

## Ramsar Convention on Wetlands COP15

### Highlights: Monday, 28 July 2025

Delegates began to see the results of the previous days' efforts, with the first adoption of a draft resolution on Waterbird Partnership Estimates. Several other draft resolutions were near the finish line by day's end, and the three draft consolidated resolutions were adopted without amendments. Informal discussions continued on finance and budget, the fifth Strategic Plan (SP5), Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), and the recruitment process of the Secretary General.

### Plenary

During morning and afternoon plenary sessions, COP15 Alternate President Tadeous Chifamba (Zimbabwe), asked for updates on the status of contact groups, the Finance Committee, and Friends of the Chair.

- SP5: Zambia reported that the contact group began review of Annex 1 of SP5, with work to continue in the evening;
- RIS: Italy noted that a significant amount of progress had been made by the contact group, and hoped to have a clean version of the resolution by the end of the day;
- Budget and finance: Germany said discussions on the budget will continue in the afternoon and evening;
- Process for recruiting a new Secretary General: Denmark reported the only unresolved issue was the criteria for recruitment of a new Secretary General, including the extent to which regionality and gender should be considered;
- Implementing the institutional strengthening of the Convention: South Africa reported that the Friends of the Chair finished their work with a new compromise text; and
- Strengthening action on culture and wetlands: Uganda reported that the Friends of the Chair resolved all issues, with proposed text to be forwarded to the Secretariat.

**Organizational matters:** Plenary received nominations for members (and alternates) to represent the Convention's six regions on the (2025-2028) Standing Committee (SC). Credentials Committee Chair Jaime Esteban González Barrera (Mexico) reported the committee had validated 104 credentials and 31 official communications from contracting parties, with the

understanding that formal credentials will be communicated as soon as possible. The report was approved.

### Consideration of Draft Resolutions

**Strategic Plan 2025-2034:** COP15 Alternate President Chifamba invited the International Organization Partners (IOPs) to comment. BirdLife International, on behalf of the IOPs, noted little progress had been made since the SC meeting in January, underscored the need for clear goals and targets for the next 10 years, and urged parties to reach agreement, saying, "We cannot leave Victoria Falls without a Strategic Plan."

**Extension of implementation of Resolution XIV.20:** Ukraine presented the new draft proposal ([COP15 Doc.23.26](#)), which seeks to extend the Convention's assessment of damage to Ukraine's wetlands stemming from the Russian Federation's aggression. Explaining the late submission, UKRAINE said an earlier submission was not possible because publication of the technical assessment by the Secretariat occurred only after the deadline for proposed resolutions. BRAZIL, CHINA, and VENEZUELA said the late submission violates the Convention's Rules of Procedure and does not fall within the exemption provided under Rule 34.6 of the Rules of Procedure on unforeseen circumstances.

ESTONIA said the Secretariat's assessment underlines the need for a long-term monitoring program to determine the full range of damage to wetlands, and noted that the ecological character of Ukraine's Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) may change in the future, requiring additional assessments.

DENMARK supported the draft resolution but objected to further work on the text, saying it is a continuation of an existing resolution. In discussions on whether a contact group should be formed, CANADA and AUSTRALIA opposed, suggesting instead the text be amended to focus only on technical work, in alignment with the Convention's objectives. CUBA, INDONESIA, and IRAN emphasized a focus on scientific and technical matters, with political issues best directed to other forums to avoid the Convention's politicization.

**Establishment of the Global Waterbird Estimates Partnership (GWEP) and delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates:** Hugh Robertson (New Zealand), Chair, Scientific and Technical Review Panel,

introduced the revised draft resolution ([COP15 Doc.23.11 Rev.1](#)). He drew attention to the addition of two paragraphs, one calling on the Secretariat to explore resource mobilization from all sources to support the GWEP, and a second which repeals paragraph 17 of Resolutions VIII.38, citing the importance of allowing the new partnership to have flexibility on the frequency of waterbird estimates. He noted minor amendments to Annex I. GHANA expressed support for the GWEP. CANADA noted overlap between the added paragraph on resource mobilization and ongoing discussions regarding the draft resolution on institutional strengthening of the Convention (COP15 Doc.23.9). The resolution was adopted without further amendments.

**Consolidation of Existing Resolutions:** COP15 Alternate President Chifamba presented the draft resolutions for adoption. Poland, on behalf of the EU, recommended minor amendments to improve wording and remove outdated sections of text. The Secretariat explained that the consolidation process used text previously approved by contracting parties. Following this clarification, delegates adopted without amendment individual consolidated resolutions on: assessment of wetland values and services ([COP15 Doc.22.1](#)), water, water-related and water-management-related matters ([COP15 Doc.22.2](#)); and inventories ([COP15 Doc.22.3](#)).

**Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies:** The Secretariat introduced the document ([COP15 Doc.23.4 Rev.1](#)), noting changes to preambular and operative text, and the addition of alternative paragraphs. Delegates' views diverged regarding the relationship between the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, with some recognizing these as linked agreements and others as separate instruments. Regarding a paragraph on the Secretariat's support for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 (clean water and sanitation), Belgium, for the EU, with AUSTRALIA, requested removing "subject to available resources," saying that this SDG is essential to the work of the Secretariat. In a paragraph on national focal points, AUSTRALIA preferred the option of retaining language supporting focal points to coordinate with institutions and agencies addressing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs. Bilateral consultations will take place to seek resolution.

### ***Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards***

The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards (Ramsar Awards) celebrates and recognizes individuals and organizations for their contributions towards promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Now on its 9th edition, the Ramsar Awards are presented to three worthy individuals whose passion for protecting and conserving wetlands is rooted in tradition and innovation. Each of the awardees received the Evian Special Prize of USD 10,000, provided by the Danone Group.

Nathalie Alquier, Danone, Xia Jun, COP14 SC Chair, and Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands, presented the Ramsar Awards, in three categories:

- **Innovation:** Laura Gonzalez (Panama), Executive Director, Marea Verde, for pioneering the Wanda system—river-based waste capture solutions that prevent waste and plastic from reaching Panama Bay, while also engaging local communities through environmental education;
- **Young Wetland Champions:** Iman Ebrahimi (Iran), Founder, AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society, for fostering community engagement and environmental stewardship in three Wetlands of International Importance, and leading a campaign to elevate the ruddy shelduck as a flagship species for boosting ecotourism; and
- **Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use:** Dayana Blanco Quiroga (Bolivia), Founder, Team Uru Uru, for restoring Lake Uru Uru by integrating Indigenous knowledge and nature-based solutions, empowering women and youth, and enhancing climate resilience.

In closing the awards ceremony, Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands, highlighted their inspirational stories and praised the recipients' courage for answering "yes" to taking action.

### ***In the Corridors***

The mood around the venue on Monday was a mix of focused determination and cautious optimism. While some delegates took advantage of the breaks during the day, others remained deep in contact group negotiations and delegates had yet to discuss the revised text for many resolutions. It was not always clear what the most divisive issues might be. As one observer noted, "There's friction, but it's not always ideological—it's in the details."

Some of the more drawn-out discussions appeared to center on technical issues, such as proposed updates to the Ramsar Information Sheets. One participant, referencing a remote island Ramsar Site, highlighted the difficulty of collecting required data every six years—even for well-resourced parties. In contrast, the Strategic Plan was described by some as "more political," with one delegate reflecting, "We might get there fastest if we allow parties to set their own targets."

There were moments of hope and celebration. Delegates had opportunities to applaud the proceedings on Monday as the first Resolution was adopted, establishing a much-needed Global Waterbird Estimates Partnership. The inspiring ceremony for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards showcased action on the ground to protect wetlands across the world.

With the jury still out on important topics, such as the new Strategic Plan and the budget, tired but re-invigorated delegates worked into the night, trying to reach consensus and make COP15 a successful one.