



11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands: home and destination”

Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012

Resolution XI.16

Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention

1. RECOGNIZING that the Ramsar Convention has been founded on a practical scientific evidence-based approach to understanding, promoting and implementing the wise use of wetlands;
2. ALSO RECOGNIZING that since its adoption in 1971, the Ramsar Convention has been able to attract the involvement and support of many organizations and individual experts who have been committed to the Convention’s objectives and who continue to provide their time and expertise generously to support its implementation, thus providing a valuable resource in terms of knowledge, expertise, and capacity to support the Convention, not only at the global level but also at national and local levels;
3. NOTING that a particular strength of the Ramsar Convention is that its Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has, since its establishment at the 5th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP5) in 1993, been able to follow flexible and adaptive approaches in response to the changing needs and priorities of the Convention;
4. FURTHER NOTING that this process has encompassed the ongoing development of the STRP’s roles and composition and the evolution and refinement of the STRP’s *modus operandi*, as well as the development of the range of scientific priorities addressed by the STRP and other bodies of the Convention over the years, {as reflected in the work themes and priorities set out in the annexes to Resolution XI.17 on *Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015*};
5. WELCOMING the continuing increase in the numbers of Contracting Parties and Ramsar Sites over the years, but RECOGNIZING that this growth is leading to an increased demand for scientific and technical support for implementation and interventions, including increased demand for Ramsar Advisory Missions, and that there are clear capacity limitations to the current mechanisms for responding to this demand, making it necessary to reassess the priorities and focus of current Convention mechanisms, including but not limited to the STRP;

6. ALSO RECOGNIZING that the Convention should continue to work to improve its understanding of, and response to, the scientific and technical needs related to wetlands of Contracting Parties, in the most efficient and effective way possible;
7. NOTING that a number of different mechanisms for delivering scientific and technical knowledge, advice and support are currently utilized to further Convention implementation, including *inter alia* through the Secretariat, the International Organization Partners (IOPs), Ramsar Regional Initiatives, Ramsar Advisory Missions, and the STRP;
8. RECALLING that in the review of the utility of Ramsar guidance (“An Evaluation of the Use & Utility of Ramsar Guidance” and COP10 DOC.21), it was reported that, whilst the Ramsar guidance and the Wise Use Handbooks are generally appreciated and found useful by many people and Contracting Parties, there are opportunities for significant improvements in the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical guidance;
9. RECOGNIZING that there are several distinct target audiences for scientific and technical advice, support and information, due to the range of implementing agents who play roles in achieving the wise use of wetlands, including *inter alia* managers of individual wetland sites as well as managers of networks of wetlands such as on migratory waterbird flyways; wetland policy makers and those responsible for regulating use of and impacts on wetlands; policy makers in other sectors such as water, agriculture, health, urban development, and energy; stakeholders and local communities who may depend upon wetlands and wetland ecosystem services; educators and researchers; and private sector organizations;
10. AWARE that these diverse target audiences require scientific and technical advice, support and information at differing scales relevant to their responsibilities or interests, including at local or wetland site scale, river basin scale, and national, regional and global scales;
11. RECOGNIZING that there are many wetland site managers and local communities among others who require practical information and advice, case studies of best practices, and training for the wise use of wetlands, but who may lack the resources or the networks through which to access such information and training, and may not be able to access fully the advice and guidance prepared by the STRP;
12. ALSO RECOGNIZING that the capacity of the STRP is limited and cannot address the needs of so many target audiences on so many subjects and, therefore, that priorities should be established in terms both of targets and of subjects;
13. AWARE that Ramsar’s profile and recognition are growing in international processes related to water, energy, climate change, and other related sectors, and that this implies an increasing need for wetland managers and policy-makers to be able to provide relevant, credible scientific information and advice on wetlands to these processes;
14. ALSO AWARE that, through the STRP and the Secretariat, the Ramsar Convention has contributed much scientific knowledge and information on wetlands to other international biodiversity processes, notably the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and its 2005 synthesis report on water and wetlands (*Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Wetlands and Water*

Synthesis), and has been active in support and collaboration with the scientific advisory bodies of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements;

15. REITERATING that all bodies of the Convention, including the Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, the STRP, the Conference of Parties, and the Standing Committee, and others such as National Ramsar Committees, national focal points, and the International Organization Partners (IOPs), have roles to play in ensuring that scientific and technical support is delivered in ways that support effective implementation of the objectives of the Convention, and EMPHASIZING the importance of clarifying these roles and ensuring effective coordination and communication in working to deliver scientific and technical support to enhance the implementation of the Convention;
16. AWARE that the effective delivery and uptake of scientific advice, support and information, at the appropriate scales and to the appropriate target audience, is enhanced by collaboration and appropriate partnerships with other scientific organizations, observer organizations, private sector groups, academic organizations and their scientific networks in the Ramsar regions;
17. AWARE of the potential for the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to strengthen the scientific basis for effective action related to the Ramsar Convention (Resolution XI.6);
18. RECOGNIZING the need to establish clear processes for identifying and communicating scientific and technical priorities of the Parties for supporting Convention implementation at targeted and appropriate level, and to consider current priorities as well as future or emerging priorities which should be addressed by the STRP and other bodies of the Convention, as appropriate; and
19. RECALLING Decisions SC42-23 and SC43-12 of the Standing Committee regarding the establishment of an informal working group to take these matters forward to COP11, and WELCOMING this opportunity to reflect upon and improve the Convention's scientific functions;

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20. EXPRESSES APPRECIATION to the informal working group established by the Standing Committee for its provision of the supporting information paper to this Resolution (COP11 DOC.26);
21. AGREES that a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention will be undertaken for consideration by the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12);
22. ALSO AGREES that the review committee will, *inter alia*:
 - i) review the application and utility of Ramsar guidance, building on the findings and conclusions of the "Evaluation of the Use & Utility of Ramsar Guidance" and any other relevant assessments, and provide recommendations for improving the operationality of guidance for the target audiences;

- ii) review the full range of processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, prioritised and converted into tools for the range of on-the-ground stakeholders, including those processes which involve adoption of scientific and technical Resolutions by the COP (including the terms of Resolution VIII.45) as well as other relevant processes within or outside formal Convention mechanisms, and also including the development of clear and transparent criteria to formally prioritize STRP work in order to ensure that the tasks undertaken by the STRP reflect the highest priority needs of the Contracting Parties;
 - iii) review the roles of relevant entities within the Convention for scientific support and delivery to stakeholders, including the roles of the STRP, the CEPA Oversight Panel, the Secretariat, the national focal points, and the Regional Initiatives, giving special attention to finding ways to ensure that scientific and technical products effectively support the Contracting Parties' abilities to advance the implementation of the Convention;
 - iv) explore possible refinements or changes to all relevant Convention processes to facilitate effective communications between all those entities involved in scientific support and delivery;
 - v) consider ways and means to strengthen collaboration with the scientific advisory bodies of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements on scientific and technical issues of common concern, *inter alia* through further development of joint scientific and technical products, where appropriate, in order to leverage funding, increase efficiencies, and avoid duplication of efforts;
 - vi) identify monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the use of existing mechanisms, needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the scientific support and delivery processes within the Convention, across the various responsible entities; and
 - vii) generate suggestions for a future vision, direction and objectives for maintaining the strong practical science evidence base upon which the Ramsar Convention was founded;
23. FURTHER AGREES that the review will be undertaken by members of the Management Working Group and any other interested Contracting Parties and International Organization Partners since they have been key actors of the Convention since its beginning, with no conflict of interest and appointed by the Standing Committee, and that:
- i) the review committee should, through appropriate appointments, include expertise familiar of the development of the Ramsar Convention, the STRP, the responsibilities of Contracting Parties, and implementation on the ground, and also with knowledge of other international science platforms including not only IPBES but also other subsidiary scientific platforms and bodies. It should also include expertise and knowledge of the operational needs of Contracting Parties and in particular the needs of local wetland managers and policy makers;

- ii) the review committee should consult with all relevant entities and their representatives, including *inter alia* the STRP Chair and members, CEPA Oversight Panel, Secretariat staff, Contracting Party national focal points, Ramsar Site managers, other wetland managers, International Organization Partners, and representatives of other bodies associated with Ramsar, such as the biodiversity-related MEAs, who can offer advice and guidance;
 - iii) the review committee should engage widely with Parties and should present a clear assessment of the present situation and recommendations that will be submitted to the Standing Committee for consideration during the 2013-2015 triennium. Recommendations will include suggestions for mechanisms within the Convention to implement any proposed changes, with assessment of their financial implications, and a Draft Resolution for COP12 consideration; and
 - iv) the cost and duration of the review should be taken into consideration, and the work of the review committee should be focused and should use cost-effective means of working so as to keep its activity within reasonable limits and minimize costs. The Chairs of the Standing Committee, its Subgroup on Finance, the Management Working Group and the STRP plus the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee should review the STRP line items in the budget to direct their use as necessary towards implementing this Resolution; and
24. REQUESTS the Secretariat to support the establishment of the review committee and its work, as needed and according to clear specifications to be provided by the Standing Committee.