

Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general, and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular, during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995 for Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998

Contracting Party: Sri Lanka

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority

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Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighboring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

No.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.

2.1 Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:

National wetland conservation policies have been developed. Site reports have been developed for 20 important wetlands of the country. Separate management plans have been developed for conservation of mangroves in the country.

a. What are/will be its main features?

Main feature of wetland policies is the conservation. However, sustainable utilization is accepted whenever possible. Community participation is the another important feature.

b. Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

Wetlands are managed by few agencies in addition to the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC). These agencies are Irrigation Department, Forest Department, Water supply & Drainage Board. Central Environment Authority and Cost Conservation Department (CCD) also involve in conservation of wetlands by implementing policy and legal frameworks of those agencies.

c. How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

The coordination among related agencies is the key strategy and there are few coordinating bodies established for such coordination. The National Wetland Steering Committee is coordinating the wetland policy issues while Fauna & Flora Protection Advisory Committee coordinate/monitor PA of DWLC including wetlands.

2.2 If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

The site reports of wetlands provide management guidelines for each wetland. These site reports provide very good action plans for each wetland. These reports are important for

PA management agencies DWLC and FD. DWLC has developed management plan for Bundala National Park which is the only Ramsar site in the country. DWLC also taking necessary action to prepare resource inventories for another two coastal wetlands which may be proposed as Ramsar sites in near future. FD also in the process of implementing the National Mangrove Management plan. However financial limitation has limit the implementation of those plans. However, with the implementation of ADB funded projects by DWLC, FD and CCD, wetland conservation will become an active sector in the country.

- 2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with :
- a single Government Ministry,
 - a committee drawn from several Ministries, or

Few national agencies involved in wetland conservation. There is no special committee on Ramsar. But few committees coordinate the activities as explained.

- a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

- 2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government?
Yes/No

Not relevant.

If yes, please give details.

- 2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention?
Please describe these.

The Fauna & Flora Protection Ordinance is in the process of being reviewed at present. Wetlands are an integrated sector in protected area management and biodiversity conservation. The Ramsar Convention always provides additional advantage in conservation efforts. As a party to the Ramsar Convention, government is always concerned about the conservation of Ramsar site as well as other important wetlands. The Ramsar status is very much useful in dealing with other development priorities in relation to land allocations, funding etc.

- 2.6 Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:
- a. national

Since environment is a devolved subject under the constitution, provincial councils have a key role in environmental conservation. However, most wildlife, forestry, coastal conservation etc. are not devolved and the central government has the authority in conservation of most of the important natural wetlands. In this context, wetlands are integrated into all national plans and implementation of such plans.

- b. provincial

Provincial council authorities are in the National Steering Committees and they play an important coordinating role in the provinces.

c. local

Participation of local communities and local level state officials in wetland conservation has improved in the recent past with the increased awareness campaigns by state as well as NGOs.

- 2.7 Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines? Yes/No

A Management Plan has been developed for the Ramsar site but is still in draft form. The plan will finalized in near future and implementation will follow.

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

- 2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then “to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands” (Operative paragraph 9).

There is no such issue in the Ramsar site but a few wetlands face the threat of chemical pollution. The National Environment Act provides necessary guidelines and regulations to cope with such issues. The mandatory requirement of Environmental Impacts Assessments and Environmental Protection License System provide sufficient legal tools to deal with such pollution issues.

- 2.9 Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

Up to the recent past economic valuation in the natural resources sector was not properly developed and always under-valued the economic value of natural resources including wetlands. However, recently economic valuation of natural resources has been accepted as a tool in national planning and allocation of state funds for conservation. However, still proper guidelines and indicators have to be developed.

- 2.10 Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

Any development around sensitive areas such as protected areas, wetlands, forest reserves are subjected to EIA process under the National Environmental Act. The FFPO also has some environmental guidelines in relation to its PA system.

- 2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? Yes/No.

Yes.

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

Wetland restoration has been identified as a key area in sectoral plans. These concerns have been well addressed in National Environmental Action Plan, Wetland Conservation

Project and others. Mutturajawela marsh, an important coastal wetlands in Colombo suburbs has been selected for restoration under the wetland project. Chillaw lagoon, another important wetland has also been selected by a NGO for rehabilitation.

- 2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

Community participation from the planning session onwards is one of the key strategies in wetland conservation. All the wetland management plans so far developed had very good participatory process where local communities and NGOs played a prominent role. Women are an integral part of the society, necessary actions have been taken to address all the issues in relation to women. Community participation in management has given prominence in the National Mangrove Management Plans where a separate cluster has been identified for participatory management. The Muthurajawela wetland management plan is also implemented through local NGOs and communities.

- 2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use? Yes/No

With the introduction of the open economy system a decade back, private sector is playing an important role in national programmes including conservation of natural resources. In all management plans, private sector involvement was identified in eco-tourism and related activities. In addition to the hotel industry, small to medium level private agencies are also involved in eco-tourism related activities.

If yes, please provide details.

Management plans identified the role of the private sector and seek their participation.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels

- 3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

Yes. All agencies involved in the conservation of natural resources including PA and wetland management are carrying out awareness and extension programmes as a strategy to win the support of local communities. All the management plans have incorporated extension and awareness as an important component of the plans. With the introduction of the buffer zone concept in management plans, higher priority has given to the local communities in buffer zones and they became the target groups in most of the awareness programmes. But even other stakeholder sections also considered as important target groups, particularly women and school children.

- 3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar’s Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

Natural Resources Management (NRM) has become a part of most of the university curricula in basic degree courses. In the recent past there have been many post graduate courses on NRM. Wetlands and mangroves have been included in the school curricula from grade eight up to university entrance level (primary, secondary and tertiary). There are many short training/certificate courses arranged by universities on wetlands.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

- 4.1 Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions, which can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and *modus operandi*.

The National Wetland Steering Committee, Committee on Natural Resources of the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Fauna & Flora Advisory committee of the Department of Wildlife Conservation are involved in wetland conservation. These committees take a leading role in conservation, research, education & awareness. NSF annually offers more than 5 research grants on wetland sector while universities also carry out studies on wetland issues. These committees play a coordinating and advisory role in conservation.

- 4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

a. a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

Yes. But identification of training needs has been addressed in policy statements and management plans. However there are no separate plans on training needs. Most of the studies have pointed out the training needs strongly and recommend short/long term training programmes in human resource development in the wetland sector.

b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?

No

c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

No

d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

Yes. Many senior officers/academics/managers have participated in wetland-related training locally as well as outside the country.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

- 5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:
- a. being prepared?
 - b. fully prepared?

Only one Ramsar site (Bundala NP). A management plan has been developed in the recent past and will be implemented in near future.

- c. being implemented?

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites, which sites these, are and what category they fall into.

- 5.2 Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

The management plan includes a monitoring evaluation section. This section deals with monitoring the biodiversity, hydrological parameters and vegetation changes.

- 5.3 Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

Yes. Due to the increase of drainage water from an up-stream irrigation scheme, water quality of the wetland has changed. With the increase of fresh water, lagoon water has become fresh, which is not conducive for most of the birds including greater flamingoes. This issue has discussed in detail in the management plan and measures have been proposed to mitigate those impacts.

- 5.4 In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?

Not applicable.

- 5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties", please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

Not applicable.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6

To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.

6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No. **Yes**

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalized, where it is kept and what information it contains.

The national wetland directory is available in the Department of Wildlife Conservation Office. Another inventory is available through the National Wetland Project, Central Environment Authority. These inventories were compiled more than 5 years ago. These inventories contain information about location, extent, biodiversity, important bird spp. etc.

6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of "important" wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for "important" were used, and the types of information it contains.

There is no separate inventory for important wetlands.

6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

Sri Lanka has 103 main river basins and 93 coastal watersheds. It is estimated that there are 3 ha of inland lentic water for every square kilometer. Total extent of coastal wetlands is about 200,000 ha while inland wetlands have not been properly estimated. There are no estimates of wetland losses. However a few studies have been carried out in selected wetlands.

If this information is available, please indicate what definition of "wetland" was used.

The definition use for all wetland programmes is the Ramsar definition.

6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

- a. meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
- b. meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
- c. are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
- d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
- e. are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
- f. are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

No. These issues have been discussed in the management plan and will be considered in the implementation stage.

6.5 If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

Yes. Two sites have already been selected, to be proposed as Ramsar site. It is in the process.

6.6 Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

Not applicable.

6.7 Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

Not applicable.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilize international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

7.1 Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7). **No**

7.2 Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or internationally? Yes/No. **No**

If yes, please give details.

7.3 Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

- a. Convention on Biological Diversity
- b. Framework Convention on Climate Change
- c. Convention to Combat Desertification
- d. Convention on Migratory Species
- e. World Heritage Convention

Sri Lanka is a signatory to all the above Conventions. The focal point for the first three is the Ministry of Forestry and Environment; the focal point for the fourth is the Department of Wildlife Conservation; the focal point for the fifth one is the UNESCO Council of Sri Lanka. There are National Steering Committees in relation to the above conventions. These committees consist of members of all relevant state agencies, NGOs and academics of the country.

7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No. **No**

If yes, please provide details.

- 7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

Yes, GEF has supported PA management and biodiversity conservation for the last 5 years. Management of the Ramsar site is part of this project.

- 7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No. **Yes**

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

The budgetary allocation is part of the annual protected area management budget.

- 7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Not applicable.

- 7.8 Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No

Not applicable.

If yes, what is that process.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8 To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

- 8.1 Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No. **No**

If yes, please provide details.

- 8.2 If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

These are **optional** questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and

type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this **optional** section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

9.1 Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in your country? **Few local NGOs.**

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

9.2 Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:

a. to each other? Yes/No **No**

b. to the government? Yes/No **No**

If yes in either case, please give details.

9.3 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No

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9.4 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

Mostly concentrated on conservation of mangroves

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9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details.

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9.6 Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

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Final comments:

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

a. The Ramsar Standing Committee

b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel

c. The Ramsar Bureau

d. The Ramsar NGO partners

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.