

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS  
59th Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Resumed session  
Gland, Switzerland, 23 to 27 May 2022

**SC59/2022 Doc.24.13**

**Draft Resolution**

**Waterbird population estimates to support new and existing Ramsar site designations under Ramsar Criterion 6 – use of alternative estimates**

*Submitted by Australia, in consultation with the Chair of Scientific and Technical Review Panel*

*Secretariat cover note:*

The DR proposes amendments to Resolution XI.8, Annex 2 *Streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and subsequent updates*. On 21 April Australia requested an amendment on the submitters of the DR.

**Action requested:**

The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached Draft Resolution for consideration by the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

**Introduction***Information for Standing Committee*

This draft resolution is about the application of Ramsar Criterion 6, which states “A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% or greater of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird”. This criterion has been used often for listing Ramsar sites.

The Secretariat requested the STRP’s advice in October 2019 on the use of population estimates when applying Criterion 6 for the designation and update of Wetlands of International Importance, after receiving a request for advice from the Government of Australia.

Decisions SC58-06 and SC59-05 provided instructions to the STRP on the requirements for this advice. This advice has been finalised and is provided at Annex 1 to SC59/2022 Doc.25 Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

This draft resolution reflects the STRP advice and additional guidance sought from Wetlands International and flyway network organisations.

This draft resolution was required to avoid inconsistency with Resolution XI.8 Annex 2 (Rev COP13).

The draft resolution seeks, as an interim solution, to allow Contracting Parties to use alternative data to the Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE) for the application of Criterion 6 where the WPE is out of date and does not reflect the best available scientific information. Such alternative data should be published in the Waterbird Populations Portal or be peer reviewed, as set out in the draft resolution.

*Financial implications of implementation*

Paragraph	Action	Cost (CHF)
Para 15 REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to include in its workplan for the next triennium the preparation of guidance to facilitate appropriate application of this Draft Resolution by Contracting Parties	Preparation of guidance to assist contracting Parties to implement this DR in a format such as a Ramsar Briefing Note	Accommodate within existing approved budget for STRP workplan
Para 16 REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to develop, in consultation with Contracting Parties, relevant flyway agreements and partnerships, Wetlands International and interested entities, a proposal for resourcing and implementing future timely Waterbird Population Estimates updates.	Preparation of a proposal, including appropriate research and consultation, for resourcing and implementing future timely Waterbird Population Estimates updates.	Accommodate within existing approved budget for STRP workplan

## Draft Resolution

### Waterbird population estimates to support new and existing Ramsar site designations under Ramsar Criterion 6 – use of alternative estimates

#### 1. RECALLING

- i. Resolution V.9: Application of the Ramsar Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance
- ii. Resolution VI.4: Adoption of population estimates for operation of the specific criteria based on waterfowl
- iii. Resolution VIII.38: Waterbird population estimates and the identification and designation of Wetlands of International Importance
- iv. Resolution X.22: Promoting international co-operation for the conservation of waterbird flyways;

#### 2. RECOGNISING the critical importance of waterbirds to the biodiversity and ecological character of wetlands and that Ramsar Criterion 6 facilitates the designation of Ramsar sites that are internationally important for waterbird conservation;

#### 3. NOTING

- i. the effectiveness of Criterion 6 in supporting waterbird conservation depends on availability of scientifically robust estimates of biogeographical population sizes of waterbirds, and
- ii. use of inaccurate or out of date population estimates, particularly for species in rapid decline, may undermine the intent of the 1% threshold embedded in Criterion 6;

#### 4. RECOGNISING the current 'Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands' (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), – 2012 Revision, (adopted as Resolution XI.8, Annex 2, Rev. COP13) provides guidance on the application of Criterion 6;

#### 5. RECOGNISING that measures to enhance the effectiveness of waterbird conservation are relevant to meeting the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international biodiversity conservation agreements;

#### 6. ACKNOWLEDGING the important role of Wetlands International in collating and publishing, at the request of the Conference of the Parties, previous periodic Waterbird Population Estimates and WELCOMING the new Waterbird Populations Portal launched in 2021;

#### 7. ACKNOWLEDGING critical work being undertaken through cooperative arrangements in the world's migratory bird flyways including Conservation Status Reviews undertaken in the African Eurasian and East Asian-Australasian flyways and RECOGNISING that such work enables the ongoing update of the Waterbird Population Estimates;

8. DEEPLY CONCERNED about ongoing global decline of waterbird populations, notably of migratory waterbird species, and the underpinning loss and degradation of intertidal wetlands as well as other habitats on which waterbirds depend that are essential for supporting them on their regular migrations;
9. ALSO CONCERNED that the Waterbird Population Estimates has not been updated since 2012 and there is currently no mechanism in place to ensure that these essential updates are completed in a timely manner;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. REAFFIRMS the use of Waterbird Population Estimates to underpin application of Ramsar criterion 6 as agreed and affirmed under Resolutions VI.4 and VIII.38 and as outlined in the Strategic Framework – 2012 Revision, (adopted as Resolution XI.8, Annex 2 (Rev. COP13).)
11. AGREES that until the Waterbird Population Estimates publication is updated with accurate population estimates, alternative data sources may be used by Parties for the purposes of determining the 1% threshold in the context of applying Ramsar Criterion 6, provided:
  - i. that the biogeographical population of the species concerned is clearly stated for the species as listed in Waterbird Population Estimates available through the Waterbird Populations Portal;
  - ii. that such thresholds should be derived from estimates that are published in the Waterbird Populations Portal, for migratory species, based on Conservation Status Reviews produced under the auspices of flyway instruments, or other peer reviewed assessments for endemic populations;
  - iii. that the reasons why a new estimate is considered more appropriate is documented with a clear audit trail to original sources, thus allowing third parties to check any derivation of the estimate;
  - iv. that the standard rounding conventions methodology used by Wetlands International to convert from a biogeographic population estimate size to a 1% population threshold should be used; and finally
  - v. that any alternate thresholds used by Parties for Criterion 6 purposes, and their justification be communicated both to the Secretariat (to maintain a log of such instances), and Wetlands International (to review and include in future updates of the Waterbird Population Estimates and present on the Waterbird Populations Portal);
12. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to amend the Strategic Framework – 2012 Revision, (adopted as Resolution XI.8, Annex 2, Rev. COP13) to give effect to para 11, as outlined in Annex 1;
13. ENCOURAGES Parties to work cooperatively with flyway agreements and partnerships to facilitate regular updates to Waterbird Population Estimates;
14. ALSO ENCOURAGES Parties to use best available, scientifically robust, data, through the process set out in paragraphs 10 and 11, for determining the 1% threshold for site designations made on the basis of Criterion 6 and for future updates of the Ramsar Information Sheets;

15. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to include in its workplan for the next triennium the preparation of guidance to facilitate appropriate application of this Resolution by Contracting Parties;
16. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to develop a proposal for resourcing and implementing future timely Waterbird Population Estimates updates, in consultation with Contracting Parties, relevant flyway agreements and partnerships, Wetlands International and interested entities.

## Annex 1

### **Amendments to the ‘Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)’, – 2012 Revision, (adopted as Resolution XI.8, Annex 2, Rev. COP13).**

Delete and replace para 90 as follows:

For waterbirds, please use Wetlands International’s Waterbird Population Estimates as the definitive source of information on populations and species taxonomy (see also sections 6.1.5 and 6.1.6 below). (Note that there are only a few differences between the nomenclatures adopted by Waterbird Population Estimates and CITES). The most recent reference source is Waterbird Population Estimates, 5th edition, available in the Waterbird Populations Portal.

Amend para 197 by inserting the new text in italics, as follows:

197. Current estimates of the sizes of all waterbird species’ populations and 1% thresholds for those populations for which there is a reliable population size estimate are also available in Wetland International’s periodic publication Waterbird Population Estimates, available in the Waterbird Populations Portal. If this Criterion is being applied to a waterbird species or population which is not covered in Waterbird Population Estimates, or for which that publication does not provide a 1% threshold *or the threshold provided is considered to be out of date, an alternative source of the population size estimate may be used and details of the source must be provided*, both to the Secretariat (to maintain a log of such instances). And to Wetlands International (to review and include in future updates of the Waterbird Population Estimates)

After para 207 insert a subparagraph as follows:

207(a). An alternative source may also be used where population estimates published in the current Waterbird Population Estimates are considered to be out of date.

Remove the existing hyperlinks and amend para 210 as follows:

International Waterbird Census: Wetlands International, <https://www.wetlands.org/IWC> and the publication *Waterbird Population Estimates* available through the Waterbird Populations Portal <https://wpp.wetlands.org/>.