

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**26th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 3-7 December 2001**

**DOC. SC26-24
Addendum 2**

Report of the contact group considering SC26/COP8-2 Annex III

Present: Australia, France, India, Japan, USA, Birdlife, WWF.

1. The contact group considered in general terms the document “Proposed procedure for the review of Ramsar site boundaries for reasons other than urgent national interest, without prejudice to other international obligations”. The following concerns with the document were discussed:
 - Inconsistency of treatment of similar issues compared with SC26/COP8-1;
 - Limited recognition of the rationale for including non-wetland areas in a listed site in order to: a) facilitate management; b) conserve ecosystems in a wetland-dryland mosaic; and c) conserve catchments;
 - Potential to misinterpret revised management planning as a trigger for boundary changes;
 - Importance of stakeholder engagement being limited to assisting rather than triggering boundary reviews, as changes must be justified on legal and scientific grounds;
 - The need to provide guidance to identify unacceptable scenarios;
 - The threshold of ‘trivial’ changes;
 - The need for a mechanism to provide advice to the Bureau;
 - The need to address the status of listed wetlands that no longer meet the criteria for international importance.

2. There was consensus that it was undesirable to “review Ramsar site boundaries for reasons other than urgent national interest” when this is contrary to the Convention. The contact group recommends:
 - i) Redrafting for consistency, with treatment of similar issues such as stakeholder engagement and advice to the Bureau to be incorporated in the revision of SC26/COP8-1;
 - ii) A resolution encompassing scenarios a) to c) (as in SC26/COP8-2 Annex I) where boundaries can be more accurately defined by Contracting Parties updating RISs for sites; and
 - iii) A resolution encompassing scenario d) the unintentional and irreversible loss of a Ramsar site. Further, the resolution may consider scenario “31” (as per SC26/COP8-2 Annex I) where a wetland no longer meets the Ramsar criteria for sites of international importance. This resolution would also indicate that scenarios e) and f)

are not admissible reasons for boundary change. One option in these instances would be for a register to be established for sites that have been destroyed. This resolution may also encourage compensation for sites that have been lost.

3. The group recommends that the Steering Committee appoint a contact group to prepare these two resolutions for consideration at the Subgroup on COP8 meeting May 2002.