

Agenda item 7.5

## **The status of sites in the Ramsar List**

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to consider and approve finalization by the Secretariat of the attached draft Resolution for consideration by COP10.

### **Note from the 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 COP10 in the Report of the Secretary General. The draft Resolution (COP10 DR X.[00]) attached to this note provides the mechanism for Contracting Parties to discuss these matters at COP10 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 COP10 DR X.[00] will need to be compiled subsequent to its 37<sup>th</sup> meeting,

notably from information provided by Parties in their National Reports to COP10, in order to make this information as up to date as possible before the COP9 materials are sent to Parties in July 2008.

## Draft Resolution X.00

### 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 that since the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties have designated a total of [xx] Ramsar sites covering a total of [xx] hectares: [add list of Parties];
4. WELCOMING the xx Contracting Parties that have very recently designated a total of xx additional Ramsar sites: [add list of Parties];
5. RECOGNIZING, however, that despite this representing an xx% increase in the number of sites included in the List, and an xx% increase in the total area designated since COP9, there remain significant gaps in the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the global network of Ramsar sites and that total of xxxx designated Ramsar sites as of 1 September 2008 falls below even the target of 2,000 sites set for the year 2005 by Resolution VII.11 (1999) and significantly lower than the target established in the present *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the development of the Ramsar List* (2005) of 2,500 sites by the year 2010;
6. CONCERNED that for xx Ramsar sites (xx% of sites included in the List) in xx countries (see the Annex to this Resolution), Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) or adequate maps have not been provided or updated RISs and maps have not been supplied to the Secretariat for more than six years, so that information on the current status of these sites is not available;
7. AWARE that Article 3.2 of the Convention 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]”;

8. RECALLING Resolution VIII.8 (2002), 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 fulfill 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 [Secretariat] so as to fully implement Article 3.2 of the Convention”;
9. [EXPRESSING CONTINUING CONCERN that according to available information (including the National Reports to COP10) this situation does not appear to have improved;]
10. AWARE that, despite information provided in their National Reports to COP10 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;
11. 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 COP10 on the status and trends in the ecological character of Ramsar sites, as requested by Resolution VIII.8;
12. NOTING, however, that STRP was able to prepare for COP10 an operational tool on “Detecting, reporting and responding to change in ecological character: scientific and technical guidance” (cf. Resolution X.00) to help Contracting Parties in addressing these issues henceforth in an organized way;
13. RECOGNIZING that the pressures on Ramsar sites are likely to increase, and 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; and
14. EXPRESSING CONCERN at the number of third-party 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 (COP10 DOC. 00) in accordance with Article 8.2 (d), including *inter alia*:  
  
[list the sites and countries];
15. NOTING that some of these sites are parts of transboundary 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”, but;

16. CONCERNED that in the management of some transboundary wetlands that include Ramsar sites, such as those in the Danube Delta [possibly list other sites as well], in relation to developments causing or likely to cause change in ecological character, fruitful international cooperation has not been achieved;
17. CONCERNED that of the xx Ramsar sites included in the Montreux Record only xx sites have been removed from the Record since COP9;
18. RECOGNIZING the submission of Article 3.2 reports by: the government [list Parties and sites] of the steps being taken to restore the ecological character of these Ramsar sites; and
19. 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 xx times, by [add list of countries and sites], since COP9 in relation to change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites as indicated in the Report of the Secretary General to this meeting;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

20. REAFFIRMS the commitment made by the Parties in Resolution VIII.8 to implement fully 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 Conference of the Parties in order to establish a clear picture of the status and trends of the Ramsar site network at three-year intervals;
21. 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 (1996), 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;
22. ALSO 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;
23. EXPRESSES ITS APPRECIATION to those xx Contracting Parties that in their National Reports to this Conference provided information on xxx Ramsar sites where human-induced changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or may occur, namely: [list to be added from COP10 National Reports], and URGES all of those 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;

24. 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;
25. 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;
26. CONGRATULATES Contracting Parties for their statements made at this meeting concerning addressing site-specific ecological character and boundary issues, notably:  

[to be added during COP]
27. 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.]
28. REQUESTS Contracting Parties to use the most up-to-date format of the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) prepared by the Secretariat to incorporate the amendments introduced by [list possible Resolutions X.00 incorporating relevant points] in their designations of new sites, extensions to existing sites, and updates of existing sites;
29. STRONGLY URGES those Parties within whose territories lie Ramsar sites for which official descriptions have not been provided in one of the three working languages of the Convention, and/or for which suitable maps have not yet been submitted, to submit those materials to the Secretariat as a matter of the highest priority;
30. INSTRUCES 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 [list possible Resolutions X.00 incorporating relevant points], in one of the Convention's official working languages;
31. WELCOMES the statements made in the National Reports to COP10 or during this meeting concerning planned extensions to existing Ramsar sites, and future designations of new or extended Ramsar sites, from the following [xx] Contracting Parties: [Country (x sites) to be added from National Reports and during COP]: and
32. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat to consider options for assisting and encouraging Parties in their actions in response to change or likely change in ecological character.

## **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 2008 from information supplied from the Ramsar Sites Information Service]