

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: Slovak Republic

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority

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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.

The Slovak Republic hosted the 4th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on May 4-15th in Bratislava. The program also focused on wetlands protection, transboundary cooperation, and the problems of small island developing countries. A document was submitted on cooperation between the two Conventions (UNEP/CBD/COP/4/Inf.8). The joint workplan with the goal to combine activities of the two Conventions for the period 1998-1999 was approved. The 10th IUCN Global Forum on biodiversity, dealing also with wetland issues was held from May 1-3rd, 1998 in Bratislava. Other meetings and undertakings are listed in 4.2. 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? In February 1997, the Slovak Government discussed the National Program on Wetlands Management in Slovakia and its Action Plan for 1997-2002. The Government has discussed this Program without taking formal decision. Tasks of the Action Plan are however implemented according to the personnel and financial conditions. Issues of wetlands conservation and wise use were included in the Slovak National Strategy for Protection of Biodiversity (approved by the Slovak Government as of April 1st, 1997 and by the Slovak National Council as of April 2nd, 1997) and in the Action Plan for Implementation of the Slovak National Biodiversity Strategy for 1998-2010 (approved by the Slovak Government on August 4th, 1998).

The National Program on Wetlands Management in Slovakia, based upon the Ramsar Strategic Plan, states 4 management principles and 5 wetlands management activities, 9 strategic and 15 partial objectives. The main principles of Slovak wetlands management in Slovakia are following: 1. Prevention of further loss or degradation of natural wetlands, their biological diversity and vitality of those populations that depend upon wetlands; 2. Wetlands management and sustainable use; 3. Wetlands restoration and rehabilitation; 4. Promotion of public awareness with respect to wetlands values and importance.

The main types of activities for wetlands management are in harmony with the Ramsar Guidelines for the Implementation of the Wise-Use Concept: 1. Improvement of institutional and organizational background; 2. Legislation and government strategies; 3. Promotion of education about wetlands and their values; 4. Development of an overview on the wetlands status and priorities for their conservation; 5. Identification of problems at particular wetland ecosystems.

The activities are included in the Action Plan for 1997-2002, developed on the national level according to the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002. It contains 22 measures, which are being implemented in the meantime.

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. The National Program on Wetlands Management and its Action

Plan were approved by the Operational Meeting of the Minister of Environment, who is responsible for implementation of commitments of the Ramsar Convention. Both documents were submitted to the Slovak Government for review and comments. Consequently, after review by other ministries, it was discussed by the whole of Government. The National Strategy for Protection of Biodiversity in Slovakia and the Action Plan were approved by the Government.

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 Slovak Wetlands Management Program is related to the: -
National Environmental Action Program (NEAP) approved by the Government Resolution No. 350 of May 14th, 1996. The NEAP effectiveness will be evaluated in the year 1998 and will be updated for the period 2000-2010.

- National Strategy for Protection of Biodiversity in Slovakia (approved by the Government Resolution No. 231 of April 1st, 1997; and National Council Resolution No. 676 of July 2nd, 1997), - The Action Plan for Implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy for 1998-2010, approved by the Government Resolution No. 515 of August 4, 1998.

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?

The National Program on Wetlands Management in Slovakia, though discussed by the Government without taking a formal resolution, is being implemented and it is controlled by the Slovak Ramsar Committee. Because of the complexity and financial demands of some measures implementation Review Days were set up for measures implementation. However, some measures are being delayed. The main obstacles in wetlands management are not only financial and personnel limitations but also the need for cooperation between institutions, owners, users and inhabitants. Some progress was reached in establishing cooperation on the national level and local levels.

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 Action Plan for the period 1997-2002 defined the responsibilities of individual ministries to implement measures, time schedule for measures implementation, and objectives. The Ministry of Environment, the Executing Body of the Ramsar Convention, and the Slovak Ramsar Committee, which controls implementation of the Action Plan, provide the evaluation of the National Program on Wetlands Management. The Slovak Ramsar Committee includes representatives of government sectors, institutions, scientific and non-governmental organizations. The Slovak Ramsar Committee is the Advisory and Coordinating Body of the Minister of Environment.

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? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

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. The Action Plan for the period 1997-2002 defined the responsibilities of individual ministries to implement measures, time schedule for measures implementation, and objectives. The Ministry of Environment, the Executing Body of the Ramsar Convention, and the Slovak Ramsar Committee, which controls implementation of the Action Plan, provide the evaluation of the National Program on Wetlands Management. The Slovak Ramsar Committee includes representatives of government sectors, institutions, scientific and non-governmental organizations. The Slovak Ramsar Committee is the Advisory and Coordinating Body of the Minister of Environment.

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. At the national level, the integrated planning process is found in the following documents: The Conception of Land Development of the Slovak Republic (updated in 1997); the Strategy of Spatial Development and Settlement of the Slovak Republic (updated in 1997); updated Framework of National Territorial System of Ecological Stability; proposed amendments of the Act No. 287/1994 on Nature and Landscape Protection and into the proposed guidelines for spatial planning development; the management plans for protected areas; and guidelines for landscape planning documentation. Also, the National Ecological Network of Slovakia (IUCN Slovakia, 1995), was developed and updated in 1996. The National Environmental Action Plan, adopted by the Government in 1996, the primary document for complex, systematic, and specific solutions of environmental problems, is a starting point for regional policies for management of environment, including protection and wise-use of water, and nature and landscape protection. The Policy for Territorial Protection of Nature and Landscape was approved in 1998.

b. At the regional level, projects of Regional Territorial Systems of Ecological Stability are being integrated with the Framework of National Territorial System of Ecological Stability and projects for individual districts. The Policy for Spatial Development of the Slovak Republic (1997) is the primary document for spatial projects of so called large units. In 1998, projects of large units areas were approved for all 8 regions of Slovakia. These projects include measures for the preservation of important landscape elements e.g. wetlands (as bio-centers or bio-corridors). District Environmental Strategies for 38 districts were developed in 1994-1995 (the National Environmental Action Plan was developed based on these regional level environmental strategy proposals).

During the years 1995-96, the IUCN Slovakia Foundation coordinated and financed the following projects on wetlands protection and sustainable use within the European Program of IUCN: Environmental and Economic Evaluation of Functions and Management of Fishponds in Slovakia (1995), Protection of Kysuce Region Nature and Cooperation on its Sustainable Development (1996), and Protection of Biodiversity and Management of Grasslands in the Landscape Protected Area Polana (1996). Since 1998 the Slovak - Japanese project for the development of a regional environmental management Plan for the Hron River Basin has been implemented. The project and measures for environmental resources management are being implemented in 10 districts of central Slovakia.

c. At the local level, local spatial systems of ecological stability and management plans for protected wetlands (including the Ramsar sites e.g. project of Local System of Ecological Stability of Trnava City) are being developed. The Bratislava Regional Protection Association (NGO) is developing the Integrated Study of the Rudava Basin Restoration.

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? Yes/No

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

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 1996 the Slovak Government approved the Second Program of Waste Management, including the final disposal of dangerous chemicals. The Information system on chemical substances (based on InChem and InChemtox databases) was implemented. The Center for Waste Management of the Slovak Environmental Agency, established in 1996, is responsible for the Regional Information System on Wastes. It is projected that in September 1998 the Slovak Government will discuss the Act on Chemical Substances and Compounds (the proposal was approved by the Government in 1996). The major share of financial sources coming from the state budget and from the State Environmental Fund was invested in wastewater treatment investment projects (for example in the Morava Floodplains Ramsar site) and in waste management projects. In the Latorica Ramsar site, measures were made to prevent oil spills from the upper stream of the Latorica River in Ukraine.

During 1996-1997, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe supported the Rudavka River restoration project, implemented by the Slovak River Network (NGO). The objective of the project was to improve the water quality in the Rudavka River. The Rudavka River was the main source of pollution of the Rudava River Valley Ramsar Site.

Within the proposed Slovak - Japanese project on environmental standards proposals are being developed to expand or update existing standards based on the spatial analyses of heavy metals pollutants in ground and surface water and in soils of the Hron River catchment.

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

Wetland economic valuation techniques are not used in natural resource planning and assessment in Slovakia. However, valid legislation includes economic valuation of natural resources. Also, for the protected parts of nature there is societal valuation in place (Order of the Ministry of the Environment of the SR No. 192/1993).

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

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. Wetlands restoration and rehabilitation is one of 4 main principles defined in the National Program on Wetlands Management in Slovakia. Currently, following projects are being elaborated: (a) a specific program for restoration and rehabilitation of destroyed or damaged wetlands, mainly the watercourse systems of Slovakia; identification of wetlands to be restored is provided through (b) the Wetlands Inventory in Slovakia, (c) projects of territorial system of ecological stability, and (d) the proposed program of streams survey and categorization in Slovakia based on the nature and landscape protection objectives and hydroecological plans of river basins. The gradual restoration of streams or basins, which were affected by inappropriate measures in the past, is part of the (e) Water Management Policy of the Slovak Republic (approved by the National Council in 1994). This Policy established the priority measures to be implemented before the year 2005. Further, (e) restoration studies for several sites (Parižke močiar Marshes, Sur, Wetland System of Tice, etc.) were developed. However, because of the lack of finances or unresolved ownership rights these studies have not yet been implemented. Since 1995, restoration measures have been implemented at several sites of the Morava River

catchment (Ramsar Site Morava Floodplains): Ciglát, restoration of 4 cut meanders of the Morava River, Labske lake, Kruh and restoration of flooded meadows. Projects are being developed for the Rudava River restoration (the Ramsar site the Rudava River Valley), and the Maly Dunaj oxbow close to Vrakuna (made by the Association of Industry and Nature Protection). The rehabilitation of wetland meadows and peatlands has been done mainly within protected areas, e.g. the National Parks Mala Fatra, Nizke Tatry, Poloniny, Protected Landscape Areas of Biele Karpaty, Velká Fatra, Horná Orava, Strážovské vrchy, Polana, Slovenský kras, and Ramsar site Turiec Wetlands. Smaller restoration projects were implemented in a number of small protected area sites throughout Slovakia and in the wetlands within or adjacent to Bratislava, the Capital.

IUCN and WWF, supported by the PHARE Program, prepared the Small Scale Wetland Restoration in the Danube Basin Project for 1998. IUCN Slovakia coordinates the Project and six localities were selected in Slovakia to apply for a grant from this project. In April 1998, the Green Danube Program Course for NGOs was organized for representatives of 9 Danube countries. The course focused on wetlands restoration and management. The Slovak (DAPHNE) and the Czech (SAGGITARIA) NGOs and WWF International organized it. NGOs in cooperation with the Natural Sciences Faculty of the Comenius University and the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Slovak Technical University the draft of book for students „Restoration of Watercourses", was developed to be published in 1998.

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).

The state nature protection bodies and NGOs hold events and implement projects with local public participation. Municipal representatives participate in the Committees which control the status and management of Ramsar and other wetlands sites. Some municipal offices hold management, maintenance and protection activities (for example in the Morava Floodplain Ramsar Site). They also organize bilateral promotion activities like the Stork Festival held in cooperation with the Austrian and Slovak communities, or activities in the Slovak/Hungarian border region, Poiplie. The municipalities support editing of Ramsar Sites promotion materials (e.g. Zitavsky luh), etc.

The right of public participation is based on the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Act No. 171/1998 on Access to Information on Environment, Act No.287/1994, Act No. 127/1994 on EIA, etc. In wetland areas, particularly in Ramsar Sites, educational trails (e.g. Niva Moravy, Biskupické floodplain forests near the Danube, Cíčovske rameno oxbow) and information centers that provide information to the local inhabitants and tourists have been established. Also, in cooperation with the municipalities exhibitions, presentations and discussions are held with local inhabitants.

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.

Tax arrangements and funding policy review are included in the measures of the Action Plan for the period 1997-2002, and they are also part of the general assessment of the Slovak legislation for the EU accession process. The private sector participates in the process of wise-use of wetlands (based upon the approval of the state nature conservation authority). For example, wetlands resources are used for a local craft work production (reeds in Parizske mociare marshes), hay production etc.

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)

As of November 25th, 1997, the Slovak Government adopted the Environmental Education and Training Policy (Resolution No. 846). This resolution involves Measures for increasing of effectiveness of environmental education and awareness, including wetland conservation. The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and other relevant state administrative institutions are also responsible for implementation of related tasks of the State Environmental Policy (school environmental education, organizing of seminars, trainings, publishing of methodologies and guidelines, books, etc.). The Ministry of Education also held a National Conference on Environmental Education in Schools, competitions, workshops, and it supports environmental activities in museums, galleries and libraries. The Slovak Environmental Agency established Center of Environmentalism and Environmental Education, which is responsible for training of state administrative official's and for out-of-school based environmental education. A network of environmental education centers, national park and landscape protected areas information centers, and an educational trails network are being developed. The Ministry of Environment annually organizes ENVIROFILM, an international environmental films, TV and video programs festival, which includes presentation of wetland issues. Private companies organize also an annual film festival EKOTOPFIM. At the local level, many Districts, cities and municipalities use films originated in these festivals for presentations. Other measures are focused on institutional arrangements and strategies at all levels in the field of media and publishing advancement. Informal environmental education to support conservation and wise-use of wetlands takes place during the annual events organized by governmental organizations and NGOs in schools, and at various sessions. Of these, the Nature Protection Camps, and Ornithological Camps held in wetland localities have a long-standing tradition.

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 environmental protection education curricula for primary and secondary schools were put into force in September 1996. These materials also include issues of conservation and wise-use of wetlands. For example, the book Ecology for Secondary Grammar Schools, issued in 1994 and 1998, includes wetlands protection, management and restoration issues.

Measures for increasing the effectiveness of environmental education and training involve development of programs and implementation of projects focused on environmental education in schools, pupils competitions, secondary school student activities. These activities are supported by experts, institutions and NGOs.

Programs for general study of ecology and environmental sciences at universities will be reviewed before the end of 1998. Education faculties are also encouraged to establish environmental study divisions and to develop proposals for the subject „Environmental science“, to be a compulsory subject for all students in the first year of study. The Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University in Bratislava has established a pedagogical study of environmental science in combination with biology, chemistry and geography.

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.

Cooperation between the institutions responsible for actions which could have an impact on the conservation and wise-use of wetlands is based upon Slovak legislation (Act on Environment, Building Act, Act on Nature and Landscape Protection, Act on Forests, Act on EIA, Act on the Access to Environmental Information, etc.).

The Slovak Ramsar Committee coordinates wetlands conservation and wise-use activities, and the Ramsar Convention required activities. The Ministry of Environment in 1991 established the Slovak Ramsar Committee (SRV). Since 1997 representatives of the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Education, Foreign Affairs, Government Agencies (Slovak Environmental Agency), research and scientific institutes (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Universities, Water Research Institute) and four NGOs take part. The Minister of Environment approved the Statute and Administrative and Procedure Code of the SRV. The Code defines SRV as the professional, advisory, initiating and coordinating Body for implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Slovakia. SRV is the common entity of the ministries required by the Convention. The committee is filled from the Board (representatives of the Ministry of Environment) to act as the Administrative Authority for the Ramsar Convention and counselors. Activities of the Committee are based upon the Workplan, and meetings are held as needed, at least twice per year. According to the Ramsar Convention, the Committee adopts recommendations for responsible ministries and initiates and supports effective enforcement of obligations. The Committee also promotes effective conservation and wise use of water and wetland habitats, provides information, analyses, prognoses and studies for decision-making authorities, and coordinates exchange of information, experience and literature related to the Ramsar Convention implementation. The Committee is the contact partner for negotiations with the Ramsar Bureau, Standing Committee and other bodies, Parties and international institutions. The SRV Committee is involved in the preparation, coordination, and review of strategy and policy materials and programs (including preparation of the National Report, and appointing the national representatives). In addition to providing recommendations for state and regional authorities in the conservation and wise-use of wetlands, the SRV develops legislative proposals and recommends sources for wetlands conservation, and assesses state and development of individual wetlands, mainly these of international importance. The SRV initiates and proposes measures for research, monitoring, conservation or improvement of wetlands, also, it proposes sites to be included in the Montreux Record, and cooperates on wetland inventory, and classification.

The Minister of Environment established the Slovak Commission for the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Slovak Commission is the inter-sectorial advisory body responsible for effective and professional implementation of the Convention and there are representatives of 6 ministries and research institutions in this body. 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? According to the conclusions of the Environmental Education and Training Policy of 1997, the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment is responsible for the development and maintenance of a permanent database of ecological and environmental study divisions and postgraduate institutes. Opportunities for participation in the training courses include the: International Course of Wetlands Management/The Netherlands, courses of EPCEM/The Netherlands, trainings funded by PHARE projects in cooperation with EUROPARC, EUROSITE, and training with the support of other international and national organizations (US Peace Corps). In addition to the specific information and experience on restoration and wise use of wetlands obtained during the courses and training seminars, experience in working with the public is also very important.

Passing the Exams of Professional Ability is compulsory for officials of the regional and

district authority and the Slovak Inspection for Environment officials (decision-makers). This Exam involves legal and economic instruments for the management of environment including wetlands management. This training is organized and financed by the Government

c. the development of training modules or a training program 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.

For the 25th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention, in November 1996, a national workshop on wetlands management was organized under the auspices of the Minister of the Environment. Participants included the State Administration, nature protection institutes, NGOs and wetlands users. Proceedings were published in 1997

The Slovak Republic has regularly participated in the training courses organized for Central and Eastern Europe by Wetlands International and Wetlands Training Center in Trebon (1995-1998), which have been focused on the integrated management and restoration of catchments and wetlands. In 1996, one representative of the Slovak Environmental Agency took the International Course on Wetlands Management organized by the Wetland Advisory and Training Center, RIZA, in Lelystad, the Netherlands. In April 1998, a course was held on wetland restoration for NGOs was held in Slovakia. The Slovak government and NGO representatives also took part in the Eurosite/Matra Wetland Management Workshops, which were organized by NGOs and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in 1997 and 1998.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5 To ensure the conservaiton of all sites 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? 6 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. After proclamation of the Ramsar Site Dunajske Luhy (Danube Floodplains) as a Protected Landscape Area in 1998, the new management plan for this area and for five new Ramsar sites will be developed during the next three-year period. Finalizing of formal management plans for other 6 sites is based upon the Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 218/1998, which set out the details on nature protection documentation.

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

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.

Positive changes are expected in the Ramsar site Dunajske luhy (Danube Floodplains) due to its becoming a Protected Landscape Area since May 1st, 1998, and due to artificial flooding which is being implemented in the Danube arms network. Improvements are also expected in the Ramsar sites the Morava River Floodplains and the Rudava River Valley due to the restoration projects and proposals, and in the Ramsar Site Parizske Mociare Marshes, following implementation of the management project supported by the Slovak and Japanese governments. Proposals have been made for protected areas in the following Ramsar sites: Danube Floodplains, Morava River Floodplains, Wetlands of Orava Basin, Poiplie and Turiec Wetlands. A number of wetlands were also included in updated projects of the territorial system of ecological stability to support their conservation.

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? There are no Montreux Record Ramsar sites.

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

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6 To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.

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 finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains. The national wetlands inventory started in 1991. This activity is coordinated by the Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors (SZOPK). SZOPK established Coordination Center for Wetlands Inventory in Prievidza. During 1992-1998 about 2100 wetlands were identified, of which categorization was developed for 1500 wetlands. More than 200 persons provided the inventory. From the total amount of 1500 categorized wetlands there were identified: - 14 sites of international importance, - 77 sites of national and multi-regional character, - 419 sites of regional importance, and - 995 sites of local importance. The database contains information on wetlands listed in the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands, other detailed information on conservation and proposed measures, maps and a site pictures, when these are available. The wetlands database is developed and up-dated by SZOPK in close cooperation with the Slovak Environmental Agency. However, the finalizing of the Inventory Program is delayed because of the limited amount of finances available. Therefore, a request for funding was submitted to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund in 1998. Since 1992, the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) coordinates the mapping of biotopes, including wetlands, and the Botanical Institute of SAS coordinates the mapping of plant communities. The editing of individual project results and assessment of Slovak wetland resource publication is projected for the year 1999. Since 1997, the Slovak Environmental Agency has coordinated the survey and categorization of watercourses and nearby wetlands. The goal of this activity is to develop output data that could be compared and used in other projects as background information for nature protection institutes, mainly in the process of the proposed activity impact assessment. The Development of the Policy and Action Plan for Conservation of Slovak peatlands involving the mapping and rating of Slovak peatlands is part of the Wetlands International project for CEE Countries, started in 1998. 6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of "important" wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No.

The list of Slovak wetlands is being prepared for publication. All district offices were informed about important sites that originated from wetlands inventory (as of February 1996). Up-dated information is regularly submitted to the Ramsar Committee. If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for Aimportant@ were used, and the types of information it contains. 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.

According to the Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic, water areas cover more than 933 square kilometers (1.9% of the total area), however, the number does not include all wetlands as defined by the Ramsar Convention. The area of 12 Ramsar wetlands is approximately 370 square kilometers. The total area of mapped wetlands is 210 ha.

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

The same definition as defined in Ramsar Convention was used.

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), In 1998 three sites important for fish habitat were designated for the Ramsar List. 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), The Slovak Ramsar Committee held discussions with the Hungarian party on transboundary cooperation in the Ramsar Site of karst wetland systems of Slovensky kras and Aggtelek. Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary also discussed and agreed on development of guidelines for designation of underground karst and cave wetland systems into the Ramsar List.

d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)

Two of the five Ramsar sites designated in 1998 contain peatland ecosystems, of which the Wetlands of the Orava Basin is the most important in Slovakia and is connected to the broad peatland ecosystems of transboundary character in Poland. Assessment and selection of other sites are the tasks of the Wetlands International Project on wetlands conservation and management in Central Europe.

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.

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. On February 11th, 1998, in the framework of the World Wetlands Day, the Slovak Republic designated five new sites (total area of 11,563.6 ha) to the Ramsar Sites List.

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

From the total of 12 Ramsar Sites, five sites are of transboundary character: - Morava floodplain (with Czech Republic and Austria) - Latorica (with Ukraine) - Dunajské luhy - Danube flood plains (with Hungary) - Wetlands of Orava Basin (with Poland) - Poiplie (with Hungary)

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

In cooperation with the Hungarians, a proposal is being developed for a transboundary wetland site in the Slovensky kras and Aggtelek underground karst waters. Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, and Ukrainian NGOs participate in the development of a proposal for a transboundary Ramsar wetland in the area of the upper Tisa within the framework of the project supported in 1997 by the Ramsar Small Grants Fund.

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).

Since 1996, within the framework of the Austrian Ramsar Conception for the Morava and the Dyje, the Protected Landscape Area Zahorie Administration has prepared a Management Plan for inundation area of the Morava River. Since 1993 a project financed by GEF Biodiversity Protection Project (in cooperation with the Czech Republic) has been implemented in that Ramsar Site. Within the project, the partial rehabilitation of the Morava river (opening of the four river meanders that were cut previously), restoration of the Ciglat wetland, project of mapping of biotopes, project of forest management, restoration of the Morava flood plain meadows and management and protection of some species ex situ is being implemented. Since 1996, several projects have been financed in this site (e.g. monitoring of water quality, Strategic Action Plan for Implementation of Program for the Morava and the Dyje Rivers restoration projects) in the framework of multi-lateral PHARE project (Environmental Program for Danube Basin). In cooperation with Hungary there also were implemented some partial projects (protection of *Emys orbicularis*). In cooperation with the Czech Party, the regional NGOs are taking part in preparation of the Trialog Project for Morava - Dyje Region, to support cooperation and coordination of three countries' activities in sustainable development of the region.

Protection of transboundary wetlands of Oravsko-Nowotargaska kotlina Basin (proposal of bi-lateral Ramsar Site) and transfrontier Dunajec River Basin was discussed during the Slovak-Polish Commission for Nature Protection meetings, and bilateral consultations of local administration offices, nature protection institutions and municipalities. (The Slovak-Polish Commission for Nature Protection was established in 1996 within the framework of the Polish and Slovak Convention on transfrontier cooperation). International cooperation takes place also in wetland sites and species research (e.g.. Czech Universities participate in research in the Morava and Vah basins. Czech nature protection institutions cooperate in survey on transfrontier wetlands of Protected Landscape Areas Kysuce and Beskydy, e.g. otter research, etc.. Slovak and Hungarian nature protection institutions cooperate in the research in areas of Cerova vrchovina and National Park Bukk).

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

If yes, please give details.

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

The Ministry of Environment is the executive body for all international conventions in the field of environment and nature protection. The Chairman of the Slovak Ramsar Committee (SRV) is the Director of the Nature and Landscape Protection, EIA, and Inter-sectorial Section of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic. In the meantime, he is also the Chairman of the Slovak Commission for Biological Diversity (Advisory Body of the Ministry of Environment, established on November 24th, 1995) and is responsible for management of the Convention on Migratory Species executed by the Department of Nature and Landscape Protection of the Ministry. The Deputy-Chairman of the SRV is the officer of the Ministry of Environment

responsible for coordination of the Bern Convention activities. The Secretary of the SRV coordinates activities of the Slovak Environmental Agency, Convention on Migratory Species and Bern Convention.

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.

Governmental and non-governmental nature protection organizations participate in updating the network of Important Bird Areas of Europe in Slovakia. These areas are also important wetland areas (including Ramsar Sites). BirdLife International and the Slovak partner - Society for Protection of Birds in Slovakia (NGO) coordinate survey activities. Monitoring and the winter census of water birds are organized annually. The winter census of water birds is coordinated internationally. The Society for Protection of Birds in Slovakia (partner organization of BirdLife in Slovakia, and the Member of Ramsar Committee) participates in the BirdLife Program on research and protection of the endangered Ferruginous Pochard. The Slovak Environmental Agency and some NGOs cooperate in research and protection of the White Stork, Black Stork, White-tailed Eagle and European Otter. They also cooperate with other countries and coordination centers in monitoring of the Great Cormorant and Beaver.

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 Japanese Government supported development of the Study „Regional Environmental Management Plan for the Hron Basin". This Study was developed within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement signed in 1997, by the Slovak Environmental Agency, the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation (JICA) and the Green Blue Corporation. The Ramsar Site Parizske mociare Marshes is located in the Hron Basin. Duration of the project is scheduled for 2 years and involves development of the Master Plan for the Hron Basin, recommendations for Master Plan implementation and provision of technical assistance and technologies for partner organizations during the study development. Within the PHARE Danube Environmental Program, the Danish Government supervises the Project for surface Waters Protection and restoration of the Silicka Planina wetland (Slovensky kras Protected Landscape Area), the management project for restoration of fish sites in the Rudava Valley Ramsar Site, and the restoration of the meadows of Ramsar Site Niva Moravy (Morava flood plains). The Dutch, and Danish Governments and the GEF supported the Project Peatland Protection and Management in Central Europe, which is coordinated by Wetlands International. The Ramsar Small Grants Fund also funded monitoring of birds migration, restoration of the Umbra krameri population and Ramsar Site Niva Moravy wetland restoration.

Since 1997, the IUCN/WWF Project of Danube Basin wetlands restoration is coordinated by the National Focal Point IUCN Slovakia. Within this project, grant applications were developed for 6 wetland areas.

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 program or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget? Annually, the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic allocates finances for research, protection and management of wetlands. The Slovak Environmental Agency allocates finances from its budget for activities in Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, and for implementation of the Ramsar Convention. Additional financial sources for activities in wetland sites are provided from the State Environmental Fund upon request.

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 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? Yes/No

If yes, what is that process.

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. In 1998, the Slovak Republic voluntarily contributed the amount of 799 SFR.

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.

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.

International Organizations (3): IUCN Slovakia, Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe Bratislava, Society for Birds Protection in Slovakia (partner of BirdLife International) National Organizations (3): Slovak Association of Nature and Landscape Protection, Slovak River Network, Tree of Life Regional Organizations (9): Ipelská Union, DAPHNE Bratislava, Regional Protection Association, Batrachoherpétology Association, SOSNA Košice, Vah Union, Association Slatinka, Fauna and Flora - Society for Nature Protection Litava, Carpathian Protection Association of Altruists

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. a. Several organizations are associated in the Slovak River Network, which is the public association of NGOs, movements, groups, and

individuals, which organizes common meetings and programs and supports mutual cooperation and information exchange. b. Four organizations have representatives in the Slovak Ramsar Committee. NGOs comment on planned activities in the wetland areas and submit their opinion to the Ministry of Environment. They also participate in the process of National Strategies development (e.g. National Program on Wetlands Management, National Strategy for Biodiversity Protection and Action Plan for its implementation, National Program of Water Courses and Wetlands Restoration, etc.). The NGOs also propose new Ramsar Sites.

9.3 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/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).

Programs of the Slovak Association of Nature and Landscape Protection and the Society for Bird Protection involve wetlands and water birds protection, education and promotional activities (publishing of promotional materials, presentations, discussions, education and advancement events in the field, excursions, exhibitions, etc.). The target groups of these programs are children, students, teachers, and the general public. The Slovak River Network cooperated on the PHARE and Tacis Project Increasing of Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making and in Environmental Issues Management. It also organized a series of seminars and consultations for mayors, deputies, and local activists. Within the Model Project of Rudava Restoration, the Slovak River Network cooperated with local residents in the planning and implementation of restoration measures. DAPHNE Bratislava, in cooperation with foreign partners, held international conferences and, in cooperation with the ministry of Environment and Slovak Ramsar Committee, issued publication Wetlands for Life (1996). The Ministry of Education distributed this publication in secondary schools. DAPHNE constructed an education trail in the Ramsar Site Niva Moravy (Morava flood plain), opened in 1997 and published a guidebook in Slovak, German and English languages. Several NGOs published or prepared publications focused on wetlands conservation and wise-use (e.g. APOP publication and poster Red Lists of Flora and Fauna of National Nature Reserve Sur).

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

Representatives of NGOs take part in all present and proposed advisory committees of Ramsar Sites.

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.

National NGOs are most active in implementation of the following objectives:

2B in the wise use of wetlands implementation

3B in increasing of public awareness on wetland values and functions

5B in implementation of the Ramsar Sites conservation

6B in selection of wetlands that reach Ramsar Convention criteria