

13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

“Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”
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Ramsar COP13 Doc.9

Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

Introduction

1. This report from the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) focuses on STRP activities and progress for the 2016-2018 triennium. For interim reports by the STRP Chair to the Standing Committee (SC), please see documents [SC51-13](#), [SC52-10](#), [SC53-10](#) and [SC54-22](#).
2. One month after being appointed, STRP members met in November 2015 and developed a draft work plan for the Standing Committee’s consideration. The Standing Committee requested that the STRP seek additional input from Contracting Parties and STRP National Focal Points (NFPs). After this consultation process, the Standing Committee approved the revised work plan in June 2016. Annex I of the present report provides a table that summarises the progress against the [STRP Work Plan 2016-2018](#) as of July 2018.

Update on high priority tasks

3. [Decision SC52-04](#) called on the STRP to focus on nine high-priority tasks, outlined below.
4. *Providing advice to Ramsar Contracting Parties and stakeholders on the State of the World’s Wetlands and their Services to People:* The STRP, in collaboration with the Secretariat, has produced the **Global Wetland Outlook: State of the World’s Wetlands and their Services to People** as the first edition of the Convention’s flagship publication. The Global Wetland Outlook, which will be released on 1 October in advance of COP13, reviews and analyses wetland status and trends, drivers of and responses to wetland loss and degradation. It will be available online, and the STRP has prepared technical notes that provide supplemental information to the main report.
5. *Earth observation as a “best practice” tool for inventorying, mapping and monitoring wetlands, including Ramsar Sites (Task No. 1.1):* The STRP delivered to the Secretariat a draft **Ramsar Technical Report, The use of Earth Observation for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring: An information source for the Ramsar Convention for Wetlands**. The report is under production.
6. *Development of guidelines for inventories of peatlands for possible designation as Wetlands of International Importance (Task 1.2):* As requested, the STRP prepared a [Draft Resolution on Guidance on identifying peatlands as Wetlands of International Importance \(Ramsar Sites\) for global climate change regulation as an additional argument to existing Ramsar criteria \(COP13 Doc.18.13\)](#). A Briefing Note on *Best practice guidelines for conducting tropical peatland inventories to facilitate their designation as Ramsar Sites* has been prepared and is under production.

7. *Ramsar wetland Sites management toolkit* (Task 2.1): After the STRP and Secretariat solicited input from STRP NFPs and CEPA NFPs, the STRP and the Secretariat developed an [online Ramsar Sites management toolkit](#).
8. *Wetland ecosystem services assessment and valuation Policy Brief with toolkit* (Task 3.1): A [Policy Brief](#) on *Integrating multiple wetland values into decision-making*, with an annexed protocol for assessing multiple values of wetlands, was produced and launched in September 2017. The annex adapted the IPBES six-step guide for diverse conceptualisation of nature and its benefits into a Ramsar context.
9. *Wetland Ecosystems and Disaster Risk Reduction* (Task 3.2): A [Policy Brief](#) on *Wetlands for disaster risk reduction – Effective choices for resilient communities*, drafted by Wetlands International, with STRP member Ritesh Kumar as the lead, was produced and launched in October 2017 for the International Day for Disaster Reduction.
10. *Water requirements for wetlands* (Task 4.1): The STRP delivered in January 2018 to the Secretariat for finalisation a draft **Policy Brief**, which is under production, on *Implementing environmental flows with benefits for society and different wetland ecosystems in river systems*, derived from a more comprehensive technical report on environmental flows, *Listen to the river: Lessons from a global review of environmental flow success stories*, issued by WWF-UK at the 20th International River Symposium.
11. *Review and analysis of Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAMs) Reports* (Task 4.2): A [consultants' report](#) analysing RAMs was produced in consultation with the STRP. A [Policy Brief](#) and [Briefing Note](#) on RAMs have been produced and published.
12. *Promoting best practices in wetland restoration* (Task 5.1): The STRP delivered in March 2018 to the Secretariat for finalisation a draft **Briefing Note**, which is under production, on Wetland restoration for climate change resilience.

Update on selected other tasks, including ad hoc advisory functions and emerging issues

13. A number of other tasks, requiring limited time and resources, have been progressed, including:
 - [Draft Resolution](#) on *Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2019-2021* (COP13 Doc.18.12).
 - *Task 2.6, Montreux Record: A report on Change in ecological character of wetland sites – Ramsar guidance and mechanisms*, which has been uploaded to [the Ramsar Sites management toolkit](#) (see Task 2.1).
 - *Task 5.3, Advice for the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on practical methods for rewetting and restoring peatlands: A [Draft Resolution](#) on Restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity* (COP13 Doc.18.14) was prepared. The Panel also progressed a draft Ramsar Technical Report on *Peatland restoration and rewetting methodologies in northern bogs*, which is being reviewed externally. Production of the report will be contingent on capacity and the feedback from the external review.
14. *Draft resolutions prepared by Contracting Parties*: As one of its core responsibilities, the STRP

provided comments and advice on scientific and technical-related issues in draft resolutions drafted by Contracting Parties.

15. *Wetland City accreditation*: Under [Resolution XII.10](#), an STRP member serves on the Independent Advisory Committee. The STRP provided suggestions for improving the process to SC54 (see [SC54-22](#)).
16. *IPBES*: The STRP Chair attended the Fourth Session of the IPBES Plenary in February 2016 and meetings of the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in June 2017 and June 2018. Similarly, STRP members Siobhan Fennessy and Lars Dinesen represented the Convention at the Sixth Session of the Plenary of IPBES in March 2018. The STRP will be providing advice on a proposed thematic assessment request to IPBES on the current status and trends of wetlands, in accordance with [Resolution XII.2](#) and Decision [SC47-24](#).
17. *STRP participation in global assessments*: The STRP participated in the external review processes, including where relevant providing data from the Wetland Extent Trends (WET) Index, for the following global environmental assessments:
 - IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment;
 - IPBES Global Biodiversity Assessment;
 - IPBES Regional Assessments;
 - Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6); and
 - Global Land Outlook.
18. *Emerging issues—peatland fires (RAM) and HPAI (reminder of guidance)*: In 2016, the STRP offered advice to the STRP NFP of Indonesia, through a call, regarding the uncontrolled spread of fires in peatlands. The issue was presented at SC51 (see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc51-presentation-report-of-the-strp-chair> and Annex II to document [SC51-13](#)).
19. The STRP also reminded Contracting Parties, in 2017, of Ramsar guidance on appropriate policy and national responses to recent outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (see document [SC53-10](#)).
20. In closing, I would like to thank the Secretariat for its support of the STRP and express my deep gratitude for the many hours of service dedicated by STRP members, experts, and observers to promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Annex

Status of STRP tasks 2016-2018 work plan

Task title	Task no.	Target audience(s)	Output(s)	Notes	Comments
High Priority Tasks					
Providing advice to Ramsar Contracting Parties and stakeholders on the State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People (SoWWS)		Policymakers and practitioners (wetland managers and stakeholders, including protected areas managers and wetland education centres)	Flagship report (Global Wetland Outlook (GWO): State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People) Executive Summary Summary for Policy Makers Technical Notes Micro website	Outputs are in production at layout and translation stages. Release is scheduled on 1 October in advance of COP13.	Two drafting workshops were held (in 2016 on the margins of INTECOL in Changshu, China and in 2017 in Gland, Switzerland, at the Secretariat). As part of the STRP work plan 2016-2018, an update of the WET index was commissioned to UNEP-WCMC to include all Ramsar regions, as a key component of the GWO. The updated index was included in the GWO.
Earth Observation as a "best practice" tool for inventorying, mapping and monitoring wetlands, including Ramsar Sites	1.1	Practitioners	Ramsar Technical Report	A final draft was submitted to the Secretariat and is under production.	A drafting workshop was held in 2016 in Lao People's Democratic Republic, hosted by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)-Southeast Asia.

Task title	Task no.	Target audience(s)	Output(s)	Notes	Comments
Development of guidelines for inventories of peatlands for possible designation as Wetlands of International Importance	1.2	Practitioners (Ramsar Site managers)	Draft Resolution Briefing Note	A Draft Resolution on <i>guidance on identifying Peatlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) for global climate change regulation as an additional argument to existing Ramsar criteria</i> was drafted and considered at SC54. A draft Briefing Note was drafted by consultants, reviewed by the STRP and delivered to the Secretariat. The draft is under production.	An international workshop on <i>Peatland Conservation and Wise Use in the Context of Climate Change</i> , organised by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BNF) in Vilm, Germany (2016), was used as an opportunity to gather inputs on this and other peatland-related tasks (e.g., Tasks 2.4 and 5.3) in the work plan.
Ramsar Sites management toolkit	2.1	Practitioners (Ramsar Site managers)	Sub-page in Ramsar website	Completed	
Wetland ecosystem services assessment and valuation policy brief with toolkit	3.1	Policy makers and practitioners Practitioners	Policy Brief Ramsar Technical Report	Completed The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	A drafting workshop was hosted by Wetlands International in the Netherlands in 2016.
Wetland ecosystems and disaster risk reduction	3.2	Policy makers	Policy Brief	Completed	
Water requirements for wetlands	4.1	Policy makers and practitioners at national, basin, and local level	Policy Brief building on WWF's report	Policy Brief under production	STRP members participated in the advisory board for WWF's report.
Review and analysis of Ramsar Advisory Mission reports	4.2	Policy makers Practitioners (wetland managers)	Consultancy Report Policy Brief Briefing Note	Completed	WWF provided CHF 22,000 to cover the costs of the consultancy.

Task title	Task no.	Target audience(s)	Output(s)	Notes	Comments
Promoting best practices in wetland restoration	5.1	Policymakers Practitioners (wetland managers)	Briefing Note Policy Brief	Under production The output was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
Other tasks					
Wetland cultural inventories implementation workshop	1.3	Practitioners (wetland managers)	Capacity building workshop Case studies to be published on the Ramsar website as part of the Ramsar Sites Management Toolkit.	The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
Wetland management to reduce the risk of waterborne and aquatic-vector borne diseases	2.2	Practitioners (wetland managers)	Briefing Note	An initial draft of the Briefing Note was prepared but not finalised due to time constraints.	
Transboundary wetland management	2.3	Policymakers	Policy Brief	The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
Assessment of the progress made with the implementation of the "Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GAP)"	2.4	Practitioners and policymakers	Development and dissemination of a questionnaire to selected Contracting Parties through their STRP National Focal Points, based on peatland area/other criteria, with a view to identifying best practices for implementing a wetland action plan	A memo was prepared on country selection for the questionnaire.	

Task title	Task no.	Target audience(s)	Output(s)	Notes	Comments
Best practices for developing and implementing action plans to manage Invasive Alien Species in Ramsar Sites and other wetlands: a guide to available guidance	2.5	Practitioners (wetland managers)	Briefing Note	The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
Montreux Record	2.6	Practitioners (wetland managers) and policymakers	Publish report Webinar	Completed The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	The report is posted on online Ramsar Sites management toolkit .
Case studies on 'wetland valuation and wise use'	3.3	Practitioners Policymakers	Case studies Policy Brief	A call for case studies was drafted but not released due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
Aquaculture developments and wise use of wetlands	4.3	Policymakers (conservation and aquaculture communities)	Policy Brief	The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
The implications of REDD-plus for the wise use of wetlands	5.2	Policymakers	Policy Brief	The task was not undertaken due to limited capacity and time constraints.	
Advice for the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on practical methods for rewetting and restoring peatlands	5.3	Practitioners (wetland managers)	Draft Resolution Ramsar Technical Report	A Draft Resolution on <i>Restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity</i> was drafted and considered by SC54. A draft Ramsar Technical Report was produced and is under external review.	Completion of Ramsar Technical Report will depend on capacity and feedback from the external report.