

Agenda item 9.11

The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to consider and approve finalization by the Secretariat of the attached draft Resolution for consideration by COP9.

Note by the Ramsar Secretariat

1. Article 8.2 of the Convention states that the continuing duties of the [Ramsar Secretariat] include, *inter alia*:
 - (b) to maintain the List of Wetlands of International Importance and to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any additions, extensions, deletions or restrictions concerning wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 5 of Article 2;
 - (c) to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 3;
 - (d) to forward notification of any alterations to the List, or changes in character of wetlands included therein, to all Contracting Parties and to arrange for these matters to be discussed at the next Conference;
 - (e) to make known to the Contracting Party concerned, the recommendations of the Conferences in respect of such alterations to the List or of changes in the character of wetlands included therein.
2. Pursuant to these duties, information concerning Contracting Parties' implementation of Articles 2.5 and 3.2 will be provided to COP9 in the Report of the Secretary General. The draft Resolution (COP9 DR16) attached to this note provides the mechanism for Contracting Parties to discuss these matters at COP9 in line with Article 8.2 (d) and to make recommendations, if they so wish, on any such matters raised (Article 8.2 (e)).
3. The draft Resolution also covers other issues concerning reporting and responding to change or likely change in the ecological character of Listed Ramsar sites in relation to the terms of Article 3.2, as well as issues concerning progress in the establishment of a global network of Ramsar sites, including the provision of adequate and up-to-date information on the status of Ramsar sites through the preparation of Information Sheets on Ramsar Wetlands (RISs). These matters were addressed at COP8 through two separate Resolutions (VIII.8 and VIII.10).

4. The Standing Committee should note that some information needed for the finalisation of the text of COP DR15 will need to be compiled subsequent to its 31st meeting, notably from information provided by Parties in their National Reports to COP9, in order to make this information as up to date as possible before the COP9 materials are sent to Parties in August 2005.

COP9 DR16

The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance

1. RECALLING Article 2.1 of the Convention, which states that “each Contracting Party shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance”, and Resolution VIII.11, in which the Parties established that the Vision of the Ramsar List is to be achieved through the designation of coherent and comprehensive national and international networks of Ramsar sites;
2. AWARE of Article 3.1 of the Convention, which specifies that “the Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory”;
3. CONGRATULATING the **xx** Contracting Parties which have designated since COP8 a total of **[164]** Ramsar sites covering a total of **[16,786,878]** hectares: **[add list of Parties]**; which represents an **xx%** increase in the number of sites, and **xx%** increase in the total area designated; but RECOGNIZING that there remain significant gaps in the global network of Ramsar sites;
4. CONCERNED that for **xx** Ramsar sites in **xx** countries, Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) have not been provided or updated RISs and maps have not been supplied to the Secretariat for more than six years, and that adequate maps have yet to be supplied for **xxx** sites in **xx** countries, so that information on the current status of these sites is not available;
5. AWARE of Article 3.2, which provides that “each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay to the **[Ramsar Secretariat]**”;
6. RECALLING Resolution VIII.8, which expressed concern that (according to available information including the National Reports to COP8) many Contracting Parties do not have in place the mechanisms to comply with Article 3.2 or that these are not being implemented, and which urged Contracting Parties, as a matter of high priority, to “put in place mechanisms in order to be informed at the earliest possible time, including through reports by national authorities and local and indigenous communities and NGOs, if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory included in the Ramsar List has changed, is changing or is likely to change, and to report any such change without delay to the Ramsar Bureau so as to fully implement Article 3.2 of the Convention”;
7. **[EXPRESSING CONTINUING CONCERN** that according to available information (including the National Reports to COP9) this situation does not appear to have improved;]

8. AWARE that, despite information provided in their National Reports to COP9 concerning monitoring of the ecological character of Ramsar sites, few Parties have reported to the Ramsar Secretariat issues of change, or likely change, in the ecological character of their designated Ramsar sites in line with Article 3.2 of the Convention;
9. ALSO EXPRESSING CONCERN that this lack of Article 3.2 reporting has meant that the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has been unable to prepare a report to COP9 on the status and trends in the ecological character of Ramsar sites, as requested by Resolution VIII.8;
10. RECOGNIZING that many Ramsar sites have undergone or are undergoing change in their ecological character, or are likely to undergo such change, by virtue of the land use and other pressures affecting them;
11. EXPRESSING CONCERN at the number of reports received by the Ramsar Secretariat of Ramsar sites facing human-induced change, or likely change, in their ecological character as reported to this Conference in the Report of the Secretary General (COP DOC. 6) in accordance with Article 8.2 (d), including *inter alia*:

[list the sites and countries];
12. NOTING that some of these sites are parts of transnational wetlands and river systems, such that change in their ecological character may affect the status of those parts of the wetland, including any Ramsar sites, lying within the territory of neighbouring countries, and RECALLING Article 5 of the Convention which states that “the Contracting Parties shall consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties”;
13. CONCERNED that of the ~~xx~~ Ramsar sites included in the Montreux Record only **three** sites have been removed from the Record since COP8;
14. RECOGNIZING the government of Australia for its submission of an Article 3.2 report concerning the Gwydir Wetlands Ramsar site and its further reporting of the steps being taken to restore the ecological character of this Ramsar site; [add other examples of AAs Article 3.2 reporting]; and
15. RECALLING that under Article 2.5 a Contracting Party has the right, because of its urgent national interest, to delete or restrict the boundaries of wetlands already included in the List, and that the Party shall at the earliest possible time inform the Ramsar Secretariat of any such changes; ALSO RECALLING that Resolution VIII.20 provided “General guidance for interpreting “urgent national interests” under Article 2.5 of the Convention and considering compensation under Article 4.2”, and NOTING that Article 2.5 has been invoked by Contracting Parties ~~xxx~~ times, by [add list of countries and sites], since COP8 in relation to change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites as reported in the Report of the Secretary General to this Conference;

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16. REAFFIRMS the commitment made by the Parties in Resolution VIII.8 to fully implement the terms of Article 3.2 on reporting change and to maintain or restore the ecological character of their Ramsar sites, including utilizing all appropriate mechanisms to address and resolve as soon as practicable the matters for which a site may have been the subject of a report pursuant to Article 3.2; and, once those matters have been resolved, to submit a further report, so that both positive influences at sites and changes in ecological character may be fully reflected in reporting under Article 3.2 and in the reporting to meetings of the COP in order to establish a clear picture of the status and trends of the Ramsar site network at three-year intervals;
17. CONTINUES TO ENCOURAGE Contracting Parties to adopt and apply, as part of their management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands, a suitable monitoring regime, such as that outlined in the annex to Resolution VI.1, and to incorporate within these monitoring regimes the Convention's *Wetland Risk Assessment Framework* (Resolution VII.10), so as to be able to report change, or likely change, in the ecological character of Ramsar sites in line with Article 3.2 of the Convention;
18. CONTINUES TO ENCOURAGE Contracting Parties, when submitting a report in fulfillment of Article 3.2, to consider whether the site would benefit from listing on the Montreux Record, and to request such listing as appropriate;
19. EXPRESSES ITS APPRECIATION to those ~~xx~~ Contracting Parties which in their National Reports to this Conference provided information, in relation to Article 3.2 of the Convention, on ~~xxx~~ Ramsar sites where human-induced changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or may occur, namely: [list to be added from COP9 National Reports]; and URGES all of these Contracting Parties to consider, at the earliest opportunity, the possible inclusion of these sites onto the Montreux Record, if they are not already included, in line with the further guidance provided in Resolution VIII.8 on the purpose and role of the Record;
20. REQUESTS Contracting Parties with sites on the Montreux Record to regularly provide the Ramsar Secretariat with an update on their progress in taking action to address the issues for which these Ramsar sites were listed on the Record, including reporting fully on these matters in their National Reports to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
21. REQUESTS those Contracting Parties with Ramsar sites for which the Secretary General has received reports of change, or likely change, in their ecological character to advise the Secretary General at the earliest opportunity of steps taken to address these changes, or likely changes, in ecological character;
22. CONGRATULATES Contracting Parties for their statements made concerning addressing site-specific ecological character and boundary issues, notably:

[to be added during COP]

23. RECOMMENDS, pursuant to Article 8.2 (e), the following with respect to alterations to the List or changes in the ecological character of specific Ramsar sites listed in the Report of the Secretary General to this Conference:
 - i. [insert specific site recommendations],
 - ii. [etc.]
24. REQUESTS Contracting Parties to use the revised format of the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) prepared by the Secretariat to incorporate the amendments introduced by [COP9 DR1 – Annex D] in their designations of new sites, extensions to existing sites, and updates of existing sites;
25. CONTINUES TO EXPRESS DEEP CONCERN that there remain a large number of Ramsar sites for which an official description has not been provided or updated, or has not been provided in one of the three official working languages of the Convention, and/or for which a suitable map has not yet been submitted;
26. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to contact the Contracting Parties listed in the Annex to this Resolution and request them to provide or update, as a matter of high priority, Ramsar site descriptions (Ramsar Information Sheets and/or maps), using the Ramsar Information Sheet as revised to incorporate the amendments introduced by [COP9 DR1 – Annex D], in one of the Convention's official working languages; and
27. WELCOMES the statements made in the National Reports to COP9 or during this meeting concerning the number of impending, or planned, extensions to existing Ramsar sites, and future designations of new or extended Ramsar sites, from the following [xx] Contracting Parties: [to be added from National Reports and during COP]

Annex

List of Contracting Parties from which one or more Ramsar Information Sheets or updated Sheets are needed as a matter of priority

[to be added in July 2005 from information supplied by Wetlands International from the Ramsar Sites Database]