

Introductory Course to the Convention on Wetlands

Course Workbook

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Lesson 1

Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will:

1. Gain general knowledge on wetland ecosystems
2. Gain insight into the multiple values of wetlands, and learn why they are important for sustainable development
3. Gain a general understanding of the status, trends and current threats to wetlands.

If you are very familiar with wetlands then some of the content may not be new to you but it could be a great way to remind you about the tremendous value they hold.

If you happen to be new to wetland conservation, we hope you take some inspiration to help you think about wetland conservation from an individual and organizational perspective.

1. What are Wetlands?

The definition of wetland contained in the Convention is broad, encompassing inland wetlands, such as lakes, rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases; marine and coastal wetlands, such as estuaries, deltas, tidal flats, mangroves, seagrass beds and, coral reefs; as well as all human-made wetlands such as fishponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and saltpans. Wetlands may range in size from less than a single hectare to several million hectares, such as the Pantanal in Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, which covers an area three times the size of Ireland.

“Wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters”
(Convention on Wetlands, Article 1)



The Convention recognizes 42 wetland types in three categories: marine and coastal wetlands, inland wetlands and human-made wetlands

- Marine/Coastal Wetlands



Marine and coastal wetlands include unvegetated tidal flats, salt marshes, coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds. Salt marshes have the largest global area among marine/coastal wetlands. Nonetheless, global area of some coastal wetlands, such as seagrasses, remains difficult to calculate due to the lack of data

- Inland Wetlands



Inland wetlands include peatlands, marshes and swamps, rivers and natural lakes. Peatlands, forested and non-forested, form 33% of the global area of surface inland wetlands, while lakes make up 29%.

- Human-made wetlands



Human-made wetlands include rice paddy, water storage bodies such as reservoirs, salt pans, aquaculture ponds and wastewater treatment ponds, as well as areas of wet grasslands.

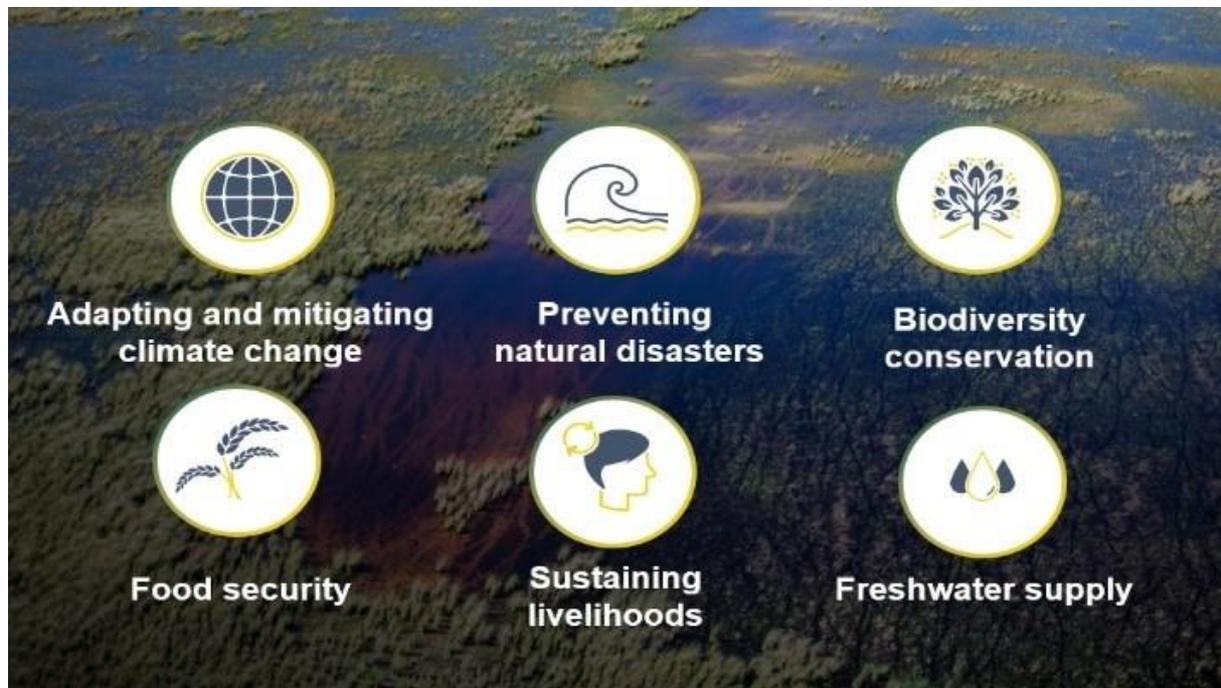
2. The Value of Wetlands

VIDEO

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JK4VylwtNc&ab_channel=TheConventiononWetlands



People often equate wetlands with wasteland; a place to be drained, filled in, burnt off and re-purposed, and as a result, wetlands have severely diminished during the last decades. But wetlands are actually essential for sustainable development.



Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Some wetlands, including Blue Carbon Ecosystems (mangroves, seagrass beds and intertidal marshes) and peatlands, sequester and store large amounts of carbon. Peatlands alone cover an estimated 3% of the world's land area, but they store twice as much carbon as the world's forests. This is twice the amount stored in all the world's forests. But when they are burned or drained for agriculture, they go from being a carbon sink to a carbon source. CO₂ emissions from peatland fires, drainage and extraction equate to 4% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Coastal wetlands are also an on-going and powerful carbon sink, with sediment carbon burial rates that are up to 55-times faster than tropical rainforests. If wisely used and managed, wetlands will also play a major role in adaptation (e.g. providing flood control).

Wetlands are nature's shock absorbers

Wetlands, such as peatlands and wet grasslands in river basins, act as natural sponges, absorbing rainfall, creating wide surface pools and reducing floods in streams and rivers. This storage capacity also helps safeguard against drought. Coastal wetlands such as mangroves, saltmarshes and coral reefs protect shorelines and prevent erosion by reducing the impact of waves and storm surges.

Wetlands are critical for biodiversity

Wetlands are home to more than 100,000 freshwater species, and new species are continuously being discovered . From 1999 to 2009, some 257 new species of freshwater fish were discovered in the Amazon. Wetlands are essential for many amphibians and reptiles, as well as for bird breeding and migration, and often hold endemic species, forms of life that are unique to one particular area or location.

Wetlands ensure fresh water supply

Less than 3% of the world's water is fresh, and most of that is frozen. Yet every human requires 20-50 litres of water a day for basic needs including drinking, cooking and cleaning. Wetlands maintain water cycles, filtering and storing water and replenishing aquifers. Almost all water used for human consumption is drawn directly or indirectly from wetlands, which contribute to keeping drinking water clean and safe, provide water for food crops, and help ensure the safety and wellbeing of people

Wetlands create sustainable products and livelihoods

61.8 million people earn their living directly from fishing and aquaculture. Including their families, more than 660 million people depend on these sectors. At least two-thirds of all fish consumed worldwide are dependent on coastal wetlands. Sustainably managed wetlands provide timber for building, vegetable oil, medicinal plants, stems and leaves for weaving and fodder for animals.

Wetlands guarantee our food supply

Rice, grown in wetland paddies, is the staple diet of nearly three billion people, and accounts for 20% of the world's nutritional intake. More than one billion people worldwide rely on fish harvested from wetlands as their primary source of protein. For another two billion people, the fish harvested from wetlands account for at least 15% of the animal protein in their diets.

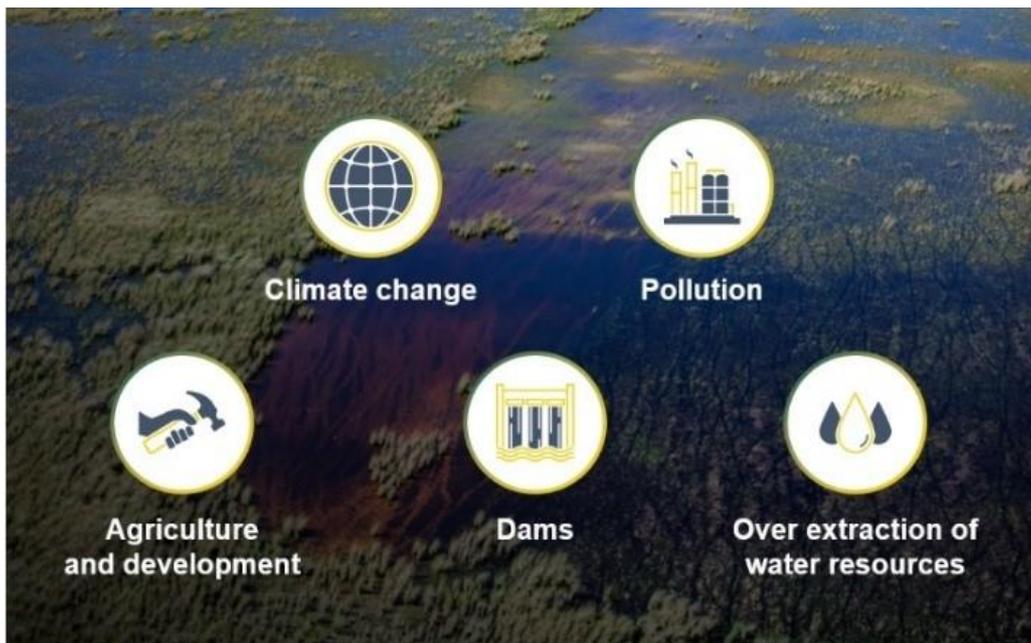
Wetlands and international targets and goals

Healthy wetlands are key to achieving several global commitments, including relating to biodiversity, sustainable development, land degradation, climate change and disaster risk reduction. Such global commitments include the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, land degradation neutrality, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



3. Threats

We are losing wetlands at an alarming rate, three times faster than forests. As much as 35% of the world's wetland area has been lost in the last five decades alone. As a result, access to fresh water is declining for one to two billion people worldwide, while flood control, carbon storage and traditional wetland livelihoods all suffer. Since 1970, 81% of inland wetland species populations and 36% of coastal and marine species have declined according to WWF's Living Planet Index.



Climate Change

Wetlands are particularly impacted by climate change especially sea-level rise, coral bleaching as a result of increased sea surface temperatures, and changing hydrology in inland waters. For instance, Coral reefs are projected to decline by a further 70 to 90% if temperatures rise 1.5°C, with larger losses, up to 99%, at 2°C.

Over extraction of water resources

Prolonged or permanent water abstraction destroys the ecological character of inland wetlands; the Aral Sea and Lake Chad being extreme examples. Nearly all global fresh water

resources were compromised to some extent, with 82% of the global population exposed to a high level of threat to their upstream fresh water supply. But water is not the only resource that is being overexploited in wetlands. Overfishing catch, intensive wood harvesting and sand and gravel mining also have widespread negative impacts on wetlands.

Dams

Of the 292 large river systems in the world, only 120 are still free-flowing, of which 25 will be fragmented by ongoing or planned dam construction. Dams can have detrimental impacts on water resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and can lead to greenhouse gas emissions including methane emissions from reservoirs.

Agriculture

Wetlands continue to be lost and degraded due to unsustainable agricultural development, with practices such as Drainage, excessive use of fertilizers and livestock farming being the main threats. Estimates based on available data show that approximately 35% of the world's wetlands have been converted to other land uses since 1970, with agriculture being one of the main drivers of change. More than half of the Wetlands of International Importance are negatively affected by agricultural practices.

Pollution

Excessive nutrients from sewage, industrial waste, agriculture or aquaculture cause eutrophication, changing biodiversity, water quality and biomass. Nutrient enrichment boosts algal and other plant growth, reducing oxygen concentrations in the water. Global fertilizer use has increased steadily since 1960, with growth rates slowing down after 1900 but still increasing.



Wetlands continue to decline both in terms of area and environmental health, with immediate and long-term impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services, human livelihoods and wellbeing.

However, the world still contains an area of wetlands larger than Canada – providing huge benefits to humanity in terms of ecosystem services, ranging from the provision of food and fresh water, to carbon sequestration and disaster reduction to more intangible aesthetic and spiritual values. Sustaining and extending these benefits through effective wetland management and restoration will have ongoing benefits for humankind

The Convention on Wetlands provides a mechanism and guidance for coherent national efforts to safeguard remaining wetlands, and halt and reverse the global decline.

4. Recap

The Value of Wetlands

- The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands that encompasses human-made, inland and marine/coastal wetland.
- Wetlands can contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation, prevent or reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, ensures food security, sustainable livelihoods and freshwater supply, and are essential for biodiversity conservation
- Wetlands play a key role in meeting global goals and targets related to biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development.

Status and trends

- A very large proportion of the world's wetland has been lost or degraded, and wetland degradation continues at alarming rates
- The most significant drivers of wetland loss currently are over extraction of resources, agriculture, pollution, dams, and Climate change.
- Protecting and restoring wetlands is more urgent than ever.

5. Knowledge Refresher

This section is intended to consolidate the knowledge you have gained throughout the module. The answer key can be found at the end of the workbook.

Exercise 1: Multiple Choice

Choose the correct option and click submit:

Which of the following are classified as Inland Wetlands?

- Rivers
- Mangroves
- Rice paddies
- Saltmarshes
- Peatlands
- Reservoirs
- Marshes
- All of the above

Exercise 2:

Multiple choice

Choose the correct option and click submit:

How many people's livelihoods depend on fishing and aquaculture in wetlands?

- 500 Million
- 10 Million
- >660 Million
- 100 Million

Exercise 3:

Fill in the blank

Since 1970, ____% of inland wetland species populations and ____% of coastal and marine species have declined according to WWF's Living Planet Index.

6. Additional Resources

- [Handbook 1](#): An Introduction to the Convention on Wetlands
- [Leaflet](#): Introducing the Convention on Wetlands
- [Fact sheet 1](#). Wetlands: why should I care?
- [Fact Sheet 3](#): Wetlands: a disappearing act
- [Fact Sheet 4](#): Wetlands: What can I do?
- [Fact Sheet 7](#): Wetlands: Source of sustainable livelihoods
- [Fact Sheet 8](#): Keep peatlands wet for a better future
- [Fact Sheet 9](#): Wetlands: a natural safeguard against disasters
- [Fact Sheet 10](#): Wetlands essential for a sustainable urban future
- [Wetlands and SDGs](#): Scaling up wetland conservation, wise use and restoration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

Lesson 2

The Convention on Wetlands

Learning Objectives

Lesson 1 showed why wetlands are important and how they are being lost. This Lesson aims to provide information so you can:

1. Learn the origins of the Convention and why it was created
2. Understand the commitments the Contracting Parties take when signing the Convention
3. Gain an understanding of the key mission of the Convention
4. Understand the current trends that make the Convention more relevant than ever

1. What is the Convention on Wetlands?

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, (the Convention on Wetlands, sometimes referred to as the Ramsar Convention), is an international agreement promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

The treaty was adopted on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, a day that since 1997 has been celebrated as World Wetlands Day, and since 2022 it gained UN observance status. The Convention is the first of the modern multilateral environmental agreements on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and the only one to focus on a single ecosystem.

A Brief History of the Convention

2 February 1971

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat is agreed by representatives of 18 nations meeting in the Iranian town of Ramsar, and signed the following day.



December 1975

The Convention on Wetlands comes into force four months after the seventh nation, Greece, deposits an instrument of accession. (The first six were Australia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, and Iran.)

January 1988

The “Ramsar Bureau” is formally established as the Convention’s permanent secretariat, with Mr Dan Navid (USA) as the first Secretary General.

October 1996

The Standing Committee formally establishes 2 February as World Wetlands Day. The Mediterranean Wetlands Committee is established as the first regional arrangement under the Convention – paving the way for the current portfolio of Regional Initiatives around the world.

February 1997

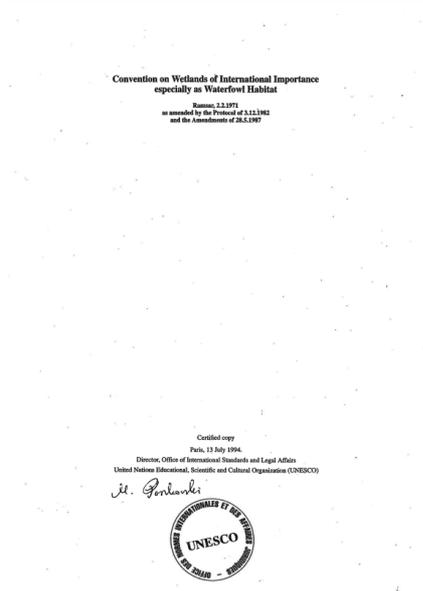
The first World Wetlands Day is celebrated in about 50 nations and becomes an annual event. Bahamas and Georgia both accede to the Convention on 7 February, becoming the 99th and 100th Contracting Parties.

June 2002

The surface area of the world’s Wetlands of International Importance surpasses 100 million hectares.

Today

The Convention celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2021, and World Wetlands Day obtained UN observance on the same year. Currently, there are more than 2,400 Wetlands of International Importance Covering more than 255 million hectares. As of 2022, 172 Countries are Parties to the Convention.



The [Convention on Wetlands](#) was developed in response to international calls for effort to address the loss of wetland habitats and species, in part due to a lack of understanding of their important functions, values, goods and services. Governments that join the Convention as Contracting Parties commit to the “three pillars” of the Convention: wise use of all wetlands; protection of Wetlands of International Importance; and international cooperation.

2. The Convention and its mission

Because wetlands are important for maintaining key ecological processes, for their rich flora and fauna and for the benefits they provide to local communities and to human society in general, the broad objectives of the Convention are to ensure their conservation and wise use.

The Three Pillars of the Convention

Under the convention, Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management; and cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.

Pillar 1

Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands

Under the Convention there is a general obligation for the Contracting Parties to include wetland conservation considerations in national planning (this might include, for example, land-use planning, water-resource management planning, or development planning). Parties have committed themselves to “formulate and implement their planning so as to promote ... as far as possible, the wise use of wetlands in their territory” (Article 3.1 of the treaty). The Conference of the Contracting Parties has approved guidelines on how to achieve “wise use”, which is interpreted as being synonymous with sustainable use.



Pillar 2

Designating Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

The first obligation under the Convention is for a Party to designate at least one wetland at the time of accession for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) (Article 2.4) and to promote its conservation, and in addition to continue to

“designate suitable wetlands within its territory” for the List (Article 2.1). Designation of Wetlands of International Importance is based on a wetland’s significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology, or hydrology. The Contracting Parties have established nine specific criteria, at least one of which must be met, along with guidelines for identifying sites that meet these criteria.



Pillar 3

International Cooperation

Article 5 of the Convention establishes 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. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.”

Contracting Parties may also designate Transboundary Wetlands of International Importance. These are ecologically coherent, shared wetlands extending across national borders, which are managed collaboratively under a formal agreement.



Compliance



The Convention on Wetlands is not a regulatory regime and has no punitive sanctions for violations of or defaulting upon treaty commitments. Nevertheless, its terms do constitute a solemn treaty and are binding in international law, with an expectation of common and equitably shared transparent accountability.

Failure to live up to that expectation reflects poorly on a contracting party, may draw media attention and lead to political and diplomatic challenges in international for a, and may also impact upon success in other ways, for example, in efforts to secure international funding for wetland conservation..More generally, it prevents Parties concerned from getting the most out of what would otherwise be a robust and coherent system of checks and balances and mutual support frameworks.

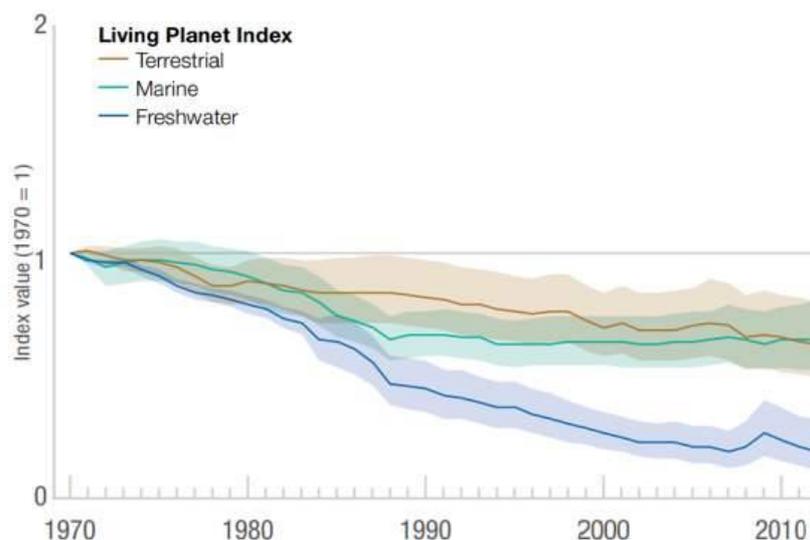
In several cases, national jurisdictions now embody international obligations under the Convention in national law and/or policy with direct effect in their own court systems.

3. The Convention on Wetlands today

More than half a century after the Convention on Wetlands was adopted, its mission is more urgent than ever.

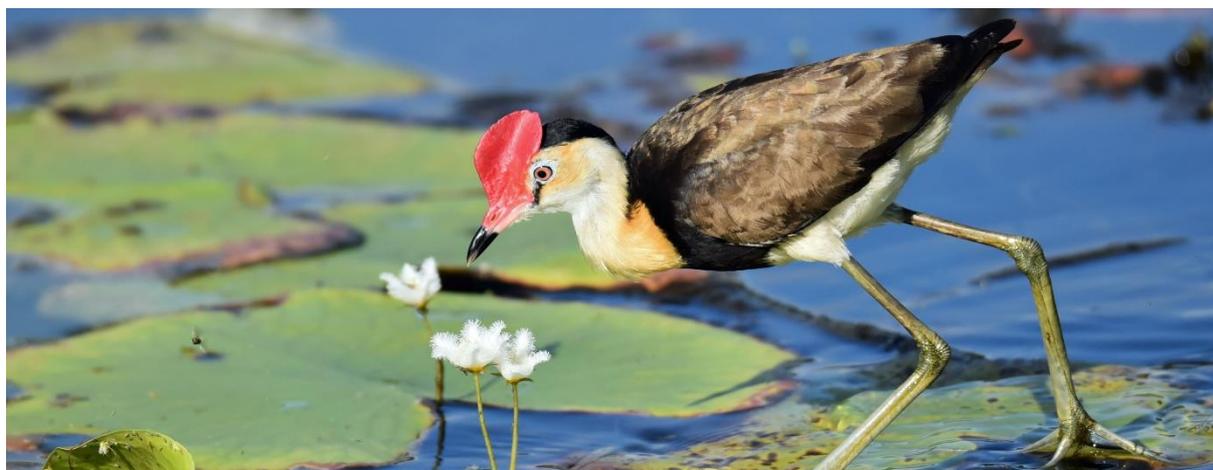
Although wetlands still cover a global area of 1.2 billion hectares (ha), they are declining fast, with 35% losses of natural wetlands since 1970. Quality of remaining wetlands is also suffering due to drainage, pollution, invasive species, unsustainable use, disrupted flow regimes and climate change.

Continuing to benefit from the services wetlands provide while awarding them the protection they need requires global cooperation. The Convention plays a key role as a global forum for negotiation and consensus building on the management of wetlands.



Living Planet Index 2016 for freshwater, marine and terrestrial biomes. Terrestrial biomes include tropical and temperate forests, grasslands, shrublands and deserts

The Fourth Strategic Plan (2016 - 2024)



The Contracting Parties approved the Fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024 at COP12. The Fourth Strategic plan lays out a new vision under the Convention mission, four overall goals and 19 specific targets which are designed to support the efforts of Parties, partners and other stakeholders in preventing, halting and reversing the global decline of wetlands

GOAL 1: Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss and Degradation

Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, Regional Initiatives and IOPs will enhance their engagement with relevant stakeholders in order to diminish threats, influence trends, restore wetlands and communicate good practices.

Targets:

1. Wetland benefits are featured in national/local policy strategies and plans relating to key sectors.
2. Water use respects wetland ecosystem needs for them to fulfil their functions and provide services at the appropriate scale inter alia at the basin level or along a coastal zone.
3. The public and private sectors have increased their efforts to apply guidelines and good practices for the wise use of water and wetlands.
4. Invasive alien species and pathways of introduction and expansion are identified and prioritized, and management responses are prepared and implemented.

GOAL 2: Effectively Conserving and Managing the Wetlands of International Importance Network

Parties must commit themselves to efforts to protect and effectively manage the existing Wetlands of International Importance and enable the full and effective participation of stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

Targets:

1. The ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance is maintained or restored, through effective planning and integrated management.
2. There is a significant increase in area, numbers and ecological connectivity in the Wetlands of International Importance network, in particular underrepresented types of wetlands including in under-represented ecoregions and Transboundary Sites.
3. Sites that are at risk of change of ecological character have threats addressed.

GOAL 3: Wisely Using all Wetlands

The wise use of all wetlands requires that Parties ensure they are addressing wetlands beyond those currently included in the Wetland of International Importance network. Mainstreaming recognition of ecosystem functions, services and benefits into a wide range of sectors and with a broad array of actors will help ensure the success of this effort.

Targets:

1. National wetland inventories have been initiated, completed or updated and disseminated and used for promoting the conservation and effective management of all wetlands.
2. The wise use of wetlands is strengthened through integrated resource management at the appropriate scale, inter alia, within a river basin or along a coastal zone.
3. The traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities are documented, respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations
4. Wetland functions, services and benefits are widely demonstrated, documented and disseminated.
5. Restoration is in progress in degraded wetlands, with priority to wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change

GOAL 4: Enhancing Implementation

It will be vital for the survival of wetlands and the success of the Convention for Parties to enhance implementation of the Strategic Plan. Various approaches will help strengthen the implementation of the three Strategic Goals, and ultimately of the Convention itself.

Targets

1. Scientific guidance and technical methodologies at global and regional levels are developed on relevant topics.
 2. Ramsar Regional Initiatives are reinforced and developed into effective tools to assist in the full implementation of the Convention.
 3. Wetlands conservation and wise use are mainstreamed through communication, capacity development, education, participation and awareness
 4. Financial and other resources for effectively implementing the Fourth Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 from all sources are made available.
 5. International cooperation is strengthened at all levels
 6. Capacity building for implementation of the Convention and the Fourth Strategic Plan is enhanced.
-

4. Recap

The Convention on Wetlands

- The Convention on Wetlands is an international agreement promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands
- The three pillars of the convention are:
 - Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)
 - Wise use of all wetlands
 - International Cooperation

The Convention Today

- While there are notable successes in protection and management of wetlands, the global area of wetland continues to decline
- The Convention plays a key role as a global forum for negotiation and consensus building on the management of wetlands.
- The Fourth Strategic Plan (2016-2024) is designed to support the efforts of Parties, partners and other stakeholders in preventing, halting and reversing the global decline of wetlands

5. Knowledge Refresher

This section is intended to consolidate the knowledge you have gained throughout the module. The answers key can be found at the end of the workbook.

Exercise 1: Multiple Choice

Which are the three pillars of the Convention?

- Negotiation and consensus building on the management of wetlands
- International Cooperation
- Enhancing Implementation of the Convention
- Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss and Degradation
- Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands
- Designating Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Exercise 2: Multiple choice

Choose the correct option(s):

How many sites shall a state party designate for inclusion in the List of Wetlands?

- At least one
- As many as possible
- At least one every year

Exercise 3:
True or false

Choose the correct option:

The Convention places specific obligations on Contracting Parties to enact legislation to protect wetlands

- True
- False

6. Additional Resources

- [Handbook 1](#): An Introduction to the Convention on Wetlands
- [Fact Sheet 6](#): The Ramsar Convention: What's it all about?
- [Handbook 2](#): The Fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024
- [Brochure](#): The Strategic Plan 2016–24
- [The Global Wetland Outlook 2018](#)
- [The Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2021](#)

Lesson 3

The Bodies of the Convention

Learning Objectives

With this Lesson, the participant will learn about the structure of the Convention, by gaining knowledge on:

1. The main bodies of the Convention
2. Their responsibilities and functioning
3. Activities they undertake to achieve the goals of the Convention

1. Introduction

The Convention is divided into different bodies, each of which has a specific function. The bodies are divided among three main categories; the Decision-making Bodies, the Advisory Bodies and the Supporting Bodies:

The Decision-making bodies

- The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP)

The policy-making and decision-making organ of the Convention, meeting once every three years

- The Standing Committee (SC)

The intersessional executive body that represents the COP between its meetings, within the framework of the decisions made by the COP. The Standing Committee meets yearly.

The Advisory Bodies

- The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

The subsidiary body of the Convention that provides scientific and technical guidance to the COP, the SC, and the Secretariat.

- The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel

The Oversight Panel monitors and reports on the implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme and sets priorities for communication, education and capacity building.

The Supporting Bodies

- The Secretariat

The administrative office, based in Gland, Switzerland, which supports the three-year (triennial) cycle of Convention processes.

- The International Organization Partners (IOPs)

International organisations that have been formally recognised by the Contracting Parties as official partners of the Convention. They are BirdLife International, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International (WI), the

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) and WWF International.

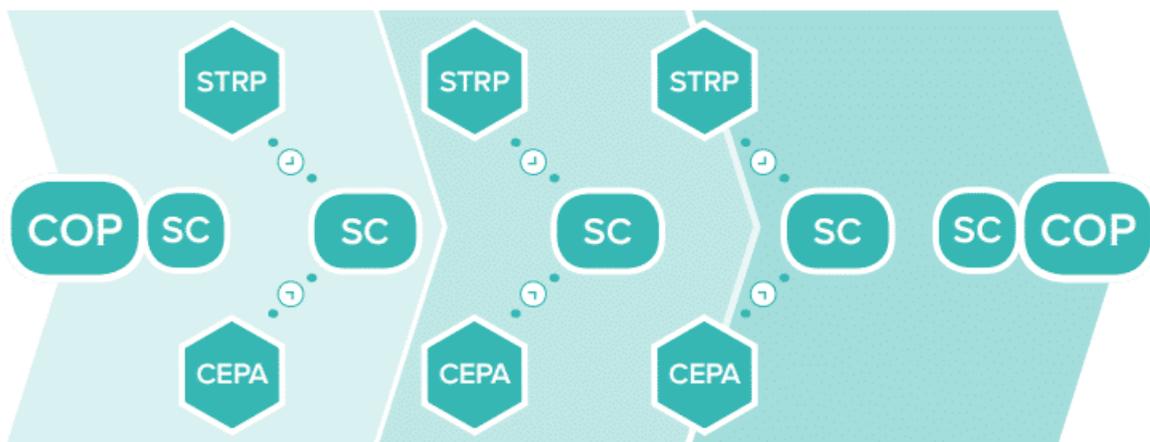
The three-year cycle



Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties are held every three years. Between the COPs, the Standing Committee meets yearly in order to oversee Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat.

The two advisory bodies, the STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel also meet annually to organize their work, prepare technical guidance and support decision making by the Standing Committee and COP.

All of the bodies, and their meetings, are supported by the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands.



The three-year cycle

2. The Conference of the Parties



Every three years, representatives of the governments of each of the Contracting Parties meet as the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), to agree on a work programme and budgetary arrangements for the next triennium and consider guidance on a range of ongoing and emerging environmental issues.



[COP 13 Resolutions Resolutions](#)



[COP 12 Resolutions](#)



[COP 11 Resolutions](#)



[COP 10](#)

Each meeting of the COP consists of several working group meetings, where parties discuss and work on the resolution proposals presented, which get the final approval in the plenary sessions of the COP. Other bilateral meetings and side-events also happen during the meeting.

Representatives of non-member states, intergovernmental institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also participate in these meetings as observers.

14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties - COP14

Wuhan, China and Geneva, Switzerland

The 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14) took place from 5 to 13 November 2022 in Wuhan (China) at the East Lake International Conference Center (ELICC) and Geneva (Switzerland) at the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG).



COP14 2022

COP14 closed with 21 resolutions adopted to advance wetlands action for people and nature, and main outcomes include The Wuhan Declaration, wetland actions for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience, strengthening the connection with Youth, and a stronger multilateral collaboration, among others. Further information on COP 14 outcomes can be found [here](#).

3. The Standing Committee

The Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands oversees Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat. It represents the Conference of the Contracting Parties (the COP) between its three-yearly meetings, within the framework of the decisions made by the COP.

The Contracting Parties established the Standing Committee at their third meeting in Regina, Canada in 1987, through Resolution 3.3. The Standing Committee normally meets once a year, traditionally at the offices of the Secretariat in Switzerland. It also meets just before each meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, and regularly through the COP, when it is called the Conference Bureau.

During the COP, Contracting Parties are elected to serve on the Standing Committee for the next three years. The newly elected members choose their chair, vice chair and subgroup members, and set the date for their first full business meeting.



Membership is determined using a proportional system. Each regional group is represented according to the number of Contracting Parties in the group. The hosts of the previous and next COPs are also represented.

Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee have the following tasks:

- To designate delegates to the Standing Committee, and make every effort to ensure that delegates or their substitutes attend meetings.

- To consult regularly with other representatives of their regional group
- To maintain regular contact with all the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and canvass their opinions before meetings of the Standing Committee.
- To advise the Secretariat in setting the agendas of Regional pre-COP meetings.
- Where possible, to attend other regional and international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and promote its objectives
- To serve as members of Standing Committee subgroups.
- To advise the chairs of the Standing Committee and its subgroups and the Secretariat as requested.
- To encourage other countries in their region to join the Convention

The Standing Committee 2022-2025

The voting members are:

- **North America:** Canada
- **Europe:** Belgium, Czechia, Georgia and Sweden
- **Asia:** Lao People's Democratic Republic, Japan and Iraq
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Brazil, Costa Rica, Saint Lucia
- **Africa:** Gabon, Libya, Rwanda, Burkina Faso and Lesotho
- **Oceania:** Samoa

A complete list of Standing Committee 2022-2025 members, including alternate members, can be found here.

4. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) was established by Resolution 5.5 in 1993 to provide scientific and technical guidance to the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands.

The STRP's Work Plan for each triennium is built around the specific requests from as well as general scientific and technical priorities identified by the Conference of the Parties, and approved by the Standing Committee.

STRP members are appointed by the Management Working Group of the Standing Committee, based on nominations from Contracting Parties, IOPs and Observer Organizations. They serve on a voluntary basis in their own right, not as representatives of their countries or institutions.

Guided by the priorities identified by the Contracting Parties, the STRP regularly meets and produces Scientific and technical outputs that provide the basis for technical guidance, and responds to specific methodological needs, for policy-makers and practitioners.

During the 2019-2021 triennium, the STRP prepared a special edition of the Global Wetland Outlook on the occasion of the Convention's 50th Anniversary, as well as a number of products on blue carbon, peatlands and sustainable agriculture. The outputs can be found below:



Peatlands

- [Policy Brief 5](#): Restoring drained peatlands: A necessary step to achieve global climate goals

Provides information and recommendations for policy makers on peatland conservation and restoration
- [Briefing Note 11](#): Practical peatland restoration

Provides hands-on methodological guidance for restoring drained peatlands,
- [Technical Report 11](#): Global guidelines for peatland rewetting and restoration

Summarizes the state of knowledge and identifies principles for restoring drained peatlands.

Blue Carbon

- [Briefing Note 12](#): The contribution of blue carbon ecosystems to climate change mitigation

Provides information on extent and carbon storage capabilities of blue carbon ecosystems in Wetlands of International Importance.

Sustainable Agriculture

- [Policy Brief 6](#): Transforming agriculture to sustain people and wetlands

Identifies priority actions across sectors to increase the sustainability of agriculture and promote the wise use of wetlands.

- [Briefing Note 13](#): Wetlands and agriculture: impacts of farming practices and pathways to sustainability

Summarizes current global knowledge on wetland agriculture and presents case studies of transition to wise use of wetlands

The Global Wetland Outlook (GWO)

The Global Wetland Outlook (2018) was produced by the STRP and summarizes wetland extent, trends, drivers of change and the steps needed to maintain or restore their ecological character.

The Global Wetland Outlook Special Edition 2021 was prepared on the occasion of the Convention's 50th anniversary, drawing on more than 30 global and regional studies to document the latest wetland trends, their impacts and opportunities wetlands offer for achieving global climate and sustainability goals.



- [The Global Wetland Outlook \(2018\)](#)
- [The Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2021](#)

5. The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel

The CEPA Oversight Panel was established at Standing Committee 34 in 2006, following the request of the Contracting Parties through Resolution IX.18 of 2005. The main function of the Panel is to monitor and report on implementation of the CEPA Programme. The Panel advises the Standing Committee and Secretariat on priorities for communication, education, participation, awareness and capacity building at national and international level, including priorities for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP).



The vision of the Convention’s CEPA Programme is the same as the vision of the Strategic Plan:

“Wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits are recognized and valued by all”

The over-arching Goal of the Convention’s CEPA Programme is:

“People taking action for the conservation and wise use of wetlands”

The current CEPA programme (2016 - 2024) was adopted by COP12 in 2015, and identifies nine Goals and 43 targets. COP 14 also adopted a new CEPA approach which aims to increase the effectiveness of CEPA activities. The new approach can be found [here](#).

The Goals of the CEPA Programme

1. Ensure leadership to support effective implementation of the Programme by providing institutional mechanisms and establishing and supporting relevant networks.
2. Integrate CEPA processes, where appropriate, into all levels of policy development, planning and implementation of the Convention
3. Provide support to implementers of wise use principles, especially those with a direct role in site management.

4. Build the individual, institutional and collective capacity of people with a direct responsibility for the Convention's implementation.
5. Develop and support mechanisms to ensure multi-stakeholder participation in wetland management.
6. Implement programmes, projects and campaigns targeting diverse sectors of society to increase awareness, appreciation and understanding of wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide.
7. Recognize and support the role of wetland centres and other environmental centres as catalysts and key actors for activities that promote the Convention's objectives.
8. Support the development and distribution of education materials that build awareness of ecosystem values and services and the value of wetlands for use in formal education settings, at Wetlands of International Importance and by all actors.
9. Ensure that the guidance and information provided by the STRP is developed in line with adopted Resolution and in close collaboration with the CEPA programme and dissemination to the identified target audiences is ensured through the most effective communications channels.

6. The Secretariat

The Secretariat carries out the day-to-day coordination of the Convention's activities. It is based at the headquarters of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Gland, Switzerland.



The functions of the Secretariat are to:

- Maintain the List of Wetlands of International Importance and note any additions and changes to the List and the database of Wetlands of International Importance ([Ramsar Sites Information Service](#) (RSIS))
- Facilitate accession of new Contracting Parties to the Convention;
- Organize the Conferences of Contracting Parties (COP) and regional pre-COP meetings, meetings of the Standing Committee and of the STRP
- Publish Decisions, Resolutions, and Recommendations of the COP and the Standing Committee;
- Provide administrative and communications support to the STRP
- Provide administrative, scientific, and technical support to Contracting Parties, especially in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Plan
- Organize Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAM) at the request of Contracting Parties and contribute to follow-up of RAM reports
- Develop cooperation with other conventions, intergovernmental institutions, and national and international NGOs
- Administer funding programmes set up to support the implementation of the Convention, seeking financial contributions, inviting and evaluating project proposals, and overseeing expenditure
- Inform the Contracting Parties and the public of developments related to the Convention

The Secretary General

Dr Musonda Mumba is the current and seventh Secretary General, succeeding Ms Martha Rojas Urrego who served the Convention for six years until 2022.

Dr Mumba is a Zambian-born environmentalist with over 25 years of global experience in environmental management and sustainable development

The Secretary General works under the direction of the Conference of the Parties and plays a key policy leadership and management role in the delivery of the Convention's mandate, by managing and leading the Convention's Secretariat with purpose and vision for effective programmes and policies



7. Recap

Decision-making Bodies

- The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) agrees on a work programme and budgetary arrangements for the next triennium, provides guidance on a range of ongoing and emerging environmental issues and direction to the advisory bodies of the convention.
- The Standing Committee (SC) oversees Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat. It represents the COP between its three-yearly meetings, within the framework of the decisions made by the COP.

The Advisory Bodies

- The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) provides scientific and technical guidance to the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands.
- The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel advises Standing Committee and Secretariat on priorities for communication, education, participation, awareness and capacity building at national and international level.

The Supporting Bodies

- The Secretariat carries out the day-to-day coordination of the Convention's activities.
- The International Organization Partners (IOPs) are international organizations that have been formally recognised by the Contracting Parties as official partners of the Convention

8. Knowledge Refresher

Exercise 1: Matching

Match the Body of the Convention with its category:

	The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel
Decision-making bodies	The Scientific and Technical Review Panel
Advisory Bodies	The Conference of the Parties
Supporting Bodies	The Standing Committee

	The Secretariat
	The International Organization Partners

Exercise 2:

Fill in the blank

The Convention's meetings are structured with a _____ year process

Exercise 3:

Matching

Match the body of the Convention with its function:

The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel	Agrees on a work programme, budget, and provides guidance on emerging environmental issues
The Scientific and Technical Review Panel	Provides scientific and technical guidance to the COP, SC and Secretariat
The Conference of the Parties	Oversees Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat in between COPs
The Standing Committee	Advises on priorities for communication, education, participation and capacity building
The Secretariat	Carries out the day-to-day coordination of the Convention's activities

9. Additional Resources

- [Leaflet: National Focal Points and their Roles](#)
- [4th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties \(COP14\) Documents](#)
- [How the Standing Committee Works](#)
- [The Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2021](#)
- [The Global Wetland Outlook 2018](#)
- [STRP Outputs](#)

- [Work Plan of the Secretariat](#) for 2019-2021
- [CEPA Resources and Activities](#)

Lesson 4

The Wise Use of Wetlands

Learning Objectives

Previous lessons outlined how Contracting Parties commit to the wise use of wetlands, designating and managing Wetlands of International Importance and international cooperation. In this Lesson, you will learn:

1. About the wise use concept and how it is implemented by Contracting Parties to the Convention.
2. How Wetlands of International Importance are protected through the Convention.
3. The links between wise use and Wetlands of International Importance and other conventions and international processes

1. Wise Use

At the centre of the philosophy behind the Convention on Wetlands is the “wise use” of wetlands. When acceding to the Convention, Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands and water resources in their territory, through national plans, policies and legislation, management actions and public education.

The Convention defines wise use of wetlands as:

“the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”

Ecological character is the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits /services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time.

Wise use can thus be seen as the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and all the services they provide, for the benefit of people and nature and as a contribution to sustainable development.



In 1990 the Contracting Parties adopted Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept. The Guidelines emphasized the importance of:

- Adopting national wetland policies, either separately or as a component of wider initiatives such as national environmental action plans;
- Consideration of wetlands and wetland benefits in formulation and implementation of sectoral policies;
- Developing programmes covering wetland inventory, monitoring, research, training, education and public awareness
- Developing integrated management plans at wetland sites

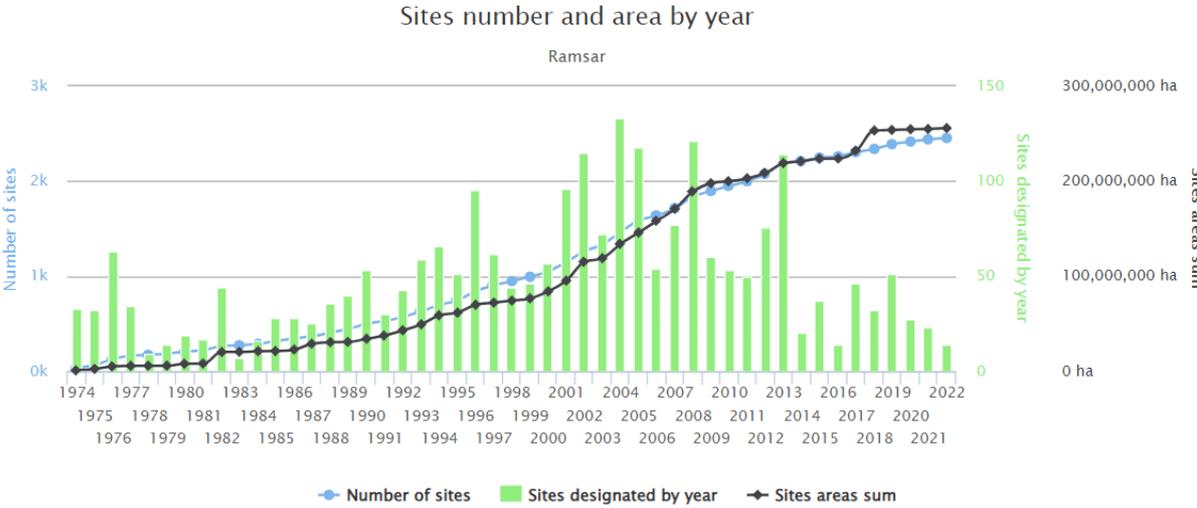
2. Wetlands of International Importance

At the time of joining the Convention, each Contracting Party must designate at least one wetland site within their territory for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar List).

These Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) acquire a new national and international status. They are recognized as being of significant value not only for the country or the countries in which they are located, but for humanity as a whole.



There are currently over 2,400 Wetlands of International Importance around the world. They cover over 2.5 million square kilometres,



The Ramsar Site Information Service (RSIS) enables Contracting Parties to complete online Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for designation of new Sites, and to provide updates on existing Sites.

The RIS is the means by which Contracting Parties presents information on wetlands designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and by which the List is kept up to date. Information compiled in the RIS includes factual data on surface area, wetland types, location, jurisdiction and ecological character, as well as justifications for how Criteria for inscription on the list of Wetlands of International Importance are met.

Designating Wetlands of International Importance

Any wetland which meets at least one of the nine Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance can be designated by the appropriate national authority to be added to the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

<p>Group A of the criteria</p> <p>Sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types</p>		<p>Criterion 1: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.</p>
<p>Group B of the criteria</p> <p>Sites of international importance for conserving biodiversity</p>	<p>Criteria based on species and ecological communities</p>	<p>Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.</p>
		<p>Criterion 3: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.</p>
		<p>Criterion 4: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.</p>
	<p>Specific criteria based on waterbirds</p>	<p>Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.</p>
		<p>Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.</p>
	<p>Specific criteria based on fish</p>	<p>Criterion 7: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.</p>

		Criterion 8: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.
	Specific criteria based on other taxa	Criterion 9: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

Contracting Parties continue to designate wetlands for inclusion in the List. They select suitable wetlands for designation based on the Criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance.

The information provided by Contracting Parties in the RIS, including any supplementary information provided, are held in the database of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites Information Service, RSIS) and made publicly available through the RSIS website. You can access Site summaries by country in the country profiles on this website; or search for Sites by country, wetland type, criteria, and other characteristics.

The inclusion of a wetland in the List embodies the government’s commitment to take the steps necessary to ensure that ecological character is maintained. The Convention includes various measures to respond to threats to the ecological character of Sites.

Responding to changes in ecological character

The ecological character of a Site is fundamental. Its description is an essential part of the designation process, and it is maintained through management and monitoring actions. Threats to Sites can cause a change in their Ecological Character, and the Convention has procedures to respond to such possible changes.

Article 3.2

According to Article 3.2 of the Convention, “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.” Contracting Parties commit to inform the Secretariat of such changes. Reports may also be submitted to the Secretariat by third parties, which then are confirmed by the Contracting Party. The Secretariat closely follows the situation until the issue is solved. An Article 3.2 may trigger some of the other mechanisms mentioned below.

Montreux Record

Wetlands of International Importance which are potentially at risk as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference may be placed on “The record of Ramsar Sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur” - the Montreux Record.

The Contracting Parties approved the Record through Recommendation 4.8 in 1990 as a means of drawing attention to Sites at risk and catalysing action to address these risks. In 1996 Guidelines for Operation of the Montreux Record were adopted through Resolution VI.1.

Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAMs)

At the request of a Contracting Party, the Secretariat may organize a Ramsar Advisory Mission to analyse the situation at one or more Sites, including in connection with reports under Article 3.2 of the Convention and Sites on the Montreux Record, and provide advice on measures to address the situation.

The Secretariat, together with the national authority, and according to agreed Operational Guidance, organizes a small team of experts to visit the site, consult local authorities and stakeholders, and produce a report with concrete Recommendations.

Missions offer pragmatic Recommendations that can be implemented. The RAM is not a ‘compliance’ mechanism. All steps are decided by agreement with the authorities and concerned stakeholders.

You can find all of the Ramsar Advisory Mission reports [here](#).

Managing Wetlands

Article 3.1 of the Convention specifies that “Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List” as well as promoting the wise use of all the wetlands in their territory.

Resolution 5.7 and Resolution VIII.14 called for management plans for all Wetlands of International Importance, with appropriate support and funds for implementation and training of staff, and including a monitoring programme with indicators on the Site’s ecological character.

Contracting Parties identified the effective conservation and management of the Network of Wetlands of International Importance as one of the three strategic goals of the Fourth Convention Strategic Plan for 2016-2024. The Plan calls for efforts to enable the participation of stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

The [Ramsar Sites management toolkit](#) provides simple guidance to site managers on the key steps and components involved in managing a Wetland of International Importance. It also identifies and provides links to more detailed information on:

- Describing the Ecological character of the Site

- Recognising and assessing threats to the Site
- Working with communities to identify key wetland services
- Management and monitoring
- Planning
- Periodic evaluation and review

3. International Cooperation

The Convention works with a diverse global network of partners to meet its objectives. They range from other global Conventions and agencies, to international and national non-governmental organizations and prominent private companies.

International Organization Partners

The Convention works very closely with six global organizations recognized as International Organization Partners (IOP) of the Convention.

Birdlife International, IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature, Wetlands International and WWF were recognized as IOPs in Resolution VII.3 (1999), which also describes the rules for conferring IOP status.

In Resolution IX.16 (2005), the Parties endorsed the addition of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) as the fifth International Organization Partner of the Convention, and in Resolution XII.3 (2015) they approved the status for the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT).



[Birdlife International](http://www.birdlife.org)



[International Union for Conservation of Nature](http://www.iucn.org)



[Wetlands International](http://www.wetlands-international.org)



[World Wide Fund for Nature](#)

[International Water Management Institute](#)

[Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust](#)

The IOPs provide invaluable support for the work of the Convention, by providing expert technical advice, field level implementation assistance, and financial support, from their headquarters as well as from their national and regional offices and affiliates and from their expert networks.

In addition, they embody the philosophy of the Convention and its wise use concept and support the use of the Convention guidelines in their own work around the world. The IOPs also participate regularly as observers in all meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

Partnerships with other Conventions



The Convention collaborates with the six other global Conventions that focus on biodiversity issues through the Biodiversity Liaison Group established in 2002 by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The other members are:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
- The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, (CITES)
- The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resource for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)
- The World Heritage Convention (WHC)

The Secretariat also cooperates with the Secretariats of other conventions including UNFCCC and UNCCD, intergovernmental science-policy panels such as IPCC and IPBES, as well as organizations of the UN system including UNEP, UNDP, FAO, WHO, WMO and others, as requested by Contracting Parties in resolution XIV.6.

Other Partnerships

The Danone Group

In 1998 the Danone Group and the Convention on Wetlands signed the first partnership agreement between a global environmental convention and a private company. Within the framework of this agreement the Danone Group established the Danone-Evian Fund for Water and the Danone Fund for Nature to support the Convention’s work to raise awareness and promote the sustainable use and management of wetlands as a source of water. The partnership contributes to the World Wetlands Day Awareness campaign and the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards



World Wetlands Day is made possible by the Danone Fund for Water.

Other notable outcomes of this partnership include country projects, and methodologies on the restoration of wetlands, sustainable management of water resources, and better livelihoods. In 2007 the Evian Water Protection Institute programme was launched and restoration projects completed in Argentina, Nepal, Thailand and Japan.

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration



Most recently, the Convention on Wetlands has become one of the global partners of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Restoration of the Earth’s wetlands must be a key priority for ensuring a sustainable future. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration represents a distinct and timely opportunity to join efforts and make meaningful headway worldwide in preventing, halting, and reversing the degradation of our planet’s wetlands.

Three fact sheets prepared by the Secretariat outline the importance of wetland restoration:

- [Wetlands restoration](#): unlocking the untapped potential of the Earth's most valuable ecosystem
- [Realizing the full potential of marine and coastal wetlands](#): why their restoration matters
- [Restoring drained peatlands](#): now an environmental imperative

3. National Reporting

Contracting Parties report on their implementation of the convention by two means: National Reports and Ramsar Information Sheets.

National Reports

National Reports are submitted by Contracting Parties every three years, six months prior to each ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP). The latest National Reports are found [here](#).

The main purpose of National Reports is to monitor the implementation of the Convention. They therefore include data and information on how, and to what extent, the Convention is being implemented, structured around the Strategic Plan, its targets and indicators.

Data found in National Reports is also used to track progress towards global goals and targets. For instance, the extent of water-related ecosystems, provided by Contracting Parties in their National Reports, provides data on SDG Goal 6 Indicator 6.6.1: "Change on the extent of water related ecosystem," for which the Convention and UNEP are co-custodians.

National Wetland Inventories

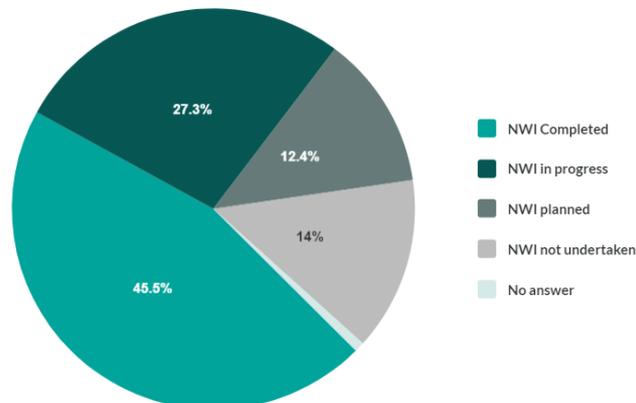
The Convention has recognized the importance of National Wetland Inventories (NWI) as a key tool for informing national policies and other measures to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is thus a priority in the Convention's Strategic Plan.

National Wetland Inventories are also a basis for reporting on wetland extent through National Reports, as a contribution towards tracking of SDG indicator 6.6.1 change in the extent of water-related ecosystems.

In order to support contracting parties in completing and keeping up to date their national wetlands inventories, the Convention has produced a [Toolkit](#), and a range of capacity building measures are being carried out including [online training](#) for contracting parties.

The following graph illustrates the NWI status of parties to the Convention based on national reporting to COP14 (2022)

% of the status of Contracting Parties' NWIs



Ramsar Information Sheets

As mentioned in the previous lesson, the RIS is the tool used for compiling information on new and updated Wetlands of International Importance.

The Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) is submitted through the Ramsar Site Information Service (RSIS). Contracting parties are to revise the data provided in RISs for each Site at least every six years for monitoring purposes. All of the RISs are made publicly available [here](#).

4. Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRI) are operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan. RRIs actively support Contracting Parties with a common interest in a particular area, region or ecosystem, to protect wetlands in the Convention on Wetlands framework.

The RRIs provide a platform for collaboration with technical experts and representatives of intergovernmental bodies, International Organization Partners, NGOs, local communities and private companies.

The Administrative Authorities responsible for implementing the Convention in their countries drive the development and implementation of RRIs. RRIs are endorsed by the Conference of the Parties, and by the Standing Committee between meetings of the COP. They are independently governed and do not speak or act on the Convention's behalf, but they work in close contact with the Secretariat. Some initiatives receive start-up financial assistance from the Secretariat's core budget. Operational Guidelines for RRIs were adopted in resolution XIV.7.

There are two types of regional initiatives: regional Ramsar regional centres for training and capacity building, and Ramsar networks for regional cooperation.

Ramsar Regional Centers

Ramsar regional centres promote scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of knowledge in their region. The four centres established to date cover the Western Hemisphere, West and Central Asia, Eastern Asia and Eastern Africa. They have shown that the professional training and capacity building they provide can fulfil a significant role in increasing implementation of the Convention.



- [Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa](#) (RAMCEA)
- [Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia](#) (RRC-EA)
- [Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere](#) (CREHO)
- [Ramsar Regional center for Central and West Asia](#) (RRC-CWA)

Ramsar Networks for Regional Cooperation

There are currently 15 Ramsar networks for regional cooperation.

Regional Initiatives in Africa:

- [West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network](#) (WACOWet)
- [Nigerwet](#)
- [Senegalwet](#)

Regional Initiatives in Europe

- [Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative](#) (NorBalWet)
- [Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative](#) (MedWet)
- [Carpathian Wetland Initiative](#) (CWI)
- [Black Sea Coastal Wetlands Initiative](#) (BlackSeaWet)

Regional Initiatives in Asia and Oceania

- [Partnership for the East-Asian Australasian Flyway](#) (EAAFP)
- [Indo-Bruma Ramsar Regional Initiative](#) (IBRRI)
- [Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia](#) (RRI-CA)

Regional Initiatives in the Americas

- [Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin](#)
- [Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative](#) (CARIWET)
- [Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs Ecosystems](#)
- [Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands](#)
- [Regional Initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in the Amazon River Basin](#)

The Secretariat receives annual progress and financial reports as well as financial and work plans for the coming year from each Regional Initiative. The annual reports are made publicly available [here](#).

5. Recap

Wise use and Wetlands of International Importance

- Wise use of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development
- At the time of joining the Convention, each Contracting Party must designate at least one Wetland of International Importance
- The Convention has procedures such as Article 3.2, Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Missions to respond to possible change in a Site's ecological character.

International Cooperation

- The Convention cooperates internationally with its International Organization Partners, the Biodiversity Liaison Group, in the UN Decade in Ecosystem Restoration, as well as with partners such as the Danone Group, among others.
- The Conventions' International Organization Partners (IOPs) provide expert technical advice, field level implementation assistance, and financial support to the Convention

Reporting

- Data on the extent of water-related ecosystems, provided by Contracting Parties in their National Reports, contributes to tracking SDG Goal 6 Indicator 6.6.1

- National Wetland Inventories are an important tool for national planning and assessment to support wise use as well as for international reporting on wetland trends and status

Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- RRI support Contracting Parties with a common interest in a particular area, region or ecosystem, to protect wetlands in the Convention on Wetlands framework.
- There are four regional Ramsar centres that promote scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of knowledge in their region.
- There are 15 Ramsar networks for regional cooperation that provide a platform for collaboration between governments, technical experts, international NGOs, local communities and private companies.

6. Knowledge Refresher

Exercise 1:

Multiple choice

How many International Organization Partners (IOPs) does the Convention have?

- 5
- 6
- 15
- 4

Exercise 2:

Multiple choice

Which of the following are procedures to respond to possible change in a Site's ecological character?

- Article 2.3
- Montreux Record
- Ramsar Information Sheets
- Ramsar Advisory Mission
- Article 3.2

Exercise 3:

Multiple choice

The Role of Ramsar Regional Initiatives is to:

- Represent and act on behalf of the Convention in its region

- Provide Contracting Parties with support for improving the implementation of the Convention
- Lead the implementation of the Convention in its region

7. Additional Resources

- [Handbook 1: The Wise use of wetlands](#)
- [Handbook 17: Designating Ramsar Sites](#)
- [Handbook 18: Managing wetlands](#)
- [Handbook 19: Designating Ramsar Sites](#)
- [Handbook 20: International Cooperation](#)
- [Ramsar Advisory Missions: Help for Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands](#)
- [Ramsar Advisory Missions Reports](#)
- Wetlands of International Importance listed in the [Montreux Record](#)
- [The Ramsar Site Management Toolkit](#)
- [Partnerships](#) with the Convention on Wetlands
- [Training Webinar: National Wetland Inventories](#)
- [A new toolkit for National Wetland Inventories](#)
- [The Ramsar Regional Initiatives](#)

Lesson 5

Giving visibility to wetlands

Learning Objectives

This Lesson provides an overview of awareness raising activities in the context of the Convention. Participants will learn about:

1. Key activities to raise awareness about wetlands and the convention among the general public
2. Awards given to institutions and people who exemplify the wise use of wetlands
3. How the general public can use the materials provided by the Convention to raise awareness

1. Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)

The CEPA Oversight Panel, mentioned in lesson 3 of this course, is the Body of the Convention responsible for developing the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme and overseeing its implementation.

The key implementers of the Programme are Convention's Administrative Authorities. Two CEPA National Focal Points, one from within the government and one representing an NGO, are appointed by the Administrative Authority to lead the development and implementation of national and local wetland CEPA action plans in the context of the Convention's CEPA programme.

National Focal Points for the Convention work with CEPA Focal Points, NGOs, Ramsar Regional Initiatives and civil society organizations and wetland visitor centers for the implementation of the programme.

Investment in CEPA activities helps decision-makers and mobilizes local-scale actions directed at achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Effective use of CEPA requires a planned systematic approach which reflects the interests of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Approaches need to be tailored to the local context, culture and traditions. Nonetheless, international experiences can guide national planners in formulating country-specific CEPA plans.

Wetland Education Centres

The Convention's CEPA Programme encourages the establishment of Wetland Education Centers, recognizing their value in promoting wetland conservation and wise use. Wetland centers across the world connect people with nature and raise their awareness of wetland values and sustainable lifestyles. They range from high-tech centers designed to welcome significant numbers of visitors, to simple, non-staffed centers giving small numbers of people a limited but effective wetland CEPA experience.



Wetland Centres members of the global [Wetland Link International \(WLI\)](#).

The CEPA Programme recognizes the role of the global Wetland Link International (WLI) network of centres in connecting wetland education centres and providing opportunity for sharing experiences, materials and innovative display and engagement ideas. WLI has over 300 member centres and has established several regional networks.

Join the CEPA Network

Interested individuals and organizations are invited to join the CEPA email list. Through this platform, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and CEPA network members share a wide range of news, educational and outreach materials, inspirational CEPA stories and Actions Plans from around the world, capacity building techniques and publications and engage in discussion and exchange of views.

[Join the CEPA network here](#)

2. World Wetlands Day

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Since 1997, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands has provided outreach materials to help raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands. Materials can be downloaded at www.worldwetlandsday.org

Since its inception, the production and distribution of materials for World Wetlands Day have been financially supported by the Evian Project funded by the Danone Group

On 30 August 2021, the 75th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a resolution co-sponsored by 75 Member States proclaiming World Wetlands Day a UN observance.



Each year, World Wetlands Day's campaign and activities revolve around a main theme, previously decided by the Contracting Parties. The theme for 2023 was Wetland Restoration



Following a decision by the Standing Committee, the theme “Wetlands and Gender” was selected as a theme for the next World Wetland Day in 2024.

3. The 50th Anniversary of the Convention

Fifty years ago, the need for a global agreement on wetlands was becoming increasingly apparent to visionaries within the hunting and science communities, and to governments. Half a century later, the fundamental mission of the Convention is more urgent than ever: Continuing to benefit from the services wetlands provide while awarding them the protection they need requires global cooperation.



The opportunity to leverage full implementation of the Convention for biodiversity conservation, climate change and sustainable development outcomes has never been greater.

50th Anniversary Campaign

The anniversary campaign was designed to support Contracting Parties, organizations and individuals in celebrating and raising awareness about wetlands throughout this anniversary year, to increased public understanding about what wetlands are, and the services they perform for humankind – with the ultimate goal of improving their protection

A [toolbox](#) was developed to support the campaign, including:

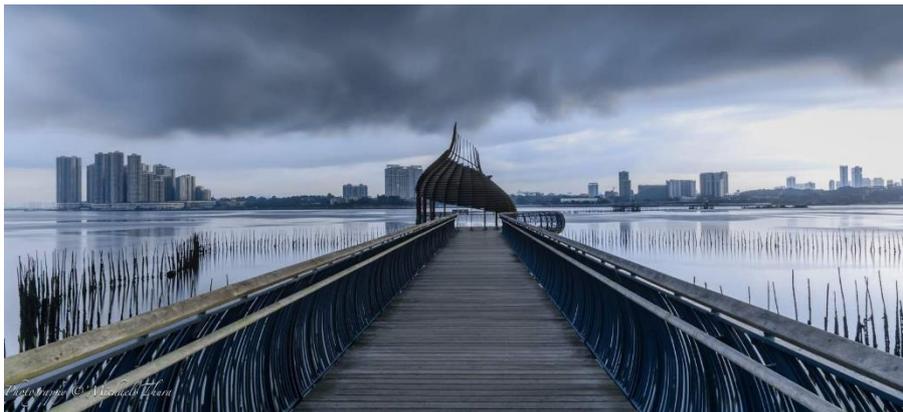
- Guideline
- Powerpoint presentation
- Factsheets (Biodiversity, Carbon Sink, Water, Livelihoods, Disaster Risk Reduction)

- 50th Anniversary video
- Webinar: intergenerational dialogue about wetlands
- Interview with Eckhart Kuijken, representative of Belgium to the Convention in 1971
- Logo of the 50th Anniversary

4. Wetland City Accreditation

Urbanization is one of the defining trends of our time. It is transforming where and how people will live in the future. Four billion people, about half of the world's population live in urban areas today. By 2050 that number is expected to increase as more people move into cities.

Current trends in human settlement potentially pose a major threat for wetland conservation and wise use. As cities grow and demand for land increases, the tendency is to encroach on wetlands.



Yet when preserved and sustainably used, urban wetlands can provide cities with multiple economic, social and cultural benefits. During storms, urban wetlands absorb excess rainfall, which reduces flooding in cities and prevents disasters and their subsequent costs. The abundant vegetation found in urban wetlands, acts as a filter for domestic and industrial waste and contribute to improving water quality.

Urban wetlands are prize land not wasteland and therefore should be integrated into the development and management plans of cities.

The Contracting Parties have agreed to the conservation and wise use of wetlands in their territories. Recognizing the importance of cities and urban wetlands, the Convention has introduced a Wetland City accreditation scheme (Resolution XII.10). This voluntary scheme provides an opportunity for cities that value their natural or human-made wetlands to gain international recognition and positive publicity for their efforts.

The Wetland City Accreditation scheme encourages cities in close proximity to and dependent on wetlands, especially Wetlands of International Importance, to highlight and strengthen a positive relationship with these valuable ecosystems, for example through increased public awareness of wetlands and participation in municipal planning and decision-making. The Accreditation scheme further promotes the conservation and wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands, as well as sustainable socio-economic benefits for local people.

To be formally accredited, a candidate for the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention must satisfy the national standards used to implement each of the following international criteria:

- It has one or more Ramsar Sites or other significant wetlands fully or partly situated in its territory or in its close vicinity, which provide(s) a range of ecosystems services to the city;
- It has adopted measures for conservation of wetlands and their services including biodiversity and hydrological integrity;
- It has implemented wetland restoration and/or management measures;
- It considers the challenges and opportunities of integrated spatial/land-use planning for wetlands under its jurisdiction;
- It has delivered locally adapted information to raise public awareness about the values of wetlands, and encouraged the wise use of wetlands by stakeholders through, for example, establishing wetland education/information centers;
- It has established a local Wetland City of the Ramsar Convention committee with appropriate knowledge and experience on wetlands and representation of and engagement with stakeholders to support the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention submission and the implementation of proper measures for fulfilling the obligations under the accreditation.

The Current list of cities that have been awarded with the Wetland City Accreditation can be found [here](#).

5. The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award was established in 1996 in order to recognise and honour the contributions of individuals, organisations, and governments around the world towards promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Award has been celebrated eight times, usually on the occasion of meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2022), with Awards presented to 36 organizations and individuals.

Since its inception, the Award laureates have also received the Evian Special Prize of US\$ 10,000, through the generosity of the Danone Group.



Eighth edition of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

The Ramsar Awards were presented in three categories in its eighth edition: Wetlands Wise Use, Innovation and Young Wetland Champions. On this occasion, the jury also conferred a Merit Award to recognize an individual's outstanding achievements in the wetlands community.

The Ramsar Convention Award for Wetland Wise Use

Rewarding a person, project, programme or policy that has made a significant documented contribution to the longterm sustainable use of wetlands, either at specific wetlands (including Wetlands of International Importance) or on a broader scale, and which can be replicated elsewhere.

This award was given to Mr. Masayuki Kurechi, Board Member of Ramsar Network Japan, who was recognized for his long-term commitment to the Asian-Australasian flyways and conservation of migratory birds, which has helped to restore endangered bird species.

The Ramsar Convention Award for Wetland Innovation

Rewarding a person, project, programme or policy that has contributed to the conservation and wise use of wetlands through an innovative technique or approach.

The award was given to Ms. Carla Ximena Giraldo Malca, Peru, who was recognized for her work with the Municipal Authority to the sustainability of the Pantanos de Villa wetland. Her contributions have helped to ensure that the voice of children as “Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa” wetland is recognized and that they are included by law in decisions to protect these marshlands.

The Ramsar Convention Award for Young Wetland Champions

Rewarding a young person or a group of young people that has contributed to the wise use of wetlands, through activities including but not limited to awareness raising, campaigning, restoration and other conservation efforts. For the purpose of this Award, people between 18 and 30 years old or groups with members and leader between 18 and 30 years old at the time of the nomination are considered.

The award was given to Fernanda Samuel, National Coordinator of Mangrove Protection and Restoration, for her continued efforts to protect and restore mangrove wetlands off the coast of Angola.

The Merit Award

The selection committee may decide to grant a Merit Award to nominated individuals or institutions in recognition of their long-term contribution or commitment to the conservation and wise use of wetlands and to principles of the Convention.

Jérôme Bignon, Président de l’Association Ramsar France, was given this award for his dedicated and long-term contribution in various roles towards the conservation of wetlands in France by championing laws that improve the conservation of wetlands.

You can read the full stories of the winners of the Eighth edition of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards by clicking [this link](#)

6. Recap

CEPA

- CEPA activities help decision-makers and mobilize local-scale actions directed at achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands
- Wetland Education Centres promote the Convention on Wetlands' principles of wetland conservation and wise use.
- CEPA approaches need to be tailored to the local context, culture and traditions

World Wetlands Day

- World Wetlands Day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971
- As of 2021, World Wetlands Day is recognized as a United Nations (UN) observance
- World Wetlands Day materials and information about events can be found at www.worldwetlandsday.org

Awards and Accreditations

- The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award recognizes the contributions of individuals, organisations, and governments around the world towards promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- The Wetland City Accreditation provides opportunity for cities that value their natural or human-made wetlands to gain international recognition and positive publicity for their efforts.
- To be formally accredited, a candidate for the Wetland City accreditation must satisfy international criteria and be reviewed by an Independent Advisory Committee.

7. Knowledge Refresher

Exercise 1:

Multiple choice

Who leads the development and implementation of national and local wetland CEPA programmes and action plans?

- Wetland Education Centers
- CEPA Government Focal Points
- WLI members
- CEPA NGO Focal Points

Exercise 2:

Multiple choice

When was World Wetlands Day recognized as a UN observance?

- 2021
- 2022
- 1971
- 1977

Exercise 3:
Fill in the blank

Since its inception, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award has been supported by _____, as part of the activities of the partnership with the Convention

6. Additional Resources

- [CEPA Educational Materials](#)
- [CEPA Stories](#)
- [Wetland CEPA Methods](#)
- [CEPA Action Plans and Guidelines](#)
- [World Wetlands Day Website](#)
- [Previous World Wetlands Day](#)
- [50th Anniversary toolbox](#)
- [Wetland Accredited Cities](#)
- [Resolution XII.10: Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention](#)
- [Previous Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards](#)
- [Winners of the Eighth Edition of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards](#)

Answer Key

Lesson 1

Exercise 1: Multiple Choice

Which of the following are classified as Inland Wetlands?

- Rivers
- Mangroves
- Rice paddies
- Saltmarshes
- Peatlands
- Reservoirs
- Marshes
- All of the above

Exercise 2: Multiple choice

How many people's livelihoods depend on fishing and aquaculture in wetlands?

- 500 Million
- 10 Million
- >660 Million
- 100 Million

Exercise 3: Fill in the blank

Since 1970, **81%** of inland wetland species populations and **36%** of coastal and marine species have declined according to WWF's Living Planet Index.

Lesson 2

Exercise 1: Matching

Multiple Choice

Which are the three pillars of the Convention?

- Negotiation and consensus building on the management of wetlands
- International Cooperation
- Enhancing Implementation of the Convention
- Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss and Degradation
- Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands
- Designating Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Exercise 2: Multiple choice

How many sites shall a state party designate for inclusion in the List of Wetlands?

- At least one
- As many as possible
- At least one every year

Exercise 3: True or false

The Convention places specific obligations on Contracting Parties to enact legislation to protect wetlands

- True
- False

Lesson 3

Exercise 1: Matching

Advisory Bodies	The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel
Advisory Bodies	The Scientific and Technical Review Panel
Decision-making bodies	The Conference of the Parties
Decision-making bodies	The Standing Committee

Supporting Bodies	The Secretariat
Supporting Bodies	The International Organization Partners

Exercise 2:

Fill in the blank

The Convention's meetings are structured with a **three** year process

Exercise 3:

Matching

Match the body of the Convention with its function:

The Conference of the Parties	Agrees on a work programme, budget, and provides guidance on emerging environmental issues
The Scientific and Technical Review Panel	Provides scientific and technical guidance to the COP, SC and Secretariat
The Standing Committee	Oversees Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat in between COPs
The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel	Advises on priorities for communication, education, participation and capacity building
The Secretariat	Carries out the day-to-day coordination of the Convention's activities

Lesson 4

Exercise 1:

Multiple choice

How many International Organization Partners (IOPs) does the Convention have?

- 5
- 6
- 15
- 4

Exercise 2:

Multiple choice

Which of the following are procedures to respond to possible change in a Site's ecological character?

- Article 2.3

- Montreux Record
- Ramsar Information Sheets
- Ramsar Advisory Mission
- Article 3.2

Exercise 3:
Multiple choice

The Role of Ramsar Regional Initiatives is to:

- Represent the and act on behalf of the Convention in its region
- Provide Contacting Parties with support for improving the implementation of the Convention
- Lead the implementation of the Convention in its region

Lesson 5

Exercise 1:
Multiple choice

Who leads the development and implementation of national and local wetland CEPA programmes and action plans?

- Wetland Education Centers
- CEPA Government Focal Points
- WLI members
- CEPA NGO Focal Points

Exercise 2:
Multiple choice

When was World Wetlands Day recognized as a UN observance?

- 2021
- 2022
- 1971
- 1977

Exercise 3:
Fill in the blank

Since its inception, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award has been supported by **Danone** as part of the activities of the partnership with the Convention