

Draft Resolution on Ramsar Community¹ Accreditation

Submitted by Tunisia and the Republic of Korea

Action requested:

- The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached draft resolution for consideration by the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Draft Resolution XII. xx

Ramsar Community accreditation

1. RECALLING the commitments made by Contracting Parties to achieving the wise use, as far as possible, of all wetlands in their territory and to maintaining the ecological character of designated sites for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance;
2. RECALLING also that Resolution X.27 on *Wetlands and urbanization* underlined the importance of wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments, and of their wise use;
3. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution XI.11 on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* requested the Convention to explore establishing a “wetland city accreditation” scheme, which may in turn provide positive branding opportunities for cities that demonstrate strong and positive relationships with wetlands;
4. RECALLING that the Information Document 23 submitted to the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties entitled *Background and context to the development of principles and guidance for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* noted that more than 50% of the Earth’s population now resides in cities, towns and urban settlements; that this shift to a predominantly urban population is predicted to continue at rates up to almost 4% per annum, with the rate of increase in urban populations being greatest in the least developed nations; that some estimates suggest that by 2030 80% of the human population will dwell in urban areas; and that whilst cities currently only occupy 2% of the Earth’s surface, they use 75% of the world’s natural resources and generate 70% of all the waste produced globally;
5. NOTING also that with the increasingly rapid urbanization, wetlands are being threatened in two principle ways:
 - i. through direct planned or unplanned conversion of wetlands to urban areas, leading to acute problems associated with polluted drainage, direct habitat loss, overexploitation of

¹ A community as defined in this draft resolution refers to a city or a town or a village which has its own governing system (i.e. municipal authorities).

- wetland plants and animals by urban and peri-urban residents, and the increased prevalence of non-native invasive species, uncontrolled waste disposal etc.; and
- ii. through the watershed-related impacts of urban development, including increased demands for water, increased diffuse and point source pollution, the need for greater agricultural production, demands on the extractive industries to supply materials to support the development of urban infrastructure, and the water requirements of energy production to support the burgeoning urban population;
6. CONSIDERING that with the growing impact of urbanization on wetlands the importance of urban and peri-urban wetlands for biodiversity as well as the quality of urban life becomes even more significant;
 7. AWARE of the huge potential of urban areas in terms of education and public awareness related to wetlands conservation, including through wetland education centres, guided tours for the public in general and schools in particular, and various communication means such as World Wetlands Day celebration, production of film documentaries, media events, etc.; and
 8. TAKING into account the recommendations of workshops considering a city accreditation mechanism held in Morocco in 2012 and in the Republic of Korea and in Tunisia in 2014;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. ENDORSES the Statutory Framework for the Ramsar Community Accreditation (RCA) which is attached as Annex 1 of this Resolution;
10. INVITES Contracting Parties to encourage communities on their territories which are close to Ramsar Sites and depend on them to submit to the Ramsar Secretariat proposals to obtain the RCA;
11. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to identify suitable members for the Independent Advisory Committee foreseen in the Statutory Framework and to provide support to facilitate their engagement and the development of the Committee's terms of reference and operations;
12. INVITES the Standing Committee to approve the detailed accreditation procedures and documentation to be proposed by the Independent Advisory Committee, including the application form to be completed by candidates for the RCA;
13. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to develop and apply national criteria for communities wishing to apply for the RCA, which take their particular situation into account while respecting the detailed criteria to be proposed by the Independent Advisory Committee, in order to select and put forward the most eligible candidates for the RCA;
14. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to identify eligible proposals and submit them to the Independent Advisory Committee for assessment and eventual recommendation to the Standing Committee;
15. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to decide on the recommendations put forward every three years by the Independent Advisory Committee, including on eventual proposals for withdrawal of the RCA;

16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and their agencies including the local governments , non-governmental organizations and other partners to disseminate information on the RCA through events, celebrations and diverse media channels; and INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to set up a global online network of communities having obtained the RCA; and
17. INVITES the Convention's International Organization Partners and other partners to encourage communities to promote their branding through the RCA, and promote local efforts to gain and maintain the RCA, including through participation in and support to local management committees.

Annex 1

The Statutory Framework for Ramsar Community Accreditation (RCA)

Introduction

COP 11 adopted Resolution XI.11 on the *Principles for the sustainable planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* which recognizes that the Principles can also be applied to spatial planning and management in rural areas, as appropriate, and urges Contracting Parties and other governments to act upon these Principles, further disseminate them to other interested parties (including through translation into local languages), and seek to ensure that they are taken up by the sectors and levels of government responsible for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban environments.

COP 11 also asked the Convention to explore establishing a “wetland city accreditation” system, which may in turn provide positive branding opportunities for cities that demonstrate strong and positive relationships with wetlands.

During the 47th meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee, the Republic of Korea presented a report on the workshop it organized on the city accreditation. Through Decision SC47-27, the Standing Committee asked the Secretariat to prepare a document for the 48th Meeting of the Standing Committee taking into account this report. In addition, it invited Tunisia, WWF, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Republic of Korea to prepare a draft resolution related to wetland city accreditation.

It is within this context that this Statutory Framework for the RCA was developed.

This accreditation should allow communities that are close to and depend on wetlands, primarily “Ramsar Sites” on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, but eventually also other wetlands:

- a) to maintain, and if necessary establish, a positive relationship with these wetlands, and to be aware of their ecological, economic, social and cultural importance, and promote their long-term conservation and wise use;
- b) to develop the Ramsar Site(s) within the limits or in the proximity of their human settlement (city, village, etc.) as green infrastructure, which offers services to the population and provides a better-functioning natural system;
- c) to encourage municipal and other local decision-makers to consider and promote the good management of urban and peri-urban wetlands in land-use planning and in the plans and projects which may affect those wetlands; and
- d) to promote their community as a ‘Ramsar Community’, and to promote the further implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

The Ramsar Community is so labelled in order to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands and regional and international co-operation, as well as to generate sustainable socio-economic benefits for the local populations.

A candidate community for the RCA is approved as a 'Ramsar Community' by the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention, following nomination by the Contracting Party on whose territory it stands, according to the accreditation procedure described at Article 4 below. The new Ramsar Community joins the global network of Ramsar Communities established by this Statutory Framework. The Ramsar Community continues to come under the sole sovereignty of the Contracting Party in which it is located, and is thus subject to the legislation of that Party alone.

The aim of this Statutory Framework for the RCA is:

1. To improve the effectiveness of the management of wetlands in the proximity of each Ramsar Community and to reinforce mutual understanding, communication and cooperation at regional and international levels on wetlands; and
2. To contribute to the broad recognition of the links between communities, local governments and wetlands, and to encourage and increase the number of examples of positive connections between human settlements and their wetlands.

This Statutory Framework establishes the procedure for the RCA and for the support and promotion of the Ramsar Communities, taking into account the wide variety of national and local situations. Each Contracting Party, as appropriate, is encouraged to develop and apply national criteria for the RCA, which take their particular situation into account.

Article 1 – Definition

The RCA is assigned to a community (urban or rural) which, through its inhabitants, its local government and its resources, continuously promotes the conservation and wise use of any Ramsar Site(s) and other wetlands within or nearby the limits of the community, respecting its physical and social environment and its heritage, while supporting the development of a sustainable, dynamic and innovative economy as well as educational initiatives in connection with these wetlands.

An eligible community for the RCA may be a city, village, and other type of human settlement according to the definitions given by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, with its own governance system.

Article 2 – Criteria

To be formally accredited, a candidate for the RCA must meet all of the following seven criteria:

1. To have one or more Ramsar Sites fully or partly situated on its territory or in its close vicinity, and to be able to demonstrate how it depends on those wetlands;
2. To have established an operational interpretation/information centre or equivalent system with sufficient information or activities about wetlands and their resources, open to both the local population and visitors;
3. To have created a Local Management Committee for the RCA that will deal with the issues related to the accreditation label;
4. The Ramsar Site(s) related to the candidate Ramsar Community must have an up-to-date Ramsar Information Sheet and must not be listed on the Ramsar Convention's Montreux Record;

5. Each of the concerned Ramsar Sites must have a management plan which has been prepared using a participatory approach, and which is being actively implemented;
6. The candidate Ramsar Community must have a land-use plan or its equivalent which ensures the long-term conservation of the Ramsar Site(s) and of other wetlands situated fully or partly on its territory; and
7. The candidate Ramsar Community must justify that in at least the two years before its request for the RCA, it has celebrated the World Wetlands Day or organized a public information event on wetlands.

In addition a candidate Ramsar Community shall commit itself to maintain, or develop in the near future (preferably within a 3 year period):

1. Appropriate standards regarding water quality , sanitation and management in the entire area under its jurisdiction;
2. Sustainable agricultural, forest, fish and pastoral production systems contributing to the conservation of the Ramsar Site(s);
3. Methods to evaluate the socio-economic and cultural values as well as the ecosystem services of the Ramsar Site(s), and good practices to conserve them; and
4. Where appropriate, a plan for disaster prevention and management which addresses hazards which relate to the Ramsar Site(s) such as accidental pollution or flooding.

Article 3 – Functions

The Ramsar Communities are intended to act as models for the study and demonstration of the Ramsar Convention approaches, principles and resolutions. Ramsar Communities combine the following functions:

1. Conservation: to contribute to wetlands conservation and their associated resources;
2. Development: to encourage sustainable economic and human development from the socio-cultural and ecological points of view;
3. Demonstration: to mobilize resources for demonstration projects and environmental education and training activities, research and continuous monitoring on local, regional, national and global issues related to conservation and sustainable development; and
4. International cooperation: to establish cooperation initiatives such as exchanges of experiences, courses, and twinning activities.

Article 4 – Accreditation procedure

A community is accredited as a “Ramsar Community” by the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention, at its final full meeting prior to each Conference of the Parties. Candidate communities

for accreditation are recommended by the Independent Advisory Committee (see Article 5 below), in accordance with the following procedure:

- a) The accreditation request must be submitted, after consultation with local populations, by the Local Management Committee for the RCA (see Criterion 3 above) to the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority of the Contracting Party concerned;
- b) Each Contracting Parties can submit no more than one Ramsar Community accreditation request per triennium, i.e the one they consider the best candidate;
- c) After reviewing whether the community meets the criteria defined in Article 2 above, the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority submits to the Ramsar Secretariat the accreditation request, (in the format approved by the Standing Committee and supported by the appropriate documentation) not later than one year before each Conference of the Parties;
- d) The Secretariat confirms the eligibility of the proposal. If a proposal is incomplete, it requests the Contracting Party to provide the missing information;
- e) At least eight months before the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat submits eligible proposals to the Independent Advisory Committee; and
- f) The Independent Advisory Committee studies their validity and submits its recommendations to the final full meeting of the Standing Committee prior to the Conference of the Parties, at least 60 days in advance;

If the Standing Committee approves the accreditation, the Secretary General informs the relevant Contracting Party of the decision. The Contracting Party receives an accreditation certificate for the Ramsar Community, which is valid for five years. The status of each Ramsar Community is reviewed every triennium.

Any procedure by which the Independent Advisory Committee proposes to withdraw accreditation must be regarded as an exception to this primarily positive approach. Withdrawal should only be proposed after an in-depth study that takes into account the environmental, cultural and socio-economic situation of the country in question, and only after consulting with the government and Ramsar Community concerned. The decision on withdrawing of the RCA rests with the Standing Committee.

Article 5 – Independent Advisory Committee

It is proposed that the composition of the Independent Advisory Committee shall be as follows:

- A representative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), who shall act as Chair of the Committee;
- A representative of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI);
- A representative of the Ramsar Convention's International Organization Partners;
- Five Contracting Parties members of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention;

- One representative of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention;
- A representative of the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel of the Ramsar Convention;
- The Ramsar Secretary General or his/her designated representative; and
- The Ramsar Senior Advisor for the concerned region (rapporteur).

The Committee must develop its own rules and regulations, terms of reference, roadmap, and monitoring and evaluation system, subject to the approval of the Standing Committee.

Article 6 – Publicity

The local government of Ramsar Community, the Contracting Party concerned, the Ramsar Secretariat, non-governmental organizations and any other partners (social, economic and commercial, tourist, cultural etc ...) are encouraged to disseminate information on the RCA, both locally and more widely, through events or national or international celebrations (World Wetlands Day, World Water Day, International Day for Biological Diversity, etc.) and through diverse media channels.

Article 7 – Global network of Ramsar Communities

The Ramsar Secretariat will set up a global network of Ramsar Communities, managed via the Internet, hereinafter referred to as the Network:

1. The Network is a tool used to help implement the Ramsar Convention’s mission, namely: “The conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world. To achieve this Mission it is essential that the vital ecosystem services, and especially those related to water and those that wetlands provide to people and nature through their natural infrastructure, are fully recognized, maintained, restored and wisely used.²”
2. The Ramsar Communities will participate in the Network exchanging information and, as appropriate, conduct cooperative activities, which may include monitoring and the collection of information; facilitate various types of exchanges; facilitate environmental education and training; and development of human resources.
3. The Contracting Parties are encouraged to promote the participation of representatives of Ramsar Communities at meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, who could in this way share their experiences, for example in side events.
4. The functioning of the Network and its promotion are taken care of by the Ramsar Secretariat. In particular, the latter develops and maintains an online information system on the Ramsar Communities.
5. The list of Ramsar Communities is updated by the Secretariat.

² Additional paragraph to the Ramsar Mission added by Resolution XI.3 of the Conference of the Parties.

Article 8 – Periodic review

1. The situation of each Ramsar Community shall be subject to a periodic review every five years, on the basis of a report drawn up by the Local Management Committee of the RCA based on the criteria in Article 2 above, and which the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority of the Contracting Party concerned has addressed to the Ramsar Secretariat.
2. The review report is examined by the Independent Advisory Committee who submits its recommendations to the Ramsar Standing Committee at least 60 days before its last full meeting prior to the Conference of the Parties.
3. If the Ramsar Standing Committee considers that the Ramsar Community continues to meet the requirements for the RCA, the accreditation is renewed for five more years.
4. If the Standing Committee considers that the Ramsar Community no longer meets the criteria or has not complied with its commitments as set out in Article 2 above, it can recommend that the Local Management Committee of the RCA takes appropriate measures within a year to ensure compliance with the criteria.
5. If after one year, the Standing Committee notes that the Ramsar Community still does not satisfy the criteria, the Ramsar Community loses its accreditation. The Secretary General of the Convention notifies the Contracting Party concerned of the Standing Committee's decision.
6. If a Contracting Party wishes to withdraw the RCA from a Ramsar Community placed under its jurisdiction, it notifies the Ramsar Secretariat. This notification is then transmitted to the Standing Committee for information purposes.

Article 9 – Accreditation costs

The Local Management Committee for the RCA of Ramsar Communities which are in a position to do so should contribute towards the costs of the Ramsar accreditation periodic review system, using either their own resources or those obtained by them for this purpose, in accordance with the criteria adopted by the Ramsar Standing Committee.