

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

National Report of the Republic of Korea for COP7

**National Report prepared for the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

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

Contracting Party: **Republic of Korea**

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority

Full name of the institution: **Ministry of Environment**

Name and title of the head of the institution
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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 subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention

None.

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 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 Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

Recognizing the growing importance of systematic wetland conservation policies, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries have jointly submitted the "Wetland Conservation Act" to the National Assembly in pursuant to the Ramsar convention.

The Act prescribes that conservation areas in and around wetlands shall be designated on the basis of basic research to be conducted every five years. Within a conservation area, construction projects shall be restricted and reclamation projects exceeding a certain scale shall be subject to approval by the relevant ministries.

The Act will constitute a firm legal basis on which the wetland conservation Policy/Strategy/Action Plan can be established at the governmental level in the near future.

The Ministry of Environment has designated a total of eight "Natural Ecosystem Conservation Areas," encompassing 99.78 ha, which are considered to be important habitats for migratory species and ecologically affluent wetlands. These eight areas are:

- the estuary of the Nakdong River, which serves as an important habitat for migratory birds;**
- the prime natural forests of Mt.Chiri;**
- wetlands in Young on Mt.Taeam (Ramsar site);**
- the habitat for rare plants on Mt.Paekun;**
- the specified wildlife habitat at Keumdae Peak on Mt. Taedok;**
- the habitat for rare insects and natural primeval forests at Mt.Myongji;**
- Mt.Chonggye by the upper reaches of the Chojongchon River; and**

- the habitat for rare plants at Koje Hachong and Woopo swamp(Ramsar site).

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?

As mentioned in the response to question 2.1, the government will establish a National Wetland Conservation and Management Plan on the basis of the Wetland Conservation Act to be approved by the Assembly. The Ministry of Environment has been conducting a Natural Environment Survey to diagnose the overall situation of coastal wetlands since 1997 (which will end in 2001). The results of this study will be utilized to develop measures for the conservation and wise use of wetland.

Lack of public awareness can be counted as one major obstacle to wetland conservation and wise use activities. Local communities show reluctance in the designation and expansion of conservation areas by the government, because they expect the development projects to bring more economic benefits than the conservation.

The government is currently undertaking reclamation projects, which will eventually transform 75,000 ha of tidal flats into agricultural areas to enhance food production capacity. However, the appreciation of wetlands will reduce reclamation projects to its minimum level.

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 Ministry of Environment is playing a leading role for wetland conservation activities, while other ministries are partially involved depending on the characteristics and nature of the wetland conservation activities.

The Ministry of Environment's National Wetland Conservation and Management Plan stipulates that the Ministry of Environment shall be responsible for formulating plans for inland wetlands while those for coastal wetlands shall be under the authority of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

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

Not Applicable.

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?

The National Environment Conservation Act (1997) authorizes the government to

designate and manage those areas which have admittedly significance in terms of ecosystem value and biodiversity. The government designated a total of eight zones (including three wetlands) as "Natural Ecosystem Conservation Areas."

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

National Level

1) Legislative Efforts

a) Wetland Conservation Act (Ministry of Environment)

The Act is mainly directed to formulate a Wetland Conservation and Management Plan, conduct surveys on wetlands, regulate development activities within wetland conservation zones, and implement the Ramsar Convention.

b) Coastal Management Act (Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries)

The Act incorporates the spirit of sustainable development and management into coastal management concepts.

c) National Environment Conservation Act (Ministry of Environment)

The Act allows designation and management of the wetlands which deserve to be conserved as "Natural Ecosystem Conservation Areas" (see 2.1)

d) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act (Ministry of Environment)

The Act stipulates that any reclamation project exceeding a certain scale shall be subject to an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment), in order to minimize possible adverse impacts caused by development or reclamation projects.

2) Survey/Research

a) Natural Environment Survey (1997-2001)

A survey on topography, geological features, and the status of fauna and flora of coastal and inland wetlands.

b) Analysis of characteristics of wetlands and study on measures for their conservation and wise use (1996-1997)

c) Economic assessment of wetlands (1996)

d) Ecosystem surveys on wetlands along the southwest coast (1996)

e) Feasibility study on the restoration of wetlands in Young on Mt. Taeam (1996-1998)

f) Census of wintering migratory birds at major country-wide checkpoints to get details of

population, species, etc. (1996-1997)

g) Survey on waterfowl migrating to wetlands along west coast lines (1996-1997)

Local Governmental Level

1) Survey and research on wetlands under local government jurisdiction.

2) Seminars and public hearings to coordinate how to conserve the wetlands in their regions.

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 Guideline?

None.

2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advice of the actions taken since then "to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands" (operative paragraph 9)

None.

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

The Ministry of Environment surveyed and researched both natural and economic values of wetlands.

The number of reclamation activities has declined as wetlands gain more public awareness. Moreover, the balance between the conservation and development of wetlands will be kept in formulating the "Land Use Plan".

2.10 Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country?

Environmental Impact Assessment Act requires that any reclamation project with a potential or actual adverse impact on wetlands be subject to an EIA, thereby minimizing harmful activities against wetlands.

2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? If yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilize resources for restoration or rehabilitation

Since 1996, the significance of restoration and rehabilitation has been drawing more and more attention. The Ministry of Environment has been conducting a feasibility study on restoring the wetland in Young on Mt. Taeam, a registered Ramsar site, of which the unique inland ecosystem characteristics are disappearing.

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)

Local communities voluntarily conduct monitoring programmes on ecosystem changes in the wetland of Young on Mt.Taeam and Woopo swamp regularly. In addition, they have organized watchman activities to prevent possible man-made adverse impacts.

The government supports local NGOs' conservation efforts such as seminars and surveys on wetlands in their regions.

In May 1996, the Ministry of Environment held a seminar on the "Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands" to encourage the conservation and wise-use of wetlands.

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. If yes, please provide details

No.

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

The Environmental Officials Training Institute under the auspices of Ministry of Environment provides both central and local government officials with educational programmes on the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education(primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details

Ramsar's Wise Use principles are not an integral part of the curricula of primary and secondary institutions. However, natural ecosystem conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including the marine ecosystem, are comprehensively dealt in the curricula of all levels of education.

Certain academic institutions have extra-curricular programmes which encourage students to explore tidal flat ecosystems, thereby leading students to recognize the importance of the conservation and wise use of tidal flats.

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

In case that the development projects to be undertaken on the basis of the Land Use Act, Reclamation Act, etc., affect wetlands, the Environmental Impact Assessment procedures shall be applied in accordance with the EIA Act. Even if such projects do not seem to have any effect on wetlands, relevant ministries shall be consulted on most reclamation projects.

Depending on the unique characteristics of each development project, National authorities (the Ministry of Construction and Transportation, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), local governments, and experts should contact each other through various intergovernmental meetings and frequent bilateral consultations between the authorities concerned.

A national Ramsar/Wetland Committee has not been established yet.

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.

No.

b) a review to identify the training opportunities for these people 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

A government official from the Ministry of Environment participated in the UNITAR Training Workshop for the Asia-Pacific Region on the Implementation of Multilateral Agreements Related to Biological Diversity, which was held during 14-19 September 1998 in Kushiro, Japan.

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.

The Republic of Korea has designated and registered the wetland in Young on Mt. Taeam and Woopo swamp as Ramsar Sites. Research is being conducted by experts to establish a detailed and systematic management plan in conformity with the characteristics of wetlands. On completing the research in 1999, the government will prepare a detailed management plan.

Name of Site: Wetland in Young on Mt. Taeam

Registered on: March 28, 1997

Area: 106 ha

Type of wetlands: peatland (peat bog)

Name of Sites: Woopo swamp

Registered on: March 2, 1998

Area: 854 ha

Type of wetlands: freshwater marshes

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.

As mentioned in 5.1 above, a detailed management plan for Ramsar sites has not been established at this stage, but will be formulated in the near future. The government, however, conduct monitoring procedures on the ecological characteristics of wetlands.

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

Since 1996, research and studies have been undertaken to identify ways and means to conserve the wetlands in Young on Mt. Taeam.

Woopo swamp is considered to have a fragile ecosystem which human activities could cause serious harm to its ecosystem. The area is designated and managed as a Natural Ecosystem Conservation Area in accordance with the Natural Environment Conservation Act.

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?

Not Applicable.

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.

Not Applicable.

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. If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No. Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalized, where it is kept and what information it contains.

Surveys on the geographical distribution of wetlands were frequently conducted, but we do not have any formal wetland inventory.

The government is to develop standards to prepare a wetland inventory, while taking into account migratory birds, ecological and hydrological features, etc.

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 finalized, where it is kept, what criteria for "important" were used, and the types of information it contains.

No. The Ministry of Environment is in the process of identifying important wetlands and taking appropriate conservatory measures.

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

In Korea, approximately 2,393 ha tidal flats exist, comprising 2.4% of national territory.

The loss of tidal flats during the last 10 years due to reclamation projects is estimated to exceed 810.5 ha.

Major causes for such loss can be attributed to reclamation and landfill projects to make industrial complexes and agricultural areas. Recently, these projects have begun to decrease as the importance and value of wetlands gain public awareness.

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 habitats (Resolution V1.2)
- b) meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution V1.4)
- c) are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution V1.5)
- d) are peatland ecosystems(Recommendation 6.1)
- e) are coral reefs and associated system(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)

In accordance with COP6 Recommendation 6.1, the Korean government designated wetlands in Young on Mt. Taeam, which still has its peatland characteristics.

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.

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilize 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, or their watersheds/catchments(Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7) are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands

Not applicable.

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

No.

7.3 Where your country is also a signatory 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

The Republic of Korea acceded to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the World Heritage Convention. The several different authorities are responsible for the implementation of the conventions depending on the nature and characteristics of the conventions. For instance, the Office of Cultural Properties, jointly with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trades is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. In addition to this, there exist regular and cooperative dialogue channels among the officials in charge. They exchange and share information if necessary.

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

The Republic of Korea is not a party to the Convention on Migratory Species. However, it is undertaking and directly involved in a number of cooperative activities through the following bilateral arrangement:

Agreement on the Conservation of Migratory Birds between Korea and Russia

Conference on the Conservation of Migratory Birds between Japan and Korea

- 1st: June 1996, Tokyo
- 2nd: June 1997, Tokyo
- 3rd: November 1998, Tokyo

Designated Crane Network Sites in Northeast Asia (March 1997, China)

Designated global longbill network (May 1997, Republic of Korea) at estuary of the Dongjin River

7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in country? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details

No.

7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

The Ministry of Environment has been earmarking a certain amount of annual budget for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The government is also

undertaking surveys on conservation activities for wetlands. In 1998, the Ministry of Environment has secured the fund for the nationalization of Woopo swamp.

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries allocated its annual budget of 23.8 billion (Korean won) for the period between 1999 and 2004 to establish a database, conduct an economic analysis of tidal flats, and survey their ecosystem characteristics.

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. If yes, please provide details

Of Korea's total ODA in 1995 (US\$ 116,000,000), assistance funds toward the environmental sector accounted for 3%. None of these funds is directed towards enhancing wise use and conservation of wetlands, but is mainly used for drinking water supply system and wastewater treatment system projects. In 1997, a total of circa 185 million US\$ was provided to assist the developing countries but the purposes of such ODA can not be clearly identified.

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

Yes.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

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

No.

8.2 If your government 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.

Not Applicable.

Optional Section

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

**NGOs at the national level: Two
NGOs at the local level: Ten**

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

Yes. Approximately twenty NGOs hold meetings and forums on a regular basis.

b) to the government? Yes/No

Yes. Information on wetland conservation and wise use are shared by the government and NGOs through various forums and seminars.

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

The Republic of Korea acceded to the Ramsar Convention in 1997, and COP7 will be the first COP in which the Republic of Korea will participate as a party. The composition of official delegation for COP7 is not finalized at this stage.

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

NGO activities

Running "Nature Wetland School" mainly for primary and secondary school students. The goal of the school is to induce students to watch closely and gain experience of the ecological changes in wetlands on a seasonal basis.

Organizing wetland study and tour programmes for primary and secondary school teachers.

Holding meetings with local communities on a regular basis.

Holding workshops to train the instructors who will take charge of wetland conservation and wise use activities.

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

No formal management advisory committee exists. However, there are local NGOs in Kyungnam which are actively involved in Woopo swamp conservation and management activities.

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.

Most of Korean NGOs act on the context of Ramsar Strategy 3,5,6, particularly focusing their efforts on gaining public awareness of wetland value.

Final Comments

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan

Since Korea acceded to the Ramsar Convention in 1997, public awareness on the importance of wetlands has begun to increase. Reflecting on our constant efforts to increase public awareness and to establish policies and legal mechanisms, we expect the Ramsar Strategic Plan to be implemented in an effective and efficient manner.

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