at Tata, when 6 new Sites and two extensions had been added to the List.

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.

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

The national wetland inventory project mentioned in the 2nd National Report of Hungary prepared for the COP6, will be implemented in different stages in accordance with the new nature conservation legislation (Act on Nature Conservation No. LIII of 1996) and will be elaborated by Hortobágy National Park Directorate. Inventories for *ex lege* protected wetlands (springs, bogs, swallow holes and saline lakes-stated in the 1996 nature conservation act) shall be announced by the Minister responsible for nature conservation. Inventories for **saline lakes** and **bogs** are expected to be finalised by 1999. An inventory of Hungarian **springs** has been published by VITUKI (Scientific Institute for Water) in 1960 however this work needs to be updated. **Oxbow lakes** should be inventorised according to the Decree of Hungarian Parliament No 24 of 1997. In the scope of the project the list of oxbow lakes has been finalised for the Valley of Tisza, the hydrological aspects of Valley of Danube. This latter should be extended with nature conservation aspects. The manual on wetland management mentioned above will include a description of the types of wetland habitats of Hungary.

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

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 above mentioned inventories (see 6.1.) have been completed or under preparation. The criteria for identification of the important wetlands have been incorporated in the text of Act on Nature Conservation (1996) as follows:

“**Ex lege**” protected wetlands are clarified in Article 23 (see2.1.). **Strictly protected wetlands** are those nature reserves that require higher level of protection. **Protected natural areas** are any area declared to be protected or strictly protected by the Act on Nature Conservation or any other provision of law. **Natural areas** are primarily characterised by near-natural conditions. Natural areas and **locally protected areas** are on similar status of protection. The list of natural areas will be announced by the ministers responsible for both agriculture and nature conservation.

6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities. If this information is available, please indicate what definition of "wetland" was used.

Wetlands cover approximately 2% of the territory of the country, which is incomparably less, to those of before large river regulations. More details can be found in 2.1. The rate of wetland loss is unknown.

One of the accepted wetland definition is as follows (by ecologist professors dr. Gy. Dévai, dr. Cs. Aradi, dr. A. Tóth, dr. S. Nagy):

With special respect to Hungary, the term wetland refers to water bodies having an area-related mean water depth below 2 m at mean water level, parts of deeper waters overgrown or fringed by a macrophyte cover (hydrophyte and/or marginal vegetation) on at least on-third of their whole extent, as well as areas with hydromorphic soils the upper layer of which being continuously or seasonally waterlogged and therefore supporting characteristic vegetation (reedswamp, fen, tall sedge and tall herb vegetation, marshy meadows, marsh weed communities, vegetation of salty shores and shoals/sandbanks, wet saline meadows (puszta) and sheer alkali Sites, forested fen (peat swamp forest), willow carr, soft and hard wood riparian forest, riparian alder grove) or their clearly recognisable remains.

6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and 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)**

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

Hungary has designated 6 new sites and 2 extensions to the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Although the new criteria were not the main reasons for the designation of the above mentioned sites, Hungary has started the preparatory work for the designation of Aggtelek subterranean hydrological system to the Ramsar List. During this project, Hungary has proposed a Modified Information Sheet for Ramsar (elaborated by Dr. Ödön Rádai) and participated actively in the subregional workshop on "karst and subterranean wetlands" held in Slovenia, 1998.

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

Hungary has significantly extended its territory of Ramsar Sites in 1997 by adding 6 new sites and 2 extensions for the List of Wetlands of International Importance. It made the Hungarian list a total number of 150,000 hectares.

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

Since Lake Fertő, the Hungarian part has been designated to the List and extended in 1997, the whole lake became Ramsar Site. The Austrian part of the lake has been already designated to the List.

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

Hungary has exceptionally good relationship with Austrian, Slovenian, Romanian, Croatian, Serbian, and Ukrainian ministerial bodies responsible for nature conservation. Cooperation covers transboundary nature reserves, Ramsar Sites, exchange of expertise.

Biharugra Fishponds

Close to the wetland site on the Romanian territory there is an important wetland (Cséfal fishponds) and natural forest (Radványi-erdő) that are expected to be protected in Romania. After declaration as protected areas a transboundary wetland (Ramsar Site) can be formulated. There is an agreement on the level of state secretaries of the Ministries for Environment of Romania and Hungary.

Béda-Karapanca

Co-operation is based on agreement between Hungarian and Croatian state secretaries to designate "Kopaczki Rit" to the list establishing transboundary Ramsar wetland and to establish a transboundary national park network.

Upper-Tisza

Based on an NGO proposal for establishing a transboundary wetland area in the Upper Tisza region there is an intention to build cross-ministerial co-operation between Romanian, Ukrainian, Slovakian and Hungarian nature conservation authorities.

River Ipoly

A co-operation process has been started for establishing transboundary Ramsar Site along the river (River Ipoly-Poipia).

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.

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

Both side of the Lake Fertő of Hungary /Neusidlersee of Austria are under protection creating a transboundary national park system. Co-operation, planning processes and joint strategies are

governed by the Austrian-Hungarian National Park Committee. Water level management are regulated by an agreement on Austrian-Hungarian Convention on Water management. In the field of joint submission of proposals to international organisations, for instance to PHARE CBC INTERREG EU the national parks apply jointly. The monitoring surveys of waterfowl and waders are being carried out jointly as well.

7.2 Do you have Ramsar Sites that are "twinned" with others, either nationally or internationally? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Lake Kolon at Izsák:

In the framework of EUROSITE Twinning Project, the UK RSPB Reserve Leghorn Moss has been designated as a twin for the Site.

Lake Fertő

Since 1982, the Austrian part of the lake has been designated to the Ramsar List, the whole lake forms a uniform Ramsar Site (Ramsar-Gebiet Neusiedler See Seewinkel). Partnership is mainly between national park directorates.

7.3 Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, 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**

As most of the administrative authorities of environment-related conventions are in the Ministry for Environment, regular dialogue and close co-operations exist between personnel responsible for the implementation of the above-mentioned conventions. In the case of a, b, d, e, the main responsibility is in the Ministry for Environment.

The Republic of Hungary has approved or ratified the nature conservation-related conventions as follows:

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl habitat (since 1979),

Convention on Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (since 1985),

Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (since 1983),

Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (since 1989),

Convention on Biological Diversity (since 1994),

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (since 1985),

Framework Convention on Climate Change (since 1994),

Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (the Final Act was approved).

The Temporary Secretariat of Danube Basin Ecological Convention (Ministry for Environment, Budapest) has been working on its mandate that was given by the previous conference of experts. Document entitled “ *Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for (the) Environment on the*

Ecological Protection of the Danube Basin (draft) and *Danube Basin Nature Convention* (draft) have been prepared. Both documents will be submitted to conference of experts in 1999.

**7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No.
If yes, please provide details.**

Under the aegis of Bonn Convention (Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals) Hungary has been working actively on the conservation of migratory species of animals. Moreover, Hungary has accepted the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Slender-billed Curlew.

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

Although the Republic of Hungary is not involved in multilateral donor supporting project, in the field of bilateral co-operation and donor supporting projects, Hungary has extremely good relationship with the Netherlands and Denmark.

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

Executive plan of the National Environmental Programme sets the budgetary fund allocations related to wetlands. The following main issues are connected to wetlands:

Executive plan for protection of ecological status and improving the water quality of lake Balaton, Great Plain project (establishing environmental monitoring network, objectives for water quality improvement of oxbow lakes along rivers,

Project for water supply in Kiskunság (large sandy alluvial plain between river Danube and Tisza).

Project of national biodiversity monitoring system.

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

It is mainly part of a larger project which aims to improve not only the conservation status of a specific region, but also the human welfare.

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

Hungary has no such programme.

7.8 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

There is no consultation (see previous point)

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

8.1 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.

If yes, please provide details.

Republic of Hungary has made a Swiss franc 10.000 voluntary financial contribution for achieving the objectives of the Convention on Wetlands in 1997.

8.2 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.

Hungary has paid its dues regularly.

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.

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

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

From the total number 538 of non governmental organisations registered in the book entitled Green Network of Hungary 1996/1997 there are approximately 160, which noted the interests to wetlands in their names or activities. Among these, there are 20-30 on regional level (that works on or deals with two or more Hungarian counties) and about 10 with international co-operations.

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

a. to each other? Yes/No

b. to the government? Yes/No

If yes in either case, please give details.

Since the leading non governmental organisations (BirdLife Hungary and WWF Hungarian Office) delegates members to the Hungarian Ramsar Committee, that is the one and most important forum to exchange and share the experiences, knowledge on wetlands.

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

So far there were no representatives of non governmental organisations on official Ramsar meetings.

9.4 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).

BirdLife Hungary has a section called Division on Conservation of Waterbirds that runs regional education and public awareness projects.

The Hungarian Riverwatch NGO also maintains such activities.

9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar Site management advisory committees include NGO representatives?

If yes, please give details

There are no formal advisory body for the management of Ramsar Site or other wetlands.

9.6 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.

General Objective 2,3,5,7. (Wise use of wetlands, public awareness, conservation of wetlands, mobilisation international and national financial assistance for the conservation of wetlands.)

Final comments:

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

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

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

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

c, The Republic of Hungary highly appreciates the expert activities and the efficiency of the whole staff of Ramsar Bureau (Gland, Switzerland).

d, Since the Ministry for Environment is a member of the IUCN World Conservation Union, and the Wetlands International a good relationship is maintained with those NGO Partners. The

Ministry has similar connection to BirdLife International that has its own Hungarian partner (Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Protection Society).

References

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Compiled by:

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Ref. No: TvH - /98

Delmar Blasco
Secretary General

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

After finishing the preparatory process of the document, I am pleased to forward the National Report of Hungary on the Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International

Importance especially as waterfowl habitat for submission to the 7th Conference of the Contracting Parties which will be held in San Jose, Costa Rica, May, 1999.

Referring to the Diplomatic Notification 1988/1 dated on 23rd of January, please accept my apologies for the delay in sending the national report of Hungary.

Sincerely yours,