

**La Réunion Declaration**  
**Southern African Regional Ramsar Initiative (SARRI)**  
**May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

RECOGNIZING wetlands as important ecosystems in the Southern African region, having a central position in maintaining biodiversity, mitigating and adapting to climate change, poverty eradication and disaster risk reduction, as well as providing a variety of ecosystem services to many wetland dependent communities;

ACKNOWLEDGING that wetlands are being degraded by anthropogenic activities affecting their ability to provide the numerous ecosystem services;

RECOGNIZING the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage we have in common, and the need to inclusively manage transboundary wetlands, in respect of the people that depend on them;

RECALLING the importance of awareness raising for the protection of wetlands, development of knowledge, wetlands mapping and inventory, capacity building, and supporting the effective management of Ramsar Sites;

EMPHASIZING the importance of wetlands protection, conservation, wise use and restoration in the Southern African region;

RECALLING that Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) under the Convention on wetlands include regional centers for training and capacity building and regional networks to facilitate cooperation, which are intended as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the Convention and its strategic plan in specific geographic regions, through voluntary international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern;

RECALLING the Decision 7 of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019 of the SADC Ministers responsible for Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism regarding the establishment of a mechanism to protect wetlands at the regional level and institutionalizing the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative;

RECALLING that the Conference of the Contracting Parties has recognized the importance of RRIs in promoting the objectives of the Convention;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Resolution XIV.7 endorsed the establishment of the Southern African Regional Ramsar Initiative (SARRI);

**The Southern African Regional Ramsar Initiative,**

WELCOMES the progress made by the Member States during the workshop organized in La Réunion island from May 20<sup>th</sup> to May 21<sup>th</sup> 2024 by NatureXpairs, the French Hub for Protected Areas and People, with the funding support of the French Ministry for an Ecological Transition and the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB) and the technical support of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-ESARO office) and the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Mediterranean region (MedWet);

INVITES all the SADC Member States, international partners, experts, to support the implementation of the SARRI;

DECIDES, that, as 12 Member States\*, namely: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, to actively participate and collaborate in the operationalization of the SARRI;

DECIDES that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-ESARO office) will host the SARRI coordinating body as the implementing agency;

ADOPTS the proposed declaration of « La Réunion island » and the objectives below:

**The overarching goal of the SARRI is to promote the wise use of wetlands in the SADC region and ensure stronger cooperation and synergies to effectively implement the Ramsar Convention and its strategic plans.**

In particular, the SARRI aims to:

- 1) Ensure inclusivity and transparency in its governance and that its strategic plan is developed and implemented in accordance with the Convention's strategic plan and resolutions
- 2) Enhance capacity building, networking, expertise, knowledge generation and sharing in wetlands amongst SARRI members and other stakeholders
- 3) Facilitate the implementation of regional projects that address common challenges in wetlands management, conservation and restoration
- 4) Ensure effective regional coordination in wetland related issues by:
  - establishing a platform for cooperation, knowledge generation, and information sharing and,
  - strengthening the capacity and participation of local communities and wetland related stakeholders
- 5) Develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy that enable the effective implementation of the SARRI objectives and the Convention on Wetlands within the Region


Endorsed in La Réunion island, the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2024,

Names of Member States

Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe


SARRI coordinator

NTIEA LETSAPU

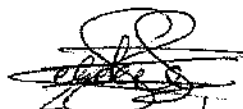
  
24/05/2024

Witnessed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, SADC Secretariat

SADC Secretariat

  
24/05/2024

Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands

  
24/05/2024

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\*Comoros also participated in the La Reunion workshop