Annex II
Ramsar Standing Committee, 26th Meeting
Ramsar Database (RDB) Report

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Developments and Actions	Relevant Strategic Plan, COP, and technical contract references
I. Since RSC 25, development and updating of the Ramsar Database web presentation has continued apace. There are now some 351 web pages* devoted to Ramsar Sites Database presentation on the Wetlands International website (see http://www.wetlands.agro.nl/rdb.htm). Within these pages are some 325 (mostly "clickable") maps (from global scale through Ramsar regional and down to site level) covering the Convention's 129 Contracting Parties. These have been generated from a desktop GIS system. In addition to a number of thematic maps, there are approximately 20 thematic charts with many more in development. By the time of the RSC 26 meeting it is anticipated that all Contracting Parties (including dependent/overseas territories) will be represented by national (territory) scale Ramsar site distribution maps. These are being complemented (and linked) with higher resolution sub-national and "site locality" maps (a large number of which are posted already or which exist in draft form). Access to maps via Ramsar region is through the address: http://www.wetlands.agro.nl/ramsar_database/regional_menu_list.html. *_exclusive_ of the Ramsar Sites Directory proper, described later.	**Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002** **Action** 3.3.1 Review the Bureau's communications activities, especially those related to the creation and functioning of regional and national communication networks; develop new material and use of technology, and improve existing material. **Action** 5.4.2 Upgrade and update the database to meet assessed needs and revise its structure accordingly, including the feasibility of developing a Geographical Information System (GIS). **Action** 5.4.3 Make the database widely accessible (read only versions) through Electronic networks (the Internet), run-time versions on diskettes and CD-ROMs, and by the publication of special reports and other outputs. **Annex from Resolution VII.9 The Convention's Outreach Programme 1999-2002** ¶ **33.** A more accessible database for the Wetlands of International Importance - As the List of Wetlands of International Importance rapidly expands, a priority is to make the information about these flagship sites

	more freely available by electronic means. The database, managed for the Convention by the Wetlands International office in the Netherlands, will be introduced on the World Wide Web by the end of 1999. Capacity for answering a range of queries on-line is envisaged. Contracting Parties, in developing their Wetland CEPA Action Plans, should anticipate this development and plan for increased use of the Ramsar sites database as a promotional and information tool.
(continued from previous sheet) Where available, electronic format "site maps" (i.e. maps of particular Ramsar sites submitted by Contracting Parties) have (often been enhanced and have) been linked into the aforementioned presentation. In addition, available satellite imagery covering Ramsar sites has also been linked into the RDB presentation. See also **IV** and **VI** below.	**Contract Annex** references: **Action 1.6; Action 2.2**
II. The on-line version of the 1999 edition of the Directory of Wetlands of International Importance (originally published on CD-ROM and issued at COP7) is a "living" directory. It is constantly being updated in terms of new data or revisions for 964 pre-existing sites (241 sites so far), new sites (28 of 142 new designations to date, drafted) and a new format (to accommodate changes in the Ramsar Criteria at COP7, and to add in additional information as requested by the Bureau). By virtue of being a *living* presentation, the *entire* Directory will be updated for COP8 (up to an agreed cut-off date) rather than just a summary of sites designated since the previous Directory was published (COP7). An HTML (the standard web page language) or webpage format has been developed, and it has now been updated in terms of the aforementioned structural format changes. Transition from text and document formats (almost 2000 existing documents) to webpage format avails increased speed of access and capacity for cross-linking, and seamless integration with the maps and other features in the Database presentation. Some 53 sites have been fully integrated into this new Directory presentation so far. The direct relevant URL for the HTML Directory of Ramsar sites is: http://www.wetlands.agro.nl/ramsar_database/HTML_DIR/Intro/Introduction.htm	**Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002** **Action** 3.3.2 Develop existing Bureau productions, notably the Newsletter, videos and CD-ROMs. **Action** 5.3.4 Review, update and reprint the Directory of Ramsar Sites for the 7th COP (1999), and produce, for the 8th COP (2002), a summary of sites listed between the 7th and 8th COPs. **Action** 5.4.3 Make the database widely accessible (read only versions) through Electronic networks (the Internet), run-time versions on diskettes and CD-ROMs, and by the publication of special reports and other outputs. **Contract Annex** reference: **Action 2.3**

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As acknowledged under Wetlands International's technical services contract with the Ramsar Bureau, funds outside the contract are required to bring the product to fruition. Wetlands International has developed a proposal brief and is currently distributing it to seek these additional funds for a CD-version of the web-based Directory and an associated booklet.

III. A running detailed assessment of the status of Ramsar site Information Sheets (RIS) and site maps is available from and maintained by the Ramsar Database unit which has developed *meta* databases for this purpose. These analyses are routinely provided to the Bureau and in reports to the STRP, by the RDB unit. During this reporting period the unit has worked very closely with the Bureau to derive detailed summaries of Contracting Party submissions of data and maps. This is especially important in the run-up to preparation of the Ramsar Sites Directory for COP8. This relates to the obligatory site information updating provision of Resolution VI.13 for Contracting Parties. Thus far, the level of such updating by Contracting Parties is falling short of expectations in terms of the Resolution.	**Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002** **Action** 5.3.1 Ensure that the maps and descriptions of Ramsar sites submitted to the Ramsar Database by the Contracting Parties at the time of designation are complete, in the approved standard format of the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands, and provide sufficient detail to be used for management planning and monitoring of ecological character. **Action** 5.3.2 Ensure that missing or incomplete data sheets and/or maps of listed sites are submitted as a matter of priority and in the shortest possible time, as a means to enhance the relevance and use of the Ramsar Database. **Action** 5.3.3 Ensure that data sheets on Ramsar Sites are regularly updated, at least for every second meeting of the COP, so that they can be used for reviewing the achievements of the Convention, for future strategic planning, for promotional purposes, and for site, regional and thematic analysis (Resolution VI.13). **Action** 5.4.1 Assess data currently available in the database and identify any gaps in the data provided by Contracting Parties. **Contract Annex** references: **Action 1.1; Action 1.4; Action 1.7.**
IV. Concerning the MoU between Ramsar Bureau, Wetlands International and CIESIN/Columbia University to develop a Ramsar	**Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002** **Action** 5.4.2 Upgrade and update the database to meet assessed needs

(continued from previous sheet) Wetland Data Gateway (see http://www.ramsar.org/key_ciesin_mou.htm). The Ramsar Database unit has consistently, and in a timely fashion provided the CIESIN organization with Ramsar Database updates, background and interpretative information, scenarios and examples, and recommendations concerning the development of the Gateway. Most recently, the RDB unit has provided detailed input through a series of instalments on data "thesauri" as requested by CIESIN, as well as some additional comments on the "Gateway" presentation design and a new "spatial data viewer". For more details on this project, see also: http://www.wetlands.agro.nl/ramsar_database/rdb_partners.html#gatewayProj	and revise its structure accordingly, including the feasibility of developing a Geographical Information System (GIS). **Contract Annex** references: **Action 1.6; Action 2.4.**
V. A follow-up assessment of the status of designation of under-represented wetland types was conducted for the Bureau and STRP (10th Meeting). Distribution maps were created and posted on the Ramsar Database web presentation. The relevant URL is: http://www.wetlands.agro.nl/ramsar_database/global/under_rep.html Also in follow-up to the previous (9th STRP) RDB advice for designation of under-represented wetland types under Criterion 1, a paper concerning treatment of the biogeography issue of the Strategic Framework for the List (Resolution VII.11) was presented to the 10th STRP. Wetlands International also provided additional major input into the related further development of peatland designation guidelines.	**Resolution VII.11** on the Strategic framework for the List **Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002** **Action** 6.2.1 Promote the designation for the Ramsar List of an increased area of wetland, through listing by new Contracting Parties, and through further designations by current Contracting Parties, in particular developing countries, in order to ensure the listing of a representative range of wetland types in the Territory of each Contracting Party and in each Ramsar region. **Action** 6.2.3 Give priority attention to the designation of new sites from wetland types currently under-represented on the Ramsar List, and in particular, when appropriate, coral reefs, mangroves, sea-grass beds and peatlands. **Contract Annex** reference: **Action 2.2; Action 3.1; Action 3.2**

VI. A new generation (MS Access/Visual Basic) Ramsar Database application has been undergoing development since the last reporting period (following a decision to stop development of a legacy database application in favour of modern software). The unit is actively seeking to overcome the loss of a staff programmer (and limited resources) which has delayed progress, by seeking advice on finalization of the application from professional programmers. This has included the solicitation of preliminary bids to use in developing a proposal for finalization of the RDB application. The issue of internet accessibility is of primary importance for development of the RDB application. Wetlands International met with Bureau staff in January 2001 for detailed talks on the database developments. As a follow-up, a procedure for electronic conversion of Ramsar Information Sheets and their associated storage and retrieval was tested. The results including resource implications have been communicated to the Bureau to decide on whether this aspect should be considered for development along with the conventional and internet aspects of the RDB application.	**Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002** **Action** 5.4.2 Upgrade and update the database to meet assessed needs and revise its structure accordingly, including the feasibility of developing a Geographical Information System (GIS). **Contract Annex** reference**: Action 1.2; Action 1.3** See also the other **relevant links** across from **section I** (left column) above.
VII. The RDB unit has provided extensive information servicing to the Ramsar Bureau and a wide external audience. Besides direct support to the Bureau, the audience includes Contracting Party Administrative Authorities and other government agencies, Conventions (e.g. CBD) international government organizations (e.g. UNESCO), international organization partners and other NGOs, as well as local governments, researchers, university students, journalists and consultants. Since the 25th RSC meeting approximately 135 *discrete* information requests have been serviced by the unit (additional follow-up requests have been consolidated into the previously mentioned total). This corresponds to approximately 32 person-days of servicing effort. The first six-monthly log of information servicing activity was provided to the Bureau in	**Applicable to many SP objectives.** **Contract Annex** reference**: Action 2.1**

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August 2001. In this, the run-up to COP8, a significant measure of requests has related to provision of data and/or products to Ramsar (sub) regional meetings. | |