

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**26th Meeting of the Standing Committee,
Gland, Switzerland, 3-7 December 2001**

DOC. SC26-4

Agenda Item 8

Report and analysis on issues related to Resolution VII.12: “Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance: official descriptions, conservation status, and management plans, including the situation of particular sites in the territories of specific Contracting Parties” and application of Articles 3.2 and 8.2(d) of the Convention¹

Action requested. The Standing Committee is requested to receive the report of the Secretary General on this matter, to note the draft resolutions for COP8 that have been prepared on these issues, and to provide guidance to Contracting Parties and /or the Bureau.

1. Practically all issues related to this matter have been covered in the report of the Secretary General, in paragraphs 72-79 (urgent national interests) and paragraphs 91-94 (fulfillment of Article 3.2 on change of ecological character).
2. Two issues in Oceania were not contained in that report. They are as follows:
 - a) Australia. The Bureau had received information from a local NGO concerning plans for a toxic waste depository adjacent to Lake Reeves (Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site). The representatives expressed concerns that any leakage of toxic or radioactive wastes into surface or groundwater could place the ecological character of the site in jeopardy. The Bureau raised these concerns with the Convention’s Administrative Authority, who have replied that they have arranged for these issues to be examined, and a substantive response is awaited.
 - b) New Zealand. The Bureau had received information of a long-term problem of increased siltation in the Whangamarino Wetland Ramsar site resulting from discharge of silt-laden water from Lake Waikare upstream of the wetland, as part of a flood management scheme. According to the information, this has led to severe restriction of plant and invertebrate animal growth and a major decline in the

¹ ARTICLE 3.2. Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay to the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8.

ARTICLE 8.2 The continuing bureau duties shall be, *inter alia*: ...
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;

internationally-important numbers of waterbirds using the wetlands; it was reported that a further 25-year discharge consent had recently been granted which did not fully address appropriate mitigation measures. The New Zealand Department of Conservation have now investigated these matters through their regional staff and have advised the Bureau that they are presently examining ways of managing the system to ensure the ecological character of the site in the future.

3. The issues addressed in this agenda item are dealt with in the proposed resolutions on:
 - a) General guidance for determining “urgent national interest” under Article 2.5 of the Convention and compensation under Article 4.2 (DOC. SC26/COP8-1)
 - b) Procedure for the review of Ramsar site boundary reductions or deletions from the Ramsar List for reasons other than urgent national interests (DOC. SC26/COP8-2)
 - c) The implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention (DOC. SC26/COP8-9)
4. Concerning Article 8.2 of the Convention (see footnote), the alterations in the Ramsar List will be reported upon in the Report of the Secretary General to COP8, which will be based upon the analysis of the National Reports submitted by Contracting Parties. This issue should also be addressed under Agenda Item X of COP8: Issues arising from Resolutions and Recommendations of previous meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.
5. In the meantime, the Standing Committee may wish to provide guidance to Contracting Parties and/or the Bureau on the issues raised in the report of the Secretary General as indicated in paragraphs 1 and 2 above.