

ABOUT THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

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". Countries that join the Ramsar Convention are expressing their commitment to work towards the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources, both within their own territories and through cooperation globally and with other Parties. In the broadest sense, their treaty obligations are grouped under the **three Pillars of the Convention**.

1 WISE USE OF WETLANDS

There is a general obligation for a Party to include wetland conservation considerations in their national land-use, hydrological and river basin plans. They have committed to implement these plans to promote, as far as possible, the wise use of wetlands in their territory (Article 3.1 of the Convention). A Party should also undertake to establish nature reserves in wetlands and promote training in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening (Article 4).

2 LISTED SITES

Another commitment is for a Party to designate at least one wetland (Ramsar Site) 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. In addition, a Party should continue to designate suitable wetlands within its territory for the List (Article 2.1). Each Party is also obliged to inform the Ramsar Secretariat if the ecological character of any Ramsar Site in its territory has changed, is changing or is likely to change (Article 3.2).

3 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

A Party also agrees to consult with other Contracting Parties about implementation of the Convention, especially in regard to transboundary wetlands, shared water systems, and shared species (Article 5).

GLOBAL BODIES AND PROCESSES

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, guided by the framework of the decisions made by the COP.

Advisory Bodies (reporting to Standing Committee & COP)

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

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

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.

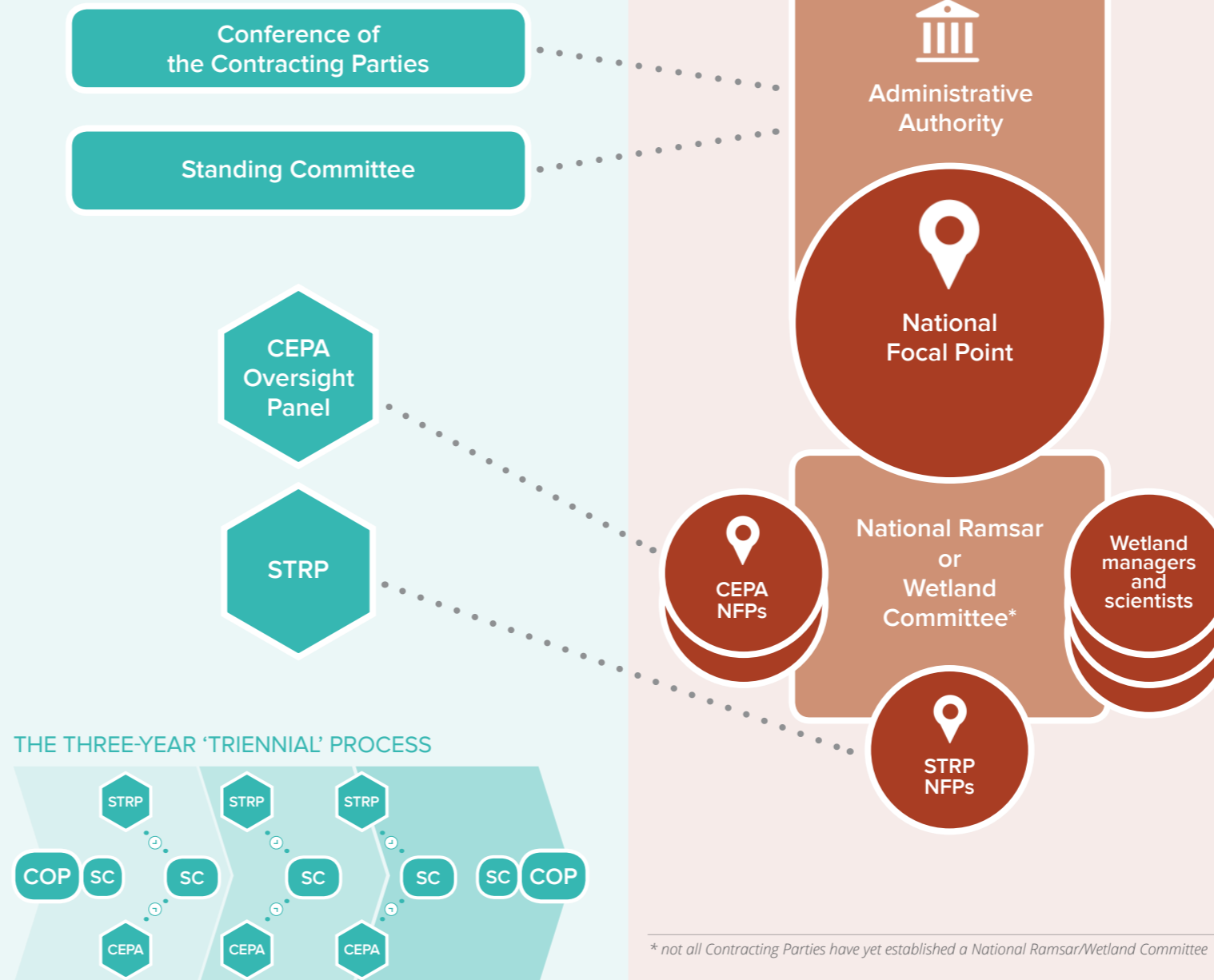
Supporting Bodies

The Convention Secretariat

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

The International Organization Partners (IOPs)

International NGOs that have been formally recognised by the 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), and WWF International.



* not all Contracting Parties have yet established a National Ramsar/Wetland Committee

NATIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Leading national implementation

The **Administrative Authority (AA)** is the government agency responsible for the national application of the treaty and the focal point for communications with the Ramsar Secretariat. The AA, led by an identified Head of Administrative Authority, consults and cooperates with as many other government ministries, agencies and non-governmental organisations as necessary to ensure the best possible results in implementing the Convention. The AA is expected to designate four National Focal Points whose roles, which are vital to the effective functioning of the Convention, demand a high level of personal commitment.

The **AA National Focal Point (AA NFP)** is a member of staff of the Administrative Authority appointed to coordinate national implementation and act as the daily contact point for the Convention for people within the country and the Ramsar Secretariat.

The Administrative Authority appoints three specialist focal points and establishes a committee through which they collaborate

The **STRP National Focal Point** is a committed scientist who advises the Scientific and Technical Review Panel. He/she has acknowledged expertise in wetland-related subjects and the capacity to initiate technical collaboration and communication within the country's scientific networks. STRP NFPs liaise between the STRP's regional members and any national networks of experts.

CEPA National Focal Points are recognised experts in Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA), one from within the government and one representing an NGO. Together they lead the development and implementation of national and local wetland CEPA programmes and action plans.

National Ramsar or Wetland Committees provide a mechanism for promoting the objectives of the Convention beyond the individuals and branches of government that are officially charged with its implementation. National Committees should include as many government agencies and other stakeholders as possible, as well as NFPs from the other multilateral environmental agreements.

COORDINATING GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

The government agency designated by the head of state or government or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take charge of the national implementation of the Convention, and to support its regional implementation in collaboration with other Contracting Parties.

Maintain regular contact with the Secretariat of the Convention.

Liaise with Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee and participate in Ramsar regional meetings.

Participate in the Conference of Contracting Parties.

Approve and update Ramsar Information Sheets on Wetlands of International Importance.

NATIONAL FOCAL POINT

A daily contact person, coordinating activities and liaising with national stakeholders and international partners including the Convention Secretariat.

Liaise regularly with the Secretariat.

Coordinate the compilation of national reports to the Secretariat and to each Conference of Contracting Parties on implementation of the Convention and the status of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.

Liaise with the National Focal Points of other Ramsar Contracting Parties as necessary.

NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL (STRP)

An acknowledged and committed wetland technical expert from either the government or another organisation.

Liaise with the STRP, including through the STRP Platform, to promote regional scientific priorities and important national and regional issues.

Review STRP draft guidance and other reports produced by global Convention bodies on issues within their areas of expertise.

Engage in thematic work areas or tasks of STRP Working Groups, giving input through the Panel member leading that work area or task in the STRP Work Plan.

Contribute to national reporting on STRP activities to the Conference of Contracting Parties.

NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS (CEPA)

Two qualified experts, one from within government and one from a non-governmental organisation, who lead in implementing the Convention's CEPA programme.

Serve as national point of contact on CEPA matters with the Secretariat and other Contracting Parties, and link with peers through the CEPA e-mail lists.

Contribute to national reporting on CEPA activities to the Conference of Contracting Parties.

COORDINATING NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Designate suitable wetlands for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, and arrange for their appropriate management.

Implement a national wetland policy.

Establish a national committee to support the implementation of the Convention.

Appoint a National Focal Point, and focal points for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and Communications, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) activities.

Work with other government agencies concerned with wetlands, water-related issues and biodiversity, to strengthen implementation of the Convention.

Help coordinate the national implementation of the Convention.

Maintain communication with the STRP and CEPA National Focal Points and update them on national or international progress in the implementation of the Convention.

Work with the national focal points for other water-related and biodiversity multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), to ensure effective and coherent implementation of all the conventions.

Ensure that global scientific and technical decisions and guidance inform national decision-making.

Develop a national network of relevant experts, including national focal points of other MEAs, disseminate the work of the STRP to them and seek their advice on key issues.

Liaise on STRP matters and provide technical advice to the National Focal Point and Wetland / Ramsar Committee.

Help to monitor and evaluate Small Grants Fund (SGF) projects when requested.

Lead the development and implementation of national, subnational and local wetland CEPA programmes or action plans, establishing a CEPA task force where necessary.

Help implement national activities, establishing and maintaining contacts, networks and mechanisms for effective communication.

Serve as active spokespeople for wetland CEPA, to ensure a prominent and positive public profile for the Convention and its conservation and wise use goals.

Liaise on CEPA activities and issues, with each other and with the National Focal Point.



Ramsar Convention Secretariat
Rue Mauverney 28
CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 999 0170
Fax: +41 22 999 0169
ramsar@ramsar.org
www.ramsar.org

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address book of key contacts
www.ramsar.org/key-contacts

The "Ramsar Toolkit": Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands
www.ramsar.org/handbooks

Ramsar Sites Information Service
www.ramsar.wetlands.org

List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)
www.ramsar.org/pdf/sitelist.pdf

Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance
www.ramsar.org/anno-list

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DELIVERING THE RAMSAR CONVENTION IN YOUR COUNTRY

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS AND THEIR ROLES

