

Summary of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: 5-13 November 2022

Wetlands have been called the “cradle of biodiversity,” home to an abundance of flora and fauna. Among the world’s most productive ecosystems, wetlands provide freshwater, food and building materials, flood control, and climate change mitigation. Yet despite their significance to nature and human well-being, wetlands continue to experience extremely high rates of decline and degradation: an estimated 35% of wetlands have been lost since the 1970s, with no sign of abatement.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands plays a central role in focusing attention on the importance of wetlands, fostering partnerships for conservation and wise use, and providing a framework for countries to designate specific wetlands as internationally important.

The fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP14) was held under the theme “Wetland Actions for People and Nature.” The Ramsar Awards ceremony and Wetland City Accreditation showcased some of the ways the Convention is working to realize its mission of conservation and wise use of wetlands.

COP14 convened from 5-13 November 2022, in Geneva, Switzerland. Originally intended to be held in Wuhan, China, the meeting shifted to a hybrid format with events taking place in Wuhan and Geneva, simulcast in both countries. The meeting opened with a hybrid opening ceremony on 5 November and a hybrid high-level ministerial segment on 6 November. Nearly 1,100 delegates, observers, and other participants attended the meeting.

A Brief History of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands) was signed in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971, and entered into force on 21 December 1975. The Convention provides a framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Originally emphasizing conservation and wise use of habitat for waterbirds, the Convention subsequently broadened its scope, recognizing the importance of wetlands as ecosystems that contribute to both biodiversity conservation and human well-being.

Wetlands cover an estimated 6% of the Earth’s land surface, and contribute significantly to the global economy in terms of water supply, fisheries, agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

The Convention currently has 172 parties. A total of 2,471 wetland sites, covering more than 250 million hectares, are included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). The Ramsar List includes the Montreux Record, which is a register of wetland sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution, or other human interference.

Parties commit themselves to:

- designate at least one site that meets the Ramsar criteria for inclusion in the Ramsar List and ensure maintenance of each site’s ecological character;
- include wetland conservation within national land-use planning to promote the wise use of all wetlands within their territory;
- establish nature reserves on wetlands and promote training in research and management; and
- consult with other parties about Convention implementation, especially regarding transboundary wetlands, shared water systems, shared species, and development projects affecting wetlands.

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Contracting parties meet every three years. In addition to the COP, the Convention's work is supported by a Standing Committee (SC), a Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the Secretariat.

Key Turning Points

The Conference of the Contracting Parties has met 13 times since 1980. Extraordinary COPs (ExCOPs) were held in 1982 and 1987. The first Ramsar ExCOP (December 1982) established the Paris Protocol for amending the Convention and adopted official versions of the Convention in six languages. The second Ramsar ExCOP (May- June 1987) adopted the Regina Amendments, which defined the powers of the COP, and established the Standing Committee, Secretariat, and a budget.

COP6 (March 1996) adopted the first Ramsar Strategic Plan for 1997-2002.

COP7 (May 1999) articulated the "three pillars" of action: wise use of wetlands; designation and management of Ramsar Sites; and international cooperation. COP7 also confirmed BirdLife International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wetlands International, and the World Wide Fund for Nature as International Organization Partners of the Convention.

COP8 (November 2002) focused on the role of wetlands in water provision, as well as their cultural and livelihoods aspects. Delegates approved the Convention's Work Plan for 2003-2005 and Strategic Plan for 2003-2008.

COP9 (November 2005) adopted the Convention's Work Plan for the 2006-2008 triennium, and reviewed its Strategic Plan 2003-2008. An informal Ministerial Dialogue adopted the Kampala Declaration, which emphasized the role of the Convention in arresting the continued loss and degradation of wetland ecosystems.

COP10 (November 2008) adopted the Convention's Strategic Plan 2009-2015. Delegates also adopted resolutions on wetlands and climate change, and on wetlands and biofuels.

Recent Meetings

COP12 convened in June 2015 in Punta del Este, Uruguay, under the theme "Wetlands for our Future." COP12 adopted 16 resolutions by consensus, including: the Strategic Plan 2016-2024; a new framework for the delivery of scientific and technical advice, and guidance on the Convention; peatlands; disaster risk reduction; and a wetland city accreditation system under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

COP13 was the first COP held in an Arab country, meeting under the theme "Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future" in October 2018 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. COP13 adopted 25 resolutions, including on: a language strategy with a step-by-step plan to add Arabic as the fourth Convention language; gender; peatlands: blue carbon ecosystems; sustainable urbanization; agriculture; intertidal wetlands; wetlands in West Asia; and Arctic and sub-Arctic wetlands.

COP14 Report

Opening Ceremony

On [Saturday](#), 5 November 2022, COP14 opened with a striking performance of traditional Chinese music and dance during a hybrid ceremony in Wuhan, China, and Geneva, Switzerland. The ceremonial Ramsar flag indicated the transfer of the COP Presidency for the next triennium from the United Arab Emirates to China. Participants heard statements from:

- President Xi Jinping, China, via video message, who emphasized, *inter alia*, China's achievements in wetlands conservation since joining the Convention, and the proposed International Mangrove Center to be hosted in Shenzhen;
- Wang Guanghua, Minister of Natural Resources, China, who moderated the opening session;
- Shen Yueyue, Vice-Chairman, Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China;
- Inger Andersen, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);
- Wang Menghui, Secretary, Communist Party of China (CPC), Hubei Provincial Committee;
- Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN;
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretary General Musonda Mumba; and
- Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

In the final presentation, the Youth Initiative of COP14 celebrated the history and importance of the Convention and highlighted taking action to protect wild animals and places and to be a spokesperson for protecting wetlands.

High-level Ministerial Segment

On [Sunday](#), 6 November 2022, delegates heard statements from ministers and ambassadors who highlighted accomplishments in wetland protection and flagged areas of concern. On [Monday](#), the Wuhan Declaration, drafted by China, was introduced and adopted. In the Declaration, Ministers, Ministerial-level officials, and Ambassadors of the parties, endeavor to, *inter alia*:

- take appropriate and urgent measures to achieve the goal of halting and reversing the loss of wetlands globally;
- mobilize more resources to strengthen implementation of the Convention's Fourth Strategic Plan;
- support legislation and implementation of wetlands conservation, restoration, management, and wise and sustainable use in harmony with the Convention; and
- strengthen technical cooperation and knowledge sharing among global wetland conservation practitioners through established Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs), the STRP, the Convention's communication, education, participation, capacity building and awareness programme (CEPA), and other subsidiary scientific bodies related to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Organizational Matters

On [Monday](#), the parties elected Li Chunliang, Deputy Administrator, National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA), China, as COP14 President and Wu Zhimin, Deputy Director General, Department for Wetland Management, NFGA, as

Alternate President. They also elected Jacey Scott (Canada) as Vice President and rapporteur and Laura Bermudez Wilches (Colombia) as Vice President.

Parties adopted the agenda ([COP14 Doc. 3.1](#)) and provisional working programmes for the Wuhan meeting ([COP14 Doc. 3.2.1](#)) and for the Geneva meeting ([COP14 Doc. 3.2.2.Rev.1](#)) with minor modifications. They also approved the Rules of Procedure ([COP14 Doc.4.2](#)) and the admission of observers that met the requirements of the Rules of Procedure ([COP14 Doc.7](#)).

Reports

On [Monday](#), the plenary heard reports from the SC Chair, Secretary General, and Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Secretariat.

Report of the SC Chair: SC Chair Mohamed Al Afkham introduced the SC report ([COP14 Doc.8](#)).

Report of the Secretary General on global implementation of the Convention: Secretary General Mumba introduced the report on the global implementation of the Convention ([COP14 Doc.9.1](#)), noting the Convention's high national reporting rate, and encouraged members to use the national report online tool and to strengthen synergies among MEAs.

Report on the Work of the Secretariat: The Secretariat introduced the report ([COP14 Doc.9.2](#)), noting the increasing relevance of wetlands and the Convention to global policy objectives on sustainable development and on enhancing efforts on the visibility of wetlands and the Convention.

Report on the List of Wetlands of International Importance: The Secretariat introduced the report ([COP14 Doc.10 Rev.1](#)), noting a lack of updated information on 75% of Ramsar Sites, including information on sites facing human threats on their ecological character. Other highlights included the designation of 125 new Ramsar Sites and two new transboundary Ramsar Sites

Report on implementation of the CEPA Programme 2016-2024: The Secretariat reported on the Convention's communication, education, participation, capacity building and awareness (CEPA) Programme 2016-2024 ([COP14 Doc.11](#)). COP14 President Wu Zhimin noted that recommendations from delegates will feed into the Ramsar Strategic Plan revision.

Report of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel Chair: STRP Chair Lei Guangchun presented the report ([COP14 Doc.12](#)), noting the Panel's priorities, defined by the SC, are blue carbon ecosystems, peatlands restoration, and wetlands agriculture.

Issues arising from previous resolutions and recommendations: The Secretariat noted that all relevant discussions are reflected in the current meeting's agenda and draft resolutions.

Administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions: The Secretariat presented the document ([COP14 Doc.14](#)), cautioning that budgetary projections are subject to change based on activities defined by parties.

Special Events

Ramsar Awards: On [Monday](#) afternoon, Deputy Secretary General Jay Aldous presented the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards, in four categories:

- Young wetland champions: Fernanda Samuel, National Coordinator, Mangrove Protection and Restoration, Angola, for consistent and passionate efforts towards protecting and restoring mangrove wetlands;
- Wise use of wetlands: Masayuki Kurechi, Board Member, Ramsar Network Japan, for his long-term commitment to Asian-Australasian flyways and conservation of migratory birds;
- Wetland innovation: Carla Ximena Giraldo Malca, honoring contributions to the sustainability of the Pantanos de Villa wetland, Peru, by ensuring the voice of children as guardians of the wetland is recognized; and
- Merit award: Jérôme Bignon, President of the Association Ramsar France, for his dedicated and long-term contribution towards the conservation of wetlands in France by championing laws that improve the conservation of wetlands.

Wetland City Accreditation: The award ceremony for the Wetland City Accreditation took place on [Thursday](#) afternoon. Delegates viewed a short film on urban wetlands and heard about the unique values and co-benefits that accrue to urban wetlands as well as the achievements of each Wetland City.

Secretary General Mumba presented the certificates to representatives of 25 cities from 12 countries that have demonstrated strong and positive relationships with wetlands.

Resolutions

During the COP, parties considered 24 draft resolutions; one was withdrawn, and two were consolidated into one resolution.

Financial and budgetary matters: The draft resolution was introduced on [Monday](#) by SC Finance Subgroup Chair Mariana Olivera West. The Subgroup had several meetings during the week and a revised draft was discussed in plenary on [Thursday](#). The budget features a single scenario of a 0% increase in the budget for the 2023-2025 triennium, following Decision SC59/2022-39 of the Standing Committee. During discussions, the parties highlighted the need to find ways to pay outstanding and future contributions.

The resolution was adopted on Saturday.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.1 Rev.1), the COP decides that the Subgroup on Finance will be continued, operating under the SC. The four annexes include: the core budget for 2023-2025; estimated core budget contributions by contracting parties for 2023-2025; Secretariat staff (core) for 2023-2025 as per the budget in Annex 1; and 2023-2025 non-core fundraising priorities.

Responsibilities, roles and composition of the SC and regional categorization of countries: The Secretariat introduced this draft resolution on [Monday](#). SWEDEN proposed an amendment that would reduce the number of regions from six to four. Following informal discussions, a revised draft was introduced on [Thursday](#). SWEDEN withdrew its suggestion and expressed a wish to renew the discussion ahead of COP15. A final text was adopted on Sunday, 13 November.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.2 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*, notes with appreciation steady improvement in performance, management, and optimization of resources by the Secretariat over the past triennium. The decision contains four annexes on:

- responsibilities, roles and composition of the SC and regional categorization of countries under the Convention;
- allocation of parties and non-parties to the six regional groups;
- tasks of parties elected as regional representatives in the SC; and
- an indicative schedule for SC intersessional meetings for the 2023-2025 triennium.

Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Convention: The draft resolution was introduced on [Monday](#) by the UK. In the ensuing discussion, parties considered intersessional work and work of the Secretariat. Informal consultations continued throughout the week.

On Saturday, the plenary adopted the resolution.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.3 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- encourages the Secretariat to provide administrative support to parties, at their request, in preparing draft resolutions to provide transparent and timely advice regarding the cost of implementing proposed draft resolutions, and improve cross-references, avoid duplication, and support consolidation of draft resolutions going forward;
- instructs the Secretariat to improve its communications approach towards contracting parties, and submit an updated Strategy for Communications with Parties for consideration at SC63;
- instructs the Secretariat to propose approaches, including possible online systems, and in particular, a closed members' portal, and to report on its proposals about such technologies, including the costs and benefits of such systems and how the proposal manages any risk of creating a participation gap between parties with different internet access, to SC63; and
- allocates CHF 10,000 of unspent funds for the work of the Effectiveness Working Group to fulfill the mandate of this resolution.

Review of the fourth Strategic Plan and key elements for the fifth Strategic Plan: The draft resolution was introduced by AUSTRALIA on [Monday](#) and discussed in a contact group throughout the week. Parties expressed a range of views regarding changes to the text, including terminology related to nature-based solutions (NbS), ecosystem-based approaches (EbA) and "integrated approaches," as well as whether to reference the forthcoming Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) post-2020 global biodiversity framework. On [Thursday](#), AUSTRALIA reported the completion of discussions by the contact group. Delegates adopted the resolution on [Saturday](#), without reference to NbS.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.4 Rev.1), the COP adjusts the fourth Strategic Plan to add three thematic Annexes, 3-5, to assist parties in addressing emerging issues over the final triennium of the plan on: key actions to support practical implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); new approaches to CEPA; and gender considerations and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

With regard to the fifth Ramsar Strategic Plan, the COP, among others:

- reaffirms the decision of the SC59 to establish a new Strategic Plan Working Group, which has commenced preparatory work to ensure a draft plan is ready for adoption at COP15;
- encourages the new Working Group to keep the goals of the fourth Strategic Plan in the fifth Strategic Plan to maintain consistency and continuity in reporting; and

- recognizes the important role that stakeholders can play and the need to enable contributions, in particular of Indigenous Peoples, youth, women and girls, local communities, and the business sector in conserving, restoring, and wisely using wetlands and providing solutions to global environmental, social, and economic challenges.

Strengthening Ramsar Connections Through Youth:

AUSTRALIA introduced the draft resolution on [Monday](#). Many parties supported the proposal, and a few amendments were requested. Some suggestions raised included the need for technical and financial support, the importance of including youth from rural and urban areas, and the addition of success stories of youth engagement. On behalf of the AFRICA REGION, Malawi recalled that youth will disproportionately experience the negative consequences of environmental degradation. Australia was instructed to conduct informal consultations and submit a revised draft.

On [Saturday](#), AUSTRALIA reported agreement on the revised draft proposal and introduced two additional minor amendments that were submitted. YOUTH ENGAGED IN WETLANDS thanked delegates for creating ways for engagement. The plenary adopted the revised proposal.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.14 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- recalls the principle of intergenerational equity that underpins the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- encourages parties to explore and support strategies to engage, collaborate, and involve youth in the implementation of the Convention, such as: appointing national non-governmental organization or government Youth Focal Points (as set out in Annex 1), inviting youth participation on the National Ramsar Committees, and identifying youth professional development opportunities and employment pathways on wetlands;
- instructs the Secretariat to explore hybrid models and engagement approaches that are relevant and meaningful to youth;
- requests the SC to establish a Ramsar Youth Working Group, establishing its mandate and operation in Annex 2;
- requests the Secretariat to employ the capacity of its Junior Professional Programme to assist with the coordination of the Ramsar Youth Working Group and the joint work plan;
- instructs the Secretariat to call for voluntary contributions to support the employment of a youth advisor to facilitate youth engagement; and
- urges parties to use their national reports to provide information on strategies to support youth participation in implementing the Strategic Plan.

Wetland education in the formal education sector: The draft resolution was introduced on [Monday](#) by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, and discussed again at plenary on [Thursday](#). Proposed amendments related to inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, involvement of the private sector, and establishment of education networks. Informal consultations ensued and on [Saturday](#) the REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted consensus on including reference to informal and non-formal education in the resolution. The plenary adopted the revised proposal.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.13. Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- urges parties to recognize the benefits of promoting wetland education topics in formal education and other sectors to encourage a greater understanding of wetlands and their values;
- encourages parties to further integrate wetland education in formal education settings, including by identifying institutions responsible for formal education and developing strategies to introduce wetland topics into existing curricula;
- encourages parties to establish partnerships and networks for mobilizing resources;
- calls upon parties to consider other partners and sectors in education, including Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities that may assist in the introduction of wetland topics in formal curricula, non-formal and informal education, and share examples of good wetland education materials;
- encourages parties to seek opportunities to support citizen science initiatives, including traditional knowledge, and to utilize existing online education platforms;
- encourages parties to use Ramsar National Reports to report on progress regarding wetland education in schools and learning institutions, as appropriate;
- instructs the Secretariat to analyze the progress of the development and implementation of wetland education programmes and report the progress to the COP; and
- requests the Secretariat to work to integrate wetland education in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Education for Sustainable Development - 2030 Roadmap.

Review of Ramsar Criteria, and delisting Ramsar Sites:

ALGERIA introduced the draft resolution (COP14 Doc.18.16) on [Monday](#), proposing, *inter alia*, the delisting of Ramsar Sites located in territories that are not recognized at the UN level as part of the territory of the submitting territory. Several parties opposed the draft, saying the Convention should focus on the ecological criteria of Ramsar Sites, not their political status. The COP14 President requested further input from the Legal Advisor before reconvening the discussion.

On [Tuesday](#), delegates resumed discussions on a revised version. Many parties opposed the resolution, with some cautioning against mixing political and ecological issues. A contact group, chaired by South Africa, was established to further discussions. On [Thursday](#), SOUTH AFRICA reported that an agreement had been reached to defer the draft resolution, and on Sunday, the President confirmed its consideration would be postponed to COP15.

Enhancing visibility and synergies with other MEAs and other international institutions:

This draft resolution was introduced on [Tuesday](#) by the Secretariat, and discussed during informal consultations throughout the week. Discussions focused on a number of issues, including: whether to make explicit linkages to the forthcoming CBD post-2020 global biodiversity framework; whether to be more explicit in synergies with other MEAs and international institutions; and whether to establish an open-ended working group for considering the observer status of the Convention Secretariat in other international fora.

On [Saturday](#), parties continued discussions on the regional scope of the synergies and a proposed amendment to highlight

the relevance of the Convention's work in contributing to a larger network of area-based conservation measures.

The plenary adopted the draft resolution on Sunday.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.8 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- instructs the Secretariat, in consultation with interested parties, to prepare an institutional strengthening report with recommendations reflecting the needs of the Secretariat to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention, ahead of SC62;
- encourages the Secretariat, in consultation with the STRP, to engage with UNESCO, the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) family, IUCN, and relevant International Organization Partners (IOPs), to contribute to ongoing efforts to improve ecological connectivity of the world's flyways for migratory birds and other taxa;
- encourages the Secretariat and parties that are also parties to the CBD to enable the adequate recognition of wetlands in the goals, targets and indicators of the future post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and requests the STRP to engage with the CBD in their development; and
- urges parties to establish national collaboration mechanisms between MEA focal points to promote synergies and effectiveness of national efforts, for example through relevant measures in national biodiversity strategies, harmonized knowledge management and national reporting, including by making use of the Data Reporting tool (DaRT) developed by UNEP.

New CEPA approach: SWEDEN introduced the draft resolution in plenary on [Tuesday](#). During discussions, parties called for mainstreaming the new approach across public and private sectors, including with youth, and highlighted the value of media, events, and educational activities for sharing science-based knowledge on wetlands. Parties also proposed amendments to the text, including replacing NbS with "integrated approaches," as well as references to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Sweden was instructed to collect views and submit a revised draft.

SWEDEN presented the changes on [Saturday](#), and parties further discussed reference to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

On Sunday, a revised version was circulated, with additional changes proposing references to NbS, EbA, and other approaches, and the criteria for the composition of the CEPA Oversight Panel. Parties considered the revised draft and adopted it during the afternoon plenary.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.10 Rev.3) on the new CEPA approach, the COP, *inter alia*:

- instructs the Secretariat to initiate the nomination process for the CEPA Oversight Panel following COP14, for the SC to take an intersessional decision on its composition for the following triennium;
- instructs the CEPA Oversight Panel to develop a workplan for the next triennium to be presented at SC62;
- instructs the Secretariat, in collaboration with the CEPA Oversight Panel, and in consultation with parties, to prepare, for SC63, a proposal on the future operations of the Oversight Panel to support the new approach.

Annex 1 contains the characteristics of the new approach to CEPA. Annex 2 explains how the new CEPA approach will be integrated into the Strategic Plan, and contains a table of goals and targets. The selection criteria for the CEPA Oversight Panel, contained in Annex 3 on Terms of Reference, establishes that the Panel should include, among others, a youth representative and an Indigenous member, as feasible.

Ramsar Regional Initiatives – Operational Guidelines: The draft resolution was introduced on [Tuesday](#) by COSTA RICA, and discussed in a contact group chaired by Costa Rica throughout the week. Parties proposed a number of amendments to the proposed operational guidelines, touching upon: matters related to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the RRIs, as well as their transparency and accountability; not overburdening smaller RRIs with additional reporting requirements; the appropriate role of the Secretariat regarding funding; collaboration with IOPs to address gaps in implementation capacity; and the establishment of RRIs in parts of the world where none exist.

On Sunday, COSTA RICA reported that parties had reached consensus, and the text was adopted.

Final Outcome: The final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.9 Rev.2) is divided into two parts: Part A addresses the operational guidelines for RRIs, and Part B lists RRIs endorsed as operating in the framework of the Convention, which the COP endorses for the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15. In Part A, the COP adopts the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives, contained in Annex 1 of the resolution. The COP also, *inter alia*:

- reaffirms the effectiveness of regional cooperation through networks and centers in supporting the improved implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan and Resolutions;
- encourages parties, working with partner organizations, to establish RRIs in parts of the world where none yet exist;
- requests the Secretariat, working with IOPs, to identify opportunities for promoting RRI establishment in parts of the world where no RRIs currently exist; and submission of a brief annual report to the SC;
- decides that all RRIs shall comply with the criteria based on Resolution XIII.9 to be formally recognized as an RRI under the Convention, which include, *inter alia*: written terms of reference, transparent and accountable governance and financial structures, and submission of a template for proposed new regional initiatives by new RRIs.

In Annex 1, the operational guidelines state, *inter alia*, that:

- RRIs complying with all requirements should receive a certificate for the endorsed period by the COP or the SC;
- RRIs should establish their own governance and advisory mechanisms in order to provide leadership, coordination, guidance, and accountability in a transparent and equitable manner, which requires the establishment of a governing body made up of the participating parties and other relevant stakeholders, and a coordination body; and
- instructs the Secretariat to open calls for proposals for new RRIs to be endorsed by the COP or intersessionally by the SC.

Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards: This draft resolution was introduced on [Tuesday](#) by SWEDEN, and discussed in an informal group throughout the week. NEW ZEALAND, supported

by BOLIVIA and COLOMBIA, proposed an additional award category for Indigenous Peoples. The Secretariat worked with relevant parties to revise the draft.

On [Saturday](#), parties considered the revised draft, and following an additional proposed amendment concerning the criteria for the new award and the process for nomination, they adopted the text.

Final Outcome: The final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.11 Rev.1) contains two annexes on: the categories, eligibility criteria, award criteria and procedures; and a compilation of relevant resolutions and SC decisions to be retired. In the main text, the COP decides to have an additional Ramsar Wetland Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award, aimed at promoting outstanding projects by or involving Indigenous Peoples, to specifically acknowledge outstanding leadership and transformative projects either led by, or involving, Indigenous Peoples.

Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects for 2023-2025: The draft resolution was introduced on [Tuesday](#) and a revised text presented in plenary on [Thursday](#) by the STRP Chair, following informal consultations coordinated by New Zealand. Discussion centered on prioritization of activities. On [Saturday](#), the revised document was presented in plenary, and after further informal consultations, delegates adopted the resolution on Sunday.

Final Outcome: The final resolution (COP14 Doc 18.17 Rev.1) addresses the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects for 2023-2025, along with three annexes that include: a list of STRP outputs produced during 2019-2022; priority thematic work areas and high priority tasks 2023-2025; and a list of the bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in meetings and processes for the triennium.

The COP, *inter alia*:

- instructs the STRP to develop a streamlined and achievable work plan for 2023-2025, one that takes into account traditional and local knowledge and the potential contribution of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, where appropriate, to be submitted as soon as possible for SC approval;
- encourages the STRP to include unfinished tasks from the 2019-2021 work plan, including elements of the Strategic Plan, which the Secretariat reported that parties are struggling with; and
- requests the STRP to explore, with the Secretariat, the value of virtual meetings and other online tools to support its work, taking into account the need for equitable and broadly inclusive participation, and environmental and financial impacts.

Enhancing the conservation and management of small wetlands: CHINA introduced the draft resolution on [Tuesday](#).

Following discussions on the term “small wetland,” with one party highlighting the importance of small wetlands to local community livelihoods, the Secretariat was instructed to revise the draft resolution.

On [Saturday](#), CHINA updated delegates on the draft resolution and presented some proposed changes. Regarding the definition of “small wetlands,” CHINA recalled that the issue was discussed at COP13, and Resolution 13.21 states that there is currently no clear definition.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.18 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- expresses concern that small wetlands are increasingly facing development pressures leading to degradation and loss;

- notes the publication of a New Toolkit for National Wetlands Inventories by the Convention (2020) that can be applied and adapted to small wetlands;
- encourages parties to consider the conservation and management of small wetlands in policies, plans, programmes, and other policy instruments, and as part of nature-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk management;
- encourages parties to designate small wetlands and small wetland complexes that meet the criteria for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance;
- requests the STRP, based on the latest scientific knowledge and feedback from parties, to develop guidance on inventories and monitoring of small wetlands and their multiple values for biodiversity conservation, drawing on the draft framework for the inventory, classification, management, and restoration of small wetlands contained in Annex 1, and national best practices and experiences; and
- requests the Secretariat, subject to available resources, to include a section on small wetlands in future editions of the Global Wetland Outlook.

Review of all previous resolutions and decisions and draft list of effectively defunct resolutions: These draft resolutions were introduced on [Tuesday](#) by the Secretariat, and discussed again on Saturday. It was noted that the document for the draft list of the status of resolutions was subsumed under COP14 Doc.18.6 under Annex 1, which contains options for the process of consolidating and retiring outdated resolutions.

Discussions focused on a range of topics, including concerns about the additional workload and clarification of implications on funding and the core budget. Regarding options for consolidating and retiring outdated resolutions, there was overwhelming preference for Option 1, under which the COP approves a categorized list of existing resolution from which the SC selects three or four subjects, and for which the Secretariat would provide draft consolidations, to be considered at the next COP.

Informal consultations continued throughout the week. On Sunday, the plenary adopted the draft resolution.

Final Outcome: The final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.6 Rev.2) contains the process for reviewing resolutions and recommendations of the COP, and contains three annexes on: a list of resolutions and recommendations of the COP and their status; categories of resolutions of the COP; and guidelines on the preparation and recording of future resolutions and decisions of COP.

The COP, *inter alia*:

- instructs the Secretariat to maintain, on the website of the Convention, a list of all current COP resolutions, and a separate list of resolutions that are no longer in effect; and
- adopts the list of resolutions and an annex, indicating their status in terms of whether they remain wholly or partly in effect.

Regarding the review and consolidation of the current resolutions, the COP establishes, subject to available resources, an iterative process for consolidation of COP resolutions, as follows:

- the general objective of the consolidation is to facilitate the understanding and implementation of the resolution, by combining into a single resolution the text from existing resolutions that deal with the same subject or sub-subject, using the words from existing resolutions as far as possible, while eliminating discrepancies and inconsistencies; and

- after each meeting of the COP, the SC will select a small number (generally two to four) of categories for which the Secretariat will prepare a consolidated resolution for consideration at the following COP.

Regarding the preparation and adoption of future draft resolutions and draft decisions, the COP:

- recommends that parties, when drafting a resolution intended to treat a subject comprehensively or make significant changes in the way that the subject be dealt with, prepare a draft so that, if adopted, it will replace and repeal all existing resolutions on the same subject; and
- requests parties, chairs of committees and other Convention bodies and the Secretariat, to follow the guidance in Annex 3.

The COP also decides that the procedure for recording and maintaining the decisions of the SC shall be decided by the SC itself.

Waterbird population estimates to support new and existing Ramsar Site designations: AUSTRALIA introduced the draft resolution on [Wednesday](#), highlighting a request to the STRP to develop a technical proposal to enable the resourcing and implementation of future waterbird population estimates. The UK announced a CHF 5,000 contribution to fund the STRP-related work. Many countries expressed support for the proposal. Several parties asked for changes in processes for updating population estimates. Others drew attention to the need for further funding and capacity building, knowledge sharing, and technology transfer to support the implementation of this work.

The President asked Australia to conduct informal consultations and requested the Secretariat to submit a revised draft.

On [Saturday](#), many parties proposed amendments to the revised text, requesting the STRP to develop technical support guidance to assess waterbird populations, in particular for developing country parties. The revised draft resolution was adopted.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.21 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- agrees that until the Waterbird Population Estimates are updated with accurate population estimates, alternative data sources may be used by parties to determine the 1% threshold in the context of applying Ramsar Criterion 6 (must regularly support 1% of the individuals in a biogeographic population of one species or subspecies of waterbird);
- instructs the Secretariat to update the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance – 2012 Revision, as set out in Annex 1; and
- requests the STRP to develop a technical proposal to enable the resourcing for the process for the future Waterbird Population Estimates updates, data collection focusing on the most biodiverse regions, and the capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation exchange needed to support developing country parties.

Protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of wetland ecosystems in addressing climate change: SPAIN introduced the draft resolution on [Wednesday](#), with the original title containing reference to NbS and EbA. Several parties proposed amendments to broaden the draft resolution beyond its current regional focus. Ensuing debates centered on whether to focus on NbS, EbA, or both. Several parties highlighted United

Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 5.5, which provides a definition of NbS. Others noted that NbS and EbA are complementary, and both should be referred to in the resolution. BRAZIL highlighted concerns from civil society about the risks associated with the term, including greenwashing, and doubts about whether NbS supports aims for tackling biodiversity loss.

The President requested the Secretariat conduct informal consultations and submit a revised version. On Thursday, a contact group was established, chaired by Brazil.

On [Saturday](#), BRAZIL presented a revised draft, highlighting a change to the title. He stressed that the proposed revision brought together divergent views among parties concerned that the concept of NbS might be misused, misinterpreted, or used as a silver bullet. Parties willing to retain the term NbS underscored it can help unlock access to funds for wetlands.

The draft was adopted on [Saturday](#).

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.20 Rev.3), the COP, *inter alia*:

- recalls UNEP Member States decided on the NbS definition at UNEA 5.
- recognizes that NbS, as defined by UNEA, and EbA, as defined by the CBD, contributes to climate action;
- acknowledges that the concept of NbS is cognizant of and in harmony with EbA;
- requests the Secretariat facilitate the establishment of a community of practice on addressing climate change and to facilitate global cooperation among regional initiatives and other partners and stakeholders by sharing scientific and technical support and information on accessing financial resources;
- recognizes the need to identify options, including innovative financial solutions and incentives, for supporting sustainable investment, in particular for developing countries;
- strongly encourages parties to urgently phase out or modify policies, to the extent possible, that contribute to wetlands loss and degradation, and pursue policies and projects to conserve and restore wetlands; and
- requests the STRP to undertake a desktop study of success stories of NbS or EbA used to address climate change and achieve other co-benefits, and share with parties.

Updating the Wetland City Accreditation: The REPUBLIC OF KOREA introduced the draft resolution on [Wednesday](#). Delegates suggested minor changes, amendments, and new text to the proposal, including a normalized timeline, outlining the benefits of accreditation, consistency, and transparency of the process, and furthering the development of guidelines on the management of accredited cities. The COP14 President instructed the Republic of Korea to conduct informal consultations and submit a revised draft.

On Sunday, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted agreement on the text, including on compromise language to ensure that the accreditation system not be abused, yet not be too arduous for smaller countries. The plenary adopted the revised text.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.12 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- encourages parties to undertake processes to identify, empower, and encourage cities to work towards their voluntary accreditation and to support the cooperation of the system with other relevant city networks and initiatives;

- takes note of the proposal by the Independent Advisory Committee to prepare operational guidance following the proposal for operational guidance for Wetland City Accreditation outlined in Annex 1, and the addition of new and updated elements set out in Annex 2, such as the criteria for accreditation, the overview of the process, updated procedures, award process, renewal process, and administration for the system;
- requests the allocation of time during the triennium to provide administrative services outlined in Annex 2, a review of the implementation progress and financing of the system to be reported to each COP, and that the SC nominates members of the Independent Advisory Committee for future COP cycles at its first full meeting; and
- invites the STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel to establish permanent co-operation with the Wetland City Network.

Proposal to establish an International Mangrove Center as an RRI: The draft resolution was introduced on [Wednesday](#), by CHINA, who proposed creation of the International Mangrove Center. Parties sought clarity on the mandate and terms of reference for the center, its relationship with Convention, and legal, administrative and governance arrangements. A contact group was formed and a new proposal presented to plenary on [Thursday](#), to establish the center as a Ramsar Regional Initiative. The resolution was adopted on [Saturday](#).

Final Outcome: The final resolution (COP14 Doc 18.22 Rev.2) invites submission of the proposed RRI to SC62 for consideration.

Status of Sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance: The Secretariat introduced the draft resolution on [Wednesday](#). Parties proposed some amendments and suggestions to simplify and streamline the reporting process to make it less burdensome for parties, assess the cost of improving and revising the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), and provide guidance and support for parties to overcome submission-related obstacles.

On [Saturday](#), delegates considered the revised document. ALGERIA reported a compromise by parties to include a request to the Secretariat to incorporate in this draft resolution a reference to sites on the Ramsar List in accordance with the Convention, while taking due account of geographical coordinates provided by the UN Geospatial Network. Informal consultations continued.

On Sunday, parties considered the revised text, and due to the lack of agreement on some ideas, including the periodicity of RIS reports, informal consultations continued during the lunch break. In the afternoon, MEXICO presented the results from the lunchtime informal consultations, and the resolution was adopted.

ALGERIA noted that parties had come a long way on this issue and thanked all who engaged constructively in the discussions to find a landing zone. He requested the Secretariat to provide clear guidance on the coordinates of international borders, which should be reflected in all Ramsar documents and maps.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.15 Rev.3), the COP, *inter alia*:

- appreciates the designation of 125 new Ramsar Sites by parties;
- notes that for 75% of the Sites that had been designated by 30 June 2022, recent information on their status is not available;
- expresses concern that, by 30 June 2022, only three Ramsar Sites included in the Montreux Record have been removed from the Record since COP13;

- encourages parties to continue to use the Montreux Record questionnaire presented in Annex 1 to determine the inclusion or removal of a listed Site in the Montreux Record;
- requests the Secretariat to prepare a technical report on the procedure undertaken by the Secretariat to include a site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance for consideration at the SC-62 meeting; and
- decides to defer consideration of the draft resolution on the Ramsar List (COP14 Doc.18.16 Rev.3) to COP15, to be informed by the technical report and relevant discussions at the upcoming SC meetings.

Integrating wetland conservation and restoration into national sustainable development strategy: CHINA introduced the draft resolution on [Wednesday](#). Ensuing discussions concerned the alignment with national strategic and actions plans under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and CBD, identifying capacity gaps, and enabling conditions to roll out national strategies through capacity-building programmes, and technical and scientific support. Parties also discussed monitoring based on appropriate performance mechanisms and environmental impact assessments. Different views were expressed for retaining or removing the reference to NbS. The COP14 President instructed the Secretariat to revise the draft resolution.

On Sunday, CHINA presented the revised draft. In line with the previous inclusion of references to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the UNFCCC, SOUTH AFRICA requested including “land degradation under UNCCD.”

A sticking point emerged around the partnership strategies to develop transboundary wetland conservation and restoration within the relevant frameworks. Some parties wanted to refer to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), and others opposed. China was asked to organize an informal consultation during lunchtime. Consensus was reached and the resolution was adopted.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.19 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- encourages parties to integrate wetland conservation, restoration, sustainable management, and wise-use policies and actions into national sustainable development strategies;
- recognizes that the effective integration of wetland policies into national sustainable strategies is dependent on adequate advocacy for wetlands and resources, including financing, which may require the need to mobilize increased financial resources, capacity building, and exchange of knowledge;
- recommends that parties conduct systematic national wetland inventories using the New Toolkit for National Wetland Inventories of 2020;
- encourages parties to identify the status of national and local degraded wetlands;
- encourages parties to regularly monitor policies and actions to conserve, restore and sustainably manage wetlands;
- encourages parties, where appropriate, to develop international transboundary wetland partnerships strategies in collaboration with neighboring countries within the relevant frameworks, such as the Water Convention; and

- requests the STRP to strengthen case studies and tool development for the integration of national wetland conservation and restoration into national sustainable development strategies and to develop technical guidelines.

Environmental emergency relating to damage to Ramsar wetlands: On [Monday](#), UKRAINE spoke out against the “unprovoked and unjustified” aggression by the Russian Federation and highlighted the environmental emergency relating to the damage to Ramsar wetlands, and stated that they had a draft resolution to be considered by the plenary. The COP14 President said since the draft resolution had been submitted after the deadline, the COP Bureau would decide on Tuesday whether it would be considered at COP14.

On [Tuesday](#), the plenary learned the COP Bureau had decided to submit the draft resolution to COP14 for consideration.

UKRAINE introduced the draft resolution on [Thursday](#), noting it had 35 co-sponsors. She highlighted that 16 Ramsar Sites have already been adversely affected as a result of Russia’s military invasion, and 15 more Sites are under direct threat, and that the resolution asks to explore ways to assess damage, recommend mitigation measures, and identify financial assistance for restoration.

During discussions, Czechia, on behalf of the EU, and GEORGIA, CANADA, NORWAY, the UK, FRANCE, ALBANIA, NEW ZEALAND, JAPAN, the US, GUATEMALA, and others voiced their support. Several opposed, stating that it was outside the mandate of the Convention and that political matters should be considered by other UN fora. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION deplored its “one-sided” and discriminatory character. BRAZIL, CHINA, IRAN, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA, VENEZUELA, INDONESIA, NICARAGUA, GABON, CUBA, and BOLIVIA also opposed. The COP14 President, noting that the Russian Federation and Ukraine did not want to establish a contact group, asked interested parties to hold informal discussions, saying it was his responsibility to make every possible effort to seek consensus on all matters of substance.

On [Saturday](#), UKRAINE presented a revised text. Following interventions, the COP14 President noted that “obvious and apparent divergence” persists among parties, which precludes consensus, and that a vote would be held on whether to adopt the draft resolution.

Before the vote, the Legal Advisor clarified that in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the adoption of the draft resolution required a simple majority vote of those present and voting, with “present and voting” meaning those casting an affirmative or negative vote. UKRAINE exercised its right for a roll-call vote. The plenary adopted the draft resolution by a vote of 50 parties in favor, 7 against, and 47 abstaining.

Final Outcome: In the final draft resolution (COP14 Doc.18.24 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*,

- recalls the commitment of parties with respect to the exclusive sovereign rights of the parties in whose territory the wetland is situated;
- recognizes the devastating impact of the Russian Federation’s aggression on the environmental situation in Ukraine, including disruption of ecological status of 16 Ramsar Sites and potential damage to another 15;
- demands that the Russian Federation immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders;

- requests the Secretariat to coordinate actions with the parties and relevant international organizations to conduct an assessment of the affected Ramsar sites in Ukraine, advise on appropriate mitigation and restoration efforts, and submit a report to COP15; and
- invites parties to provide support, including financial contributions on a voluntary basis, to the Government of Ukraine in coordination with the Secretariat for conducting an assessment of the damage of the affected Ramsar sites in Ukraine.

Thanks to the Host Country, China: The draft resolution was introduced on [Thursday](#) by the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. Comments focused on the manner for presenting the process and intent of the Wuhan Declaration, and the appropriate recognition of the organization of the high-level segment. The final resolution was adopted on Sunday.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (COP14 Doc.18.23 Rev.3), the COP, *inter alia*:

- notes the outcomes of the high-level segment of COP14, organized by the Host Country under its own initiative, with the adoption of the Wuhan Declaration and
- takes note of the Wuhan Declaration and its intended aim to enhance the visibility of the Convention.

Closing Plenary

On Sunday, 13 November, the Secretariat noted that no official offer to host the next COP had been received. ZIMBABWE offered to host COP15 in June or July 2025, which was greeted with applause by the delegates.

The Secretariat introduced the draft session reports covering proceedings through the morning of 8 November (COP14 Rep.1, Rep.2, Rep.3 Rev.1, and Rep.4 to Rep.11). FRANCE and SLOVENIA requested appending, as an annex to the report on the High-level Ministerial Segment (COP14 Rep.2), the full text of statements made by their representatives, noting the simultaneous interpretation resulted in omitting portions of their text related to aggression by the Russian Federation and their support for Ukraine. CHINA objected and noted they had posted the full statements online. COP President Wu proposed further consultations among the relevant parties with an alternative for including the information in the report. The parties adopted the reports with the understanding that reports from the final days would be added by the Secretariat.

YOUTH ENGAGING IN WETLANDS gave an impassioned statement urging delegates to implement the recommendations of the Youth resolution, including appointing national youth focal points, declaring, “We want to be part of the present so we can be part of the future where wetlands will not be wastelands.”

WORLD WETLANDS NETWORK, representing more than 250 non-governmental organizations, urged delegates to work harder on including all voices from civil society, especially smaller organizations, to allow for better national reporting and CEPA opportunities in the implementation of the Convention.

PARTNERS FOR WETLANDS, representing six science-based IOPs, welcomed progress made to date, including positioning wetlands as solutions in the climate and nature crisis, and the accreditation of 25 new wetland cities.

COP14 President Wu thanked the parties and the host country China, especially the municipal government of Wuhan City, and Geneva, Switzerland. He also thanked the contracting parties,

chairs of contact groups and informal consultations, the Conference Bureau, the Secretary General, the Secretariat, the Legal Advisor, and interpreters. He bowed to the delegates, saying, “Thanks for your warmth and enthusiasm, without your smiling faces I would not have been as confident as I have.”

A Brief Analysis of COP14

Is it possible for one of the oldest multilateral environmental agreements to maintain its collegial spirit, navigate politically-charged issues, and still hold true to its mission? This question hovered over the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP14) as the Convention passed the half-century mark. The Convention, which was established with a narrow mandate to conserve wetlands for protecting habitats of waterfowl, has widened its scope to encompass water, plants, human health and wellbeing, and, more recently, transboundary wetlands, climate mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. During that time, the threat to wetlands has only grown.

The Convention’s 2021 Global Wetland Outlook revealed that wetlands are among the most threatened ecosystems, disappearing three times faster than forests, with an estimated 35% loss of global wetlands since 1970. More than half of the Wetlands of International Importance have been affected and climate change is projected to exacerbate the damage. Although parties have long known that wetlands are in trouble, this stark figure reminded delegates of the need to accelerate action. At the same time, there is a growing recognition of the vital ecosystem services provided by wetlands, including carbon sequestration and serving as the “kidneys” of nature—regulating water and filtering waste from the environment.

The COP14 theme, “Wetland Actions for People and Nature” recognizes the need to invest in protecting wetlands from further loss by putting people at the center of restoration and management, an approach that resonates with global goals and targets from other multilateral environmental agreements geared to combat the triple planetary crisis: biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution.

This brief analysis reviews the challenges of COP14, the nature of the meeting, and what its outcomes suggest for the Convention’s ability to address current and future global environmental challenges.

Wetlands and Geopolitics: Terra Incognita

The Legal Advisor was a busy figure throughout the meeting, as the COP14 President referred a series of thorny issues for guidance. Ukraine, along with 35 co-sponsors, introduced a proposed resolution on “damage to its wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites) stemming from the Russian Federation’s aggression.” It became clear early on that the proposal would neither be taken off the table nor postponed. With the possibility of productive discussions in contact groups ruled out, and leaving voting as the only remaining option, concerns surfaced about how to organize a vote on the contested resolution. The vote was marked by repeated questions and explanations of the voting rules, along with some technical issues. The challenges were summed up in the COP14 President’s observation, “We seldom vote, right? Twice in 51 years. So we are still learning.”

The resulting adoption of the resolution by a vote of 50-7 generated uneasy reactions. Some parties believed the development tarnished the track record of the Convention, while others described it in more serious terms—as a Pandora’s-box moment—opening the door for parties to use the Convention as a stage to highlight other territorial disputes. The large number of abstentions (47) may, however, indicate a reluctance by many countries to insert political issues into the Convention. The quick return to business after the vote suggested that parties will continue to seek common ground on ways to prevent or reduce damage to wetlands.

A separate proposed resolution, by Algeria, to establish criteria to “delist” existing Ramsar Sites also raised concerns about territorial issues spilling into the primary work of the COP. Algeria explained that under current protocols, one country could propose listing as an “internationally important” wetland one located outside the proposing country’s territory, and that the intent of the proposal was simply to fix a problem. Some countries remained unconvinced, and delegates engaged in lengthy discussions about the verification process and use of official maps. Algeria’s flexibility to defer the matter to COP15 was lauded by many as a sign of comradery for progress.

Familiar Territory

Several resolution topics brought delegates back to their comfort zones, striking progress in technical aspects of the Convention, including discussions on species, supporting enhanced inclusivity in the work of the Convention, and establishing ways to work together on ecosystem approaches.

Examples at COP14 included efforts to find ways to increase not just the coverage of wetland protection, but also the quality, and to provide meaningful technical guidance for their conservation and wise use. The resolution on developing alternative waterbird population estimates to support new and existing Ramsar Site designations spawned discussions on how to monitor management of important bird areas in wetlands using appropriate performance indicators. Expert groups such as Birdlife International and Wetlands International weighed in and offered technical support for developing countries on data collection, monitoring and evaluation of wetland integrity. After a lengthy discussion on whether to include “nature-based solutions” vs “ecosystem-based approaches” in a resolution on wetlands and climate change, COP14 President Wu captured the mood in the room, saying, “This is not a life-or-death question,” and eventually persuaded parties to reach agreement on the proposal.

Working together on common thematic goals has long been promoted in the Convention, particularly through endorsement of Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs). Strong support for an International Mangrove Centre as an RRI was seen as a positive avenue for further collaboration and for the Convention to deliver on its theme “Wetland Actions for People and Nature” by supporting conservation, restoration, and wise use of mangroves and coastal blue carbon ecosystems. Parties also saw the Center as a way for the Convention to show its ability to contribute to the achievement of global goals and targets, highlighting mangroves as biodiversity-rich ecosystems that provide a wide range of ecosystem services and functions.

Despite some difficult issues on the agenda, the 50th anniversary of the Convention also created opportunities to celebrate success. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) now include 2,471 wetlands in over 160 countries and cover more than 250 million hectares. These designations bring recognition and increased protection for wetlands. Secretary General Musonda Mumba also reported that the Convention had the highest average national reporting rate among four environmental Conventions reviewed by the 2020 Environment Conventions Index, a measure of implementation of global environmental conventions.

50 Years On: Growing the Ramsar Family

Notwithstanding the serious nature of issues presented to the parties, a sense of collegiality was evident throughout COP14. The COP President and Algeria provided ongoing comic relief by repeated offers to dance their way to consensus. And, as is the custom of the COP, meetings were interspersed with festivities, a field trip, and awards. These included the eighth edition of the Wetlands Conservation Awards to honor and recognize contributions of individuals, organizations, and governments that promote conservation and wise use of wetlands. This special event received accolades from delegates with calls to increase the number of award categories, including one that recognizes Indigenous Peoples.

The Wetlands Cities Accreditation ceremony acknowledged the achievements of 25 cities from 12 countries. The celebration, as Wuhan Vice Mayor Yang Zefa said, is not just intended to increase a myriad of wetlands within city boundaries, but to create awareness that “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets,” stressing the importance of protecting and restoring water bodies along with the harmonious coexistence of people and nature in cities.

The 21 resolutions adopted at COP14 included several intended to increase the scope and diversity of engagement in the work of the Convention. COP14 committed to promoting the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in wetland management, including adding a new award category on Indigenous Peoples’ Conservation and Wise Use. The resolution on the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards was considered by many to be an important milestone in recognizing the territories and stewardship of wetlands by Indigenous Peoples and local communities and solidified the relevance of the meeting’s theme.

Finding innovative ways to include youth is a challenge for many Conventions. At COP14, youth observers welcomed concrete decisions to strengthen connections, including employment of a youth advisor to the Secretariat and establishment of a youth working group by the Standing Committee.

The tension between expanding its scope or focusing on its original mandate will continue to affect discussions as the Convention heads into a new triennium, with a new Secretary General at the helm. With a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework possibly weeks away from adoption at the UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal in December 2022, the pressure to act collectively on a common goal for living in harmony with nature will continue to build. The entry points for synergies and cooperation are straightforward as the conservation and wise use of wetlands have a central role in achieving the goals of the Paris

Agreement on Climate Change, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The adoption of the Wuhan Declaration at the High-level Ministerial Segment included commitments to take appropriate and urgent measures towards halting and reversing the loss of wetlands globally. The words of the Secretary General Musonda Mumba, however, summarized the way forward, saying the Declaration, “sets out key principles for integrating wetland ecosystems into all frameworks and initiatives for people and nature.” The future of the earth’s wetlands remains in the balance.

Upcoming Meetings

Water Security and Climate Change Conference: The Water Security and Climate Change Conference (WSCC) 2022 will focus on adaptation for sustainable and resilient development, with discussions on three themes: transitioning from sectoral to nexus thinking; robustifying climate change adaptation strategies; and translating knowledge into action. **dates:** 1-3 December 2022 **location:** virtual and Bangkok, Thailand **www:** watersecurity.info/wsc-2022

63rd GEF Council: The Council, which meets twice annually, develops, adopts, and evaluates the operational policies and programs for GEF-financed activities, including wetlands. The 63rd Council Meeting will be the first Council Meeting under the GEF’s eighth replenishment. **dates:** 28 November - 2 December 2022 **location:** virtual **www:** thegef.org/events/63rd-gef-council-meeting

Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: This meeting will take place just prior to the CBD COP to continue negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. **dates:** 3-5 December 2022 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** cbd.int/conferences/post2020/wg2020-05/documents

37th UN-Water Meeting: The 37th UN-Water Meeting will bring together UN-Water Members and Partners to advance progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 (clean water and sanitation). Agenda items include: preparations for the UN 2023 Water Conference; the SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative; “activating” the Water Action Agenda; and SDG 6 global monitoring. **dates:** 5-6 December 2022 **location:** Paris, France **www:** unwater.org

UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP15): This meeting includes the 15th meeting of the COP to the CBD, the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. The meetings are scheduled to take place to review the achievement and delivery of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is also expected to take a final decision on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as well as decisions on related topics, including capacity building and resource mobilization. **dates:** 7-19 December 2022 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022

Emerging Pollutants: Protecting Water Quality for the Health of People and the Environment: This conference will highlight ways the world can advance knowledge, research, and solutions for

managing emerging pollutants to improve and protect water quality in a changing world. **dates:** 17-19 January 2023 **location:** virtual **www:** wraonlineconference.org

UN 2023 Water Conference: To successfully implement the goals and objectives of the Water Action Decade, including SDG 6 and other internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, the UN will convene the UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development,” 2018-2028. **dates:** 22-24 March 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023

UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: The 2023 session of the HLPF under the auspices of Economic and Social Council will take place on the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.” It will include in-depth review of SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (partnership for the Goals). **dates:** 10-19 July 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, **www:** hlpf.un.org/2023

SDG Summit: The SDG Summit is the quadrennial meeting of the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. The 2023 Summit will be the second since the Goals’ adoption, and take place at the midpoint of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Leaders are expected to comprehensively review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, provide political guidance for the way forward, and consider new science-based solutions for accelerating the full implementation of the SDGs in the remaining years towards 2030. **dates:** September 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, **www:** <https://hlpf.un.org/>

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands COP15: COP15 will convene in 2025 in Zimbabwe on a date to be decided. **dates:** June/July 2025 **location:** Zimbabwe **www:** ramsar.org

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, education, participation and awareness
COP	Conference of the Parties
EbA	Ecosystem-based approaches
IOPs	International Organization Partners
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
NbS	Nature-based solutions
RRI	Ramsar Regional Initiative
SC	Standing Committee
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization