

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

**National Report for Latvia**

1 September 1998

Riga, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

**Contracting Party:**

*Latvia*

**Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority**

**Full name of the institution:**

*Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD)*

**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.

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**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.**

*The Ramsar Convention Pan-European Regional Meeting was held in Riga, June 1998. It was hosted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Delegates from both Eastern and Western Europe had an opportunity to come together for this meeting a year prior to COP7. Location of the meeting in Riga especially allowed participation of wide range of representatives from CEE countries, including people from national NGOs.*

*A joint transboundary wetland conservation project operates to protect and manage a large tract of natural mires that stretch on both sides of Latvian - Estonian border. This is a cooperation project of North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve and Latvian Fund for Nature from Latvian side with Government of Estonia, Nigula Reserve and Estonian Fund for Nature in Estonia. The project area includes Nigula bog Ramsar site (Estonia) and the so called Northern bogs shadow-list site (Latvia). Moreover, the Latvian Government seeks an official agreement with Estonia towards establishment a broader legal framework for enhanced transboundary Estonian - Latvian nature conservation.*

## Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

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

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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)?**

*National Wetland Policy does not exist in Latvia. Instead, there are other documents that have in part addressed wetlands-related issues so far. A National Environmental Policy Plan for Latvia was accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia in 1995. Most relevant to Wetlands are two long-term goals of the Policy Plan: i) maintenance and protection of existing biodiversity and landscape characteristics of Latvia; and ii) sustainable use of natural resources. Measures for solution of specific problems were covered by another document - National Environmental Action Programme, approved by the State Minister for Environment in 1996. Two sub-sets listing particular actions deal with Wetland protection and management: i) Nature Protection and ii) Water Protection.*

*National Environmental Action Plan for Latvia was adopted in 1997. Priorities of actions for the chapter on nature conservation were establishment of administrative bodies for Kemeru National Park and lake Engure, and elaboration of Integrated Management Plan for Lubans lake region. The former two territories, including several wetlands of international importance, have their respective administrations in place since 1997, 1998, and the management plan for Lubans region is in preparation. This indicates both satisfactory progress with implementing NEAP. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is in preparation (a GEF / UNDP project currently on-going, in 1998). This is done in close cooperation with Forestry, Agriculture, Fisheries and Transport sectors that themselves are in their way responsible for wise use of nature resources, incl. water and wetlands.*

### **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?**

*Most actions under the NEAP list are completed or on-going. For instance, - Integrated coastal zone management plan (from border with Lithuania to cape Kolka), - Management of lake Engure, - Management plan for lake Kanieris, - Management of Daugavgriva and Vecdaugava restricted nature areas, - establishment of Kemer National Park - are but few of actions undertaken. Specific actions range even more broadly, from identification and documenting nature values including important wetlands - as done within CORINE biotopes project - to issuing appropriate legal documents - e.g. Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers on especially protected nature territories and Law on North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve.*

*Main difficulties that slow down implementation and restrict scale of desirable actions are:*

- i) insufficiency of financial resources that can be allocated specifically for wetland issues;*
- ii) lack of capacity for preparation of project proposals, with consecutive project management and implementation, mainly in terms of educated and skilled human resources;*
- iii) last but not least, lack of awareness on wetland issues on all levels and consecutively low priority for nature conservation.*

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

*Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development*

**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?**

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**If yes, please give details.**

**2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out**

*No*

**and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these.**

**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**

*Wetlands are generally dealt with at provincial to local level in different planning projects aimed for integrated conservation and management. Examples include:*

- *Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Baltic States and Poland. The project focuses on a large stretch of coastline in order to set up the framework for a long-term environmental management and sustainable economic development;*
- *Administration and Management plans for Pape and Jurkalne coastal areas that include wetlands of international importance (e.g. lake Pape, Nida bog and Sarnate bogs) has been elaborated;*
- *Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan project for Engures - Kanieris Task Area is under its way to coordinate elaboration of separate management plans for two Ramsar sites lake Engure (part of Engure Nature Park) and lake Kanieris (part of Kemeru National Park);*
- *North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve was established in 1997; it includes and emphasizes in its planning several important wetland areas: East coast of Riga bay (a part is Baltic Sea Protected Area and is a Ramsar shadow-list site); the Northern bogs (Ramsar shadow-list), a part of the transboundary project area with Estonia (see 1.1.); shadow-listed Seda marsh; lake Burtnieks; Ruja fish-ponds; Madiesenu bog and lake Augstrozes Lielezers etc.*

*In 1998, work on National Territorial Plan has started.*

**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?**

**If Yes, please provide details and copies.**

- *Opermanis O. 1998. Wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in Latvia. Latvian Ornithological Society, Riga.*
- *Viksne J. 1997. The Bird Lake Engure. Riga, Jana Seta (Latvian, French and English editions).*
- *WWF 1996. Management plans for Lake Pape and Jurkalne area.*

**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).**

*The Water Law (1973) that applies to all ground and surface waters, including wetlands, provides for rational use and protection of water. A more important legal document, namely the Regulations on Water Use Permit (1997), has been issued recently. The latter focuses on direct extraction from waters and discharge into waters. In relation to the Regulations certain Water Quality Objectives were adopted. According to the regulations, a permit to pollute or extract has to be obtained, and thus limits for discharges may be set.*

*More specifically, Regulations on General Provisions for the Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories (1997) provide that, in three years time from the date of their issuing, the toxic shots (containing lead or other heavy metals) must be substituted by non-toxic shots in use for hunting waterfowl or regulating their numbers at Nature Reserves and Restricted Nature Areas. This essential regulation applies to many wetlands of international importance in Latvia, including all three Ramsar sites, since they fall under either of the protection categories.*

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

*None*

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

*Yes. Regulations on Environmental Impact Assessment (1998) provide that EIA is required for certain activities that fall in category of those potentially impacting wetlands.*

**2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country?**

*No, because there are many natural or semi-natural wetlands that need protection and / or management. For instance, action to conserve the remaining natural peatlands and mires would be a highest priority in wetland conservation in Latvia, in its own right. Designation of Teici and Pelecares bogs Ramsar site (one of the three designated Ramsar sites in Latvia) and the Latvian-Estonian transboundary project on protection of the mires complex (Ramsar site in Estonia, a shadow-list site in Latvia) both are steps towards recognition of this vital issue.*

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.

**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).**

*Administrative Boards for lake Engure Nature Park (Ramsar site) and Kemer National Park (including lake Kanieris Ramsar site and some more wetlands) have been established, incorporating members of local communities.*

**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? If yes, please provide details.**

*Management and administrative system for the lake Pape wetland area provided base for development of local economy and business through sustainable use of the local environment. A reed-cutting company was founded by local community. It was supported by World Bank Loan, Danish and Latvian subsidies. It is developing as a company directed for lake management.*

*State Game Management authority is managing lake Kanieris, controlling licenced fishing and hunting. This enterprise may be privatised soon.*

### Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

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

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#### **3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands?**

*A State Educational Programme that includes aspects of Public Awareness on issues related to wetlands is supported by Environmental Protection Fund run by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.*

If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

*Priority has been given to development of media center - Environmental Film Studio. It is preparing programmes for TV broadcasts, focusing on nature protection and solution of environmental problems.*

#### **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.**

*Wetlands conservation aspects and Wise Use principles are included in educational programs of studies for Master degrees in Biology and Environmental Sciences at University of Latvia.*

#### Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

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

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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*.**

*Several expert or working groups were formed for elaborating National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan; they consist of Government representatives and delegates from professional institutions, including specialist NGOs. One of the working groups is dealing with nature conservation in particular. Other group is dealing with fishery.*

**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**

*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.**

*No*

**c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers.**

*No*

**If yes, please give details.**

**d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. If yes, please give details.**

*Delegates from Lake Engure Nature Park Board, representing different institutions (Institute of Biology, Local Administration, MEPRD and Latvian Fund for Nature) have been on a short wetland management training visit to Sweden. It included learning case-stories and practices of management and administration of lakes Takern and Hornborgasjon. Actually, both wetlands with their development backgrounds have been at least superficially known to quite a few people in Latvia yet before - through previous exchange visits of professional biologists and student ornithologists to lake Takern field-station and following lectures and film presentations (e.g. the story of reed-bed management of lake Hornborga).*

*One more delegate has attended International course on wetland management organized by the Wetland Advisory and Training Centre in Netherlands.*



## Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

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

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### **5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:**

- a. being prepared? *One (lake Engure)*
- b. fully prepared? *Two (bogs Teici and Pelecare, and lake Kanieris)*
- c. being implemented? *Two (bogs Teici and Pelecare, and lake Kanieris)*

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

### **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.**

*Staff of Teici Nature Reserve (bogs Teici and Pelecare Ramsar site) carry out ornithological, theriological, enthomological and botanical censuses that allow for detection in changes in ecological character of this hardly disturbed area, since its foundation in 1982. Hydrological and geological survey data are also available. Although with no formal management plan in place yet, bird populations of the lake Engure Ramsar site are being monitored for much longer period (since 1958 on a regular basis). Changes in hydrology and habitat structure of the lake are documented for even more considerable period of time. Management plan of the third Ramsar site lake Kanieris does not at this stage provide for a financed monitoring scheme, although continuous studies on bird populations and general ecological status are again available.*

### **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.**

*No changes in the ecological character, according to the Ramsar definition, of any of the three Ramsar List sites in Latvia have occurred in the last few years. However, some long-term trends are apparent. Most prominent and care demanding is the practically uncontrolled spreading of reedbeds and overgrowing with emergent and water-fringe vegetation of the lake Engure, that is human induced by increased eutrophication and cessation of once traditional land-use activities.*

### **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?**

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**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.**

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## 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.

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### **6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country?**

*Yes*

**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.**

*Recently, within the last five years time or so, a tremendous effort has been done in documenting and inventorying the most important wetland areas in Latvia. Several projects with slightly different scopes have produced reports, data-bases and publications all highly relevant to Convention on Wetlands. Inventory of Mires project has identified and analysed bogs, fens and marshes with emphasis on their conditions and botany. The data are maintained in a data-base at Faculty of Biology, University of Latvia. CORINE biotopes project was completed in 1997 by Latvian Fund for Nature. This is the most up-to-date database on valuable nature territories, including wetlands, for biodiversity conservation. The data are held by the Latvian Environment Data Center. Two consecutive national wetland inventories were produced by Latvian Fund for Nature and Latvian Ornithological Society respectively. The latest of these was published in May 1998 under co-ordination with Wetlands International. The publication (in Latvian, with English summary) has a general introduction on wetlands, relevant conservation issues e.g. international conventions and national legislation, and a detailed overview of the three designated and nine shadow-listed Ramsar sites in Latvia. Each site is provided the basic data on: Ramsar criteria it meets, whether it has a management plan, its protection status, administration, location, description, nature conservation values, human activities, threats, conservation and research and details on visiting. A list of further 29 perspective or data-deficient wetlands sites is also given. The publication has been distributed to State authorities, decision-makers and specialist NGOs countrywide and is available from LOS (Opermanis 1998; see 2.7.).*

**6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of "important" wetlands for your country or region? 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.**

Besides the above mentioned (6.1) inventories, data-base on Important Bird Areas in Latvia including wetlands have been compiled by Latvian Ornithological Society / BirdLife International. The IBA database module forms an integral part of the World Bird Database maintained by BirdLife. Wetlands important for birds are selected by using criteria based on estimates of migratory waterfowl populations (e.g. 1% threshold of the flyway population is commonly used). This approach is analogous to Criteria 3a and 3c under Ramsar Convention, thus most of IBAs qualify at least one of Ramsar bird criterion too. There are 58 internationally Important Bird Areas in Latvia (1998), 32 of which are wetlands.

**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.**

*Inland waters (lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs etc) cover 3.7% of the surface area of Latvia. Mires constitute additional 5%. It makes an arbitrary total area of ca 5555 km<sup>2</sup>. This figure includes most rivers and also deep lakes (that do not fall within wetland definition) whilst the shallow (up to 6m deep) coastal waters of the Baltic Sea and the Riga Bay that may be referred to as wetlands are not included. Peat extraction was carried out in 4.2 per cent of the total mires area in 1996. Exact rates of loss of wetlands for mining have not been calculated.*

**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.**

*Of the nine selected shadow-list Ramsar sites for Latvia, all meet bird criteria, four contain a reasonable proportion of peatland ecosystems, though none is known to be credited as important fish habitat.*

**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.**

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

None

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

*One of the shadow-list sites, Ziemelu bogs (see 1.1. above) forms an integral part of transboundary Estonian-Latvian mires complex; Estonian part of it, the Nigula Reserve, is a Ramsar site. Official agreement with Estonia on legal framework for transboundary nature protection, that has been initiated, would benefit further identification of sites.*

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

*See 1.1. and 6.7.*

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

**If yes, please give details.**

*Yes, lake Engure Ramsar site has a twin site, lake Takern, in Sweden. The cooperation with Lake Takern Funds and Oestergoetland Ornithological Society has contributed to work of Engure field station and has also included regular trips for experience exchange. The latter have been invaluable for both professional biologists and students from Latvia visiting lake Takern to involve in practical field activities and learn about its management and administration.*

**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

*Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention both are a responsibility of the same staff personnel at MEPRD; they maintain regular exchange of information with person responsible for the Convention on Climate Change, at the same Department of the Ministry. The World Heritage Convention is responsibility of Ministry of Culture.*

**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.**

*Multilateral research projects on migratory fish, birds, pinnipeds and bats are carried out by different institutions in Latvia. For instance, regular wintering waterfowl counts run by Institute of Biology are a part of Mid-winter waterfowl census coordinated by IWRB / Wetlands International. Largely supported by BirdLife partner organizations, Latvian Ornithological Society organizes counts of migratory Swans, Goose species and Cranes at Important Bird Areas. Studies of ecology of Bats, including their migrations and requirements for wetlands as feeding habitats are carried out by Latvian Theriological Society (LTS), with support from Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and Natur Schutzbund Deutschland; studies of seals are also done by LTS.*

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

**If yes, please provide details.**

*The following institutions and organizations support projects that promote implementation of Ramsar Convention in Latvia: Ramsar Small Grants Fund (Inventory of Peatlands), GEF/UNDP (National Report on Biological Diversity, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan), Swedish Environment Protection Agency (ICZM Plan for Engure-Kanieris Task Area), Danish Environment Protection Agency (Pape and Jurkalne Management plans), EUCC (Management Plan for lake Kanieris), JACA (Integrated Management Plan for Lubana wetland complex), European Commission (CORINE biotopes project report), EU LIFE (Red Data Book), EU PHARE (Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Baltic States and Poland), Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries (Aerial counts of wintering waterfowl; and with Wetlands International: publication of booklet on wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in Latvia), BirdLife International / Swedish Ornithological Society (inventory of Important Bird Areas), MATRA programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Management Plan for Lake Kanieris).*

**7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country?**

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

*Yes. This forms part of the State Programme for Development and Implementation of Environmental Policy Measures, subprogramme for Nature Protection.*

**7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme**

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**does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? If yes, please give details.**

**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?**

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**If yes, what is that process.**

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

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

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?**

**If yes, please provide details.**

*Latvian Government contributed about US\$ 20,300 to organizations of the Ramsar Convention Pan-European Regional Meeting held in Riga, June 1998.*

**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.**

*No*

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

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

*Five*

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

*National:*

- *Latvian Fund for Nature (LFN);*
- *Latvian Ornithological Society (LOS, representing BirdLife International).*

*Regional:*

- *EUCC;*
- *Coalition for Clean Baltic.*

*International:*

- *WWF, Latvian programme..*

**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.**

*WWF project 4568 (Conservation Plan for Latvia) was the pioneer publication in 1992 to compile data on the network of valuable nature areas including many wetlands, irrespective of their protection status. Latvian Fund for Nature and Latvian Ornithological Society have consequently produced wetland inventories, available to other NGOs and the Government. WWF’s general opinion is also publicized through its Baltic Bulletin.*

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

*No*

**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).**

*NGOs produce infrequent educational and public awareness materials about wetlands, like leaflets, booklets, newsletters, articles etc, though lack long-term coordinated educational programmes.*

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

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**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.**

*NGOs are mostly concentrating on raising awareness of wetland values (Objective 3) and are competent in data management for identification a of the most valuable wetland areas (essentially supporting Objective 6).*

Final comments:

Final comments:

**10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.**

*Since Latvia is a country with limited resources - institutional, human and financial - it has been decided during preparation of the Environmental Action Plan that common National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan will be elaborated. These two documents will also incorporate implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.*

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

**a. The Ramsar Standing Committee**

*The Ramsar Standing Committee has been proactive and has always been contacting and consulting Parties when making decisions or proposals for decisions.*

**b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel**

*There has not been an opportunity to get acquainted with its activities in the region.*

**c. The Ramsar Bureau**

*There has been excellent co-operation with the Ramsar Bureau especially during preparation for the Pan-European Regional Meeting in 1998.*

**d. The Ramsar NGO partners**

*NGOs can provide useful and competent assistance to implementation and promotion of Ramsar Convention, especially in practice with projects on research, management and public awareness at national level (see above, section 9). Thanks are due to both national NGOs (LFN, LOS) that assisted in running the Pan-European Regional Meeting in Riga, in 1998.*

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

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