

Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. note the Report of the STRP Chair;
- ii. consider the recommendations presented by the STRP in paragraph 34 of this Report, in particular, regarding:
 - a. STRP priorities for 2026-2028;
 - b. guidance on using alternative population estimates under Criterion 6;
 - c. the scoping report to review legal and policy frameworks for wetland conservation and wise use;
 - d. the proposed approach to deliver future Global Wetland Outlooks; and
 - e. financing the establishment of the Waterbirds Estimates Partnership and delivering the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027).

Introduction

1. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has made significant progress since the last report presented at the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC63). This progress includes the completion of key tasks outlined in the STRP work plan for 2023-2025 and the successful organization of the third intersessional meeting of the STRP. The Panel has been actively involved in various working groups established by the Standing Committee and has provided responses to ad-hoc requests. This report presents an overview of the Panel's activities since SC63, with a particular focus on key achievements and forthcoming initiatives.

Intersessional online meetings of the STRP

2. Supported by the Secretariat, the third intersessional online meeting for members of the STRP, including task leads and contributors, took place on 3 and 4 September 2024, with 41 participants attending. The objectives of this meeting were to:
 - Provide updates from the STRP Chair and Secretariat;
 - Enable Thematic Work Area (TWA) leads to update members on the progress of the STRP work plan;
 - Discuss draft resolutions to be submitted to the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee: draft resolution on the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2026-2028 (document SC64 Doc.19); draft resolution on the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027) (SC64 Doc.20); and draft resolution on the application of Criterion 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance (SC64 Doc.21). Further details on these resolutions are provided below.

3. The STRP also reviewed the progress of specific STRP tasks, focusing on: the draft Briefing Note on other effective area-based conservation measures for wetlands wise use (task 4.1); work undertaken by a consultant on the assessment of costs of wetland loss and degradation for the Global Wetland Outlook (task 5.1); the proposed approach to delivering future Global Wetland Outlooks (task 5.3); and the proposed review of legal and policy frameworks for wetland conservation and wise use (task 5.4).

STRP Communiqué

4. Following the 26th meeting of the STRP (STRP26), the STRP Chair, with support from the Secretariat, launched a [communiqué](#) that focuses on sharing updates from the STRP Chair with IOPs, observers, and STRP focal points. The first communiqué was sent out on 15 May 2024 and focused on sharing information on progress related to STRP tasks and relevant publications. The communiqué also provides opportunities for sharing updates from the International Organization Partners (IOPs). The next edition of the communiqué is anticipated in December 2024.

Progress on the high-priority tasks outlined in the STRP Work Plan 2023-2025

5. The STRP has made substantial progress on high-priority tasks:

Thematic Work Area 1: Wetlands of International Importance, development of the Site network and application of criteria.

6. *Task 1.1 (a). Guidance on the application of Ramsar Criterion 9 for the designation of Wetlands of International Importance:* Task 1.1. (a) has been completed. The task has involved reviewing and proposing updates to the Strategic Framework in relation to the guidance for designating Wetlands of International Importance under Criterion 9, enhancing collaboration with relevant actors, and identifying new data sources for site designation. The work has also included updating the document *Population estimates and 1% thresholds for wetland-dependent non-avian animal species, for the application of Criterion 9*, which that was originally published in 2006.¹ STRP has also submitted a draft resolution on applying Criteria 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance (SC64 Doc.21).
7. *Task 1.1 (b). Guidance to facilitate the application of Criterion 6:* The task has involved reviewing and proposing updates to the Strategic Framework in relation to the use of waterbird population estimates under Criterion 6 as well as engaging with relevant IOPs and flyway initiatives. Task 1.1. (b) has been completed. The STRP has submitted a draft resolution on the application of Criteria 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance (SC64 Doc.21), which includes proposed changes to the Strategic Framework, including changes to Criterion 5 to ensure consistency.
8. *Task 1.1 (c). Technical proposal for resourcing and implementation of Waterbird Population Estimate updates:* Task 1.1. (c) has been completed. A technical proposal that outlined options for implementing and resourcing updates to the WPEs was presented in SC63 Doc.19, outlining synergies with related agreements, proposed institutional resourcing partnerships, capacity-building priorities, and suggested cost-reduction measures for WPE production. Pursuant to Decision SC63-31, the STRP has prepared a draft resolution on the establishment of the

¹ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/population-estimates-1-thresholds-wetland-dependent-non-avian-animal-species-application>.

Waterbirds Estimates Partnership and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027) (SC64-20), with additional information on financial implications of the WEP included in the present report (Annex 5).

9. *Task 1.2. Global assessment of gaps in the network of Wetlands of International Importance and synergies with global climate and biodiversity goals:* Task 1.2 has been put on hold due to limited human resources available to progress this work. To date, the focus for TWA 1 has been on ensuring delivery of Tasks 1.1a, 1.1b, and 1.1c. Activities associated with task 1.2 have been integrated as a prioritized task for the next triennium (see Annex 1 STRP Priorities 2026-2028). This will involve a global assessment to identify under-represented wetland types, species, and habitats across biogeographic areas, utilizing the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) and other sources. It will utilize a standardized approach to provide technical information to support the future designation and prioritization of Wetlands of International Importance across various wetland types and regions.

Thematic Work Area 2: Tools for wetland assessment, mapping and monitoring, and development of inventories.

10. *Task 2.1. Wetland mapping and inventories to catalyze greater use of available methodologies for wetland carbon assessments:* The task entails producing guidance to enhance the utility of national wetland inventories (NWIs) for national greenhouse gas (GHG) accounts and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including consideration of emission factors for various wetland types, other data sources, and technical constraints. The task is being implemented in coordination with the task team responsible for Task 3.2. Task 2.1 is ongoing, with a Technical Report expected to be available for the 27th meeting of the STRP (STRP27) on 2 to 6 December 2024.
11. *Task 2.2. Prepare guidance on inventories and monitoring of small wetlands and their multiple values for biodiversity conservation, especially in the contexts of landscape management and climate change.* The task will produce a Policy Brief to raise the awareness of small wetlands' significance for biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and hydrological regulation, highlighting their vulnerability to climate change. Task 2.2 is nearing completion, and the Policy Brief is expected to be finalized by the task team ahead of STRP27.

Thematic Work Area 3: Direct and climate-change-related pressures on wetlands, their impacts and responses.

12. *Task 3.1. Climate change and wetlands – updated information on the current and projected impacts of climate change on the world's wetlands and responses:* This task involves synthesizing technical information on wetlands from the IPCC 6th Assessment Report (AR6), focusing on climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. It is being developed alongside Task 2.1 and incorporates insights from various global reports. Task 3.1 is ongoing, and expected to produce a Briefing Note that will be available for STRP27.
13. *Task 3.2: Blue carbon guidance, data and models, and support for integration of blue carbon in climate change planning frameworks:*
 - Task 3.2 (a). Develop guidance on prioritizing coastal blue carbon ecosystems for conservation and restoration. This task focuses on coastal blue carbon ecosystems (BCEs) such as mangroves, seagrass beds, and intertidal marshes/salt marshes. A desktop study is underway to evaluate existing methods and guidance for BCE conservation and restoration site prioritization.

- Task 3.2 (b). Compiling and reviewing data and models on carbon stock and fluxes. The task examines carbon stocks, emissions, and dynamics in coastal BCEs, particularly focusing on mangroves, salt marshes, and seagrass, with additional insights into other coastal BCEs, such as mudflats. This work aims to contribute to possible future updates to the IPCC Wetlands Supplement, ensuring that global carbon models reflect the latest data and analyses from BCEs.

Both tasks are being undertaken in close connection with the task team responsible for Task 2.1. A Briefing Note (Task 3.2.a) as well as a Technical Report and Policy Brief (Task 3.2.b) are under preparation.

14. *Task 3.3. Agriculture and wetlands: maintaining and restoring the ecological character of wetlands in agricultural settings:* The task is focused on developing guidelines to enhance wetland ecosystem services within agricultural landscapes. It includes engaging National Focal Points and the STRP network for information on specific agro-ecosystems and wetland types and improving RSIS reporting on agro-wetland dynamics. A technical workshop was organized with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The output from Task 3.3 will be a Technical Report and a Policy Brief. The Technical Report is expected to be finalized before STRP27. The Policy Brief will be drafted after completion of the Technical Report in the first two months of 2025. In addition, an open-access online training module will be prepared and made available on the FAO eLearning Academy² with funding from the Convention's Partnership with Danone.

Thematic Work Area 4: Wise use, sustainable management and restoration of wetlands in the wider landscape/seascape.

15. *Task 4.1. OECMs as an opportunity in promoting wetland conservation and wise use. The task focuses on developing guidance for wetlands as 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs):* This task addresses methodologies for identifying, recognizing, and managing wetlands, including Wetlands of International Importance, as OECMs to deliver against the goals and targets of the KM GBF, including required updates to the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS). Task 4.1 is ongoing. A Briefing Note is expected to be available for STRP27. The Briefing Note is developed in partnership with other relevant organizations, such as the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas' Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures Specialist Group.
16. *Task 4.2: Develop guidance on the conservation, wise use and management of 'working coastal habitats', including synthesizing the global pressures on coastal wetlands:* Task 4.2 has been put on hold due to limited human resources available to progress this work. The task planned to develop guidance for the conservation, wise use, and management of 'working coastal habitats'. It was to include updates to the wise-use Handbook 12 and to synthesize approaches for effective coastal habitat management.
17. *Task 4.3: Integrating wetland protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management into national sustainable development strategies:* This ongoing task centers around compiling and synthesizing case studies and tools for integrating wetland conservation and restoration into national sustainable development strategies. It includes developing an electronic database for case studies that will be hosted on the Convention on Wetlands website or WWT Learning Hub. Task 4.3 is expected to produce a Briefing Note that will be made available ahead of STRP27.

² See <https://elearning.fao.org/>.

Thematic Work Area 5: Cross-cutting issues, supporting functions, and synergies with other MEAs.

18. *Task 5.1. Financial costs of wetland loss and degradation, and investment required to maintain and restore wetlands (GWO 2025):* This entails analyzing the economic impacts of wetland loss, assess required financing for wetland conservation, and explore synergies with global environmental commitments. It aims to offer investment insights for wetland management, emphasizing NBS and integrating Indigenous and local community perspectives. The GWO is expected to be finalized in the second quarter of 2025. Consultants have been recruited to prepare a desktop study synthesizing and collating financial information on wetland loss and degradation. This desktop study will be made available to the 27th meeting of the STRP. It is recommended that GWO 2025 will be launched shortly before COP15 and that a GWO side event is organized during the COP.
19. *Task 5.2. Guidance to support the global implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) for wetlands:* Task 5.2 has been completed. This task focused on guidance to address wetlands in implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM GBF), and recommendations on adequate reflection of wetlands in the KM GBF indicator framework. The following outputs have been finalized:
- Submission to the 6th meeting of the AHTEG on Indicators of the effective consideration of wetlands in the KM GBF Monitoring Framework,³ submitted on 29 February 2024 (SC63 Inf.3). It consisted of a review of indicators and reporting mechanisms relevant to the KM GBF indicator framework and was produced with additional financial support from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
 - Briefing paper on *Upscaling wetland conservation, restoration, and wise use through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)*,⁴ published on 23 November 2023.
 - Technical Report 12: *Scaling up wetland conservation and restoration to deliver the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: Guidance on including wetlands in NBSAPs: Guidance on including wetlands in National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to boost biodiversity and halt wetland loss and degradation*,⁵ published on 15 May 2024 and launched during a joint webinar organized together with the CBD on 19 June 2024.
20. *Task 5.3. Develop an approach to deliver future Global Wetland Outlooks (GWOs):* A comprehensive plan for future GWOs has been developed, considering methodologies, timelines, and resource requirements, informed by previous editions and other international assessments. Annex 4 of the present report outlines options for future GWOs, for consideration by Standing Committee.
21. *Task 5.4. Review of policy and legal frameworks for wetland conservation and wise use: scoping study:* Task 5.4 has been completed. This task has produced a technical scoping note, setting out a plan for assessing policy and legal frameworks regarding wetland conservation, restoration, and use, proposing forward-looking policy options and integrative approaches for the next triennium. The technical scoping note is included as Annex 3 of the present report to SC64, and further work on this topic has been integrated as a prioritized task for the STRP in the next triennium (see Annex 1 Prioritized STRP tasks for the 2026-2028). Members of the

³ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc63-inf3-submission-convention-wetlands-6th-meeting-ad-hoc-technical-expert-group>.

⁴ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework-upscaling-wetland-conservation-restoration>.

⁵ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/scaling-wetland-conservation-restoration-deliver-kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity>.

Standing Committee are invited to provide feedback on the recommendations outlined in the technical scoping note to help ensure the proposed review of policy instruments effectively supports the implementation of the Convention.

Draft resolutions submitted to the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC64)

22. In preparation for the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC64), the STRP has submitted three draft resolutions for consideration at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15):

(a) **SC64 Doc.19: Proposed draft resolution on the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2026-2028.**

To maintain continuity and ensure a consistent approach, the Thematic Work Areas (TWAs) have been retained from the preceding triennium. The STRP has identified several emerging scientific and technical priorities requiring consideration and action. These priorities include the enhanced monitoring and reporting of the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance, the advancement of wetland mapping and inventory tools, the assessment of harmful algal blooms and wetland fires, and the preparation of the next Global Wetland Outlook. The draft resolution further requests the Secretariat to issue future calls for nominations of STRP Members following the annual Standing Committee meeting in the year preceding each COP. This approach will ensure the timely appointment of new STRP Members immediately after the COP, allowing sufficient time for the STRP to develop and implement its work plan effectively.

Annex 1 of this report provides a description of the proposed Thematic Work Areas and tasks for the STRP work plan for 2026-2028, to support the draft resolution.

(b) **SC64 Doc.21: Proposed draft resolution on the application of Criteria 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance.**

Building upon the amendments to the Strategic Framework introduced through Resolution XIV.18, this draft resolution addresses outstanding issues that were not fully considered during COP14. Specifically, it clarifies when and how alternative population estimates may be used by Contracting Parties and addresses related aspects of Criterion 5, such as cross-references to Criterion 6. Additionally, the resolution introduces amendments to the Strategic Framework related to Criterion 9, which pertains to non-avian wetland-dependent animal species, thereby facilitating the designation of Wetlands of International Importance based on this criterion. The proposed amendments to the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance are detailed in Annex 1 and 2 of the draft resolution.

(c) **SC64 Doc.20: Proposed draft resolution on the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027).**

The STRP has prepared a draft resolution that builds upon the technical proposal for the resourcing and implementation of updates to the Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE) presented during the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee (Doc SC63.20). The draft resolution addresses the urgent requirement for an update of resident and migratory waterbird populations through the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027), and the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) to be launched at COP15. The WEP will provide essential international coordination

and support for the ongoing updates of WPE, ensuring that waterbird population data remains current and accessible for wetland conservation efforts under the Convention.

Financing the establishment of the Waterbirds Estimates Partnership and delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027)

23. Annex 5 outlines the financial requirements for establishing the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and producing the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027). The annex complements the submitted draft resolution (SC64-20) and provides cost estimates for establishing the WEP, which will oversee and coordinate the updates of waterbird population data across multiple regions. It also details the resource needs for updating 1,600 priority waterbird populations and maintaining the Waterbird Populations Portal.
24. Three funding options – comprehensive, intermediate, and minimum – are proposed, with a recommendation for the Comprehensive funding option to ensure the full scope of updates is achieved. The annex emphasizes the importance of securing adequate financial resources by early 2025 to meet the ambitious timeline for both the WEP setup and the WPE2027 production. In the event of partial funding, additional resource mobilization efforts will be required to ensure the full delivery of results.

Further guidance on the use of alternative waterbird population estimates

25. Annex 2 provides further guidance for Contracting Parties on using alternative population estimates when applying Criterion 6 to designate Wetlands of International Importance. This is in addition to the proposed changes to the Strategic Framework (SC63-20). It outlines a step-by-step process for submitting alternative estimates, particularly for cases where current estimates from the Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE) or Conservation Status Reviews (CSRs) are outdated or unavailable.
26. The guidance emphasizes the importance of adhering to standard methodologies and providing robust, peer-reviewed data to support submissions. It also includes the necessary steps for review by the STRP and Secretariat, ensuring transparency and accuracy. The guidance aims to facilitate the use of the most up-to-date and accurate population data for waterbird conservation under the Convention.
27. The Standing Committee is invited to approve the guidance outlined in Annex 2 of the present report. This will allow its publication as a guidance document, facilitating its use by Contracting Parties.

Consultation with the Earth observation community

28. Pursuant to Decision SC63-30, the STRP, with the Secretariat, has initiated a consultation process with the Earth observation community. This consultation aims to identify and provide recommendations on how Earth observation can support Contracting Parties in implementation of the Convention and foster ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange on this. Specifically, this is expected to address how Earth observation data can be made available to and support national wetland inventory, wetland conservation, management, restoration and wise use, as well as how it can contribute to strengthened monitoring and reporting, under the Convention and in relation to relevant targets of the SDGs and KM-GBF. The findings from this consultation will also inform development of the STRP work plan for the 2026-2028 triennium.

29. The Secretariat has initiated the consultation process by conducting targeted interviews with leading experts in Earth observation, focusing on exploring the potential applications of these technologies. An 'Earth observation day' will be held in association with STRP27 on 6 December 2024 to further explore opportunities for long-term partnerships with the Earth observation community.
30. It should be noted that the present report to the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee is prepared ahead of the conclusion of the consultation process. The Chair of the STRP will provide a verbal update to the Standing Committee on the key findings and recommendations emerging from the consultation. This may include proposed additions to the draft resolution on the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for the 2026-2028 period.

Proposed approach to deliver future Global Wetland Outlooks (GWOs)

31. Annex 4 outlines a detailed conceptual framework for the future delivery of the Global Wetland Outlook (GWO), as prepared by the STRP in accordance with the 2023-2025 STRP work plan (Task 5.3). It defines the GWO's purpose as a flagship product of the Convention on Wetlands, aligned with the Strategic Plan and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). The document presents a phased approach for GWO production, covering scoping, assessment, review, and communications. The approach emphasizes structured expert teams, including Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors, supported by early-career professionals, to enhance capacity-building and diversity. Relevant methodologies, communication strategies, and funding mechanisms are also discussed to ensure the report's wide dissemination and impact.
32. While alternative approaches, such as those used by the Global Biodiversity Outlook (CBD) or Global Environment Outlook (UNEP), could be considered, the proposed approach in Annex 4 is recommended for discussion at SC64, given its suitability for the needs of the Convention. This annex is intended to guide the development of future GWOs and ensure their contribution to global wetland conservation efforts.

Other ongoing work and ad-hoc requests

33. The Panel's work includes several ongoing and ad-hoc advisory functions. The STRP contributes to the following groups and fora:
 - a. The Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG): pursuant to Resolution XIV.4, paragraph 23, Dr Hugh Robertson, STRP Chair, has participated in the SPWG on behalf of the STRP, providing technical advice.
 - b. Working Group on Updating Ramsar Information Sheets: the STRP Chair has participated in the meeting of the RIS working group on behalf of the STRP.
 - c. Wetland City Accreditation Independent Advisory Committee: Matthew Simpson, STRP Observer, participated in the advisory committee's meetings.
 - d. The CEPA Oversight Panel: Resolution XIV.8, Annex 3 called upon the STRP to designate a representative to serve on the CEPA Oversight Panel. Dr Ritesh Kumar, STRP Technical Expert, has been nominated as the STRP representative and actively participates in the CEPA Oversight Panel meetings.
 - e. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP): the Chair of the STRP is an ex-officio member

of the MEP. The STRP Chair attended the 22nd Meeting of the IPBES MEP and Bureau held 1 to 8 July 2024, and submitted a brief presentation on the high-priority STRP tasks aligned with the IPBES work programme.

- f. The Advisory Board of the Ukraine Ramsar Assessment: Dr Laurent Durieux, STRP Scientific Expert, participates in the Advisory Board.

Recommendations

34. The Standing Committee is invited to :

- a. Note the significant progress made by the STRP in advancing high-priority tasks, including the completion of key technical products and the development of guidance documents that support the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- b. Consider the proposed prioritized tasks for the STRP 2026-2028 work plan, which focus on enhancing wetland inventory, monitoring, restoration, policy development, and the application of new technologies, as outlined in Annex 1.
- c. Request the Secretariat to inform Contracting Parties about the process and timeline for nominations of STRP Members for the 2026-2028 triennium in advance of COP15, to facilitate timely submission of nominations and appointment of a new Panel after COP15.
- d. Note progress made in implementation of the consultation with the Earth observation community, and to consider its findings and recommendations, when available, in further discussions on the future scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for the 2026-2028 period.
- e. Consider the guidance on using alternative population estimates under Criterion 6, as set out in Annex 2; and request the Secretariat to disseminate the guidance document to ensure a transparent process for the submission, review, and approval of alternative estimates, in line with Resolution XIV.18.
- f. Encourage Contracting Parties to follow the submission process, as detailed in Annex 2, relating to the approval of alternative estimates under Criterion 6, ensuring adherence to the established methodologies for deriving 1% thresholds.
- g. Note the technical proposal prepared by the STRP for the review of legal and policy instruments aimed at improving wetland conservation, restoration, and wise use in Annex 3, for inclusion in the STRP work plan for 2026-2028 as a prioritized task.
- h. Encourage Contracting Parties and other stakeholders to provide financial contributions to support the establishment and operation of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027), recognizing the critical role of updated waterbird population data for wetland conservation and the successful implementation of the Convention, as detailed in Annex 5.
- i. Request the Secretariat to explore opportunities for additional resource mobilization, including partnerships with international organizations, the private sector, and other funding mechanisms, to secure the necessary resources for the full implementation of the WEP and WPE2027.

- j. Consider the proposed approach for future editions of the Global Wetland Outlook (GWO), as outlined in Annex 4, which emphasizes a structured, phased process for assessment, review, and communication of key findings; based on which a final approach for future editions of the GWO will be prepared for inclusion in the Report of the Chair of the STRP submitted to COP15.

Future STRP meetings

35. STRP27 will be held on 2 to 6 December 2024 in Gland, Switzerland, to allow for the completion of relevant high-priority tasks before the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.
36. A final intersessional online meeting of the STRP will be organized in collaboration with the Secretariat. The date for the online meeting will be decided during STRP27.

Annex 1

STRP Priorities 2026-2028

1. Recommendations for the next STRP work plan 2026-2028 have been established through a consultative process that started with an initial discussion on emerging issues during the 26th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel ([Annex 2, SC63.19](#)), inputs received during the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee ([Report and Decisions of the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee](#)) and subsequent consultations with Panel Members, National Focal Points, Observers and IOPs, including the third intersessional online meeting of the STRP.

Thematic Working Areas (TWAs):

2. To maintain continuity and ensure a consistent approach, the Thematic Work Areas (TWAs) have been retained from the preceding triennium (defined in [Resolution XIV.14](#), [Pre-SC62 Intersessional Decision 04](#) on the STRP work plan 2023-2025):

- TWA 1.** Wetlands of International Importance, development of the Site network and application of criteria.

This work area focuses on providing information to support Contracting Parties in designating, managing, and monitoring Wetlands of International Importance in line with the objectives of the Convention on Wetlands. It includes guidance on applying criteria for site designation and assessing underrepresented wetland types in the Site network. TWA 1 may also provide guidance on integrating Wetlands of International Importance with broader global biodiversity targets, enhancing their role in achieving international conservation objectives.

- TWA 2.** Tools for wetland assessment, mapping and monitoring, and development of inventories.

This work area aims to improve the tools and methodologies required for wetland assessment, mapping, and monitoring, including wetland carbon assessments and biodiversity monitoring. TWA 2 will explore innovative techniques for streamlining wetland inventory and reporting, including remote sensing and Earth Observation. Future actions will ensure these tools are accessible and adaptable, allowing Contracting Parties to meet their reporting obligations under the Convention and other international frameworks that consider wetlands.

- TWA 3.** Direct and climate change related pressures on wetlands, their impacts and responses.

This work area provides scientific and technical guidance on the key pressures on wetlands, including the current and projected impacts of climate change, drawing from the latest international assessments. TWA 3 aims to provide Contracting Parties with information to enable adaptation and resilience-building measures for wetlands, promoting nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches to protect ecosystem services under changing climate conditions and other direct pressures, including agricultural expansion, pollution, and urban development.

TWA 4. Wise use, sustainable management and restoration of wetlands in the wider landscape/seascape.

This work area will support Contracting Parties in implementing actions that promote the wise use and sustainable management of wetlands and restoration. TWA 4 includes assessing options for transformative change to achieve wetland wise use in alignment with sustainable development goals and supporting the integration of wetlands into national development strategies. Future activities include guidance to enhance the role of wetlands in disaster risk reduction, promote food security, and enable wetland restoration.

TWA 5. Cross cutting issues, Global Wetland Outlook (GWO), supporting functions, and synergies with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

This work area will address cross-cutting issues that impact wetland conservation, report on the global status of wetlands (Global Wetland Outlook), and provide technical guidance to facilitate synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). TWA 5 will provide information to support Contracting Parties in applying effective approaches for wetland conservation, restoration, and wise use and promote integrated reporting mechanisms with various international frameworks, including the SDGs and KM-GBF.

Prioritized STRP tasks for the 2026-2028 triennium

3. Each STRP task is assigned to the most relevant TWA, although some tasks will likely contribute to the delivery of work under multiple TWAs. The likely type(s) of output(s)/product(s) are also listed for each task, but these may change as the scope of the work is defined further as the work progresses.

STRP task	Description	Timeframe	Output(s)	Mandate(s)
TWA 1: Wetlands of International Importance, development of the Site network and application of criteria.				
Task 1.1. Scientific and technical support towards effective monitoring and reporting on the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS).	<p>Task 1.1. will update guidance on assessing and reporting the ecological character (and changes in ecological character) of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).</p> <p>This work will also consider any additional requests from the RIS Working Group, subject to the availability of resources.</p>	2026-2028	Revisions to Strategic Framework and RIS	<p>Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 19-21 & Annex 2).</p> <p>Report and Decisions of the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee.</p>
Task 1.2. Global assessment of gaps in the network of Wetlands of International Importance, and synergies with global climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals.	<p>Task 1.2. will carry out a global assessment to identify under-represented wetland types, including associated biodiversity and habitats across biogeographic regions (including transboundary wetlands), drawing on-site details in the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) and other relevant sources in order to highlight to Contracting Parties opportunities for enhanced designation of Wetlands of International Importance towards biodiversity, climate and sustainable development goals.</p>	2026-2028	Technical Report and/or Briefing Note.	<p>Res. XII.5, Annex 1.</p> <p>Res. XIV.14, Annex 2</p> <p>Res. XIV.6, Para. 38</p> <p>Continuation from STRP 2023-25 work plan (Pre-SC62 Intersessional Decision 04).</p>

STRP task	Description	Timeframe	Output(s)	Mandate(s)
TWA 2: Tools for wetland assessment, mapping and monitoring, and development of inventories.				
<p>Task 2.1. Review of the Convention’s classification system for wetland type.</p>	<p>Task 2.1. will undertake a 2-phase review of the classification system of wetland types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1: Initial assessment to determine whether sufficient evidence justifies a comprehensive review. This would clarify why a review is needed, e.g., to meet national and global assessment and reporting purposes. Phase 2: Undertake a comprehensive assessment to address the issues and opportunities identified during Phase 1. <p>Task 2.1 will consider the potential for improving the classification of wetlands, including via minor amendments to enhance harmonization with classification systems used by other MEAs and global and national reporting on wetland extent and condition.</p>	2026-2028	<p>Reports to SC (one report covering phase 1, and one report on phase 2, if applicable).</p> <p>If relevant, STRP will prepare a resolution for COP16.</p>	<p>Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 16-18 & Annex 1).</p> <p>Report and Decisions of the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee (Decision SC63-30).</p>
<p>Task 2.2. Advancing the development and use of technology for wetland mapping and inventory.</p>	<p>Task 2.2. will focus on the development of a cross-triennial initiative to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange and guidance on the use of Earth observation for wetland inventory, assessment, monitoring, and conservation (refer Decision SC63-30), e.g., by further developing the GEO-Wetlands initiative, drawing on models provided by GEO Flagships such as Digital Earth Africa, GEO Land Degradation Neutrality (GEO-LDN).</p> <p>Task 2.2 will also inform Contracting Parties about technological advances in wetland mapping and assessment and the application of global ecosystem typologies, including streamlining mapping and inventory approaches (e.g., those used in NWIs) to report on the conservation and wise use of wetlands, tracking the status and trends of wetlands, and</p>	Cross-triennial (subject to the availability of human and financial resources).	<p>Technical Report and/or Briefing Note.</p> <p>Report to SC on progress as related to Decision SC63-30.</p>	<p>Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 49 (h)).</p> <p>Report and Decisions of the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee (Decision SC63-30).</p>

STRP task	Description	Timeframe	Output(s)	Mandate(s)
	implementation of international goals and targets, e.g., the CBD's Global Biodiversity Framework Target 3 on 30x30 and SDG Target 6.6.1 on Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time.			
TWA 3: Direct and climate-change-related pressures on wetlands, their impacts and responses.				
Task 3.1. Assessing the impacts from harmful algal blooms in wetlands.	Task 3.1 will synthesize information on the occurrence and frequency of harmful algal blooms in wetlands, the key causes of harmful algal blooms, and their impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including human health and access to clean water for agriculture and other uses. Task 3.1 will also develop guidance on best practice methods to prevent and manage harmful algal blooms, maintain wetland ecological character and protect human health (e.g., in terms of the impact on ecosystem services).	2026-2028	Technical Report and/or Briefing Note.	Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 19-21 & Annex 2).
Task 3.2. Assessing the impact of fires in wetlands.	Task 3.2. will evaluate the occurrence and change in frequency and extent of fires in wetlands and the impact on (i) protecting biodiversity, (ii) wetland carbon stocks and sequestration potential, and (iii) human health. The task will cover impacts on people (e.g., health issues from smoke) and the effects on ecosystem services, such as food, fiber, and access to clean water, if applicable.	2026-2028	Technical Report and/or Briefing Note.	Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 19-21 & Annex 2).
TWA 4: Wise use, sustainable management and restoration of wetlands in the wider landscape/seascape.				
Task 4.1. An assessment of transformative change pathways for wetland conservation and wise use for nature, climate and people.	Task 4.1 will focus on reviewing and assessing models, scenarios, and pathways for transformative change that address the triple planetary crisis (climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss), the Strategic Goals of the Convention on Wetlands, and other relevant goals and targets, such as the SDGs and KM-GBF, building on related IPBES	2026-2028	Technical Report and/or Briefing Note.	Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 19-21 & Annex 2).

STRP task	Description	Timeframe	Output(s)	Mandate(s)
	<p>assessments (e.g., Nexus Assessment and Transformative Change Assessment).</p> <p>Where applicable, the task will strive towards integrating activities originally planned under task 3.4 in the 2023-2025 work plan, covering a synthesis of successful nature-based solutions (NbS) or ecosystem-based approaches for protecting, conserving, restoring, sustainably using, and managing wetland ecosystems to address climate change and achieve other co-benefits. If possible, it will also review diverse values and views of Indigenous and traditional knowledge as part of the drive towards transformative change.</p>		<p>Potential topic for future Global Wetland Outlook.</p> <p>Database with NbS cases</p>	<p>Vision of 5th Strategic Plan (TBC)</p>
<p>Task 4.2. Strengthening wetland restoration for climate resilience and biodiversity recovery: Building on STRP outputs and global frameworks.</p>	<p>Task 4.2 will synthesize and promote knowledge and guidance related to wetland restoration, which enhances climate resilience and supports biodiversity recovery.</p> <p>Task 4.2 will harness and build on the range of restoration-related outputs already produced by the STRP, such as Briefing Note 10 on wetland restoration for climate change resilience, Briefing Note 11 on practical peatland restoration, and the Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2025. This work will also ensure the integration and communication of international developments on restoration, such as on forthcoming guidance associated with Target 2 of the KM-GBF and the UN Decade of Restoration.</p>	<p>2026-2028</p>	<p>Develop communication materials, including Policy Briefs and/or Briefing Notes if needed.</p> <p>Implement capacity-building and knowledge-exchange activities.</p>	<p>Relevant STRP activities: e.g., Res. XIV.6, Para. 45; Res. XIV.14, Annex 2; Res. XIV.16, Para. 21; Res. XIV.17, Para. 14.</p>

STRP task	Description	Timeframe	Output(s)	Mandate(s)
TWA 5: Cross-cutting issues, Global Wetland Outlook, supporting functions, and synergies with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).				
Task 5.1. Global Wetland Outlook	Task 5.1. will serve as a flagship publication under the Convention, providing comprehensive, evidence-based assessments of the global status of wetlands, tracking progress against the Strategic Plan, and offering targeted recommendations for policymakers. The assessment process will follow a structured phased approach, encompassing scoping, data collection, expert review, and extensive communication efforts.	Cross-triennial (subject to the availability of human and financial resources).	Global Wetland Outlook 2028	Doc. SC64.18
Task 5.2. Improved global reporting on wetlands: synergies in the development of indicators and methods for the Convention's 5th Strategic Plan and other global processes.	Task 5.2. will develop guidance on addressing indicator gaps and tools for reporting on wetlands to support the assessment of indicators and targets associated with the Convention's 5th Strategic Plan and other global assessment and reporting processes (e.g., KM GBF). A key opportunity will be to continue working in parallel with the KM GBF to promote the development of ambitious and linked wetland targets and monitoring indicators, for example, as part of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).	2026-2028	Technical Report and/or Briefing Note	Doc. SC63.19 (Para. 19-21 & Annex 2). Res. XIII.5 Res. XIV.14, Annex 2 Res. XIV.6, Para. 24 & 44
Task 5.3. Review of policy and legal frameworks for wetland conservation and wise use.	Task 5.3 will evaluate policy and legal frameworks to assess how effectively they support wetland conservation, restoration, and wise use. This evaluation will build on the guidance and information provided in Handbook 3: Laws and Institutions while incorporating more recent case studies and legal developments. The task will identify and showcase successful examples of wetland laws and policies that have demonstrated positive outcomes in promoting the wise use, conservation, and restoration of wetlands and provide recommendations for enhancing the implementation of these frameworks.	2026-2028	Technical Report and/or Briefing Note Policy database	SC57 Doc.8; Res. XIV.14., Annex 2; & Continuation from STRP 2023-25 work plan (Pre-SC62 Intersessional Decision 04).

Additional STRP tasks

4. Further tasks may be considered for inclusion in the STRP work plan for the 2026-2028 triennium.

Potential tasks identified during the Panel’s consultation on potential priorities are briefly itemized in the table below. However, careful thought needs to be given to availability of human and financial resources in establishing the STRP work plan for the 2026-2028 triennium.

Further emerging issues identified by the STRP	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised framework for the Convention and other MEAs to coordinate global reporting on wetland extent and degradation. 	Develop a standardized reporting framework to harmonize and enhance global coordination of data on wetland extent, condition, and degradation across multiple MEAs, improving monitoring and reporting on wetland health.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a comprehensive global wetland inventory 	Developing a global wetland inventory that consolidates existing data and fills in gaps to provide an accurate and comprehensive overview of wetland ecosystems worldwide.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland mapping and inventory in a peri-urban context 	Address the specific challenges of wetland mapping and inventorying in peri-urban areas, where pressures from urban expansion and land-use changes pose significant threats to wetland ecosystems.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in hydrological cycles and how to manage drying cycles 	Explore the effects of changing hydrological cycles, including increased drying, on wetland ecosystems and develop strategies to manage these shifts to ensure wetland resilience and functionality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for livelihoods of wetland communities 	Development of strategies to support and enhance the livelihoods of communities living in or around wetlands, ensuring that wetland conservation and wise use align with the social and economic well-being of local populations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on wetlands from the shift to electric energy sources and mineral use 	Investigate the environmental impacts on wetlands resulting from the growing demand for electric energy sources and the extraction of minerals, particularly focusing on land-use changes, pollution, and habitat degradation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges associated with biodiversity and carbon credits 	Address the complexities and challenges of integrating biodiversity conservation and carbon credit mechanisms in wetland ecosystems, aiming to propose frameworks that can maximize both carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated wetland assessments to address threats at the river basin scale 	Assessment of wetland ecosystems at the river basin scale, incorporating hydrological, ecological, and socio-economic factors to address threats holistically and promote basin-wide wetland management.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon capture potential for mineral soil wetlands 	Explore the carbon sequestration capacity of mineral soil wetlands, evaluating their role in mitigating climate change and developing best practices for their conservation and restoration.

Further emerging issues identified by the STRP	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastic pollution in wetlands and wetland species 	<p>Examine the extent and impacts of plastic pollution in wetland ecosystems, particularly its effects on wetland species, and propose strategies to reduce and manage plastic waste in these critical habitats.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetlands of International Importance – guidance on shifting baselines (ecological character) 	<p>Provide updated guidance on managing Wetlands of International Importance in the face of shifting ecological baselines.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nexus assessment – building on the IPBES assessment in a wetland context 	<p>Building on the IPBES assessment, applying its nexus framework to wetlands to evaluate the interconnectedness of water, biodiversity, food, and climate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wise use of wetlands: updated guidance 	<p>Propose revisions and updates to the Convention’s guidance on the wise use of wetlands, incorporating new scientific knowledge, best practices, and emerging environmental challenges.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further work on ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ (OECMs) 	<p>Further explore the application and integration of OECMs in wetland conservation, identifying opportunities to recognize and support non-traditional conservation areas.</p>

Annex 2

Guidance on using alternative population estimates under Criterion 6

Background

1. The Waterbirds Populations Portal (WPP), managed by Wetlands International, includes information from the Waterbird Population Estimates (editions 1-5) and for migratory species based on Conservation Status Reviews (CSRs) produced by the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP).
2. The 5th edition of the global WPE was produced in 2012. The population size and trend estimates and derived 1% thresholds provided through the CSRs give the latest information for these populations and should be used for the designation of Wetlands of International Importance. AEWA and the EAAFP are reviewing and updating these CSRs as per their established processes. Information from the CSRs feeds into the WPE updates. It should be used if a more up-to-date CSR estimate exists for a migratory population than that presented in WPE5.
3. As per [Resolution XIV.18](#) “Waterbird population estimates to support new and existing Wetlands of International Importance designations under Convention on Wetlands Criterion 6 – use of alternative estimates”:

11. “AGREES that until the Waterbird Population Estimates are updated with accurate population estimates, alternative data sources may be used by Contracting Parties for the purposes of determining the 1% threshold in the context of applying Ramsar Criterion 6, provided:
 - i. that the biogeographical population of the species concerned is clearly stated for the species as listed in Waterbird Population Estimates available through the Waterbird Populations Portal;
 - ii. that such thresholds should be derived from estimates that are published in the Waterbird Populations Portal, for migratory species, based on Conservation Status Reviews (CSRs) produced under the auspices of flyway instruments or other peer-reviewed assessments for other migratory populations for which CSR-type assessments do not exist as well as for non-migratory and endemic populations;
 - iii. that the reasons why a new estimate is considered more appropriate are documented with a clear audit trail to original sources, thus allowing third parties to check any derivation of the estimate;
 - iv. that the standard methodology used for the Waterbird Populations Portal to convert from a biogeographic population estimate size to a 1% population threshold should be used; and
 - v. that any alternate thresholds used by Parties for Criterion 6 purposes, and their justification, be communicated both to the Secretariat (to maintain a log of such instances), and Wetlands International;”

Using alternative population estimates

4. Complementing SC63 Doc.19 (Annex 4 on guidance to facilitate the application of Criterion 6) and Resolution XIV.18, this document outlines the steps that may be followed by Contracting Parties wishing to submit an alternative population size estimate and derive a 1% threshold to apply Convention on Wetlands Criterion 6. Such submissions are limited to an outdated population for which new information is available and is not covered by the CSRs. If a CSR

covers the population, no submission should be made; indicate the web link of the CSR population to be used in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) submission.

Steps for submitting alternative population size estimates for Criterion 6

5. Step 1: Identifying the need for an Alternative Population Size Estimate
 - The Contracting Party identifies a waterbird species or population for which the current 1% threshold in the Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE) is not included in the Conservation Status Reviews (CSRs), and it is either not provided, is outdated, or considered inaccurate.
 - The Contracting Party has identified relevant data from peer-reviewed sources, and/or other reputable assessments, and/or grey literature.

6. Step 2: Compiling a submission package

Prepare a report with the following information:

 - *State the biogeographical population:* Clearly state the biogeographical population of the species concerned as listed in the [Waterbird Populations Portal](#) (provide the specific weblink to the page of the concerned population in the Waterbird Populations Portal).
 - *Document new size estimates:* Document in detail the reasons why a new size estimate, either as a single figure or a minimum and maximum estimate size range, along with the time period over which it was calculated, is considered more appropriate, including a clear audit trail to original sources, ensuring third-party review is possible (see Step 4). As a minimum, the description of the methodologies should include a description of the data, how the estimates were made, data gaps, and assumptions made.
 - *Use standard methodology for 1% threshold calculation:* Ensure that the [standard methodology](#) used for converting biogeographic population estimates to a 1% population threshold is applied. This involves two steps: (1) converting a range estimate to a single figure estimate using the geometric mean, and (2) deriving the rounded 1% value (see 'Rounding of one per cent thresholds' at the same link).
 - *Annexes:* A clear audit trail (see standard report template below) for all data and estimates used, along with a copy of sources used, including peer-reviewed sources, other reputable assessments, and/or grey literature.

7. Step 3: Submission to the Secretariat
 - *Submit to the Secretariat:* submit the completed report to the Secretariat using the additional reports and documents section 6.1 and reference this document in the justification section 3.3 in the RIS.
 - Ensure that a submission copy is sent directly to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and Wetlands International to maintain a log of the alternative size estimate used: strp@ramsar.org and wpe@wetlands.org.

8. Step 4: Review and evaluation by the STRP
 - *Initial review by Secretariat:* The Secretariat conducts an initial review to ensure completeness and adherence to submission guidelines.
 - *Forward to STRP:* The Secretariat forwards the submission to the STRP for evaluation.
 - *STRP Review:* The STRP oversee a process whereby relevant waterbird experts are requested to review the methodologies and data sources used in the submission, including those from Wetlands International and other authoritative bodies.

9. Step 5: Feedback and revisions
 - *Request for additional information:* If necessary, the Secretariat or the STRP may request additional information or clarification from the submitting Contracting Party.

- *Resubmission*: The Contracting Party provides the requested information or makes necessary revisions and resubmits the documentation.

10. Step 6: Recommendation and communication

- *Recommendation by the STRP*: Upon satisfactory review, the STRP recommends to the Secretariat and the Contracting Party that the alternative size estimate and derived 1% threshold be submitted.
- *Based on the recommendation by the STRP*, the Secretariat reviews the submitted RIS.

Report template for alternative size estimate submission

Alternative size estimate submission

1. Contact information:
 - 1.1. Contact person.
 - 1.2. E-mail.
 - 1.3. Telephone.
2. Biogeographical population size proposed
 - 2.1. Biogeographical population name (also provide the specific weblink to the page of the concerned population in the Waterbird Populations Portal).
 - 2.2. Source(s) of current population data.
 - 2.3. Current population size estimate and 1% Threshold.
 - 2.4. Reason for submission.
3. New population size estimate
 - 3.1. New population size estimate.
 - 3.2. Methodology/ Detailed steps for deriving new size estimate.
 - 3.3. References to original sources.
4. 1% Threshold calculation
 - 4.1. Calculation method.
 - 4.2. Resulting 1% threshold.
5. Checklist of Attachments/Annexes
 - 5.1. Relevant data tables.
 - 5.2. Copies of original sources.
 - 5.3. Additional supporting documents.

Annex 3

Scoping note for the review of legal and policy frameworks for wetland conservation and wise use

1. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has prepared this technical scoping note in accordance with Resolution XIV.14 and Task 5.4 of the 2023-2025 STRP work plan. The note provides guidance for a review of policy instruments related to wetland conservation, restoration, and wise use. This review is scheduled to take place during the next triennium, subject to approval by the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the Standing Committee as part of the STRP work plan for 2026-2028.
2. The Global Wetland Outlook (2018, 2021) highlights the continuing loss and degradation of wetlands worldwide. The implementation of effective policy instruments is crucial to halting wetland loss, in line with the Convention's goals. The Convention on Wetlands Handbook 3: Laws and Institutions stresses the need for national and sub-national wetland laws, regulations, and policies as part of the obligation of wise use. Similarly, the conservation of Wetlands of International Importance requires laws and regulations concerning protected areas and other conservation mechanisms. Notably, several Resolutions of the Convention provide guidance on the content of such instruments, including Resolution VII.7 on reviewing laws and institutions, Resolution VIII.4 on integrated coastal zone management, Resolution X.19 on river basin management, and Resolution XI.9 on avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses.
3. The scope of wetland-related laws and policies is broad, encompassing both wetlands-specific instruments and broader environmental regulations that impact wetlands. Some laws may indirectly affect wetlands, either positively or negatively. These instruments operate at various levels of governance – local, national, regional, and international. Thus, the review will need to clearly define the types of policy instruments to be considered, their subject matter, and their scale, as well as establish the limitations of the review. This scoping note provides the necessary framework to ensure the review is conducted effectively, examining laws and policies at different levels of detail and against various parameters.

Benefits/purposes

4. The global synthesis of wetland-related policy instruments will provide Contracting Parties with valuable insights into the range of laws and policies that promote the wise use and conservation of wetlands, while addressing key drivers of wetland loss and degradation.
5. This information will support the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands at local, national, and regional levels, including in transboundary wetlands. The findings will be particularly useful for Contracting Parties seeking to review or strengthen their legal and institutional frameworks for wetlands, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly indicator 6.6.1 on water-related ecosystems.

Definitions

6. For the purposes of this review, wetland law and policy refers to rules adopted by governments concerning activities that impact wetlands, including legislation (statutes, acts, decrees, ordinances), regulations with the force of law, and policies that guide decision-making processes. This definition also encompasses judicial decisions interpreting such laws, as well as customary law applied to wetlands.

7. As noted in Handbook 3, statutes and regulations provide the legal foundation for regulatory powers, planning frameworks, and public expenditures that influence wetland management. Customary laws, meanwhile, often govern the rights and duties of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in relation to wetland resources.⁶

8. The following table outlines potential sources of law and policy relevant to wetlands.

Possible sources of law	
Obligations under international law	Municipal regulation
Relevant constitutional provisions	Ministerial technical / planning guidelines
Regional /Local Agreements	
Primary legislation (statutes)	Rules on land tenure and resource use
Secondary (implementing) legislation	Contracts and concessions
Common law (including case law)	Customary laws and best practices
Formal government policies	Relevant cultural or religious norms
Indigenous Laws and Practices	Traditional ecological knowledge frameworks Indigenous land management policies

Source: Adapted from the Convention on Wetlands Handbook 3, *Laws and institutions*.

9. For the review, the Convention on Wetlands definition of wetlands (Article 1.1) will apply: “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.” The review will consider all wetland types within the Convention’s Classification System, including marine, coastal, inland, and human-made wetlands, such as coral reefs, marshes, mangroves, lagoons, rivers, lakes, and peatlands.⁷

Scope of Work

10. The review will cover all Convention on Wetlands regions through a desktop study combined with consultations with National Focal Points, STRP Focal Points, and representatives from regional initiatives. The review will identify a range of legal and policy instruments at various levels and include case examples of Indigenous and customary laws. Wherever possible, the review will highlight effective laws and policies that have successfully promoted the wise use and conservation of wetlands.

11. The review will assess both the legal text of policy instruments and their implementation outcomes, examining their legal, social, and ecological performance. Factors such as the precision, stringency, scientific basis, public participation, enforceability, and administrative control will be considered in determining their effectiveness. The review will also identify lessons learned and best practices.

⁶ Convention on Wetlands, 2010, *Laws and Institutions: Reviewing Laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands*, Convention on Wetlands Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 3. Convention on Wetlands, Gland, Switzerland.

⁷ Convention on Wetlands, 2010, *Designating Ramsar Sites : Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, Convention on Wetlands Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 17, Convention on Wetlands, Gland, Switzerland, pages 80-82.

Desktop Study and Consultation

12. The desktop study will analyse existing literature and databases, such as the Legal Atlas, which is developing a global database on laws related to freshwater management (<https://www.legal-atlas.com/legal-intelligence-platform.html>).
13. Additionally, existing legal databases will be explored to identify wetland-related policy instruments across categories:⁸
 - (1) Protected areas and other area-based conservation instruments: Protected area laws and policies related to wetlands;
 - (2) Prescriptive regulation: Prescriptive regulatory schemes related to activities that affect wetlands. This category includes permit regimes, land use restrictions, water use restrictions and many other tools;
 - (3) Penalties and payments : Penalty provisions for causing wetland loss and degradation and financial schemes and programs that encourage wetland conservation, restoration and wise use;
 - (4) Persuasion: Procedures based on persuasion requiring informed decision-making, such as environmental impact assessments, related to activities that affect wetlands;
 - (5) Property: Property-rights based approaches to wetland conservation and wise use;
 - (6) Proxy: Laws and policies that protect wetlands by proxy—for example, by protecting wetland-dependent species or integrating the rights of nature for wetlands and/or Indigenous Peoples’ rights into laws and customs.
 - (7) Planning: Incorporating wetland protection and restoration in planning documents, usually in the context of watershed management. Planning not only addresses the conservation of wetlands but also considers large-scale phenomena. For example, the impact of fire can exacerbate wetland degradation. By integrating strategies to mitigate fire risks and promote restoration, planning efforts can enhance the resilience of wetlands and support broader ecological health.
14. Examples of wetland laws and policies will be categorised to build a comprehensive legal database for comparison and analysis.
15. Useful legal databases for this review may include:
 - Ecolex and Faolex, which is operated jointly by FAO, IUCN and UNEP and which is free (<https://www.ecolex.org/>);
 - Country-by-country searches can also be conducted through national research guides contained on NYU GlobalLex (<https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/flr.html>);
 - the Law Library of Congress (USA), which are also freely accessible (<https://guides.loc.gov/nations-world>);
 - Subscription-based services, such as Brill’s Foreign Law Guide, are also potential tools (<https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/foreign-law-guide>);
 - EUR-Lex ([EU law - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu));
 - International Environmental Agreements Database Project (<https://iea.uoregon.edu/>);
 - World Bank Environmental and Social Policies Database (<https://policies.worldbank.org/>);
 - UN Treaty Collection (<https://treaties.un.org/>).

⁸ These categories have been adapted and expanded upon from the categories discussed in James Salzman (2013) *Teaching Policy Instrument Choice in Environmental Law: The Five P’s*, Duke Environmental Law & Policy Forum, available at <https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1250&context=delpf>.

16. The national reports submitted by Contracting Parties will also be analysed to identify examples of relevant wetland laws and policies highlighted by the Parties. For example, several questions in the national reports submitted prior to COP14 may contain relevant information. In particular, question 9.2 asked whether any amendments to existing legislation been made to reflect Convention on Wetlands commitments. Question 1.1 inquired as to whether a national wetland policy exists, as well as whether wetland conservation and the identification of wetlands benefits have been integrated into sustainable approaches to the national strategies and planning processes for 15 different sectors and activities.⁹ Interactions between wetland laws and policies and other natural resources legal frameworks could therefore be described in order to discuss how one field can positively contribute to wetland protection and restoration, or not. In addition, Questions 10.1 and 10.3 may reveal information about laws and policies developed by [Indigenous Peoples and local communities].
17. Consultations will be conducted with National Focal Points, STRP Focal Points and regional initiatives to ensure comprehensive identification of wetland laws and policies across all regions. The consultations will involve sharing initial findings and requesting feedback to fill gaps and highlight effective instruments.

Deliverables

18. The review will result in the following deliverables:
 - Technical Report: A detailed report on the findings of the review.
 - Legal Database: A database showcasing successful laws and policies for each Convention region.
 - Infographic: A visual summary of key elements to consider when reviewing wetland laws and policies.
 - Training Course: A series of training sessions or webinars for each Convention region to promote legal frameworks that support wetland conservation and wise use.

References

Convention on Wetlands. (2018). *Global Wetland Outlook: State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People*. Gland, Switzerland: Convention on Wetlands Secretariat.

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Gardner, R.C. (2008). *Rehabilitating Nature: A Comparative Review of Legal Mechanisms that Encourage Wetland Restoration Efforts*, *Catholic University Law Review* 52(3): 573-620, available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1129993.

Gardner, R.C., Bonells, M., Okuno, E., Zarama, J.M. (2012). *Avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for loss and degradation of wetlands in national laws and policies*. Convention on Wetlands Scientific and Technical Briefing Note no. 3. Gland, Switzerland: Convention on Wetlands Secretariat.

⁹ The sectors and activities relate to poverty eradication; water resource management; coastal and marine resource management; integrated coastal zone management; forestry; agriculture; biodiversity; energy and mining; tourism; urban development; infrastructure; industry; aquaculture and fisheries; pollution control and management; and wastewater management.

IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (2023), *Measuring the effectiveness of environmental law through legal indicators and quality analyses*. IUCN Environmental Policy and Law Paper, No. 91. Gland, Switzerland, IUCN.

Convention on Wetlands (2010). *Laws and institutions: Reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands*. Convention on Wetlands handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 3. Convention on Wetlands, Gland, Switzerland.

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Resolution XIV. 16 on integrating wetland protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management into national sustainable development strategies.

Salzman, J. (2013). *Teaching Policy Instrument Choice in Environmental Law: The Five P's*, Duke Environmental Law & Policy Forum 23:363-376.

Appendix 1.

Legal responses to the drivers of adverse change in wetlands

1. This appendix outlines examples of wetland laws and policies according to the type of tools. Examples are identified from various jurisdictions and many others could be added to this list. For ease of categorisation, the policy instruments can be classified under 7P's allowing a better understanding of choices, hoping to assist in the challenge of identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each instrument (Salzman 2013).

Protected Areas

- Ramsar resolutions as a source of protection
 - Lac Baai (formerly Het Lac), Bonaire (NL)
- National Protected Areas Legislation
 - Protected Areas System Act (Belize, Côte d'Ivoire)
 - Decreto Ley del Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (Cuba)
 - Law dealing with the National System of Nature Conservation Units (Brazil)
 - Natura 2000 Directive in European Union
 - Nature Restoration Law – specific clauses for wetland and rewetting (Côte d'Ivoire)
 - Loi sur la conservation du patrimoine naturel (Québec, Canada)
- Indigenous Protected Areas
 - Québec, Canada: aire protégée d'initiative autochtone
 - New Zealand: Ngā Whenua Rāhui Kawenata
- Private Nature Reserves

Prescriptive Regulation

- Permit regimes
 - “No net loss” (in > 80 countries) / Biodiversity offsets
 - “No loss” of provincially important wetlands with the Provincial Policy Statement (Ontario, Canada)
 - Town and Country Planning (e.g., Barbados, Jamaica)
 - Water Act (Alberta, Canada)
 - Net gain (UK)
- Prohibitions
 - Bans on single-use plastics (12 Caribbean countries)
 - Sunscreen ban (Hawaii)
 - Peat exit plan (Switzerland)
 - Greenbelt Act (Ontario)
- Water quality limits
 - E.g. Surface water quality standards/plans
- Minimum environmental flows
 - Mexico: Environmental Flow Standard (Res. XII.12)
 - Australia: Water sharing plans

Penalties & Payments

- Penalties:
 - Loss of agricultural subsidies
- Payments :
 - Swampbuster (USA)
 - Cost-sharing restoration projects
 - Wetlands Reserve Program (USA)
 - LIFE, Common Agricultural Policy 2023-27 (EU)

- Tax deductions or credits
 - South Africa
 - Australia
- International carbon markets/Verified Carbon Standard (VCS)
- US National Wetland Mitigation Banking Program

Persuasion

- EIA Legislation
- Public “Right to Know” Laws
 - Toxics Release Inventory (USA)
- Eco-labeling or Certifications
 - Australia
 - EU sustainable investment regulation

Property Rights

- Exclusive use by local communities
 - Philippines
 - Vietnam
- Safe Harbor provisions
- Wetland mitigation or biodiversity banking
- Conservation easements (USA, Canada)

Proxy

- Wildlife or species-based laws or regulations (Species at Risk Act, Canada, Côte d’Ivoire, Bénin)
- Greenbelt Act (Ontario)

Planning

- Alberta Land Stewardship Act Regional Plans (Alberta, Canada)
- Plans régionaux des milieux humides et hydriques (Québec, Canada)
- Schéma directeur d’aménagement et de gestion des eaux (France)

Annex 4

Proposed approach to deliver future Global Wetland Outlooks

1. The Global Wetland Outlook (GWO) is a flagship publication of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) under the Convention on Wetlands. As part of the 2023-2025 STRP work plan (Task 5.3), the STRP was tasked with preparing a report for the Standing Committee outlining a conceptual framework and a detailed plan for future editions of the GWO. The scope of this work includes:
 - Defining the purpose of the GWO as a flagship product under the Convention, aligned with the goals of the Strategic Plan, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs);
 - Developing a structured approach to facilitate the delivery of future GWOs, considering methodological frameworks, timeframes, resource needs (including financial requirements), communication strategies, and information sources.Lessons learned from the 2018 GWO and the Special Edition produced under the 2019-2021 work plan, along with insights from other global assessments, have been incorporated into the current plan.
2. The STRP constituted a working group for this task, led by Dr. Hugh Robertson (STRP Chair) and Dr. Ritesh Kumar (Technical Expert). The working group met twice virtually and presented an outline approach for future GWOs during the STRP's intersessional meeting in September 2024. Feedback from these discussions has been incorporated into this report.

Purpose of Global Wetland Outlook

3. The GWO was first requested by Resolution XII.5, which called upon the STRP to update and expand Briefing Note 7: State of the World's Wetlands and Their Services to People. The resolution encouraged the STRP and the Secretary-General, subject to resource availability, to explore ways to improve and update the GWO as a periodic flagship report of the Convention, contributing to the Global Biodiversity Outlook of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The primary purpose of the GWO¹⁰ is to increase understanding of the value of wetlands, offering recommendations to ensure their conservation, wise use, and recognition of their benefits by all.¹¹
4. In line with practices adopted by other Conventions and MEAs that feature similar flagship publications, it is recommended that the purpose of the GWO be broadened to fully realize the intent of Resolution XII.5. It is proposed that:

“the GWO as a flagship publication of the Convention on Wetlands:

 - a) Provide an evidence-based summary of the [global] status of wetlands and the drivers and pressures of adverse change in these ecosystems.
 - b) Examine the different ways wetlands are being conserved and managed in various regions of the world and the challenges experienced.
 - c) Periodically tracks progress on achieving various indicators outlined in the Strategic Plan.
 - d) Offer policymakers recommendations from the STRP for effective wetland conservation and wise use.”

¹⁰ As mentioned on the Global Wetland Outlook page: <https://www.global-wetland-outlook.ramsar.org/>.

¹¹ Over the last 12 months, the GWO page has been visited over 20,000 times, and the report has been downloaded over 6,000 times.

Scope of the Global Wetland Outlook

5. The 2018 and 2021 editions of the GWO have adopted a global scope of analysis, with the 2018 edition consisting of chapters on status and trends in wetlands, drivers of change, and response options. However, the GWO provides limited insights into the implementation status of the Convention, including the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance and the condition of wetlands reported by Contracting Parties. The 2021 edition also highlighted the percentage of Wetlands of International Importance affected by agriculture-based practices.
6. Historically, there have been efforts to provide wetlands-specific assessments derived from global assessments. In 1999, a review of wetland resources and priorities for wetlands inventory was published by the Convention on Wetlands¹². The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: Wetlands and Water Synthesis¹³ was published in 2005, focusing on the future sustainability of wetlands and water resources. Further, in response to Resolution VIII.34, the STRP participated in the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture, as carried out by the International Water Management Institute.¹⁴ The TEEB-Wetlands and Water¹⁵ built on the TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) framework to enhance understanding of the ecosystem service values of water and wetlands, encouraging improved decision-making and greater business commitment to their conservation, investment and wise use.
7. To fulfil the purpose of the GWO, it is proposed that future editions encompass:
 - a) **Global assessments:** Evaluating the status, trends, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human well-being connections of wetlands at a global scale. Regional assessments would provide key components of the global evaluation.
 - b) **Thematic assessments:** Focusing on contemporary issues such as wetlands as nature-based solutions).
 - c) **Methodological assessments:** Examining the availability and application of methods such as Earth observation for wetland monitoring.¹⁶
8. The global assessment should also track the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan goals, targets and indicators, supplementing information from national reports with additional scientific evidence.

Approaches of other Conventions and MEAs

9. Various MEAs and science-policy platforms, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)¹⁷ and the Intergovernmental Panel on

¹² Finlayson CM and Spiers AG (ed.) 1999. Global review of wetland resources and priorities for wetlands inventory. Supervising Scientist Report 144 / Wetlands International Publication 53, Supervising Scientist, Canberra

¹³ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. ECOSYSTEMS AND HUMAN WELL-BEING: WETLANDS AND WATER Synthesis. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC.

¹⁴ Molden D (ed), Water for food, water for life: a comprehensive assessment of water management in agriculture. Earthscan, London, UK, pp 57-89.

¹⁵ Russi D., ten Brink P., Farmer A., Badura T., Coates D., Förster J., Kumar R. and Davidson N. (2013) The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands. IEEP, London and Brussels; Convention on Wetlands Secretariat, Gland.

¹⁶ Some of the technical reports produced by the STRP and available at: <https://www.ramsar.org/publications> would fall under this category.

¹⁷ IPBES (2018): IPBES Guide on the production of assessments. Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 44 pages available at: <https://www.ipbes.net/guide-production-assessments>.

Climate Change (IPCC),¹⁸ have established structured assessment processes. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the approaches adopted by other Conventions. It is proposed that the GWO adopt key elements from these approaches, including a clear assessment purpose, a detailed scoping phase, a broad team of experts, an explicit review process, and a communications strategy for the uptake of findings.

10. The review further suggests that the GWO follow an assessment process that includes:
 - A clear assessment purpose, including evaluation of the Convention's implementation;
 - A detailed scoping phase, approved by relevant decision-making bodies;
 - A broad team of experts to undertake the assessment;
 - An explicit and transparent review process;
 - The development of a Summary for Policymakers in consultation with Contracting Parties;
 - A communication strategy to support the uptake and application of the assessment's findings.

Type of product and frequency

11. The 2018 GWO was the first global assessment to provide detailed evidence of the state of the world's wetlands. The scope of the 2018 GWO was similar to that of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: Wetlands and Water Synthesis published in 2005. The 2021 Special Edition summarized new information on wetland trends, offering lessons for the wise use and protection of wetlands. A second special issue, focusing on the financial costs of wetland loss and degradation and the investment required for wetland restoration, is expected in 2025.
12. Future options for the GWO include:
 - a) **Global Assessments** published every nine years, providing a comprehensive review of the status and trends in wetlands, their drivers of degradation, and response options. These assessments would align with the timeline of three Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings and the Strategic Plan cycle;
 - b) **Thematic or Methodological Assessments** published every three years, focusing on contemporary issues or methodologies relevant to wetland conservation, wise use, and monitoring. These topics can be discerned from the assessments published by other Conventions and MEAs, based on a prioritized task of the STRP work plan.

Process

13. The delivery of the GWO is currently managed as a task within the STRP work plan. As a result, only STRP members and observers have contributed to drafting the report, supported by consultants working under their close guidance. While this approach offers advantages such as cost-efficiency, process control, and adherence to timelines, the GWO would benefit from a more structured assessment process. This would involve strategically assembling a diverse team of experts and incorporating capacity-building and outreach elements to enhance the report's depth and global relevance.

Composition of the assessment team

14. In previous editions, the GWO assessment teams have been composed primarily of STRP members, with two acting as Coordinating Lead Authors. While this arrangement has ensured

¹⁸ IPCC Procedures for the Preparation, Review, Acceptance, Adoption, Approval and Publication of IPCC Reports available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/09/ipcc-principles-appendix-a-final.pdf>.

timely delivery and process control, the assessment could benefit from a broader pool of experts. For example, processes like IPBES have included capacity-building by incorporating young and early-career researchers as research fellows. This approach would expand the GWO's depth and offer a more diverse set of perspectives.

15. It is recommended that future GWO assessment teams be composed as follows:¹⁹
 - a) Coordinating Lead Authors (CLA): Responsible for delivering the overall assessment, managing timelines, and producing the Summary for Policymakers.
 - b) Lead Authors (LA): Tasked with carrying out the assessment per the established framework, selected from an open call and including STRP members.
 - c) Contributing Authors (CA): Experts invited to provide technical inputs or graphics on specific subjects covered in the assessment.
 - d) Review Editors (RE): Ensuring that all substantive review comments are considered and that controversial issues are adequately addressed.
 - e) Fellows: Early-career researchers or professionals assisting the Lead Authors, appointed through an open call to promote capacity-building.

Phasing of the assessment

16. Currently, the GWO assessment is launched based on a task description approved as part of the STRP work plan. The STRP develops the detailed table of contents in the first meeting, which then guides the development of the report. To enhance the development process, it is recommended to adopt a phased assessment approach, as used in other global assessments, to ensure structured steps and adequate review mechanisms.

17. The proposed phased approach includes:

Phase 1: Scoping – A scoping document will be produced for each GWO production cycle to guide the assessment process. This document should outline:

- (1) Policy-relevant questions;
- (2) Geographic boundaries of the assessment, if applicable;
- (3) Rationale for the assessment, including its potential impact;
- (4) Utility of the assessment, including the intended end-users;
- (5) Methodological framework and assessment approach;
- (6) Chapter outline, with a brief explanation of each chapter;
- (7) Key datasets to be utilized;
- (8) Partnerships essential for delivering the assessment;
- (9) Process and timetable;
- (10) Communication and outreach strategies;
- (11) Capacity development, detailing the skills and expertise needed to complete the assessment; and
- (12) Budgetary requirements.

It is recommended that the scoping document be developed by the STRP as part of its work plan for the next triennium and submitted to the Standing Committee for approval.

Phase 2: Assessment – The assessment team, comprising the CLA, LA, and Fellows, will evaluate the state of knowledge. It is recommended that the Chair and Vice-Chair, in consultation with the Secretariat, appoint the CLA. The LA may be constituted through an open call by the Secretariat and include both STRP members and external subject-matter experts (through

¹⁹ This structure has been used in Millenium Ecosystem Assessment: Wetlands and Water Synthesis.

specific invitations). In forming the assessment team, it is important to ensure gender, regional, and disciplinary diversity. Similarly, Fellows should be selected through an open call to assist the LA in conducting the assessment and to contribute to capacity-building.

A key aspect of the assessment will be effectively communicating the confidence experts have in the findings. Established practices, such as those used by IPBES and IPCC, for conveying confidence in qualitative terms (see Appendix 2 for an illustrative example from IPBES) could be adopted, particularly for chapter summaries and the Summary for Policymakers (SPM). It is also good practice to maintain traceability of assessment findings and confidence statements by providing references to relevant sections and evidence within the assessment. The development of the assessment should include the preparation of an SPM, which provides a high-level synthesis in non-technical language for decision-makers.

Suggested steps for finalizing the assessment:

- (1) **Zero-Order Draft (ZOD):** The ZOD will include an annotated outline based on the scoping document. At this stage, Contributing Authors will be identified, and key datasets, analyses, and examples needed for the assessment will be determined. Timelines for the assessment will be agreed upon with the LA. This draft should be developed within the first six months of the triennium.
- (2) **First-Order Draft (FOD):** The FOD will have approximately 70% of the assessment completed, along with initial drafts of chapter executive summaries. Necessary graphics will also be identified at this stage. Review Editors (RE) will propose a list of experts to review this draft. The FOD should be completed by the end of the first year of the triennium.
- (3) **Second-Order Draft (SOD):** The SOD will include the full text and graphics and incorporate feedback from the FOD review. The draft SPM will also be developed at this stage. The SOD should be circulated for external review by governments and observers. This draft should be completed by the end of the second year of the triennium.
- (4) **Third-Order Draft (TOD):** The TOD will contain the final text and graphics and address comments from governments and observers on the SOD and SPM. The finalized SPM should be presented at the next Standing Committee meeting, and a decision made on whether to submit a resolution based on the assessment findings to the next Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP). The TOD should be finalized within six months of the completion of the SOD.

Phase 3: Review and Editing – Concurrent with the assessment, it is recommended that the GWO undergo independent review and editing. The ZOD and FOD should be reviewed internally by the STRP and observer organizations. The SOD and SPM should be sent to Contracting Parties for review and feedback, with a clear mechanism for incorporating comments. The RE will ensure that all comments are adequately addressed throughout the review process.

Phase 4: Communications and Outreach – In this phase, the GWO and SPM will be disseminated according to a communications strategy developed in consultation with the Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel. The impact of the GWO can be amplified through the following mechanisms:

- Collaborating with other Conventions, MEAs, International Organization Partners (IOPs), and Regional Centers to promote the use of GWO findings;
- Sharing identified knowledge and data gaps with the scientific community and research funding agencies to encourage further research and monitoring;
- Partnering with universities and research institutions to integrate GWO findings into academic curricula and engage students in wetland research;

- Working with Contracting Parties through CEPA and capacity-building activities to promote regional and national wetland assessments based on GWO findings;
- Producing scientific publications on key aspects of the GWO, authored by experts involved in the assessment, and making these available via the Convention’s website;
- Highlighting successful wetland conservation projects and initiatives as case studies to demonstrate the practical application of GWO recommendations;
- Organizing interactive webinars and workshops to disseminate the GWO findings and foster dialogue among policymakers, scientists, and practitioners;
- Using social media campaigns to raise awareness of the GWO findings, engaging a wider audience and promoting wetland conservation; and
- Ensuring that the GWO report and summaries are available in multiple languages to increase accessibility and reach.

Summary of Policy Makers

18. It is recommended that each GWO include a Summary for Policymakers (SPM) that distills the key insights and recommendations of the report into clear, actionable messages for decision-makers. The Coordinating Lead Authors would draft the SPM, which would then be presented to the Standing Committee for approval. If necessary, a resolution based on the GWO’s findings could be presented at the Conference of the Parties.

Proposed topics for future GWOs

20. The next issue of the GWO is recommended to be a Global Assessment similar to the 2018 Assessment. The assessment should comprehensively review the status and trends in wetland conditions, the direct and indirect drivers of degradation, and response options. It should be built on regional assessments. For methodological consistency, the framework used in the 2018 assessment may also be used as a basis for this assessment (including relevant future updates, such as revisions to the Wetlands Trend Index and Ecological Character Status Index). Additionally, the assessment should include an evaluation of the Fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024 and establish baselines for targets set in the forthcoming Fifth Strategic Plan.²⁰
21. Future GWO assessments should focus on comprehensive global reviews, similar to the 2018 edition, evaluating the status and trends of wetland conditions, drivers of degradation, and response options. This may include:
 - a) Wetlands as Nature-based Solutions.
 - b) Transformational change for Wetlands wise use.
 - c) Wetlands and Culture.
 - d) Climate Change and Wetland Resilience.
 - e) Invasive Species and their effects on Wetlands.
 - f) Wetlands and Disease (within the One-Health framework).

Collaboration with other MEAs

22. It is recommended that the Convention on Wetlands Secretariat collaborate with other MEAs and international platforms to produce assessments similar to the GWO. The collaboration could aim to improve efficiency in data and knowledge generation collection, share expertise, including technical support-related processes, and share best practices in assessment production and communication.

²⁰ This report is being prepared at the time of drafting this proposal.

STRP 2026-2028 work plan

23. The proposed future priorities for the STRP have been outlined in the draft resolution submitted to the Standing Committee. These include the publication of a Global Wetland Outlook (2028), which will deliver a global assessment following the proposed scope and timeline.

Data collation and technical support

24. The GWO should be produced following a comprehensive data collection, collation, and synthesis system to ensure the robustness of the assessment. It is recommended that the Secretariat provide a dedicated Technical Support Unit (TSU) to provide technical support to the GWO. The purpose of the technical support unit would be to:
 - a) Facilitate the work: The TSU will provide logistical support, such as organizing workshops and consultations.
 - b) Provide scientific input: The TSU will add scientific input to the assessment work as needed.
 - c) Ensure transparency: The TSU will ensure that the work is implemented transparently and inclusively and that it follows any rules and procedures laid down by the Standing Committee.
 - d) Provide feedback: Establish feedback mechanisms to gather insights and recommendations from stakeholders on the effectiveness of the data collection process and the assessment outcomes.
25. Hosting the TSU with an external organization may be considered, but in the interim, it is recommended that the Secretariat appoint a Programme Officer dedicated to supporting the GWO process. This officer would be responsible for logistical support, data analysis, maintaining the assessment's database, and assisting with the final publication and outreach.

Resources

26. Adequate resources should be allocated to ensure the successful delivery of the GWO in the next triennium. This includes funding for the Programme Officer, at least one in-person author meeting, and the costs associated with the production and publication of the GWO and SPM.
27. Additional resources should also be allocated to support the communications and outreach efforts associated with the GWO. These activities are critical to ensuring the GWO's findings are effectively communicated to a wide audience and have the desired impact on wetland conservation efforts globally.
28. The budget allocated for the GWO in the next triennium should cover all essential costs, including personnel, author meetings, publication, and outreach activities. Sufficient funding will be critical to ensure the successful delivery and impact of the GWO.

Appendix 1

An overview of assessment products published by different Conventions and MEAs

Name of Convention / MEA	Name of assessment report	Purpose	Publication frequency	Assessment process
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO)	Provide a summary of the status of biological diversity and an analysis of the steps the global community takes to ensure that biodiversity is conserved and used sustainably and that benefits arising from using genetic resources are shared equitably.	Five years, first published in 2001	Guided by an advisory group. Assessment by authors selected through an open call.
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	World Water Development Report	Offer an authoritative and comprehensive assessment of the world's freshwater resources' overall state, use, and management. It aims to provide decision-makers with tools to formulate and implement sustainable water policies.	From 2003 through 2012, the UN WWDR was produced and released every three years. As of 2014, it transformed into an annual thematic report focused on a different strategic water issue each year. The theme of each annual UN WWDR is harmonized with that of World Water Day (22 March) and provides the knowledge base for related celebrations, events, and discussions throughout the year.	Coordinated by UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme on behalf of the UN Water family.
UN Environment (UNEP)	Global Environment Outlook (GEO)	To keep the world environmental situation under review to periodically inform and support collective and individual action by Member States and stakeholders while strengthening the science-policy interface of the United Nations Environment Programme;	Launched in 1995, published every four years	The assessment process is presided over by a Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group. Assessment done by lead and coordinating lead authors selected through an open call. Scoping document and a summary for policymakers are reviewed and endorsed by representatives of Member States at ad hoc open-ended meetings

Name of Convention / MEA	Name of assessment report	Purpose	Publication frequency	Assessment process
Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)	Several assessments	To perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages, which include comprehensive thematic, global and regional assessments	11 completed assessments, each assessment takes up to four years, with the first year for scoping and subsequently 2-3 years for assessment	Four stages: a) Request and scope, b) Expert evaluation, c) Approval and acceptance of final assessment report, and d) Use of final assessment findings. Assessment is guided by a Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and coordinated by Assessment Chairs. For each assessment section/ chapter, Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors are selected/nominated. Research Fellows are also appointed to support capacity development.
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	Global Land Outlook (GLO)	To communicate and raise awareness of evidence-based, policy-relevant information and trends to various stakeholders, including national governments formulating their responses to commitments to better manage and restore land resources, including the SDGs and associated targets, such as Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). The GLO thematic reports provide a global analysis and offer practical solutions that are relevant and timely to address specific land management challenges and opportunities in selected geographical and socio-economic contexts.	The first edition in 2017, and the second in 2022 (along with regional reports and thematic reports)	Drafted by a team of lead authors and contributors; overall assessment produced by GLO team of coordinators, co-authors and research assistants, working under a GLO Steering Committee

Name of Convention / MEA	Name of assessment report	Purpose	Publication frequency	Assessment process
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	Assessment Report	Prepare comprehensive Assessment Reports about knowledge on climate change, its causes, potential impacts, and response options. The IPCC also produces Special Reports, which assess a specific issue, and Methodology Reports, which provide practical guidelines for preparing greenhouse gas inventories.	Every 5 - 7 years. The first comprehensive assessment report was published in 1990.	Each report starts with a scoping meeting to develop a draft outline. Experts nominated by member governments, Observer Organizations, and the Bureau, as well as those selected by the relevant Bureau, prepare a draft outline of the report for the Panel. Based on the report of the scoping meeting, the Panel decides whether work should continue on preparing the report and agrees on its scope, outline and work plan, including schedule and budget. Member governments, Observer Organizations, and the Bureau (Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs) of the Working Group or Task Force producing the report then draw up lists of experts from which the relevant Bureau or Bureaux select the report's authors. The Bureau may consider other experts known through their publications and work. Scientists who are nominated but not selected as authors are invited to register as expert reviewers for the report.

Appendix 2

Using a confidence assessment process

1. To ensure that the GWO is based on a rigorous evaluation of evidence, it is recommended to utilize assessment confidence frameworks²¹, wherein all conclusions have a confidence term attached. These terms are derived based on examination of the quality and quantity of evidence and level of agreement within the evidence. Based on these factors, four levels of confidence are attached, namely:
 - a) Well established: a comprehensive meta-analysis, other syntheses, or multiple independent studies that agree.
 - b) Established but incomplete: general agreement, although only a limited number of studies exist; no comprehensive synthesis and/or existing studies that address the question imprecisely.
 - c) Unresolved: multiple independent studies exist, but conclusions do not agree.
 - d) Inconclusive: limited evidence, recognizing major knowledge gaps.

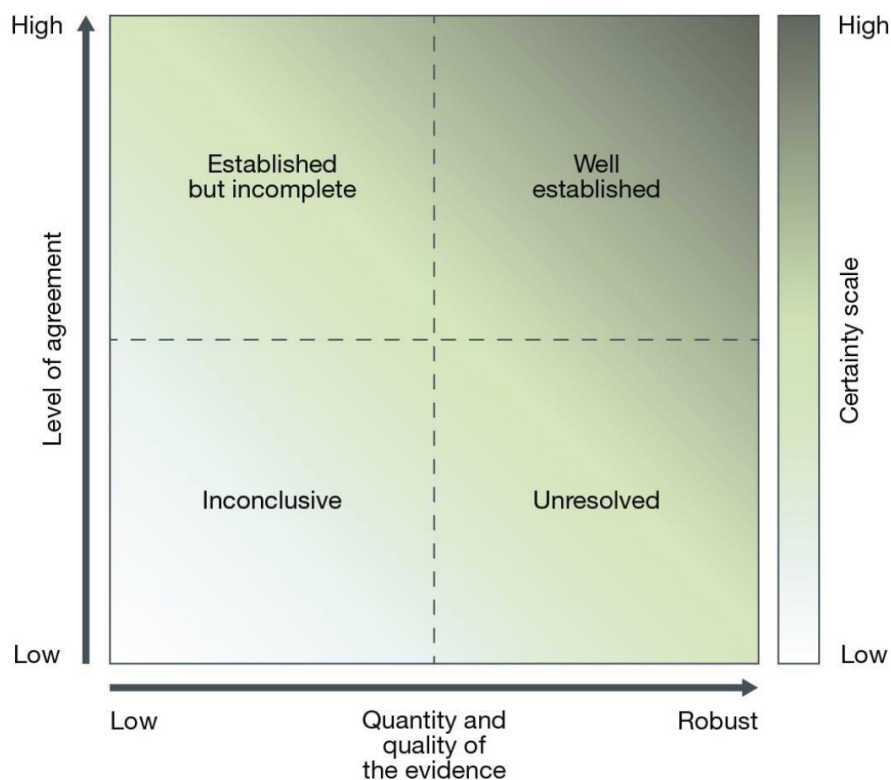


Figure SPM.A2: The four-box model for the qualitative communication of confidence. Confidence increases towards the top-right corner as suggested by the increasing strength of shading. Source: modified from Moss and Schneider (2000).^[1]

²¹ IPBES (2018): IPBES Assessment Guide Summary. Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 12 pages. The IPBES Assessment Guide Summary can be viewed and downloaded at: <https://www.ipbes.net/document-library-catalogue/ipbes-assessment-guide-summary>.

Annex 5

Financing the establishment of the Waterbirds Estimates Partnership and delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027)

1. Pursuant to Decision SC63-31, the STRP, in collaboration with relevant partners, has submitted a draft resolution on the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027). This annex outlines recommendations for financing the WEP and WPE2027 before a consultation with the Subgroup on Finance in December 2024.
2. This annex provides detailed information regarding the financial requirements for addressing the lack of up-to-date data for priority waterbird populations through the production of WPE2027 and the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership. The WEP will oversee, coordinate, and secure resources for future updates of waterbird population estimates.

Resource implications for delivering WPE2027 and the WEP

3. The anticipated resource implications for the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership and the delivery of WPE2027 are as follows:
 - **Establishment of the Partnership:** Costs associated with consultations, partner engagement, and documentation are estimated at CHF 38,047.
 - **WPE2027 Updates:** The estimated cost of updating 1,600 waterbird populations across multiple regions is CHF 366,076. This includes data collation, analysis, and expert consultation.
 - **Waterbird Populations Portal Maintenance:** CHF 61,234 is estimated for enhancements and bug fixes to improve the Portal’s usability for Contracting Parties.
4. These cost estimates are based on prior experiences, including AEWA Conservation Status Reviews and similar efforts undertaken in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The costs reflect the comprehensive scope of the Waterbird Population Estimates updates and the long-term maintenance required for the Waterbird Populations Portal.

Table 1. The overall costs for delivering WPE2027 and the WEP in Euro and in CHF.

Priority actions	All populations 1600	
	Cost in Euros	Cost in CHF
a. Establishment of a long-term global Waterbird Estimates Partnership based on consultations with potential partners (2025-2026)	40,050.00	38,047.50
b. Development of WPE27 through a review and update of 1,600 selected priority populations, not covered on latest AEWA and EAAFP CSRs	385,343.83	366,076.64
c. Waterbird Populations Portal maintenance/enhancement (including ensuring additional functionality of the WPP for enhanced ease of use by Parties)	64,457.50	61,234.63
Total	489,851.33	465,358.76

5. Table 2 outlines the priority waterbird populations and review mechanisms for WPE2027 updates based on regional assessments.

Table 2. Waterbird population priorities and review mechanism for WPE2027.

Populations (no. of populations as per region/flyway in WPP)	Current review process/mechanism and resourcing assessment	Priority for a proposed WPE 2027 update	Activities with Resource implications
Resident or locally dispersing			
Africa (226)	Outdated information with no process in place	High priority	Collate, review and update to Portal
Nearctic (North America) (91)	National processes in North America exist	High priority	Assess the compatibility of available information and update the Portal
Neotropics (Central and South America and Caribbean) (200)	Outdated information with no process in place	High priority	Collate, review and update to Portal
Asia (Indo-Malay & Eastern Palearctic) (132)	Outdated information with no process in place	High priority	Collate, review and update to Portal
Oceania (incl. Australasia) (337)	National updates in Australia, New Zealand	High priority	Assess the compatibility of available information and update the Portal
Europe (35)	EU Art 12 process, linked with ERLoB, collation funded by EC/EEA	High priority	Assess the compatibility of available information and update the Portal
Migratory			
Central Asian Flyway (264)	Included in the CAF Waterbird Action Plan ²² (264 populations, of which >140 populations are covered by AEWA CSRs) Outdated information for >124 populations with no funding or process in place is a priority	High priority	Collate, review and update to Portal
Central Pacific Flyway (& Antarctica) ²³ , (60)	Outdated information with no process in place	High priority	Collate, review and update to Portal
Americas Flyways (379)	Review processes exist for waterbirds in North America (to Central America) and 79 migratory shorebird populations across the Americas	High priority	Assess the compatibility of available information and update the Portal
East Asian - Australasian Flyway (276)	EAAFP CSRs process funded by EAAFP (276 populations)	Medium priority, to address pop gaps for many families and species not included in CSR1	None
African-Eurasian Flyways (532)	AEWA CSRs process funded by AEWA (CSR8 - 560 waterbird and seabird populations)	Low priority, plan in place for 2029 update	None
Total indicative costs:			366,000 CHF²⁴

²² See <https://www.cms.int/en/document/central-asian-flyway-action-plan-conservation-migratory-waterbirds-and-their-habitats>.

²³ For the Central Pacific Flyway (& Antarctica), numbers of residents and migratory populations are combined.

²⁴ A preliminary cost estimate is based on the tasks foreseen for each region/flyway depending on expected available information and anticipated work. The estimated cost of a unit population is based on the AEWA

Timing and implementation priorities

6. The timeline for setting up the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (by COP15) and producing WPE2027 by 2027 is ambitious. To meet this timeline, work on the WEP needs to commence by early January 2025, while preparations for WPE2027 should begin by mid-2025. Financial resources for initiating these key tasks is detailed in Table 1.

Resourcing options

7. Three primary resourcing options are proposed:
 - Comprehensive funding (100% allocation): Full funding from the Convention on Wetlands, potentially through surplus funds.
 - Intermediate funding (75% allocation): Partial funding from the Convention, supplemented by additional resource mobilization.
 - Minimum funding (50% allocation): Basic funding from the Convention, with additional resources sought from Contracting Parties and other organizations.
8. Engaging in additional resource mobilization activities will be critical if partial funding is available. Full delivery of results is contingent upon securing these additional resources. Table 3 outlines the costs and possible reductions in deliverables under the Intermediate and Minimum funding options.

Table 3. Alternative cost options (in CHF).

Priority actions	Comprehensive (all actions)	Intermediate* (75%)	Minimum* (50%)
1. Establishment of Waterbird Estimates Partnership	38,000	38,000	38,000
2. Delivery of WPE2027 through review and updates of priority populations	366,000 (1,600 populations)	287,000 (1,255 populations)	170,000 (743 populations)
3. Maintain the Waterbird Populations Portal to deliver WPE information	61,000	25,000	25,000
Total indicative costs (early estimate):	465,000	350,000	233,000

** In instances where partial funding (Intermediate/establishment) is provided, additional resource mobilization activities will be critical to seek non-core contributions from Contracting Parties and supporting organizations; delivery of the full results will be subject to the availability of such additional resources.*

CSR8 and EAAFP CSR1 costs. The main tasks anticipated for population size assessments include: reviewing of current definition of populations and revising them based on the latest taxonomy (as per BirdLife International/Handbook of the Birds of the World); collating and reviewing existing literature for population size estimate data (for some regions, review of literature in different languages requires additional effort); aligning information with WPE definition of population estimates and boundaries; updating of population size estimates and finalizing them in consultation with experts; and generating updated derived 1% thresholds. Proposed actions for population trend assessments include reviewing literature for new population trend estimates, proposing updated population trend estimates based on a review of the latest trends and trend analysis and finalizing population trends in consultation with experts. Trend analyses using International Waterbird Census data for the limited number of Central Asian Flyway populations not currently covered by the AEWA CSR8 will be undertaken.

9. The Intermediate and Minimum funding options would significantly reduce deliverables, particularly for the WPE2027 updates. Key reductions include:
 - **Waterbird Populations Portal:** Maintenance is limited to bug fixes only.
 - **WPE2027 Updates:** Fewer populations updated, with 1,600 populations in the Comprehensive option, 1,255 populations in the Intermediate option, and 743 populations in the Minimum option. Prioritization will be based on factors such as conservation status, data completeness, and regional importance.

10. Adequate resourcing is essential to the success of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership and the production of WPE2027. The Comprehensive funding option is recommended to ensure the full scope of updates and improvements are achieved. Should partial funding be provided, additional resource mobilization efforts will be necessary.