

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

24th Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland: 29 November – 2 December 1999

DOC. SC24-9

Agenda item 9.2.ii

Issues arising from COP7 requiring action by the Standing Committee – Revisions to Ramsar site boundaries, interpretation of Articles 2.5 and 4.2

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to review the texts of Resolutions VII.23 and VII.24 of COP7 and the information submitted by Australia and the RSPB, and then recommend a process for preparing guidance on these matters for consideration by COP8.

Background

1. Resolution VII.23 from COP7 is the relevant reference for this agenda item and in particular paragraphs 9 – 13 inclusive, as follows:
 9. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to develop and propose to the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP8) a procedure for the review of Ramsar site boundaries for reasons other than urgent national interest, without prejudice to other international obligations;
 10. RECOGNIZES that Australia will prepare two case studies (as referred to in Resolution VII.12) for the development of a more generalized approach to the revision of Ramsar site boundaries in cases other than the urgent national interest, and will provide the outcomes of these case studies in time for consideration at COP8;
 11. REQUESTS the Standing Committee, with support from the Bureau, and in consultation with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), experts familiar with the Habitats Directive of the European Union, appropriate legal and other experts, and interested Contracting Parties, to develop for consideration and possible adoption at COP8 guidance for the Contracting Parties in interpreting Articles 2.5 and 4.2, if resources allow;
 12. CALLS UPON any Contracting Parties that consider the deletion or restriction of the boundaries of a Ramsar site in the urgent national interest prior to COP8, to exercise the highest levels of environmental, economic and social impact assessment which take into consideration the full range of functions, services and benefits offered by the wetland; and
 13. URGES those Contracting Parties or organizations with experience in issues of urgent national interest or similar determinations and habitat compensation and mitigation issues to provide any relevant information and materials to the Ramsar

Bureau for consideration by the Standing Committee by no later than 30 September 1999.

2. Also relevant here is Resolution VII.24 concerning compensation for lost wetland areas, particularly paragraph 13: The COP “INVITES the Standing Committee to define, in cooperation with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and the Ramsar Bureau, and in consultation with the International Organization Partners, criteria and guidelines for the compensation of wetland habitats in the case of unavoidable losses and to submit these for the approval of COP8”.
3. All Contracting Parties were invited through Diplomatic Notification 1999/6 to provide to the Bureau by 30 September 1999 any pertinent information on these related issues. At the time of finalising this Agenda Paper, replies to this request had been received from Australia and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (attached).
4. At its meeting in September 1999, the STRP agreed to await the views of the Standing Committee on how they plan to progress this item before considering it further.