

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

6th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Brisbane, Australia : 19-27 March 1996

**OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION IN THE
EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION**

General Introduction by the Regional Representative

A. Basic Information¹

1. Since the Kushiro Conference of the Parties, six states from the region joined the Convention, including all of the Baltic states. A number of non-Contracting Parties have indicated (during regional meetings) their intention to join soon. These are very positive developments.
2. Whether there are few or many remaining non-Contracting Parties in the region depends partly on political factors and partly on (bio)geographical considerations. A particularly difficult question is, which states belong to Europe, and especially to Eastern Europe? As other Conventions, Ramsar can (not?) be totally free from political considerations, and the set up of the Eastern European region is one such consideration.
3. One of the main aims is to bring as many states (with wetlands of international importance) into the Convention as soon as possible. At the same time it should not be forgotten that the most important bodies and mechanisms of the Convention are structured according to the regions. So it is important to make it clear to which region any newcomers will belong to, and why.
4. Twice, already, in Montreux, 1990 and in Kushiro, 1993, the Conference of the Parties acknowledged that the existence of a separate East European region was not geographically but politically based and that this basis had ceased to exist. However the status quo has been maintained and this is the reaffirmed recommendation of the joint East/West regional meeting, held in Bulgaria, May 1995. Whilst appreciating and respecting this present common will, attention should, in the future, also be paid to the following points. Membership of the Eastern European region is not (any longer) politically based, vis-à-vis Western Europe. Is it then geographically based? With Armenia already a Contracting Party, with more than half of the Russian sites to be found beyond the Urals, and with possible future Parties including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, etc? Is it then economically based? With OECD member(s), with countries whose economy is in transition - some heading for European Union membership - and with developing countries?
5. These are delicate questions to re-think, to clarify during the next period but possibly not later than the end of this century. The process can not be free from politics, just let=s remember that (regardless of geography) all the above-mentioned states - which will hopefully soon be Contracting Parties - are members of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
6. Without any prejudice to possible future deliberations, it is possible that this may influence the whole regional system of the Convention. It must be borne in mind that these bodies and mechanisms must function efficiently and flexibly in the future as well.

B. Information on listed sites

7. In a number of Contracting Parties major steps have been taken in the field of environmental - nature conservation legislation. Formerly existing laws have been reviewed and subsequently updated, amended or totally new legislation introduced. In establishing new laws, Contracting Parties have striven to take European Union or other international legislative experience/practice into consideration.
8. The real impact - and especially the enforcement - of these new laws can only be evaluated after some years of implementation.

¹ Section headings in this General Introduction are keyed to those employed in the Bureau's Summary of National Reports beginning on page 5 of this document.

9. The transition from central planning to market economy, including land privatisation, may result in deteriorating or even irreversible effects on biodiversity in general and on wetlands in particular.
10. Though most of the Ramsar sites themselves enjoy a certain degree of protection by relevant laws, in adjacent areas there may be private land where wise use does not go without saying. This necessitates manifold actions (sharing information, awareness raising, training, involvement of local communities and authorities, education, etc.) which require financial resources.

B.4 Changes in ecological character at listed sites

11. Although only a few sites are currently included in the Montreux Record, there are adverse changes in the ecological character of a number of other sites. These are due to human activities coupled, in many areas, with long years of dry weather. Human activity ranges from agricultural intensification, with the aim of short term profit making, through the introduction of alien species (esp. fish), inappropriate or non-existing waste water/sewage treatment, energy generation, to tourism or infrastructure development etc. As the resources available for direct improvement have been severely constrained, remedial actions can be taken only slowly in many Contracting Parties. This is a serious problem, because prompt and relatively low cost action at present could help to avoid the need to spend much larger sums in the future.

B.6 Implementation of Resolution 5.7: Management Planning for Ramsar Sites

12. With regard to management planning, the picture is heterogeneous, and reflects the economic differences within the region. The necessity of drawing up and implementing such plans is clearly recognised and in some countries even required by law. Thus such plans exist for many sites, with those drawn up with international assistance generally following the best practices. The national reports do not articulate clearly how Ramsar management guidelines have been taken into account. Given the language barrier, they are not necessarily known by all site managers. There is a rather general lack of financial capacity, and in some cases, also institutional capacity, to thoroughly implement (control, update) management plans.

C. Wise use of Wetlands

C.1 Progress towards formulation and application of a national wetland policy

C.4 Additional information on application of the Wise Use "guidelines" and "additional guidance"

14. So far, only a few Parties have embarked on the elaboration of a separate national wetland policy. In many Contracting Parties wetland issues will be part of a more comprehensive national environmental policy or biodiversity strategy. This is a reasonable way to avoid overlapping documents and duplication of work, especially in cases where institutional capacity needs strengthening.
15. There are instances where regulatory measures are in place for the application of the wise use guidelines or the concept of wise use, but this is certainly not enough. The whole issue is subject to overall environmental policy. To name a few keys to success:
- ◆ the explicit commitment of the whole government for environmental/nature conservation issues. Environmental/nature conservation authorities should strengthen policy coordination and have to find the way to work in a really co-operative way with others (Finance, Agriculture, Industry, Development, Privatisation Ministries). This is not an easy task, as conflict between economic, social and environmental considerations is inevitable, especially at this time of transition;
 - ◆ appropriate economic incentives for the private sector, together with resources for compensation;
 - ◆ strengthened local participation - including improving local capacity;

- ◆ constructive NGO participation;
- ◆ improved information dissemination; communication at all levels.

D. International cooperation

16. Contracting Parties in the region comply with the relevant article of the Convention and consult each other regularly on shared wetlands. With regard to shared species this consultation is not only bi- or tri-lateral, but rather multilateral. In some cases, the co-operation of nature conservation bodies - especially in the field - is better, smoother and more effective than relations on other matters between the respective countries.

D.4 Role of international funding agencies (Recommendation 4.13, Recommendation 5.5)

17. It was made clear already at the Kushiro Conference of the Parties and also at the subsequent regional meetings, that East European Contracting Parties and especially potential future Contracting Parties are in need of technical and - mainly - financial assistance. Such assistance has been provided primarily through bilateral cooperation with developed countries and also by the EU-PHARE Programme, GEF and EBRD.

18. In the future, recipient countries and donors, be they countries or agencies, should pay even greater attention to priority setting, to project preparation and focusing on those areas or tasks where scarce resources can provide the greatest benefits. Access to the WCF could mean special help in obtaining seed money. Another point is the time span and the bureaucracy of providing support. Prompt or reasonably quick decisions about allocation (or denial) of even smaller grants can be more effective. Support for policy and/or institutional reforms is also essential in some cases.

E.2 Implementation of Recommendation 5.3: zonation of wetland reserves, and Recommendation 5.8: measures to promote public awareness of wetland values in wetland reserves

19. Raising public awareness is best achieved in the national language. Information material about individual sites is available in most Contracting Parties but not everywhere. Ramsar documents, leaflets, periodicals and other material in foreign languages can't reach a large audience, because of the language barrier. This is also a restrictive element in training of site personnel, offered or organised by international NGOs and/or others.

20. Translation and production of user-friendly, well targeted, nice/colourful information material and publications needs money and expertise at the same time. In this respect, the situation varies between Contracting Parties of the region.

F.1 Effectiveness of the Convention; problems encountered in implementation, etc.

F.2 Future activities under the Convention

21. Parties in the region consider the Convention an effective tool for conservation and also for sustainable use, and an international instrument to which reference can be made, e.g. In cases where economic interests are weighed against ecological ones. To comply with the proliferation of international treaties, however, puts heavy burdens on them and a kind of synchrony between conventions, e.g. In reporting or data requirements, would be welcome.

22. Contracting Parties of the region have great expectations of the Convention Bureau, and look forward to its widened and strengthened fund raising activity.

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Ministerial Councillor
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Bureau's Summary of National Reports

1. For the purposes of this report, the Eastern European Region is considered to include (using the 'short country names' provided by United Nations Terminology Bulletin no. 347): **Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia.** The names of Contracting Parties have been highlighted.
2. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia only became a Contracting Party in 1995; therefore, no triennial report was expected.

General Overview

3. During the period since the 5th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Kushiro, Japan, 1993), Hungary has been the Standing Committee Regional Representative for Eastern Europe, with Russian Federation as Alternate Representative. Mr Mihály Végh has been the member from the Eastern European region on the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel.
4. A Regional meeting for Eastern Europe was held in Budapest, Hungary, in March 1994. The report of the meeting is available in English and French from the Bureau.
5. A joint Regional meeting for Eastern and Western Europe was held in Varna, Bulgaria, in May 1995. The report of the meeting is available from the Bureau in English and French versions.
6. The information provided below is a summary of the key points provided by the 13 National Reports. The Bureau has generally paraphrased the actual wording used in the reports in order to save space and in order to highlight the points which it seems most important to draw to the attention of the Conference.

A. Basic Information

7. As of 30 November 1995, there were 16 Contracting Parties in the Eastern European Region, which had, between them, designated 97 sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance. (number of sites given in brackets):

<u>Albania</u> (1) ²	<u>Lithuania</u> (5)
<u>Armenia</u> (2)	Poland (8)
Bulgaria (4)	Romania (1)
Croatia (4)	Russian Federation (35) ³
Czech Republic (9)	Slovak Republic (7)
<u>Estonia</u> (1)	Slovenia (1)
Hungary (13)	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1)
<u>Latvia</u> (3)	Yugoslavia (2)

8. Underlining indicates entry into force of the Convention since the 5th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Kushiro, 1993). Five of the sites in the Czech Republic and 32 of the sites in the Russian Federation (the latter covering more than five million hectares), have been designated since

² The Convention will enter into force for Albania on 29 March 1996.

³ Of the 35 sites designated by the Russian Federation, 20 are located to the east of the Ural Mountains and are therefore not covered by the traditional biogeographical definition of Europe.

the Kushiro Conference. Two sites (Srebarna Lake, Bulgaria and _widwie, Poland) have been extended since the Kushiro Conference.

9. The names, postal addresses, e-mail addresses and fax/phone numbers of the Government authority responsible for implementing the Convention in each Contracting Party are available from the Bureau, upon request.

Non-Contracting Party States in Eastern Europe

10. Authorities of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have been in contact with the Bureau and have expressed the wish and intention to promote the adherence of their countries as Contracting Parties as soon as possible. In some cases, preparations for accession are at an advanced stage and may be completed prior to the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. Other non-Contracting Party States in the region are Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contributions to the Convention's core budget

11. In spite of the ongoing economic difficulties experienced in differing degrees throughout the region, most Contracting Parties have ensured payment of their annual contributions to the core budget of the Convention during the period 1993-1995. However, payment of a hard currency, financial contribution remains an obstacle to some states in the region becoming Contracting Parties.

B. Information on listed sites

B.1 Deletion or restriction of boundaries of listed sites:

12. **Armenia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia** report that no deletions or restrictions occurred during the reporting period.
13. **Slovak Republic:** _i_ovské m_tve rameno, designated in 1990, will be proposed for removal from the Ramsar List, since the entire site is included within Dunajské luhy, designated in 1993. It is expected that the boundaries of Šúr Ramsar site will be amended in the future to exclude non-wetland ecosystems.

B.2 Proposed site designations or boundary extensions

14. **Bulgaria:** it is expected that Shabla Lake (510.8 ha) and the Ropotamo complex (> 1,900 ha, including existing 97 ha site of Arkoutino) will be designated by the end of 1995.
15. **Croatia:** It is proposed to establish a Nature Park covering the whole area of the Neretva River Delta listed site, one of the best remaining Mediterranean deltas, subject to the results of a nature conservation evaluation of the region. The State Agency for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage organized and financed initial inventory work in 1994 and 1995, in cooperation with other bodies. The area was found to be degraded, though retaining high biodiversity value. A more detailed five-year inventory and mapping study has now been launched, with the aim of contributing to a management plan to be produced in consultation with local people. Crna Mlaka listed site became private property in 1994. The new owner is interested in promoting ecotourism in the area, in addition to the main activity of fish production.
16. **Estonia:** the following wetlands will be established as Ramsar sites "in the nearest future":

Vilsandi National Park, Soomaa NP, Nigula Nature Reserve, Lower Pedja NR, Endla NR, Muraka Bog, Moonsund Islands with Käina bay, Väike Väin strait, mouth of Emaj_gi river and Piirissaare island.

17. **Lithuania:** eight potential Ramsar sites are currently under consideration.
18. **Poland:** the extension of _widwie Ramsar site to 891 ha (from 382 ha) will be announced formally, together with the designations of the following new sites: Biebrza National Park, S_owi_ski National Park, and Stawy Milickie (Milicz Fishponds) Nature Reserve.⁴
19. **Russian Federation:** see section C.3.
20. **Slovenia:** documentation for the designation of Ljubljana marshes and Lake Cerknica have been prepared (see also section E.1.).
21. **Yugoslavia:** two additional wetlands, `Stari Begej - Carska bara' (1,676 ha) and `Skadarsko Jezero' (7,532 ha) are being proposed for designation as listed sites. It is also planned to extend the boundaries of the two existing Ramsar sites.

B.3 *Changes in legal status or degree of protection at listed sites*

22. **Armenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Latvia** report that no changes have occurred.
23. **Croatia:** Kopacki Rit listed site was not accessible to the Croatian nature protection authorities during military occupation from autumn 1991 until spring 1992. At the request of the Croatian delegation to the Kushiro Conference, Kopacki Rit was included in the Montreux Record. At the same time, Croatia requested implementation of the Monitoring Procedure at the site. Unfortunately, the Monitoring Procedure has not yet been carried out, but the request remains in force. At Lonjsko Polje and Mokro Polje, including Krapje Dol, one third of the site was militarily occupied between 1991 and mid-1995, and not accessible to the Croatian nature protection authorities. Subsequent examination of the site showed that there had been no ecological damage. Important management work was carried out at the unoccupied part of the site, including improvement in water circulation and conversion of rented arable land into pasture. Further measures are planned for the future.
24. **Czech Republic:** the 1992 Act on the Protection of Nature and Landscape gave enhanced protected area status to the country's nine Ramsar sites, which are covered by the following designation categories: National Park, Protected Landscape Area, National Nature Reserve, Nature Reserve, National Nature Monument and Nature Monument.
25. **Hungary:** a Decree issued in 1993 banned hunting from most Hungarian Ramsar sites. The privatization of land has led to legal contradictions at Ramsar sites; a Parliamentary resolution to the situation is awaited. Significant changes in ownership have occurred at Kiskunság and Pusztaszer. Two of the lake beds at Hortobágy fishponds, formerly owned by a fish farm, are now owned by the National Park.
26. **Poland:** all of the five listed sites are nature reserves and there has been no change in legal status. However, the ongoing land privatization and reprivatization process has significant implications for wetlands. Steps have been taken in an effort to ensure that areas of high biological value are not sold to private owners. The Ministry of Environment has been seeking

⁴ *Bureau note:* the extension of _widwie and the designation documents for the three other sites mentioned above were received from the Government of Poland on 27 October 1995.

to buy, or otherwise acquire, land adjacent to listed sites in order to extend the Ramsar designations. At Siedem Wysp (Montreux record site), 450 ha of adjacent land have been acquired from the former State farm cooperative. The Polish Ecofund has been used to purchase 31 ha from private owners and it is hoped that a further 35 ha can be bought. At S_o_sk (Montreux Record site), 3,570 ha are now under the control of the local Landscape Park and it is hoped that the Park will gain control of the remaining part of the site. It is planned to cultivate 100 ha of crops close to the reserve for wintering geese in order to limit damage caused to crops elsewhere. At _widwie, the Dolna Odra Landscape Park is seeking to gain control of the reserve territory. Steps are being taken to include _uknajno Lake into the proposed Masurian National Park.

27. **Romania:** in May 1994, the Romanian Government approved Governmental Decision 248/1994, including the Statutes of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, the zones of the reserve (strictly protected, buffer, economic) and the Scientific Council of the Biosphere Reserve.

28. **Russian Federation:** major changes have been linked with: (i) the Federal Government Decree No 1050 (September 1994) on actions to meet obligations under the Convention on Wetlands; (ii) the Federal Law on Protected Areas; (iii) the Federal Law on Wildlife. The Federal Decree of September 1994 established 32 new Ramsar sites and required the preparation of specific regulations for each site.

29. **Slovak Republic:** all Slovak Ramsar sites, except Dunajské luhy, are designated as protected areas according to the 1994 Act on Nature and Landscape Protection. There are plans to establish a Dunajské luhy Landscape Protection Area during the period 1996-1998.

B.4 *Changes in ecological character at listed sites:*

30. **Estonia** reports that no changes have occurred. The National Report of Lithuania does not include information under this heading.

31. **Armenia:** since 1992, the volume of water released from Lake Sevan for energy generation has increased to 2.5 billion m³ per day, with a negative impact on the lake ecosystem. Water quality is also a problem at the site. The fish stock of Lake Sevan has also declined in recent years.

32. **Bulgaria:** the first stage of a restoration programme for Lake Srebarna, a Montreux Record site, was carried out (with funding from the USA, EU PHARE programme, and World Cultural and Natural Heritage Fund) by re-establishing the lake's former connection with the Danube, allowing water levels to recover dramatically, and leading to the return of several waterbird species to nest. The colony of the globally endangered Dalmatian pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) bred successfully, but in reduced numbers owing to flooding, when the artificially increased lake level coincided with heavy rainfall. The National Nature Protection Service has allocated four full-time staff to the management and wardening of the site.

33. At Arkoutino, scrub invasion and drought led to the complete drying-out of the site in 1994. 30 ha of scrub have since been cleared, and during 1995 heavy rains restored water levels in the marsh, leading to natural outflow to the sea for the first time in 15 years.

34. An increase in predators at Atanasovsko Lake has caused a decline in numbers of nesting birds.

35. **Czech Republic:** two sites were included in the Montreux Record in 1994: Novozámecký a B_ehy_ský rybník because of increasing eutrophication, and T_ebo_ské rybníky because of the risk of adverse changes arising from privatization of the fish pond complex. A third site, Litovelské Pomoraví may be added to the Montreux Record because of the likely adverse impact of a new water supply system.

36. Proposals to construct a canal linking the Danube, Odra and Elbe rivers would adversely affect three Czech Ramsar sites: Mok_ady dolního Podyjí, Litovelské Pomoraví, and Pood_í, and nationally important wetlands along the Elbe river. Ramsar sites in Austria and in the Slovak Republic would also be affected.
37. **Hungary:** water quality in Lake Balaton has declined as a result of domestic and industrial waste water inputs and prolonged drought. Reedbeds have declined (87 ha lost), blue-green algae has increased and there have been recurrent fish kills. The situation is especially acute in summer. A Government Commissioner was appointed in 1995 to coordinate management of the area.
38. Almost all Hungarian wetlands are suffering from water loss, and especially those on the Great Plain. In addition to a prolonged period of unusually low rainfall, factors may include river regulation, drainage, and landscape alteration. A programme has been launched by the Government to restore the ecological character of the Great Plains region, since it is important for agriculture, as well as nature conservation. Successful implementation of the programme will require external cooperation and funding (PHARE, World Bank, EBRD) for which support is sought from Conventions (including Ramsar) and international organizations.
39. A further general problem has been the privatization of more than 270 Hungarian fish ponds, only 3 of which (all Ramsar sites) have been secured for conservation. The majority of the sites, many of which have significant conservation interest, are subject to intensification of fish production, introduction of exotic species etc. There is an urgent need for a nature conservation compensation scheme to be established.
40. Wetland restoration programmes are being implemented at Kiskunság (winner of 1995 EUROSITE award) and Kis-Balaton. There are some concerns that part of the latter project may be proceeding too rapidly for the wetland vegetation to adapt successfully.
41. **Latvia:** cessation of traditional cattle grazing and grass mowing since the 1960s have caused considerable vegetation changes at Lake Engure. Formerly open areas have become overgrown by reeds and scrub, leading to a decline in nesting ducks and waders. Other problems include predation by naturalized American mink, and increased human disturbance. At Lake Kanieris, adverse impacts from eutrophication (owing to inadequate waste water treatment) have been noted. Predation by American mink is also a problem.
42. **Poland:** Siedem Wysp: following application of the Monitoring Procedure at this Montreux Record site, a water control structure was built on the river flowing out of the lake, in order to raise water levels in the site. An increase of 0.8 - 1.0 m has been achieved, leading to immediate improvements. Steps are also being taken to reduce pollution entering the lake. At S_o_sk (Montreux Record site) low water levels have also been a problem. In 1993-94 work was undertaken to allow artificial flooding of 400 ha. Waste water treatment plants for nearby settlements are nearing completion. Ongoing problems include the impact of a motorway forming the southern boundary of the site, encroachment of scrub owing to lack of summer grazing and winter flooding, and increase in predation by American mink. At _widwie, the water level has been raised by about 15 cm. Pollution by domestic and industrial waste water, and the impact of a planned new border crossing are amongst ongoing problems. At Kara_, water quality studies have shown unsatisfactory results.
43. **Russian Federation:** pollution has increased in the Volga Delta because of the unfavourable situation in the Volga catchment. The level of the Caspian Sea has continued to rise, and is now the most significant factor affecting the ecological character of the Volga Delta. Significant vegetation degradation has occurred in the fore-delta area, leading to a decrease in the breeding success of the globally endangered Dalmatian pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*).

44. **Slovak Republic:** construction and operation of the Gab_ikovo hydro-power plant have caused changes in the hydrological regime of the main Danube channel and adjacent tributaries at the Dunajské luhy listed site. Guidelines for operation of the plant include simulation of natural flooding of riverine forest, and monitoring of selected components of the ecosystem and water regime. At Latorica listed site, repeated transboundary oil pollution has been a significant problem. However, remedial actions have been taken and the wetland is showing a remarkable recovery.
45. **Slovenia:** the long-term abandonment of salt production and other human interventions have resulted in a change in water regime at Secovljske Soline Ramsar site. The process of privatization and ownership changes have also affected the area. A proposal to use some of the salt-pans for intensive mariculture was halted.
46. **Yugoslavia:** a project proposal has been prepared with the aim of rehabilitation of Obedska Bara Ramsar site. Ludaško Jezero Ramsar site has undergone pronounced eutrophication.
- B.5 *Status of sites mentioned in Kushiro Recommendation 5.1 - Ramsar Sites in the territories of specific Contracting Parties*
47. *Bureau note:* Recommendation 5.1 is not applicable to Armenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia). Recommendation 5.1.3 concerns actions in the Danube basin and specifically mentions Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovak Republic.
48. **Hungary:** Recommendation 4.9 (see also Recommendation 5.1) requested the Hungarian authorities to extend year-round designation to the Ramsar sites of Lake Balaton and Tata, Öreg-tó (Old Lake of Tata). The necessary legislation has now been prepared for Tata, Öreg-tó, so that negotiations may begin among the authorities concerned.
49. Recommendation 5.1.3 made reference to the development of a Danube Basin Ecological Convention. The preparation of such a treaty, being led by Hungary, is now at an advanced stage, with a fourth draft text discussed in Budapest in September 1995.
50. Also in conformity with Recommendation 5.1.3, Hungary will respect the decision of the International Court at The Hague, with regard to the Gab_ikovo Dam, as soon as a ruling is made.
51. **Poland:** Recommendation 5.1 (and Montreux Recommendation 4.9) requested the Government of Poland to protect the middle Vistula river, as one of the last unregulated rivers in Europe, through establishment of a landscape park and designation for the Ramsar List. Six nature reserves have already been established, and draft documentation for a further 11 reserves has been prepared. A series of reviews and a seminar in 1995 have confirmed the importance of protecting the valley and it is expected that the progressive designation of protected areas will continue. Two landscape parks have already been designated.
52. **Romania:** as called for in Recommendation 5.1.3 the Romanian Government has established the legal framework to secure the aims and governance of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar site (see also section B.3).
53. **Russian Federation:** 32 new Ramsar sites were designated in 1994, as encouraged by Recommendation 5.1.
54. **Slovak Republic:** see comments regarding operation of the Gab_ikovo power plant under section B.4 above.

B.6 Implementation of Resolution 5.7: Management Planning for Ramsar Sites

55. **Armenia:** neither of Armenia's two Ramsar sites has a comprehensive management plan, though some regulations covering Lake Sevan have been drafted for Government consideration. Financial restrictions are the main obstacle to drawing up management plans.
56. **Bulgaria:** the elaboration of a management plan for Srebarna is envisaged, with financial support sought through the Ramsar Convention Bureau. Preparation of management plans for six other important wetlands (including the three Ramsar sites Durankulak, Atanasovsko and Arkoutino, began in November 1994, in the framework of the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme).
57. **Czech Republic:** the new Act No. 114/92 on the Protection of Nature and Landscape includes management planning as a requirement for all protected areas. All National Parks and Protected Landscape Areas will have management plans by the end of 1995. The majority of the smaller protected areas (National Nature Reserves etc.) already have management plans.
58. **Estonia:** a management plan for Matsalu Bay Ramsar site was completed in April 1994 with the assistance of WWF-Sweden and implementation was initiated in 1995, within the HELCOM programme on management plans for coastal lagoons and wetlands (HELCOM PITF MLW) framework and with funding from the European Union PHARE programme for assistance to central and eastern European countries.
59. **Hungary:** management plans have been prepared, or are due to be prepared, for eight of the 13 Ramsar sites, although one of the plans requires updating, another is for a temporary period, and a further two will not be completed until 1996. No management plan exists (or is due to be prepared) for Szaporca, Kis-Balaton, Hortobágy, Tata Öreg-tó, or Lake Balaton Ramsar sites, though see section B.3 for information regarding Lake Balaton.
60. **Latvia:** management plans for Lakes Engure and Kanieris will be prepared by the Latvian Fund for Nature, in the framework of the HELCOM PITF MLW and with assistance from WWF-Sweden. A five-year management plan for part of the Teichi & Pelechares bog Ramsar site has been prepared during 1995 (differences in ownership prevented establishment of a management plan for the whole site; it will be important to extend State nature reserve status to the whole site in order for a more complete management plan to be prepared).
61. **Lithuania:** a research project for protection of the Lower Nemunas is under way.
62. **Poland:** a management plan is needed for Siedem Wysp (Montreux Record site). Management plans for S_o_sk (Montreux Record site) and Kara_ are in preparation.
63. **Romania:** a management plan for the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar site was finalized in February 1995, with technical assistance from EUROCONSULT (Netherlands) and financial support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
64. **Russian Federation:** detailed regulations being drawn up for each site will provide the basis for management planning. However, this process will require further studies to be undertaken and will need significant additional financial resources.
65. **Slovak Republic:** the Slovak Environment Agency (under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment) will complete management plans for all listed sites, with the exception of Dunajské luhy, by December 1995. Because of its size and complexity, Dunajské luhy requires further studies, but this is made difficult by the lack of a specialized administration office in the area. Simulation of the natural hydrological regime, to mimic conditions prior to construction of the

Gabíkovo dam, is a key requirement for managing the site, and has been initiated in 1995. A management plan for Niva Moravy⁵ is being prepared within the framework of a GEF biodiversity project. A seminar focusing on wetland management was organized by the Slovak Environment Agency in 1995.

66. **Slovenia:** work has started on drafting a management plan for Secoveljske soline.

B.7 Additional comments on listed sites

67. **Czech Republic:** 19 million US\$ have been allocated for the 'River System Revitalization Programme' approved by the Czech Government in 1992 and being carried out in the period 1993-1995.

68. **Latvia:** steps to be taken in 1996-97 include: establishment of a management authority and detailed management plan for Lake Engure (special emphasis on appropriate management of reedbeds and meadows); establishment of Kemeru National Park (will include Lake Kanieris); improvement of waste water treatment for water entering Lake Kanieris; establishment of comprehensive monitoring programmes for Ramsar sites.

69. **Lithuania:** a research project for protection of the lower Nemunas (Nemunas delta Ramsar site) is under way.

C. Wise Use of Wetlands

C.1 Progress towards formulation and application of a national wetland policy

70. **Armenia:** the National Ramsar Committee is considering a National Wetland Policy and Plan for Wetland Conservation.

71. **Bulgaria:** the 'National Action Plan for the Conservation of the most important Wetlands in Bulgaria' was published in Bulgarian and French in 1993 and translated into English in 1995. A National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy has also been published (with funding from USAID). (*Bureau note:* the action plan was developed with support from the French Government, through the Ramsar Convention).

72. **Czech Republic:** the National Ramsar Committee will embark on preparation of a National Wetland Policy in 1996 to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Convention.

73. **Estonia:** there is not yet an official, over all wetland policy. However, Estonia is preparing a National Environment Strategy, which will be submitted for Government approval in 1996, and a new Act on Sustainable Development requires the Ministry of Environment to develop a National Wetland Conservation Strategy.

74. **Hungary:** a detailed plan for wetland conservation has yet to be prepared, but a new Act on Nature Conservation, currently being developed for submission to Government and Parliament, will deal specifically with wetlands. The new Environment Act, adopted in May 1995, provides a

⁵ *Bureau note:* this site was previously listed under the name 'Moravské luhy'.

framework instrument requiring preparation of a National Environment Action Plan, to be revised every six years.

75.Latvia: the Environmental Policy Plan (prepared by the Latvian Ministry for Environmental Protection, in cooperation with the Netherlands Ministry for Environmental Protection and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency) was approved by the Government in April 1995. The plan incorporates the 'wise use of wetlands' principle.

76.Lithuania: the Government is currently preparing a National Environment Protection Strategy and a National Biodiversity Strategy, both of which will contribute to the wise use of wetlands.

77.Poland: In March 1994, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry organized a national conference on the protection of wetlands in Poland, the results of which contributed significantly to furthering obligations under the Convention (e.g. granting in 1995 of priority status to wetland projects for funding from the central State budget and by the National Fund for Environmental Protection). A regional conference for Baltic provinces (Voivodships) was held in June 1994. The Ministry has ordered the development of a document entitled 'Network of protected wetlands - Target situation'. The areas proposed for legal protection will be evaluated and legal status will be granted on the basis of this evaluation. Work by the Institute of Ecology is currently under way to draft a national management plan for wetlands in Poland. A draft will be submitted to the Ministry for inter-sectoral consultations, prior to finalization and adoption by the Ministry.

78.Russian Federation: Article 2 of the Federal Law on Protected Areas requires the integration of wetland protection policies into regional development plans, and other broad, land-use planning frameworks. There is currently no national wetland policy, although a draft Federal Strategy for Wetlands was produced by the Russian Research Institute for Nature Conservation in 1993-1994. Adoption of the Strategy is a difficult issue under current political and economic conditions.

79.Slovak Republic: the Minister of Environment is requested by the Government of the Slovak Republic to submit a national wetland policy for approval by December 1996.

80.Slovenia: nature conservation policy is moving beyond the protection of species and small-scale, endangered biotopes, towards an integrated approach to large areas, taking into account entire ecosystems. A new Law for Nature Conservation is in preparation, and a Nature Conservation Strategy has been prepared for ratification. A draft National Wetland Policy has been prepared for consideration by the wetland expert group (see C.2).

81.Yugoslavia: the key legal instruments at the Federal level are the Resolutions on Environmental Protection and Conservation of Biodiversity. Activities aimed at protecting wetlands in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro are planned and implemented under the republics' regulations on nature protection.

C.2 Application of Recommendation 5.7: National Ramsar/Wetland Committees

82.National Committees have been established by the following Contracting Parties (an indication of committee composition is given in brackets; contact details for National Committees are available, upon request, from the Convention Bureau):

Armenia (7 members from Government, Armenian Academy of Sciences)

Bulgaria (10 members from Government, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, one NGO representative)

Czech Republic (7 members from Government, Ramsar Site manager, Water Research Institute, two NGOs; a scientific panel of 25 members has been established to advise the committee; statutes governing the role and functioning of the committee have been established)

Estonia (9 members from Government, research institutes, wetland reserves, and NGOs)

Hungary (10 members from Government, Parliament, Ramsar site managers, scientists, & 2 NGOs)

Slovak Republic (14 members from Government, state conservation agencies, scientists, teachers, NGOs)

83. The **Armenian** committee works in collaboration with the committee established under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

84. **Croatia**: it is hoped to establish a National Committee by the end of 1996.

85. **Latvia** and **Lithuania** plan to establish a National Committee in due course.

86. The role of a National Committee in the **Russian Federation** has been assumed by the Coordination Group on Wetland Inventory, which has a seven-member Bureau and more than 25 regional experts; most decisions relevant to the conservation and management of wetlands are taken at regional level.

87. In **Slovenia**, a small group of wetland experts was formed in 1994 as the basis for a National Ramsar Committee. A request to establish the committee formally will be submitted to the relevant Minister in the near future.

88. **Yugoslavia** is establishing a focal body at the federal level for monitoring implementation of the Convention; this body will be composed of federal and republican representatives of relevant Ministries and nature protection agencies.

C.3 *Application of Recommendation C.4.6: National scientific inventories*

89. **Armenia**: inventory of the floral diversity of Armenian wetlands carried out by Barseghian (1990); 149 species classified as rare or endangered species, with a further 202 decreasing species. Further inventory work has not been carried out because of a lack of financial resources.

90. **Bulgaria**: a scientific inventory of the most important wetlands along the Danube river and Black Sea coast was carried out in parallel with development of the National Action Plan. Participation in the International Waterfowl Census of IWRB involves mid-winter coverage of 34 wetlands. The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds monitors the status of 31 wetland Important Bird Areas.

91. **Czech Republic**: a finalized National Scientific Inventory of Czech wetlands is planned for publication in 1997, building upon interim results already published in 1993.

92. **Estonia**: a small IWRB grant has been used to prepare a shadow-list of potential Ramsar sites. More detailed inventories will be carried out in the future, if funds can be secured.

93. **Hungary**: an inventory project is currently being carried out with international financial support. It is planned that an inventory covering all Hungarian wetlands will be completed in 1996.

94. The National Ramsar Committee recently gathered information on 14 internationally important wetlands which are not yet designated for the Ramsar List. The sites will be screened against the Ramsar criteria, and those fulfilling the criteria will be submitted to the Ministry of

Environment and Regional Policy for possible designation. However, owing to changes in ownership and the differing interests of various sectors, the process may be lengthy.

95.Latvia: participation in the CORINE Biotopes project (1994-1996); initiation of an inventory and evaluation of peatlands in Latvia (1995-1996). Existing published inventories include 'Important Bird Areas in Latvia' (1993), and 'Wetland Inventory Work in Latvia' (1995 report to IWRB by Latvian Fund for Nature). Important gaps include inland water bodies and unregulated water courses.

96.Lithuania: 8 wetlands have been identified as potential Ramsar sites.

97.Poland: the national conference on wetland protection held in 1994 provided an opportunity for coordinating information on inventories carried out by different sectors (e.g. the authorities responsible for agriculture hold data on some 50,000 Polish mires; fieldwork for an inventory and database of wetlands, pastures and meadows was carried out in 1995 by the Institute of Melioration and Grassland Management, with support from the Dutch Government).

98.Russian Federation: a three-year international wetland inventory project was launched in 1994, with funding from the Russian Federal Budget, non-budgetary Federal sources, and the US State Department via the Ramsar Convention Bureau. Technical and administrative support is being provided by IWRB. A handbook on wetland inventory methodologies and a national wetland database have been developed.

99.The Russian Research Institute for Nature Conservation has been gathering data on internationally important wetlands for many years, and the designation of new Ramsar sites in 1994 stimulated further activity at regional and local levels. A further 29 wetlands have been recommended as potential Ramsar sites by the relevant regional authorities. An additional 33 sites are proposed by conservation and scientific institutions, including the Russian Research Institute for Nature Conservation.

100.Work has been initiated to establish a network of wetlands of national importance within the framework of the Ecological Safety of Russia Programme.

101.Slovak Republic: wetland inventory work, carried out by state conservation agencies, a national NGO, and scientists working within the Slovak Biotopes mapping project, began in 1991. 1800 wetland sites have been recorded, and their classification and evaluation will be completed during 1995. New protected areas and potential Ramsar sites will be proposed in 1996.

102.Slovenia: since 1980, the Institute for Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage has been collecting information on Slovenia's natural heritage; the third volume of a three-volume inventory will be published by the end of 1995. The inventory aims to facilitate establishment of adequate legislation, to guide planning, research and nature conservation measures, and to serve as an educational tool. This inventory provides a good basis for a future inventory dealing exclusively with wetlands.

103.Yugoslavia: it is hoped to undertake a national scientific inventory which could be used as the basis for future Ramsar site designation proposals. However, additional finances are required for the realization of such an inventory.

C.4 Additional information on application of the Wise Use 'guidelines' and 'additional guidance'

104.Bulgaria: the wise use concept is incorporated in the development of site management plans. The concept has proved useful in discussions with the salt industry at important wetlands.

105. **Czech Republic:** information on the wise use of wetlands has been translated into Czech for wide dissemination to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Convention.
106. **Latvia:** priority is being given to integration of wetlands into other policy sectors, especially National Agricultural Policy, Forestry Policy, and National Energy Strategy.
107. **Russian Federation:** implementation of the wise use concept meets with considerable difficulties, especially those stemming from the existing legal framework, which does not conform to requirements and which is being renewed only slowly. The Ministry for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources has prepared a draft Federal Law on the Conservation of the Environment, introducing a new system of state regulation of natural resource use, developed in line with Resolution 5.6 on Wise use of wetlands. Major obstacles include a lack of Government funds, and acute problems of coordination between Federal and regional conservation authorities, sectoral agencies and NGOs.
108. **Slovak Republic:** the 1994 Act on Nature and Landscape Protection is a modern legal instrument for more effective wetland protection in the Slovak Republic. Under the Act, wetlands may only be used in ways which do not reduce their ecological stability. Drainage, and other forms of manipulation, require the approval of a nature protection body. New regulations dealing with Environmental Impact Assessment and property tax also benefit wetland conservation.

D. International Cooperation

Miscellaneous

109. **Armenia:** international meetings to discuss the management of Lake Sevan were held in 1993 and 1995.
110. **Bulgaria:** the Ministry of Environment hosted the second Pan-European Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention, in Varna, 8-11 May 1995.
111. **Latvia:** several projects have been carried out on a variety of migratory waterbird and fish species.
112. **Yugoslavia:** several migratory waterbird research and monitoring projects have been implemented.

D.1 Consultations on shared wetlands

113. **Bulgaria:** signature of the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River; ratification of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution; participation in the World Bank/IWRB 'Preliminary Action Plan' for Black Sea wetlands.
114. **Czech Republic:** three of the Czech Ramsar sites are in border locations, adjoining the territories of Austria, Germany, Poland, and Slovak Republic. In the case of the site adjoining Poland (Krkonošská rašeliništ_) there is regular discussion with the Polish authorities concerning the bilateral Biosphere Reserve Krkonoše/Karkonosze. A project of WWF-Austria seeks to establish a multi-lateral National Park 'Danube-Morava-Dyje Floodplains'; an NGO (Veronica Brno) is responsible for the project in the Czech Republic. There is a bilateral Austrian-Czech commission on rivers, which coordinates work on (e.g.) minimum flow levels and artificial spring flooding.
115. **Estonia:** international consultations on shared wetlands have been initiated with Latvia and Russian Federation. These consultations will be pursued within the framework of existing bilateral agreements on environmental protection.

- 116.**Hungary:** there is everyday contact between the management authorities of the Fertő-Hanság National Park of Hungary and the Neusiedlersee-Seewinkel National Park of Austria. There have been consultations with Austria, Croatia, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia with regard to possible establishment of cross-border protected areas, including wetlands.
- 117.**Latvia:** agreements in the field of environmental protection, with specific references to wetland matters, have been concluded with the neighbouring States of Belarus, Estonia and Lithuania.
- 118.**Poland:** consultations have been held with Germany, with a view to establishing a trans-boundary protected area between the Ramsar site in Polish territory, and Gottesheide reserve on the German side of the border. Joint management cooperation between Poland and Ukraine has been established at Poleski National Park (Poland) and Szacki reserve (Ukraine). Poland is also active in the HELCOM framework for the conservation of the Baltic region.
- 119.**Russian Federation:** a draft bilateral agreement concerning Khanka Lake Ramsar site has been prepared by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Russia is an active participant in the World Bank/IWRB programme concerning conservation of Black Sea wetlands. During the Pan-European Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention, preliminary consultations on shared wetlands were held with Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Ukraine.
120. In the autumn of 1994 members of the Intergovernmental Ecological Union of the CIS signed an Agreement on the 'Conservation and Wise Use of Migratory Waterbirds, Mammals and their Habitats'. Under the agreement, the Russian Research Institute has identified the most important sites in the country for migratory species; the list of sites includes a number of trans-boundary wetlands.
- 121.**Slovak Republic:** negotiations with the Hungarian Government concerning the Gabčíkovo power plant have led to a bilateral agreement to increase the flow of water where the main river channel forms the boundary between the two States.
122. There has been close cooperation with Austria, especially along the common border formed by the Morava river, together with the active participation of Hungary. There is also Austrian-Czech-Slovak participation in a Global Environment Facility project.
- 123.**Yugoslavia:** there has been some contact with Albania, concerning management of Lake Skadar, the Yugoslavian part of which is proposed for inclusion in the Ramsar List.

D.2 Consultations on shared species

- 124.**Bulgaria:** signature of the 'Memorandum of Understanding: Measures for the Conservation of the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*)'; participation in the final negotiations for the 'Africa-Eurasia Migratory Waterbird Agreement' concluded under the Bonn Convention; participation in the development of single-species action plans for globally threatened waterbirds under the auspices of the Council for Europe/Bern Convention.
- 125.**Estonia:** participation in the final negotiations for the 'Africa-Eurasia Migratory Waterbird Agreement' concluded under the Bonn Convention.
- 126.**Hungary:** signature of the 'Memorandum of Understanding: Measures for the Conservation of the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*)'; participation in the final negotiations for the 'Africa-Eurasia Migratory Waterbird Agreement' concluded under the Bonn Convention.

127. **Russian Federation:** see section D.1. Bilateral and multilateral consultations have been held with the aim of promoting sustainable utilization of the Caspian Sea's migratory fish and waterbird species. Iran, Russia and Turkmenistan have initiated an Agreement on 'Wise Use and Conservation of Biological Resources of the Caspian Sea'.

128. **Slovak Republic:** consultations have been held with Austria regarding White storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) nesting in the Morava valley; these discussions helped overcome threats to nesting sites from gravel extraction. Scientific consultations on possible reintroduction of the freshwater turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) have been held with Hungary.

D.3 *Wetland Conservation Fund: projects supported since December 1992*

129. During the period 1993-1995, countries of central and eastern Europe, with economies in transition, were not eligible for application to the Wetland Conservation Fund.

D.4 *Role of international funding agencies (Recommendation 4.13, Recommendation 5.5)*

130. **Bulgaria:** the first phase of the restoration project at Lake Srebarna was funded in 1993/94 by USAID, the US National Parks Service, and the EU's PHARE programme. Financial support for equipment purchase was received from the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Fund.

131. **Czech Republic:** management and monitoring of part of the Ramsar site 'Floodplain of the lower Dyje River' is supported by the GEF Biodiversity Project through the World Bank.

132. **Estonia:** current projects include 'Wetstonia' (1994-1996) focused mainly on inventory of coastal and alluvial meadows, led by the Estonian Fund for Nature and funded by the Danish Government through WWF-Denmark. An EU-funded project is currently investigating the impact of nitrogen on peatlands. Funding for the IMAWELL project for surveying important coastal and marine areas in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was cancelled.

133. **Hungary:** important external financial support for wetland projects, though outside the framework of the Ramsar Convention, has been provided by the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands and the USA.

134. **Latvia:** recent projects have received support from the Government of Sweden, the Government of Denmark, World Bank/GEF, WWF Baltic Programme, and the Convention on Wetlands. However, support for small-scale, practical projects is often not available from international sources. Consideration could be given to the development of regional project proposals which could be developed jointly between the Baltic States.

135. **Romania:** the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar site (DDBR) has received a Technical Assistance grant (725,000 ECU) from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for strengthening the institutional capacity of the DDBR Authority, and to prepare a management plan. In 1994 the World Bank approved a US\$ 4.5 million grant to finance the Danube Delta Biodiversity Project, for a period of five years, commencing February 1995. The main project aims are: strengthening of wardening in the DDBR, polder restoration, ecosystem monitoring, ecosystem restoration, and public awareness.

136. **Russian Federation:** see section C.3. Other international projects related to wetlands have been supported by the Governments of Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. The Global Environment Facility funded the preliminary stage of the Russian Biodiversity Conservation Project in 1994-1995.

137. **Slovak Republic:** recent support has been received from GEF Small Grants, WWF-Austria (Niva Moravy site), and the Dutch Government. Because of the high priority placed on wetland conservation, significant sums of money have also been allocated from internal sources (e.g. almost 4 million Slovak crowns ca. 175,000 US\$ - in 1994 and 1995 from the State Environmental Fund, for 17 wetland projects).

E. Wetland Reserves and Training

E.1 *Application of Recommendation 4.4: Establishment of wetland reserves*

138. **Bulgaria:** Srebarna Nature Reserve has been extended and seven wetlands, covering more than 850 ha, have been designated as Protected Sites.

139. **Czech Republic:** 201 wetland reserves, covering 8,100 ha, have been established since December 1992.

140. **Hungary:** ten wetland protected areas, covering more than 30,000 ha, have been designated or extended since the end of 1992.

141. **Latvia:** 39 lakes, 13 river valleys and 95 peatlands in Latvia currently have protected area status.

142. **Lithuania:** 15% of Lithuanian wetlands are under protection. 34 wetland reserves have been established during 1995.

143. **Russian Federation:** Article 2 of the Federal Law on Protected Areas provides for the establishment of wetland protected areas at Federal, regional and local levels. Only five of the country's 35 Ramsar sites do not include reserves within their boundaries. The majority of sites include strict nature reserves (zapovedniks), national parks, wildlife refuges (zakazniks) and/or nature monuments covering more than four million hectares. Seven new zapovedniks, covering more than eight million hectares, and with significant wetland components, were established in 1993-94, together with Yudygva National Park (1.80 M ha) and nature-ethnic park of Beringia (3.05 M ha).

144. **Slovak Republic:** 111 nature reserves have been established since 1992, of which 29 are primarily wetland areas.

145. **Slovenia:** seven marshes, one wet grassland and 14 other wetlands are designated as protected areas for rare or threatened flora and fauna.

146. **Yugoslavia:** a special nature reserve, 'Koviljsko-Petrovaradinski Rit', is being established in the Yugoslav section of the Danube flood plain.

E.2 *Implementation of Recommendation 5.3: zonation of wetland reserves, and Recommendation 5.8 measures to promote public awareness of wetland values in wetland reserves*

147. **Bulgaria:** publication in September 1995 of the book 'Bulgaria - Natural Heritage' (funding from PHARE); publication of a guide on fish; preparation by Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds of 'Important Bird Areas in Bulgaria' (due 1996); establishment of a visitors centre for Poda Protected Site (funding from Switzerland).

148. **Czech Republic:** the Czech National Council Act 114/92 on the Protection of Nature and Landscape granted general protection to all wetlands, and special protection to certain

categories. Under the Act, zonation is a prerequisite for establishing large protected areas. Several publications, leaflets, a TV film and a poster have been produced to highlight the value of wetlands.

149.**Estonia:** trails, information centres and observation towers have been established at several wetland reserves.

150.**Hungary:** the most important parts of Hungarian reserves are given strict protection, with surrounding protected areas which act as buffer zones. In most cases, zonation is normally in place prior to Ramsar designation. A booklet has been produced on the birds of Hortobágy fishponds Ramsar site. A film and colour brochure on Hungarian Ramsar sites are to be made by 1996.

151.**Latvia:** zonation is already a traditional procedure for multifunctional protected areas in Latvia. There are plans for the zonation of Lake Engure.

152.**Poland:** construction of a research and ecological education centre at S_o_sk Ramsar site was completed in 1995. It will be equipped and staffed in 1996. A booklet on _widwie reserve and Ramsar site has been published in Polish and German editions, with a cassette tape of bird songs.

153.**Romania:** zonation of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar site (approved by Governmental Decision in 1994) includes 18 strictly protected areas (covering 50,600 ha), 13 buffer zones (covering 223,300 ha), and economic zones (covering 306,100 ha). With the support of the Ministry of Waters, Forests and Environmental Protection, the first two wetland visitor centres in Romania were opened in the Danube Delta, at Cri_an and Uzlina, respectively. A major project to provide signage throughout the site is due for completion during 1995.

154.**Russian Federation:** owing to the huge surface area of wetlands in the Russian Federation, it is not realistic to establish strict protection regimes across entire sites or complexes. Instead, zonation is used to regulate different activities and degrees of protection (e.g. Volga Delta Ramsar site includes 66,816 ha of nature reserves with 47,600 ha of buffer zones, 19,700 ha of wildlife refuges and three nature monuments. The site is also included in the Northern Caspian fishery regulation zone). Education and public awareness activities are mainly carried out by the scientific and educational divisions of reserves.

155.**Slovak Republic:** Four of the country's seven Ramsar sites are strict reserves, the other three (Niva Moravy, Latorica and Dunajské luhy) are subject to zonation measures. Publicity has been given to the aims of the Ramsar Convention, and some site-based activities have taken place. A new visitor centre is being established at Latorica.

156.**Yugoslavia:** the law on the protection of the environment in the Republic of Serbia provides for three levels of strictness of protection (I, II and III).

E.3 Implementation of Recommendation 4.5: Education and training

157.**Bulgaria:** workshops (with international participation) on wetland management were held at Ahtopol (for Veleka River and Silistar wetlands), Silistra (for Lake Srebarna) and Arkoutino in 1994 and 1995. The NGO 'Green Balkans' has produced a travelling exhibition with posters and videos.

158.**Czech Republic:** training and education will be a major focus of the National Wetland Conservation Strategy to be developed in 1996.

- 159.**Estonia**: a workshop on the conservation and management of seminatural wetlands was held in Matsalu in 1994.
- 160.**Hungary**: no special funds are allocated by the Government for education and training linked with Ramsar sites and therefore no such activities are coordinated by the Administrative Authority of the Convention. However, activities do take place at a regional level.
- 161.**Latvia**: there are annual training courses for water quality control inspectors. However, special emphasis is needed on the promotion of training for trainers, with international cooperation and support, and within a framework for the whole of eastern Europe.
- 162.**Russian Federation**: Government agencies have few resources for environmental education, but NGOs are very active in this area, especially through the publication of newspapers. A new system of education, currently being developed, includes nature conservation issues in the curricula of secondary and higher education.
- 163.**Slovak Republic**: an educational film on four Ramsar sites was made in 1993, and a TV film 'Environment of Slovakia' has been made in 1995 as part of the European Year of Nature Conservation. A second film, on ecosystems, is being made in 1995 with support from the EU PHARE programme.

F. General comments on the Convention and its implementation

F.1 Effectiveness of the Convention; problems encountered in implementation etc.
and

F.2 Future activities under the Convention

- 164.**Armenia**: the economic circumstances in Armenia, make it difficult to implement the Convention and it has been impossible to pursue reserve establishment, management training, or education/public awareness activities.
- 165.**Bulgaria**: the main activities of the Ministry of Environment will include development of a National Biodiversity Action Plan; completion of the Lake Srebarna restoration project and initiation of similar projects at Durankulak Lake and Belene marshes; development of management plans for Belene Islands, Srebarna and Vardim Island; enlargement of the protected wetlands network, including Pomorie Lake, Nova Cherna fish-ponds, and Ovtcharitsa Dam.
- 166.**Czech Republic**: the inclusion of a wetland in the Ramsar List has proved to be an effective tool for the authorities concerned with nature conservation.
- 167.**Estonia**: a more comprehensive study of potential Ramsar sites is required in order for implementation priorities to be more clearly defined.
- 168.**Hungary**: implementation of the Convention has been influenced fundamentally by the process of land privatization. The Ramsar Convention has been an effective tool for raising awareness of the international importance of wetlands amongst decision makers. However, the only truly effective solution found, so far, to the problems presented by the privatization of land of high conservation value, has been purchase by the state conservation authorities. Fund raising from national Government, or international sources has proved too lengthy a process for responding successfully to rapid changes in the market place. A further difficulty in implementation is the lack of financial resources for training wetland reserve wardens and other personnel. The language barrier - since most available training materials are in foreign languages - is also significant.

169. As a Contracting Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Hungary believes that a greater number of combined and synchronized actions of the different Conventions should take place.
170. **Latvia:** ongoing international cooperation and support will be required if Latvia is able to fully implement its obligations under the Convention, whilst economic circumstances remain difficult.
171. **Poland:** financial limitations prevent the advancement of many important projects, including establishment of Narew River Valley National Park, and implementation of management plans for wetlands of national and international importance. However, high priority is given to the conservation and wise use of wetlands, especially Ramsar sites, by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and by the Ecofund.
172. **Russian Federation:** the Convention does not define wetlands of international importance as conservation and management units. This has caused some difficulties; for example, many managers do not regard Ramsar sites as protected areas in the same sense as reserves, National Parks etc., and Ramsar sites are not mentioned in the Federal Law on Protected Areas. This means that Ramsar sites in the Russian Federation continue to be designated with the same boundaries as existing protected areas, even though the priority for application of the Convention in Russia is ensuring implementation of wise use over much larger areas. Introduction of an amendment to article 2.1 of the Convention would help to overcome these and other difficulties.
173. It is desirable that the Convention be able to find additional funds for conservation of wetlands in countries which are presently in transition and experiencing economic difficulties.
174. Closer collaboration between the Convention and the Global Environment Facility is considered a high priority so that wetland issues are fully taken into account at all stages of GEF programme development.
175. **Slovak Republic:** successful implementation of the Convention has been enhanced by the new legal framework and will be further promoted by completion of further site management plans, and by establishment in 1996 of a National Wetland Policy.
176. **Slovenia:** the Convention provides a very strong tool for ensuring that unsuitable interventions in wetlands are prevented. It is hoped that further sites will be proposed for the Ramsar List very soon.
177. **Yugoslavia:** effective implementation of the Convention requires appropriate and more efficient legislative, institutional and financial mechanisms, especially at federal level. Their establishment is made difficult by the current political and economic situation. International experience and support would assist the development of wetland conservation activities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
178. The complementarity of the Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Biological Diversity should be more fully explored, especially in terms of international cooperation and finance.