

Working together for wetlands

The Convention has five formally recognized “International Organization Partners”, which provide expert technical advice and assistance in line with Convention principles:

- BirdLife International
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
- Wetlands International
- WWF International



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The Convention collaborates with a network of partners:

- Biodiversity-related conventions including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the World Heritage Convention (WHC), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES);
- Project funding bodies including global environmental funds, multilateral development banks and bilateral donors;
- UN agencies such as UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO and the UN Economic Commission for Europe, and specific programmes such as UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme;
- Non-governmental organizations including the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, the Society of Wetland Scientists, the International Association for Impact Assessment, and many others.

Who pays for all this?

Many countries and donors support the mission of the Ramsar Convention by providing funding for projects around the world.

The Conference of the Parties provides a core budget every three years to be administered by the Secretariat, and each Contracting Party pays a percentage related to its contribution to the United Nations budget.

Since 1998 the Convention has also benefited from a strong partnership with the Danone Group including the Evian brand, and since 2007 from the Biosphere Connections partnership with the Star Alliance airline network.



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Learn more and get involved

The Secretariat publishes guidance and information to help the Contracting Parties and others manage wetlands and ensure their wise use.

www.ramsar.org

The Secretariat maintains a comprehensive web site with information on wetlands, Ramsar Sites, and Convention processes. A series of online handbooks presents the guidelines adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

Join the [Ramsar Forum](#) email list for the latest wetland news and views (contact the Secretariat at ramsar@ramsar.org).

 Join [Ramsar on Facebook](#)
www.facebook.com/RamsarConventionOnWetlands

 Follow [Ramsar on Twitter](#) @RamsarConv

Take part in [World Wetlands Day](#), the Convention’s annual campaign day, on **2 February**. The Secretariat prepares promotional and educational materials which can be adapted to local languages and contexts.

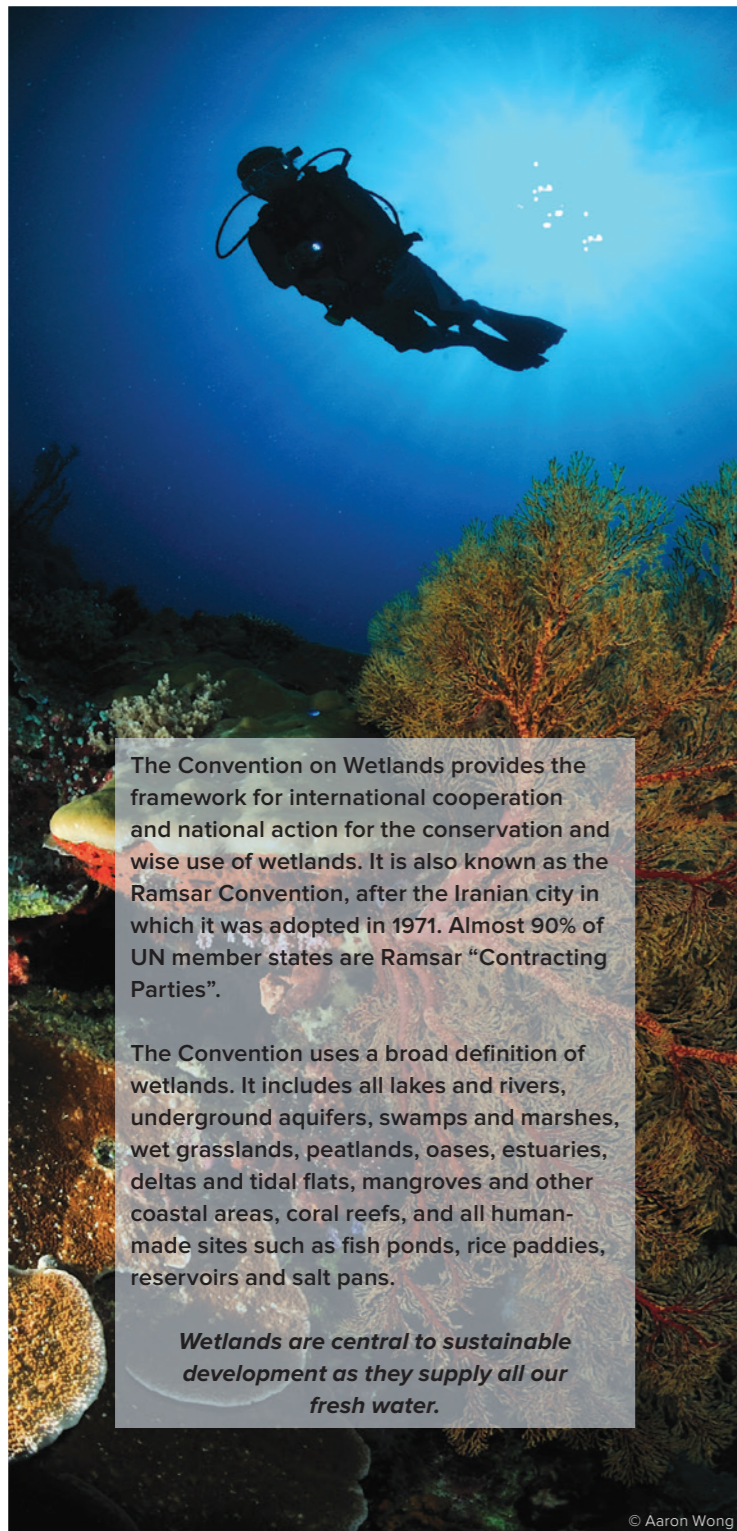
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Introducing the Convention on Wetlands



The Convention on Wetlands provides the framework for international cooperation and national action for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is also known as the Ramsar Convention, after the Iranian city in which it was adopted in 1971. Almost 90% of UN member states are Ramsar “Contracting Parties”.

The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands. It includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

Wetlands are central to sustainable development as they supply all our fresh water.

© Aaron Wong

What does the Ramsar Convention do?

The Convention’s mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

Under the **three pillars** of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to:

- work towards the **wise use of all their wetlands** through national plans, policies and legislation, management actions and public education;
- designate suitable wetlands for the list of **Wetlands of International Importance** (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management;
- **cooperate internationally** on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.

Wise use of wetlands

The Convention defines the wise use of wetlands as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. 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.



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What do wetlands do?

- Wetlands store water and ensure its quality, providing resilience against drought.
- They protect against flooding and the impacts of storms.
- They provide food and other services such as transport and recreation.
- They provide diverse habitats which support genetic, species, and ecosystem biodiversity and play key roles in the life cycles of many species and in annual migration patterns.



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What is happening to wetlands and what can we do?

Wetlands are being degraded and lost due to the increasing demands of the growing human population. Over-exploitation of the remaining wetlands is increasingly threatening their capacity to provide essential services.

To counter this, we must ensure the wise use of wetlands and of the water in them, restore degraded wetlands and create new ones if necessary to regain the services we need.

How does the Convention work?

- The **Conference of the Contracting Parties** (COP) meets every three years and promotes policies and guidelines to advance the objectives of the Convention.
- The **Standing Committee**, made up of Contracting Parties representing the six Ramsar regions of the world, meets each year to guide the Convention between meetings of the COP.
- The **Scientific and Technical Review Panel** provides guidance on key issues for the Convention.



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- The **Secretariat** in Gland, Switzerland, manages the day-to-day activities of the Convention, and publishes Convention documents and the “Ramsar List” of Wetlands of International Importance. It is administratively supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Each Contracting Party designates an **Administrative Authority** as its focal point for implementation of the Convention.
- Countries are also encouraged to establish a broad-based **National Wetland Committee**.
- Contracting Parties can place Ramsar Sites with a changing ecological character on the **Montreux Record**, and technical assistance such as a Ramsar Advisory Mission can be provided.
- Private companies and public and community organizations are encouraged to contribute to the mission of the Convention.