



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP 12) (Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015)
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency on the outcome of the abovementioned meeting to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 15 June 2015.

**12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP 12)
(Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015)**

- Information from the Presidency -

The Conference was attended by 141 Contracting Parties (121 with valid credentials) out of 168. 19 EU Member States¹ were present at COP 12, which adopted 16 resolutions by consensus. Following a suggestion from the EU Member States, COP 12 based its work on the rules of procedure of COP 11 and adopted new rules of procedure for future COPs.

COP 12 also elected a new Standing Committee (SC) to oversee Convention matters during the period until the next COP, due to take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2018. The European region is represented in the SC by four full members (Estonia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Romania) and three alternate members (Russia, Ukraine and France).

The proceedings of COP 12 were seriously hampered by organisational problems linked to the operation of the Ramsar Secretariat, in particular related to the availability of documents and translations. To avoid repetition of these problems and provide for solutions, Resolution XII.1 on financial and budgetary matters was adopted, instructing the Ramsar Secretariat to ensure that COP 13 is appropriately prepared. Other resolutions adopted by COP 12 included instructions for the Ramsar Secretariat for conducting the work between COP 12 and 13 and in preparation for the next COP.

COP 12 approved the Strategic Plan for the years 2016-2024, setting out an ambitious agenda for the period. The Strategic Plan will guide countries' actions to conserve and wisely use their wetlands and is based on four strategic priorities:

¹ Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The EU is not a Contracting Party to the Convention.

1. addressing the factors driving the loss and degradation of wetlands by ensuring that decision-makers in key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism and urban development appreciate the value and benefits wetlands provide and include these benefits in policy;
2. renewing country commitment to conserve and protect the Ramsar site network, considered to be of high value to each country and to the world because of the ecosystem services it provides;
3. promoting wise use of all wetlands and restoring wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation;
4. improving the implementation of the Ramsar Convention by mobilising resources, working through partnerships, building capacity and raising awareness.

A number of resolutions adopted by COP 12 will support the implementation of the Strategic Plan, in particular resolutions on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness, on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), on the budget for the years 2016-2018, as well as on the Resource Mobilisation and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention, requesting that the Secretariat streamline its fundraising activities.

Among others, the following resolutions should be highlighted:

- Resolution XII.10 (World Wetland City Accreditation) provides for a city accreditation system which recognises the importance of all wetlands, including those outside the Ramsar site network;
- Resolution XII.11 (Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention) recognises the important role of peatlands in the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and encourages Contracting Parties to consider limiting activities that lead to drainage of peatlands and may cause subsidence, flooding and the emission of greenhouse gases, urging for greater international cooperation, technical assistance and capacity building to address this.

The Presidency wishes to thank all the EU Member States' delegates for their substantial contribution and cooperative attitude to preparing the position papers and for their help during negotiations at COP 12.
