

Draft resolution on the Status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance¹

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached draft resolution for consideration by the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Background

1. Article 8.2 of the Convention states that the continuing duties of the Secretariat shall include the following:
 - “b) to maintain the List of Wetlands of International Importance and to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any additions, extensions, deletions or restrictions concerning wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 5 of Article 2;*
 - c) to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 3;*
 - d) to forward notification of any alterations to the List, or changes in character of wetlands included therein, to all Contracting Parties and to arrange for these matters to be discussed at the next Conference;*
 - e) to make known to the Contracting Party concerned the recommendations of the Conferences in respect of such alterations to the List or of changes in the character of wetlands included therein.”*
2. Since the second meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP2, in 1984), the Secretariat has fulfilled its duty pursuant to Article 8.2 (d) by submitting a report to each meeting of the COP. In addition, from the 35th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC35), an equivalent report was presented annually to Standing Committee, pursuant to Decision SC35-28. However, in 2023, through Decision SC62-54, the Standing Committee repealed Decision SC35-28 and decided that the Secretariat’s report on the status of the List of Wetlands of International Importance is to be prepared only once per triennium, for presentation to the COP.

¹ Please note that the text of the draft resolution will be updated to reflect the status of Wetlands of International Importance as of 31 March 2025, prior to COP15.

3. To support the preparation of the draft resolution in the present document, the Secretariat has collated data on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance from 1 July 2022 to 26 August 2024. The Secretariat will use data from 1 July 2022 until 31 March 2025 to finalize the draft resolution, and also as a basis for its report to COP15 on the status of the List.
4. With respect to maintaining the List of Wetlands of International Importance, the Standing Committee is invited to note the following actions taken by the Secretariat between 1 July 2022 and 26 August 2024:
 - a. Pursuant to paragraph 21 of Resolution XIV.13 on *The status of Sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, the Secretariat prepared a technical report on the procedure which it undertakes to include a site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and presented it to the Standing Committee at its 62nd meeting (SC62) in document SC62 Doc.23. Pursuant to Decision SC62-55, the Secretariat, in consultation with the legal adviser, prepared a report on proposals for strengthening the process to include a Site on the List, which it presented to SC63 in document SC63 Doc.23; and pursuant to Decision SC63-34 the Secretariat has provided support to a group of interested Contracting Parties to revise document SC63 Doc.23 for presentation to SC64, as document SC64 Doc.27.
 - b. Pursuant to Decision SC62-53, the Secretariat prepared a report on the challenges and opportunities related to the submission and updating of Ramsar Information Sheets, which it presented to the Standing Committee in document SC63 Doc.22. Through Decision SC63-33, the Standing Committee established a working group to further elaborate on the priority actions presented in document SC63 Doc.22, in consultation with the Secretariat and the STRP, to inform the preparation of a draft resolution on strengthening future processes on updating the RIS. The draft resolution is presented to SC64 as document SC64 Doc.26.
 - c. Pursuant to Decision SC62-47, the Secretariat initiated a data completion initiative with a focus on boundaries of Wetlands of International Importance. This aims to provide targeted support to Contracting Parties worldwide in ensuring that available geographical information system (GIS) boundary files are added to the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) and creating GIS files of site boundaries where they are lacking, and where capacity or technical challenges prevent their generation. As of 26 August 2024, 25 Contracting Parties had confirmed GIS boundary files for 165 Wetlands of International Importance, 52 of which had been published by the Secretariat. Of the 2,520 “Ramsar Sites”, 44% were missing GIS boundary files. Contracting Parties may consider utilizing this initiative to reduce the number of Sites for which GIS boundary files are lacking in RSIS, more rapidly than may be possible through full RIS updates.

Draft resolution XV.xx on the Status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance²

1. RECALLING Article 8.2 of the Convention, on the duties of the Secretariat concerning reporting on the status of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar Sites”) for the consideration and recommendations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties on these matters, and Article 6.2.d), concerning the competence of the Conference to make general or specific recommendations to the Contracting Parties regarding the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands;
2. RECALLING Article 2.1 of the Convention, which states that “Each Contracting Party shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance” and that “The boundaries of each wetland shall be precisely described and also delimited on a map”;
3. APPRECIATING the designation of [82] new Wetlands of International Importance by Contracting Parties between 1 July 2022 and 31 March 2025;
4. ALSO APPRECIATING the work done by [22] Contracting Parties that updated Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) for [245] Ramsar Sites within their territories during this period, and by [66] Parties that provided updated information on a further [595] Sites;
5. NOTING that, for [1,899] Ramsar Sites, representing [75%] of the [2,520] Sites that had been designated by 31 March 2025, either Ramsar Information Sheets or adequate maps had not been submitted, or relevant RISs or maps had not been updated for over six years, so that recent information on the status of these Sites was not available;
6. RECALLING paragraph 9 of Resolution VIII.21 on *Defining Ramsar site boundaries more accurately in Ramsar Information Sheets* which “recommends that refinement of the mapped Ramsar Site boundary should only occur where the change is so minor that it does not substantially affect the fundamental objectives for which the site was listed, and:
 - a) the site boundary has been drawn incorrectly and there has been a genuine error; and/or
 - b) the site boundary does not accurately match the description of the boundary as defined in the RIS; and/or
 - c) technology allows for a higher resolution and more accurate definition of the site boundary than was available at the time of Listing”;
7. ALSO RECALLING paragraph 44 of Resolution XIII.20 on *Promoting the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically associated habitats* which “encourages Contracting Parties to ensure that intertidal Ramsar Site boundaries include the entire ecosystem of importance to migratory waterbirds and other dependent species, including inland roost and feeding sites; and invites Parties to review and extend boundaries of relevant Sites as appropriate”;
8. NOTING that substantive changes to Ramsar Site boundaries, arising from extensions or restrictions of the area of a Site, should also be reported in updated Ramsar Information Sheets;

² The draft resolution will be updated by the Secretariat in advance of the publication deadline for COP15 to reflect the status of Sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance as of 31 March 2025. Figures included in square brackets [] reflect the status as of 26 August 2024.

9. FURTHER RECALLING paragraph 12 of Resolution VIII.8 on *Assessing and reporting the status and trends of wetlands, and the implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention*, which urges Contracting Parties “to put in place mechanisms in order to be informed at the earliest possible time, including through reports by national authorities and local and Indigenous communities and NGOs, if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory included in the Ramsar List has changed, is changing or is likely to change, and to report any such change without delay to the Ramsar Bureau so as to implement fully Article 3.2 of the Convention”;
10. EXPRESSING ITS APPRECIATION to those Contracting Parties that have provided Article 3.2 reports to the Secretariat about Ramsar Sites where human-induced changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or may occur, as listed in Annex 4a of the Report of the Secretariat pursuant to Article 8.2 on the List of Wetlands of International Importance³;
11. NOTING that [xx%] of the Contracting Parties reported in their National Reports to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15) that they had arrangements in place to be informed of negative human-induced changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites in their territories; but AWARE that during this reporting period fewer than [5%] of Parties have submitted reports of all instances of such changes or likely changes;
12. CONCERNED that, as of 31 March 2025, [none] of the [46] Ramsar Sites listed in the Montreux Record had been removed since COP14;
13. ALSO CONCERNED about the length of time Contracting Parties are taking to address changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites pursuant to Article 3.2, the ongoing lack of information on the status of many unresolved “Article 3.2 cases”, and the lack of response from some Contracting Parties to either confirm or refute concerns raised by third parties regarding potential changes to Sites; and
14. NOTING the importance of Ramsar Advisory Missions as a monitoring procedure, underlined by Contracting Parties through Resolution XIII.11 on *Ramsar Advisory Missions*, to provide technical assistance for addressing threats to Ramsar Sites that could lead to a change in ecological character;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

15. URGES the Contracting Parties that have not submitted a Ramsar Information Sheet or a map for all Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar Sites”) that they have designated (listed at Annex 3a of the Report of the Secretariat pursuant to Article 8.2 on the List of Wetlands of International Importance), to provide such information as a matter of priority within the next twelve months but not later than 120 days before COP16; and INSTRUCTS the Secretariat of the Convention to contact the relevant Contracting Parties to offer any necessary technical support;
16. REQUESTS the Contracting Parties listed in Annex 3b of the Report of the Secretariat pursuant to Article 8.2 on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, to update, as a matter of urgency, the Ramsar Information Sheets for their Ramsar Sites at least once every six years (as urged in Resolution VI.13 on *Submission of information on sites designated for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance*);
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to adopt and apply as appropriate, as part of their management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, a suitable assessment and

³ See document COP15 Doc.xx.

monitoring regime, such as that outlined in the Annex to Resolution VI.1 on *Working definitions of ecological character, guidelines for describing and maintaining the ecological character of listed sites, and guidelines for operation of the Montreux Record*, as well as the Convention's Wetland Risk Assessment Framework (Resolution VII.10), in order to be able to report change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites in accordance with Article 3.2;

18. REQUESTS Contracting Parties with Ramsar Sites for which the Secretariat has received reports of change or likely change in their ecological character (listed in Annexes 4a and 4b of the Report of the Secretariat pursuant to Article 8.2 on the List of Wetlands of International Importance) to submit information to the Secretariat in response to such reports, including, as appropriate, information on steps taken or to be taken to address these changes or likely changes in ecological character, as a matter of priority within the next twelve months but not later than 120 days before COP16 until the issue is resolved;
19. FURTHER REQUESTS the Secretariat to provide technical support to these Parties to address the threats to their Sites, with priority being given to the most threatened Sites, and to report back to COP16;
20. ENCOURAGES the Contracting Parties to continue to use the Montreux Record questionnaire at Annex 1 of the present Resolution to determine the inclusion or removal of a listed Site in the Montreux Record;
21. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, when submitting a report in fulfilment of Article 3.2, to consider whether the Site concerned would benefit from listing on the Montreux Record;
22. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to assist Contracting Parties in their actions in response to change or likely change in the ecological character of a Ramsar Site or Sites, for example by providing advice, when requested, on the application of the wise-use principles, or, when relevant, proposing to Parties to add the Site or Sites to the Montreux Record or to invite a Ramsar Advisory Mission; and
23. REPEALS Resolution XIV.13 on the *Status of Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance*, which is replaced by the present Resolution.

Annex 1

Montreux Record – Questionnaire content

Section 1: Information for assessing possible inclusion of a listed Ramsar Site in the Montreux Record

Nature of the change

1. Name of Site.
2. Ramsar Criteria for listing the Site as internationally important.
3. Summary statement of ecological character description.
4. Ecological components, processes, functions and services of the ecosystems affected by adverse human-induced change / likely change (list relevant code numbers from the ecological character description).
5. Nature and extent of the change / likely change to ecological character (use the threat categories in Appendix F of Resolution XI.8 Annex 2 *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands*).
6. Reason(s) for the change / likely change described above.

Management measures in place

1. Date when the latest Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) was submitted.
2. Management strategies and administrative mechanisms in place, if any (national government, decentralized government, community-level, or others).
3. Site management plan or other planning, monitoring or assessment programmes in place at the Site, if any (description of technique(s), objectives, and nature of data and information gathered) – refer to RIS section 5.2.7 (Resolution XI.8 Annex 1, RIS field 34).
4. Assessment procedures in place, if any. (How is the information obtained from the monitoring programme used?)
5. Protection, amelioration and/or restoration measures in place so far or planned, if any.
6. Any other analogous or linked Site intervention processes activated or planned, e.g. under other multilateral environmental agreements.
7. List of attachments provided by the Contracting Party (if applicable).
8. List of attachments provided by the Secretariat (if applicable).

Section 2: Information for assessing possible removal of a listed Site from the Montreux Record

Management measures in place

1. Date when the latest RIS was submitted.
2. Site management plan or other planning, monitoring or assessment programmes in place at the Site, if any (description of technique(s), objectives and nature of data and information gathered (refer to RIS section 5.2.7, Resolution XI.8 Annex 1 RIS field 34).
3. Assessment procedures in place, if any (how is the information obtained from the monitoring programme used).
4. Protection, amelioration and/or restoration measures so far in place or planned, if any.

Assessment for removal of the Ramsar Site from the Montreux Record

1. Success of protection, amelioration and/or maintenance measures (if different from those covered in Section 1 of this questionnaire).
2. Proposed management, monitoring and assessment or other procedures (if different from those in Section 1 of this questionnaire).
3. Extent to which the ecological components, processes, functions and services of the Site's ecosystems have been restored or maintained (provide details).
4. Rationale for removing the Site from the Montreux Record. (Refer to *Guidelines for Operation of the Montreux Record*, the specific issues identified in Section 1 of this questionnaire, and any advice given by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) or arising from a Ramsar Advisory Mission, where applicable.)
5. Status of any other analogous or linked Site intervention processes, e.g. under other multilateral environmental agreements, and details of how Montreux Record removal will be harmonized with these.
6. Measures that the Contracting Party will implement to maintain the ecological character of the Site with clear indicators for follow up.
7. List of further attachments (if applicable).