SC58 Doc.17

Management of requests for data

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

i.   take note as to how contact information is managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and IUCN policies;

ii. instruct the Secretariat to publish National Reports data that is publicly accessible on the Convention's website in aggregated form for users to download; and

iii. instruct the Secretariat to publish Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) exports, with additional fields not available in the standard export, for users to download.

Background

1.   The Secretariat of the Convention is regularly approached by Contracting Parties, other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), academics and academic institutions, and other people interested in wetland-related topics, seeking to access, in aggregated form, publicly available information held by the Secretariat.

2.   The Secretariat collects from Contracting Parties and manages three types of data: personal data about National Focal Points and participants in Convention meetings; data contained in National Reports; and data on Wetlands of International Importance submitted in Ramsar Information Sheets.

3.   In the present document the Secretariat proposes standard procedures determining when and how such data should be shared, for the consideration and endorsement of the Standing Committee.

Contact information

4.   The Secretariat holds contact information on National Focal Points and participants in meetings of governing and subsidiary bodies of the Convention such as the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP), the Standing Committee and the STRP, and on other individuals relevant to the Convention. The Secretariat follows the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR[1]) when dealing with requests for such information. The Secretariat follows the GDPR as it governs relations with Convention stakeholders within the EU. It also follows IUCN policy in so

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02016R0679-20160504

doing, and it works with IUCN to ensure the processes to respond to requests comply with the GDPR.

5. Contact information is stored in a secured system with controlled access. Some of the information of Focal Points is publicly available on the Ramsar website[2]. This information is submitted every triennium by Contracting Parties in the National Reports; the National Report form includes a note that this information will be used to update the information on the Convention website. Contracting Parties with a new Focal Point may also update the Secretariat during a triennium, in part so that the information on the website can be updated. The Secretariat has standard procedures for such updates.

6. The lists of meeting participants are not published due to GDPR restrictions. However, the meeting registration system includes a note that "part of this information, including name, function and address, may be made available for consultation to participants upon request" which allows contact information to be shared among participants when it would help achieve successful meeting outcomes.

National Reports

7. National Reports are provided as public documents on the Convention website[3]. They can be directly consulted as official references of the Convention and for information on wetlands in the territories of the submitting Contracting Parties. The Reports are an invaluable resource for different stakeholders who contribute to implementing the Convention.

8. The Secretariat compiles all the Reports submitted into a tabular dataset covering all the responses excluding the contact information. This dataset is the basis for the document *Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention: Global implementation* which is submitted to each COP, and is used by the Secretariat wherever aggregated data from the National Reports are useful.

9. Individual National Reports are currently available to the public in a disaggregated form, but only a small selection of the responses is made available in tabular form allowing analysis. The Secretariat has received requests for complete datasets in tabular form for additional analysis. So far, responses to such requests have been *ad hoc*, without clarity about who can access this information, how it should be made available to them and under which conditions.

10. The Secretariat has reviewed the practices of other Conventions[4] and learned through discussion with counterparts in those Conventions that they provide aggregated data, as a public service and to foster greater transparency. Annex 1 details the practices described.

11. The Secretariat accordingly proposes to publish on the website links to aggregated National Report data in tabular format for users to download, covering all response fields apart from the personal contact information which would be removed. Data covering past reporting exercises

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[2] https://www.ramsar.org/search?f[0]=type%3Aperson#search-contacts
[3] https://www.ramsar.org/search?f[0]=type%3Adocument&f[1]=field_document_type%3A532
[4] The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Plant Treaty); and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions.

would be available where feasible. The Secretariat would publish a disclaimer and instructions for attribution of the resulting information; see paragraph 15 below.

Ramsar Information Sheets

12. The information provided by Contracting Parties in the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), including any supplementary information, is held and is made publicly available in the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS), a public portal found at https://rsis.ramsar.org/. Interested users can download a limited standard export in tabular form, containing a predefined selection of fields from the RIS, including geographic information (GIS boundaries and centroids). This standard export includes 34 fields out of more than 170 in total.

13. An extended export functionality is available to export additional fields. It includes options to structure the data for automated analysis. This functionality, administered by the Secretariat, is used to generate aggregated datasets for analysis on specific information which is not available in the standard export. Some fields are still excluded from this extended data set, including contact information of compilers.

14. The Secretariat proposes to generate this more complete RIS dataset twice a year and publish it on the website, for users to download. The Secretariat would also publish the disclaimer and instructions for attribution.

Disclaimer for datasets

15. As noted above, National Reports and RIS datasets provided to the public would include a disclaimer underlining the following points:

    a. The content presented is "as-is" based on available data and does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Convention on Wetlands or the Secretariat of the Convention.

    b. Each Contracting Party submitting data through a National Report or RIS is the owner of the data.

    c. The Secretariat is not responsible for any result or interpretation of this data done by third parties.

    d. The data is not to be used for territorial disputes.

    e. The Convention on Wetlands should be attributed as the data source in publications where this data is used, including reports, internal documents and papers.

Annex 1
Summary of discussions with other Conventions regarding sharing of data from national reports

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

1. The national reports are available as individual reports on the CMS website[5]. The CMS Secretariat provides data in aggregated form upon request, they understand that the data is public and that working with separate pdf files is not always appropriate. Thus, they provide a file with all data from the reports.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

2. The data of the annual reports are included in the database[6] maintained for the Secretariat by UNEP-WCMC and provide the basis for comparative trade analysis. The tool is publicly available and allows for selection of countries/region and year, and data can be displayed or downloaded in aggregated form.

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Plant Treaty)

3. The national reports are available as individual reports on the Plant Treaty website[7]. The Secretariat plans to publish a file with the complete answers from all reports on the website. The Compliance Committee "…requested the Secretariat to publish online all the reports on compliance on the International Treaty's website. The Committee took the view that publication of the reports would not raise any issues related to confidentiality, and that it would increase the transparency of the monitoring process." (Paragraph 13 of the report of the second meeting of the Compliance Committee[8]).

Basel Rotterdam Stockholm Conventions (BRS)

4. The national reports are available as individual reports on the BRS website[9]. The data is also available through the online reporting database[10], which enables the public to produce reports and export data in aggregated form. In addition, the Secretariat responds to requests from NGOs, students, researchers and journalists by sending formatted, aggregated data.

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[5] https://www.cms.int/en/documents/national-reports
[6] https://trade.cites.org
[7] http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/compliance/compliance-reports/en/
[8] http://www.fao.org/3/a-br665e.pdf
[9] http://www.basel.int/Countries/NationalReporting/NationalReports/BC2018Reports/tabid/8202/Default.aspx
[10] http://www.basel.int/Countries/NationalReporting/ReportingDatabase/tabid/8105/Default.aspx