



**COP14**  **2022**

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

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

### **Resolution XIV.10**

#### **Updating the Wetland City Accreditation of the Convention**

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*, which recognizes cities which have taken exceptional steps to safeguard their urban wetlands;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING that the Contracting Parties at the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties recognized 18 cities (six in China, four in France, one in Hungary, four in the Republic of Korea, one in Madagascar, one in Sri Lanka and one in Tunisia) 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 Convention on Wetlands 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 ongoing accreditation of cities through the voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system in order to provide positive branding opportunities and mobilize support for cities that demonstrate strong positive relationships with wetlands;
11. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and INVITES other governments, financial institutions, International Organization Partners (IOPs), Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) and other implementing partners to support the implementation of the voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system;
12. ALSO ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to undertake processes to identify, empower and encourage cities to work towards their voluntary accreditation and to support accredited cities to maintain their accreditation;
13. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and INVITES other governments, financial institutions, IOPs, RRIs and other implementing partners to support the cooperation of the Wetland City Accreditation system with other relevant city networks and initiatives;
14. WELCOMES the willingness of the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia (RRC-EA) to support the Independent Advisory Committee by hosting, administrating and financing regular meetings;
15. 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;
16. TAKES NOTE of the proposal by the Independent Advisory Committee outlined in Annex 1 of the present Resolution 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;
17. 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, updated procedure, award process, renewal process and administration for the Wetland City Accreditation system;
18. REQUESTS the allocation of ten days per annum of administrative assistant time needed during the triennium to provide administrative services for the Wetland City Accreditation scheme, as outlined in paragraph 22 of Annex 2, subject to the availability of resources in compliance with Resolution XII.10 and the approval of the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee<sup>1</sup>;
19. FURTHER REQUESTS a review of the implementation progress and financing of the voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system to be reported to each meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), as initially requested under paragraph 11 of Resolution XII.10, before any further requests for Secretariat resources are made;

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<sup>1</sup> As per Standing Committee Decision SC58-24.

20. CONFIRMS that this updated text and its annexes build on the framework adopted in Resolution XII.10;
21. ALSO REQUESTS that the Standing Committee nominate members of the Independent Advisory Committee for future COP cycles at its first meeting following the COP in accordance with the terms of reference in the Annex 2 to this Resolution;
22. 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
23. INVITES the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and the CEPA (communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness) Oversight Panel to establish permanent cooperation with the Wetland City Network and use their potential to disseminate the philosophy of the Convention on Wetlands 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 of the Convention, and terms of reference for the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) of the Wetland City Accreditation. The material developed has facilitated the successful accreditation of 18 cities.

The Standing Committee has considered the progress on the Wetland City Accreditation scheme (presented in document SC57 Doc.26) and several operational challenges have been highlighted. Informed by input from the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the IAC and the Secretariat, the Standing Committee 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 provide *de novo* text to be included in the guidance to be developed by the 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 background of and benefits of the Wetland City Accreditation.
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	Procedure	Description of the procedure based on the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) cycle.
4	Guidance notes for Administrative Authorities (AAs)	Guidance for 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.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Description of content</b>
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 is 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 the IAC and responsibilities of the Secretariat.
10	Monitoring and evaluation process	Description of a monitoring and evaluation process to be undertaken by the IAC to assess impacts and outcomes of accreditation (including reports from cities, applications to renew accreditation, possible short video reports by mayors and single-page case studies), with a report to the Standing Committee 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 Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), with its own governance system.
3. To be formally accredited, a candidate for the Wetland City Accreditation should satisfy the standards used to implement each of the following international criteria:
  - a. It has one or more Wetlands of International Importance, or other wetland conservation sites, 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 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 work plan set by the IAC in the beginning of each new term.
  - 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.

**Procedure** (proposed Section 3 of the operational guidance)

5. The schedule is based on Year 0 being the year of a meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), with Year 1, 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 schedule may be required if unforeseen events or unexpected changes in the Convention calendar alter this timeframe.

*Table: Schedule for administration processes*

Year	Actions
Year 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During the Standing Committee meeting that immediately follows a COP, the Committee nominates a representative from each region for the IAC</li> <li>- The new term of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) commences with a work plan for the next triennium and election of its Chair and Co-Chair</li> </ul>
Year 1	- Within six months after the previous COP, the Secretariat launches the call for applications for new and renewed accreditation
	- Interested cities prepare and send applications to the Head of the Administrative Authority (AA)
Year 2	- Heads of AA submit applications to the Secretariat through the online submission
	- The Secretariat forwards applications to the IAC for review
Year 3	- By three months before the annual Standing Committee meeting, the IAC reviews applications and determines which cities to accredit or renew their accreditation
	- At the annual Standing Committee meeting, IAC reports its decision to the Committee
	- The Standing Committee takes note of the IAC report and instructs the Secretariat to take the following actions after the meeting: - The Secretariat a) announces the list of newly accredited and renewed wetland cities, b) invites the newly accredited cities through their respective National Focal Points (NFPs) to the certificate awarding ceremony at the upcoming COP and c) prepares the ceremony with support from the IAC and the host country
	- The 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 newly accredited cities through their respective NFPs to attend an award ceremony at the COP, noting that the cost associated with their attendance to the ceremony is to be covered by the representatives of the accredited cities.
  - The Secretariat prepares Wetland City Accreditation certificates for accredited cities.
  - An authorized representative of the accredited city notifies the Secretariat through their respective NFP or the Head of their AA of whether they will be attending the award ceremony.

- The Standing Committee’s Subgroup on COP schedules an award ceremony during the COP.
  - The Secretary General delivers certificates to a representative of each newly accredited city at the award ceremony.
7. The 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 for the award ceremony during the COP for the public recognition of the accreditation at the COP.
  - The ceremony should restrict itself to the awarding of the certificates to the newly accredited cities.
  - Films and promotional material about cities should not be part of the ceremony, except for pictures of each city for background, 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.
  - 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 the IAC.
  - The IAC reviews the renewal forms received from each city.
  - If clarification is required, the IAC may return the renewal form to the NFP requesting appropriate action.
  - The IAC reports a list of those cities that meet the required standard for renewal to the SC.
  - The Standing Committee takes note of the report of the IAC and instructs the Secretariat to inform the applicant cities of the result of the renewal process.
  - 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. The IAC develops its own intersessional work plan for completing accreditation decisions and using the criteria and procedure outlined within this Annex and the terms of the proposed operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation.



10. The 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 the IAC and not assigned to members of the same nationality as the applicant cities.
11. The 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. The IAC reports its decision on new and renewed accreditation to the final full meeting of the Standing Committee prior to the next meeting of the COP.
13. The 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. The IAC issues guidance, as required, for NFPs on how they could undertake a national review to determine which cities to propose to the IAC, and evaluates the compiled accreditation forms to ensure that they abide by the criteria.
15. The 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 Standing Committee from the following:
  - a. A Standing Committee member representative from each of the regions of the Convention;
  - b. A representative of the 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 Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Convention;
  - f. A representative of the Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel of the Convention;
  - g. Representatives of any concerned Ramsar Regional Initiatives; and
  - h. The Secretary General of the Convention or his/her designated representative (observer).
17. Technical advisors may be co-opted to the IAC as required but would be subject to approval by the Standing Committee.
18. All regional contracting party representative members of the IAC are agreed at the Standing Committee meeting following each COP.
19. All members of the 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. The IAC may invite consultants and observers 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 the IAC;
  - Forwarding queries specifically related to the review process to the IAC;
  - Announcing the result of the review process at the end of the annual Standing Committee meeting preceding a COP meeting, via official notification and on the Convention website;
  - Inviting newly accredited cities through respective NFPs to a certificate awarding ceremony at the COP meeting, ensuring that the invitation allows for sufficient time for accredited cities to register as observers at COP, 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; and
  - Updating the dedicated web page in the Convention website.
23. The role of the Secretariat as a member of the IAC is to provide updates in administrative processes and legal advice, 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.