



11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands: home and destination”

Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012

Resolution XI.8

Streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and subsequent updates

1. RECALLING that the Final Act of the 1971 International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl in Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran, noted the value of collecting supplementary descriptive information on sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and that Resolution 4.7 (1990) established procedures for the collation of standardised information on Ramsar Sites at the time of their listing, and NOTING that the content and structure of this Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) has been reviewed and revised by the Conference of the Contracting Parties periodically since 1990;
2. ALSO RECALLING that Resolution VI.13 (1996) urged Parties to supply updated information on listed sites whenever there is an actual or potential change in ecological character, and in any case at intervals of no greater than every six years;
3. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution X.15 (2008) established a standardised format for describing and reporting the ecological character of wetlands and outlined the conceptual linkages and overlaps between information on Ramsar Sites collated by different processes established by the Convention;
4. AWARE of the resource requirements associated with collating and reporting information on Ramsar Sites both at the time of their listing and subsequent updates, especially for countries with limited capacity or economic limitations, and thus the need for reporting requirements to be highly prioritised, streamlined, and efficient;
5. ALSO AWARE, however, that well-organized data and information is fundamental to the delivery of ecologically- and cost-effective wetland management measures, which are necessary for the continued provision of ecosystem services to human populations and direct economic benefits;
6. CONSCIOUS of major advances in information technology and analytical techniques since the establishment of the first RIS format in 1990, and RECALLING that Resolution VIII.13 (2002) requested “the Ramsar [Secretariat] and Wetlands International, working with interested Contracting Parties, to develop protocols for the electronic submission of RISs, where this is possible and desirable, so as to facilitate the supply of data from the

information systems of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Sites Database”, and CONCERNED that no progress has yet been made to that end;

7. RECALLING the adoption of the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands* by Resolution VII.11 (1999) and the adoption, at subsequent meetings of the COP, of additional guidance related to the selection of Ramsar Sites;
8. ALSO RECALLING that Resolution X.10, *inter alia*, requested the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to:
 - a) review the consistency, logic, and clarity of the targets and guidelines that support Ramsar’s site selection criteria;
 - b) seek the views of users of the Convention’s guidance on the identification and listing of Wetlands of International Importance;
 - c) review options for revising the format of the RIS seeking to ensure linkages and synergies with other Ramsar instruments to collect and report data and information on listed sites; and
 - d) further consider data and information needs related to the description of ecological character at the point of designation (and assessment of potential change thereafter);
9. NOTING Decision X/31 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which, *inter alia*, called on the Ramsar Convention and other interested parties to consider standard criteria for the identification of sites of global biodiversity conservation significance when developing protected-area systems;
10. DESIRING to promote synergies and harmonisation between international processes through multiple uses of the same data and information, and NOTING the importance of information on the location, status, and ecological character of Ramsar Sites for the World Database on Protected Areas, the CBD’s Programme of Work on Protected Areas, and other international processes operating at global or international regional scales; and
11. NOTING the potential utility of the descriptive information sheet in Annex 1 not only for describing Ramsar Sites at designation and subsequently, but also for inventory, ecological character description, assessment and monitoring (including Article 3.2 reporting) at these and other wetlands;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

12. ADOPTS the *Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS) – 2012 revision* as annexed to this Resolution;
13. ADOPTS the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands – 2012 revision* as annexed to this Resolution as guidance for the future selection and description of Ramsar Sites, both at the time of designation and subsequent updates;
14. CONFIRMS that the *Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS) – 2012 revision* and the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands - 2012 revision* as annexed to this Resolution supersede and

replace the previously adopted *Strategic Framework*, RIS and other associated guidance for completing the RIS;

15. AGREES that this *RIS – 2012 revision* format and its accompanying *Strategic Framework – 2012 revision* will formally enter into use from January 2015 for designations of new sites, extensions to existing sites and updates on existing sites, thus allowing adequate time for:
 - a) Contracting Parties to complete any pending Ramsar Site designations or updates that are already in preparation using the previous RIS format;
 - b) Contracting Parties to become familiar with the new format and to allow any adjustments, should this be necessary; and
 - c) the Ramsar Secretariat to update the Ramsar Sites Database (RSDB) to receive Ramsar Site data and information in the new format, allowing for on-line electronic submission of Ramsar Information Sheets whilst ensuring that new systems allow for the submission of RIS from those areas where there is limited Internet access;
16. ALSO AGREES that under exceptional circumstances, following consultation with the Secretariat, and where sites are in a legal national process towards designation which involves the use of the current format RIS, these may be submitted in support of such designations after 2015 but only until COP12;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, on a voluntary basis, to submit new Ramsar Site designations and updates on existing Sites using the *RIS – 2012 revision* format prior to January 2015, as their capacities allow and following discussion with the Secretariat;
18. INSTRUCES the Secretariat to implement the terms of Resolution VIII.13 (2002) para. 11 regarding upgrading the functionality of the RSDB to allow the on-line electronic submission of RISs by Contracting Parties and, in particular, to ensure that the RSDB captures all data and information provided by Contracting Parties in Ramsar Information Sheets, rather than just a subset of such data and information as at present;
19. REQUESTS the Secretariat to work with the CBD, the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), and other organizations to ensure that data and information on the status of Ramsar Sites are fully integrated into other appropriate databases, international processes and assessments;
20. REQUESTS the STRP to further consider the issue of recognizing the importance of ecosystem benefits/services in the future designation of Ramsar Sites, in relation to the terms of Objective 1 of the *Strategic Framework* and to assess the implications for the RIS, and INVITES Contracting Parties to work with the STRP to develop a more thorough understanding of the nature and extent of ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar Sites individually and at national and global network scales and to report the outcomes of that work to the Standing Committee and the Conference of Parties;
21. FURTHER REQUESTS the STRP, in the context of its work plan for 2013-2015 and resources permitting, to undertake further work related to the RIS and associated guidance as follows:
 - i) to develop further practical guidance on the issue of defining Ramsar Site boundaries, reflecting that approaches used may depend *inter alia* of scale of site, the

- presence of ecological, national and other boundary situations, landscape type, land tenure, and national spatial planning laws and policies, and REQUESTS Contracting Parties to assist STRP in this task through the provision of information and case studies;
- ii) to urgently consider scope for minor modifications to the RIS to support monitoring at Ramsar Sites through possible inclusion of sub-fields related to: change at the site, for example in fields 12a, 12c, and 16 relating to species composition and wetland type; identification of thresholds of change in ecological character; and monitoring indicators. It is suggested that any minor modifications be provided to the Secretariat to provide to the Standing Committee for final endorsement of remaining minor details enabling them to be incorporated within the finalized format, agreed by COP11, by January 2015; and
 - iii) to prepare additional guidance concerning a) identification, boundary-setting and management issues related to very small wetlands which may nonetheless be of international importance, and b) zoning of sites in the context of management planning and especially in relation to uses of Ramsar Sites by people, including implications for RIS reporting;
22. ALSO REQUESTS the STRP and the Secretariat to collaborate with IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, Species Survival Commission, and other interested parties in considering the implications of CBD's Decision X/31 in the context of supporting the application of the Convention's long-established Criteria for the selection of Wetlands of International Importance, including any implications this might have for the identification of important sites for delivery of ecosystem services, whilst noting the undesirability of radical changes for the Convention's established site-selection processes, as well as the delivery of Aichi Target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and to report outcomes of this work to the Standing Committee and the Conference of Parties; and
23. EXPRESSES APPRECIATION to the STRP, past and current Secretariat staff, and all those Contracting Parties and others (notably UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee, The Nature Conservancy, and Wetlands International) who have contributed to the delivery of the 2012 revisions to the *Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS)* and the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands*.

Annex 1. Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS) – 2012 revision

Annex 2. Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands - 2012 revision