

**14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**

**“Wetlands Actions for People and Nature”  
Wuhan, China and Geneva, Switzerland, 5-13 November 2022**

**Ramsar COP14 Doc.18.12**

**Note from the Secretariat:**

At the resumed session of its 59th meeting, the Standing Committee in Decision SC59/2022-29 accepted the revised draft resolution in document SC59 Doc.24.8 Rev.1 on *Updating the Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention* and agreed to forward it to COP14 for its consideration.

**Draft resolution on updating the Wetland City Accreditation  
of the Ramsar Convention**

*Submitted by Republic of Korea, Tunisia, Austria and China*

1. RECALLING the commitments made by Contracting Parties under Resolution X.27 on *Wetlands and urbanization* to pay due attention to the importance of their wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments and to take appropriate measures to conserve and protect these wetlands;
2. ALSO RECALLING Resolution XI.11 on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* and the commitment made by Contracting Parties to continue to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments;
3. FURTHER RECALLING Resolution XIII.16 on *Sustainable urbanization, climate change and wetlands* and the desire to prevent activities that may have an adverse impact on urban and peri-urban wetlands;
4. AWARE that the Contracting Parties have approved a voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system under Resolution XII.10 on *Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention*;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING that the Contracting Parties at the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties recognized 18 cities (6 from China, 4 from France, 1 from Hungary, 4 from the Republic of Korea, 1 from Madagascar, 1 from Sri Lanka and 1 from Tunisia) that have taken exceptional steps to safeguard their urban wetlands and formally accredited those cities through the voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system;
6. NOTING that Contracting Parties through the Wetland City Accreditation system have continued to improve their national standards and protocols for conservation and management of wetlands in cities;

7. ACKNOWLEDGING the Wetland City Network established through a consensus during the Inaugural Roundtable of Wetland City Mayors held on 23-25 October 2019 in Suncheon City, Republic of Korea;
8. NOTING the Report and Decisions of the 57th Meeting of the Standing Committee with respect to the Wetland City Accreditation and particularly the success of the venture as a flagship for the Ramsar Convention and the need to improve operational guidance and procedural matters; and
9. RECOGNIZING the need to review implementation progress and financing of the voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system and to enhance the accreditation process;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. ENCOURAGES the on-going voluntary accreditation of cities through the Wetland City Accreditation system in order to provide positive branding opportunities for cities that demonstrate strong positive relationships with wetlands;
11. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and INVITES other governments, financial institutions, International Organization Partners, Ramsar Regional Initiatives and other implementing partners to support the voluntary implementation of the Wetland City Accreditation system;
12. WELCOMES the willingness of the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RRC-EA) to support the Independent Advisory Committee by hosting, administrating and financing regular face to face meetings;
13. ALSO WELCOMES the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the RRC-EA to host, organize and administer the Inaugural Roundtable of Wetland City Mayors as a centre of the Wetland City Network; and ENCOURAGES voluntary collaboration among the members of this network to further deliver on the wise use of wetlands;
14. TAKES NOTE of the proposal by the Independent Advisory Committee outlined in Annex 1 to prepare an operational guidance, incorporating the updated information in Annex 2 to this Resolution and to present it to the 62nd Meeting of the Standing Committee for consideration and endorsement;
15. TAKES NOTE of the updated elements of the Wetland City Accreditation in Annex 2, which added new and updated elements such as the criteria for accreditation, overview of the Wetland City Accreditation process, normalized timeline, award process, renewal process and administration for the Wetland City Accreditation system;
16. REQUESTS the allocation of ten days per annum of administrative assistant time needed during the triennium to provide administrative services as outlined in para 22, Annex 2 for the Wetland City Accreditation scheme, subject to the availability of resources in compliance with Resolution XII.10 and the approval of the Subgroup on Finance<sup>1</sup>;
17. FURTHER REQUESTS a review of the implementation progress and financing of the voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system to be reported to each Conference of the Parties, as initially requested under paragraph 11 in Resolution XII.10, before any further requests for Secretariat resources are made;

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<sup>1</sup> As per Decision SC58-24

18. CONFIRMS that this updated text and its annexes builds on the framework adopted in Resolution XII.10;
19. ALSO REQUESTS that the Standing Committee nominate members of the Independent Advisory Committee for future COP cycles at its first full meeting following COP in accordance with the Terms of Reference in the Annex 2 to this Resolution;
20. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to support the Wetland City Accreditation process and to continue publishing information regarding the Wetland City Accreditation on the Convention's website; and
21. ALSO INSTRUCTS the STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel to establish and formalize a permanent co-operation with the Wetland City Network and use their potential to disseminate the philosophy of the Ramsar Convention to the people living in these cities.

## Annex 1 Proposal for Operational Guidance for Wetland City Accreditation

### Background

Since the adoption of Resolution XII.10 on *Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention*, a range of mechanisms and guidance has been developed to support implementation and to provide a formal procedure for city accreditation. Building on the information described in the Annex to Resolution XII.10, materials have been developed *inter alia* for the nomination of candidate cities, evaluation of accreditation submissions, guidance for cities and Administrative Authorities and terms of reference for the Independent Advisory Committee. The material developed has facilitated the successful accreditation of 18 cities.

The Standing Committee has considered the progress on the Wetland City Accreditation scheme (SC57 Doc.26) and several operational challenges have been highlighted. Informed by input from the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Wetland City Accreditation Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) and the Secretariat, the Standing Committee (SC) has expressed concerns regarding *inter alia* a lack of clarity and efficiency in the process, technical challenges within the nomination and evaluation process, the absence of a renewal process beyond 2024 and financial and resourcing implications.

In order to address these concerns, the proposals in this Annex set out the suggested contents of operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation and provides *de novo* text to be included in the guidance to be developed by IAC.

### Proposed contents of operational guidance

The operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation will provide easily accessible, comprehensive and succinct information for undertaking all stages of the accreditation process. The structure described in the table below summarizes the information required in the guidance.

Section	Title	Description of content
1	Background to Wetland City Accreditation	Explanation of the need for a Wetland City Accreditation process
2	Overview of the Wetland City Accreditation: criteria and process	Explanation of the criteria for accreditation and overall process from opening calls for application, nomination, evaluation, notification, award and renewal
3	Normalized timeline	Description of the key dates for the process based on the Conference of the Parties (COP) cycle
4	Guidance notes for Administrative Authorities (AA)	Guidance for Administrative Authorities (AAs) to understand and facilitate the overall accreditation process and in checking completed Nomination Forms
5	Guidance notes for cities	Guidance for cities, their authorized representatives and officials to understand eligibility and facilitate the overall accreditation process and completing the Nomination Form

Section	Title	Description of content
6	Evaluation process	Explanation of the evaluation process
7	Award process	Explanation of what happens when a city is formally accredited, including <i>inter alia</i> notification, attendance at COP, award ceremony, awareness raising and publicity
8	Renewal process	How cities can apply to renew their accreditation (as accreditation limited to two triennia) and a description of the process – including the evidence required for renewal
9	Administration for the Wetland City Accreditation	Description of the composition and the terms of reference of IAC and responsibilities of the Secretariat
10	Monitoring and evaluation process	Description of a monitoring and evaluation process to be undertaken by IAC to assess impacts and outcomes of accreditation (including reports from cities, applications to re-new accreditation, possible short video reports by Mayors and single-page case studies), with a report to SC and COP. To be used for improvement and promotion of the initiative.
11	Wetland City Network	Terms of reference of the Wetland City Network
Appendix 1	Wetland City Accreditation Forms	Standardized call for applications, Nomination Form, Evaluation Form, Renewal Form and Renewal Evaluation Form
Appendix 2	Background information	Information referenced in current guidance notes

## **Annex 2**

### **Updated Elements of the Wetland City Accreditation**

1. The following updated information supersedes corresponding outdated information in the Annex to Resolution XII.10 and forms part of operational guidance for the Wetland City Accreditation process.

**Overview of the Wetland City Accreditation criteria and process** (proposed Section 2 of the operational guidance)

#### ***Criteria***

2. An eligible city for the Wetland City accreditation may be a city or any other type of human settlement according to the definitions given by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, with its own governance system.
3. To be formally accredited, a candidate for the Wetland City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention should satisfy the standards used to implement each of the following international criteria:
  - a. It has one or more Ramsar Sites, or other significant wetlands designated and protected by the national or local government, fully or partly situated within its jurisdiction, which provide(s) a range of ecosystem services to the city;
  - b. It has adopted measures for conservation of wetlands and their ecosystem services;
  - c. It has implemented wetland restoration and/or management measures;
  - d. It considers the challenges and opportunities of integrated spatial/land-use planning for wetlands under its jurisdiction;
  - e. It has raised public awareness about the values of wetlands by delivering locally adapted information, and enabled participation of local stakeholders in decision-making processes; and
  - f. It has established a local committee with appropriate knowledge and experience on wetlands and representation of and engagement with stakeholders to support the preparation work to apply for the Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention and the implementation of proper measures to maintain the city's qualifications for the accreditation.

#### ***Overview of the Wetland City Accreditation process***

4. The city accreditation process is divided into the following three distinct but interconnected stages:
  - Stage 1 - The nomination and accreditation process: This process commences after the Secretariat has launched the call for applications as per the normalized timeline.
  - Stage 2 - The award process: This process commences once the Standing Committee has made recommendations on which cities are to receive accreditation.

- Stage 3 - The renewal process: This process commences when a city wishes to renew its accreditation after two COP cycles.

**Normalized timeline** (proposed Section 3 of the operational guidance)

5. The normalized timeline is based on 'Year 1' being the year immediately following the meeting of the COP, with Year 2 and Year 3 being the subsequent years. It is assumed that two COP cycles would normally span a period of six years but modification to the normalized timeline may be required if unforeseen events alter this timeframe.

Table: Normalized timeline for nomination and accreditation process and procedure

Year	Dates	Actions
Year 1	Annual SC meeting	- SC nominates a representative from each region for IAC - New term of IAC commences
	Within 2 Months after the above SC meeting	- IAC elects Chair and Co-chair
	1 July	- Secretariat launches the call for applications for new and renewed accreditation
	1 July to 31 December	- Interested cities prepare and send applications to Head of AA
Year 2	By 1 March	- Heads of AA submit applications to the Secretariat through the online submission
	By 1 April	- Secretariat forwards applications to IAC for review
Year 3	By 3 months before annual SC meeting	- IAC reviews applications and determines which cities to accredit or renew their accreditation
	At annual SC meeting	- IAC reports its decision to SC - SC takes note of IAC report and instructs the Secretariat to take the following actions after the meeting:
	After annual SC meeting	- The Secretariat a) announces the list of newly accredited and renewed wetland cities, b) invites the newly accredited cities through their respective NFPs to the certificate awarding ceremony at succeeding COP and c) prepares the ceremony with support from IAC and the host country
	During COP meeting	- COP recognizes accredited cities at the award ceremony

**The award process** (proposed Section 7 of the operational guidance)

6. The award process should involve the following steps:
  - The Secretariat invites representatives of the accredited cities through their respective NFPs to attend an award ceremony at the COP.
  - The Secretariat prepares Wetland City Accreditation certificates for accredited cities.
  - An authorized representative of the accredited city notifies the Secretariat through their respective NFP of whether they will be attending the award ceremony.
  - The Subgroup on COP schedules an award ceremony during the COP.
  - Secretary General delivers certificates to a representative of each accredited city at the award ceremony.

7. IAC recognizes the role of the host Contracting Party in determining the exact nature of the presentation ceremony but provides the following guidance:
  - The Subgroup on COP should suggest a suitable time during the COP for process for the public recognition of the accreditation at the COP
  - The ceremony should restrict itself to the awarding of the certificate to the newly accredited cities
  - Films and promotional material about cities should not be part of the ceremony but may form part of a separate session, such as a side event or a separate forum, or exhibition stands
  - Only one representative from each city should receive the certificate at the award ceremony (no group photograph of entire delegations allowed on the stage during the plenary session)
  - Wetland City Accreditation Certificates should be framed and at least A3 in size.

**The renewal process** (proposed Section 8 of the operational guidance)

8. Cities are encouraged to renew their accreditation. The renewal process should involve the following steps:
  - A call for Wetland City Accreditation renewal is announced by the Secretariat.
  - An authorized representative of the accredited city completes the Renewal Form and sends it to the designated NFP in the AA for verification.
  - The NFP checks the Renewal Form. If it is complete and satisfactory, the NFP submits the Renewal Form to the Secretariat.
  - The Secretariat forwards Renewal Forms to the Chair of IAC.
  - IAC reviews the Renewal Forms received from each city.
  - If clarification is required, IAC may return the Renewal Form to the NFP requesting appropriate action.
  - IAC reports a list of those cities that meet the required standard for renewal to the SC.
  - The SC takes note of the report of IAC and instructs the Secretariat to inform the result of the renewal process to the applicant cities.
  - The Secretariat updates the dedicated webpage of the Wetland City Accreditation with cities' renewal status.

**Administration for Wetland City Accreditation** (proposed Section 9 of the operational guidance)

***Terms of Reference of the Independent Advisory Committee***

*Responsibilities of the Independent Advisory Committee*

9. IAC develops its own intersessional work plan for completing accreditation decisions within the normalized timeline and using the criteria and procedure outlined within this Annex and the terms of the proposed operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation.
10. IAC reviews the applications for new accreditation and decides whether to accredit proposed cities. Each application is reviewed by a minimum of two members of IAC and not assigned to members of the same nationality as applicant cities.



11. IAC reviews the applications for renewed accreditation and decides whether to renew the accreditation of proposed cities. Each application is reviewed by a minimum of two members of IAC and not assigned to members of the same nationality as applicant cities.
12. IAC reports its decision on new and renewed accreditation at least 90 days in advance of the final full meeting of the Standing Committee prior to the next meeting of the COP.
13. IAC issues guidance on how cities and other human settlements should compile the nomination and renewal forms, especially regarding the level of detail required and the types of supporting evidence required, through operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation.
14. IAC issues guidance, as required, for National Focal Points (NFPs) on how they could undertake a national review to determine which cities to propose to IAC, and evaluates the compiled accreditation forms to ensure that they abide by the criteria.
15. IAC issues guidance on how it will transparently and objectively review applications and decide whether criteria have been satisfied and a city can be accredited through the operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation.

*Membership of the Independent Advisory Committee*

16. The composition of the Independent Advisory Committee shall be chosen by the SC from the following:
  - A. A Standing Committee member representative from each of the six regions of the Ramsar Convention, selected by the regions:
    - i. Africa
    - ii. Asia
    - iii. Europe
    - iv. Latin America and the Caribbean
    - v. North America
    - vi. Oceania
  - B. A representative of the Ramsar Convention's International Organization Partners
  - C. A representative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
  - D. A representative from ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)
  - E. A representative of the STRP of the Ramsar Convention
  - F. A representative of the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel of the Ramsar Convention
  - G. Representatives of any concerned Ramsar Regional Initiatives
  - H. The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention or his/her designated representative (observer)
17. Technical advisors may be co-opted to IAC as required but would be subject to approval by the SC.
18. All regional contracting party representative members of IAC are agreed at the annual SC meeting following each COP.
19. All members of IAC will serve for one full COP cycle, with future renewal possible.

20. The Chair and Co-Chair will be elected by IAC members within two months of determination of the full IAC membership.

21. IAC may invite consultants to attend meetings as required.

***Responsibilities of the Secretariat***

22. The Secretariat provides the following functions subject to available resources and as appropriate:

- Drafting and publishing the call for application for new and renewed accreditation
- Receiving applications and forwarding them to IAC
- Forwarding queries specifically related to the review process to IAC
- Announcing the result of the review process at the end of the annual SC meeting preceding a COP meeting via official notification and on its website
- Inviting newly accredited cities through respective NFPs to a certificate awarding ceremony at the COP meeting, and working with the COP host to prepare the ceremony
- Preparing accreditation certificates and presenting them to the newly accredited cities at the COP ceremony
- Updating the dedicated web page in the Convention website

23. The role of the Secretariat as a member of IAC is to provide updates in administrative processes and legal advices, as necessary and as appropriate, in accordance with its mandate provided by the COP. The Secretariat may attend IAC meetings as an observer and is not obliged to review applications.