

**CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> European Meeting of STRP National Focal Points**  
**Mittersill, Austria, 17-19 September 2007**

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**Networking and Communication**  
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**Key messages**  
**Conclusions**  
**Recommendations for current operations**  
**Recommendations for the future**

Abbreviations used:

AA	Administrative Authority
CEPA	Communication, Education and Public Awareness
CIS	Common Implementation Strategy for the EU Water Framework Directive
CP	Contracting Party
EU	European Union
EC	European Community
IOP	International Organization Partner
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NFP	National Focal Point
RBM	River Basin Management
SC	Standing Committee
STRP	Scientific & Technical Review Panel
TOR	Terms of Reference
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WG	Working Group

**Key messages** from this meeting to the global STRP:

- 1) Communication and networking between STRP NFPs of a region, according to Resolution IX.11 (Revised *modus operandi* of STRP), is highly welcomed by the European STRP NFPs and should be promoted and strengthened.**
- 2) The European STRP NFPs feel that there is a huge gap between STRP NFPs and the global STRP and that the bridges are not working well.**
- 3) In order to overcome the reluctance and passivity of some CPs, the Ramsar Secretariat should transmit a concise document to AAs detailing the necessary actions identified by this meeting.**
- 4) STRP NFPs should be involved in all Ramsar processes in the country (i.e. participation in wetland projects, National Wetland/Ramsar Committees, national reporting, creating national wetland conservation strategies).**

## I.1) Communication among European STRP NFPs:

*Background information:*

In the European region, 37 of the altogether 45 CPs (82%) have officially appointed STRP NFPs.

Less than 15% of all European STRP NFPs responded to the recent STRP survey on the use & utility of Ramsar Convention guidance.

Only 7 (19%) of officially appointed European STRP NFPs participated in the first European STRP NFP Networking & Communication Meeting in Mittersill, Austria. Scientific representatives from 3 further European countries also attended the meeting, so altogether, representatives from 10 European countries participated in the Mittersill meeting (22% of all of Ramsar's European CPs). Only 50% of officially appointed European STRP NFPs responded to the – repeatedly sent out – letter of invitation.

Within the European STRP NFPs, less than 5% of e-mail contacts are bouncing (not working).

## I.2) Capacity and skills of STRP NFPs:

There is a lack of understanding of global STRP processes and an unequal level of knowledge and understanding of Ramsar Convention processes in general among NFPs (e.g., abbreviations such as “IOP” are not known to all).

**Action: The meeting strongly welcomed the new NFP brochure and recommended that it be widely distributed and made available on the Ramsar Web site.**

There is insufficient awareness within CPs of what kind of persons and skills are needed as STRP NFPs. The NFPs, and most likely also AAs, are not aware of the qualification criteria to be followed for the nomination of STRP NFPs – so far only criteria for the nomination of global STRP members exist. However, the global STRP has already worked out a draft list of skills needed by STRP NFPs.

**Action: The draft list of skills of prospective STRP NFPs to be circulated to NFPs for comments.**

**Action: Global STRP to finalize and adopt the list of skills of STRP NFP candidates and forward them to the Ramsar AAs.**

**Action: All AAs to appoint, and if necessary reappoint, *suitable* people accordingly.**

## I.3) Nomination of STRP NFPs:

What can be done to get countries to nominate STRP NFPs?

**Action: CPs should contact and encourage other CPs to nominate their STRP NFPs.**

STRP NFPs (mainly from Eastern Europe) request more directives and a recommendation to the SC on how to nominate STRP NFPs, including a detailed list of required skills. However, in COP resolution VII.2 para 8 from 1999, CPs have already been requested to nominate their STRP NFPs and the respective TORs were included. These were prepared by the STRP at its 8<sup>th</sup> meeting held in Gland, Switzerland, on 22-24 September 1999, for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 24<sup>th</sup> meeting from 29<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1999 and can be found under: [http://www.ramsar.org/strp/key\\_strp\\_nfp\\_tor.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/strp/key_strp_nfp_tor.htm). They do not contain skills of prospective STRP NFPs.

#### **I.4) Operation of STRP NFPs:**

In some countries the STRP NFPs need formal invitations from the Ramsar Secretariat to participate in meetings.

**Action: The Ramsar Secretariat to provide assistance to STRP NFPs, if necessary, with invitations.**

It was felt that many CPs do not allocate any or sufficient funds for travel and operating costs to STRP NFPs.

**Action: AAs should provide sufficient support, in particular financial support, to enable STRP NFPs to undertake their tasks.**

**Action: The STRP NFP should report to the STRP as well as to the AA and be involved in the preparation of national reports to the COP.**

Some CPs are not aware of the different responsibilities of AAs and STRP NFPs.

**Recommendation: STRP NFPs should be independent from the AA in their work.**

#### **II.1) STRP work plan 2006-2008:**

**Action: The Ramsar Secretariat to periodically update all STRP NFPs on the progress of the global STRP work plan** (i.e., by e-mail, newsletter). The Ramsar Secretariat in collaboration with the regional STRP networking members should actively send out these updates. A simplified version of the STRP work plan showing the progress of each of the tasks could be helpful.

**Action: STRP to contact the STRP NFPs at an earlier stage regarding the STRP triennial work plan.**

**Action: Before contracting consultants, STRP NFPs should be consulted. The STRP NFP should be the first address contacted by the global STRP when seeking expertise.**

**Action: The deadlines for feedback from NFPs should provide sufficient time for their work.** (Often NFPs are heavily engaged in field work during specific seasons, namely summer, and therefore need sufficient time before being able to respond.)

Within Europe only a few people are subscribed to the STRP Support Service Web site.

**Action: The STRP Support Service should be better used by STRP NFPs.**

## **II.2) Scientific and technical issues:**

### GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. Various EU programmes and EU directives such as the ones listed below are very much in line with Ramsar objectives. Some also have the potential to provide funds to support work at the regional and national level.
  - EU Water Framework Directive/WFD (requiring “good water status” and “good ecological potential” for water bodies)
  - LIFE Plus Programme (EC co-financing possible for Natura 2000 wetland restoration and conservation)
  - Network Natura 2000: EU Bird Directive and EU Fauna Flora Habitat Directive (“favourable conservation status” for wetland habitats and species)
  - INTERREG (ERDF: European Regional Development Funds), i.e. possibility to include infrastructure (e.g., visitor centers), Ramsar site designation activities and ecological improvement of wetlands in INTERREG projects
  - 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme to support cooperative research projects (often focusing on wetland-related themes)

**Action: Look for synergies (i.e., common ground) and build partnerships with these to advance Ramsar’s objectives.**

2. Guidelines exist under EU frameworks on some aspects related to the STRP’s work and the Ramsar Convention’s priorities (e.g., on artificial wetlands, CIS guidance for wetlands, CIS guidance for hydromorphology, Water Framework Directive, strategic papers from workshops on WFD and hydropower, Danube River Protection Convention Joint Action Plan, Alpine Convention, European Union regulations, forthcoming EU Groundwater Directive).

**Action: Take existing EU guidance into consideration when drafting guidance for the Ramsar Convention.**

**Action: Global STRP, as standard practice, to think about how to take into account regional differences when drafting guidance, and find ways to make them visible in the guidance.**

3. Countries that are not yet in the EU need additional assistance from Ramsar to implement actions on relevant issues (e.g., water and agriculture).

## **II.3) Specific suggestions relating to WG tasks:**

*(The titles of the WGs correspond to the Global STRP Work Programme 2006-2008)*

**WG1: Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring & Indicators**

**Process of detecting, reporting and responding to change in ecological character:** NFPs can take the lead in monitoring and reporting on change in ecological character of Ramsar Sites to the AA as well as to the Ramsar Secretariat.

### **WG3: Ramsar Site designation & management**

Specific actions which will help deliver the objectives of the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List:

**Under-represented wetland types:** Under the European biogeographic regionalization framework, as it is the basis for the comprehensive Natura 2000 network of protected areas, review the distribution of wetland types within each of the 9 biogeographical regions in Europe, determine how many of these are already included in the Ramsar List, and determine which wetland types are under-represented. Develop a strategy at the regional and national level to get under-represented wetland types nominated to the Ramsar List.

**Additional guidance for human-made wetlands:** Guidance should indicate that this should not incite countries to designate damaged natural wetlands as human-made wetlands. The EU Water Framework has developed an evaluation scheme for artificial water bodies (which also includes heavily modified water bodies). See if this can be used to enhance the guidance on human-made wetlands.

### **WG4: Water Resources Management**

**RBM:** Several countries in Europe – the EU member states – have to develop RBM plans by 2009. These can be linked to Ramsar's work on RBM.

**Groundwater management:** Good example from Austria (INTERREG project River Mura, a transboundary river) of cooperation between flood and water management authorities as well as local communities.

**Implementation of environmental water requirements:** This is discussed in the EU Water Framework Directive and under the UNECE Water Convention ([www.unece.org/env/water](http://www.unece.org/env/water)). Several papers exist on this topic.

**Action: STRP NFPs should be working actively to involve water resource managers in actions to restore and protect wetlands.**

### **WG5: Wetlands and Agriculture**

Regional conventions (e.g., Alpine Convention, Danube Protection Convention ICPDR) have taken up this issue and have already developed guidance on good practice.

**Action: AAs and STRP NFPs should make STRP aware of these and ensure that they are taken on board when developing Ramsar guidance.**

### **WG6: Wetlands and Human Health**

Need to think about emerging issues which have to be addressed through CEPA, especially in view of the COP10 theme.

There are existing frameworks in Europe which deal with wetlands and human health, e.g., the UNECE Water Convention (cf. above) which has a protocol on water and health (sanitation). Note: The Ramsar Secretariat has good working relationships with them.

**Action: AAs and STRP NFPs should make STRP aware of these and ensure that they are taken on board when developing Ramsar guidance.**

### **WG9: Regional Networking**

A new brochure on the relationships between all Ramsar NFPs in a country has been finalized by the Ramsar Secretariat and has already been submitted to the AAs.

**Action: AAs should further distribute the NFP brochure to other relevant agencies in each country (e.g., National Ramsar Committees).**

Use established networks within a country and the region, as well as existing regional initiatives, as a way to get things moving and people working together. Potential also exists for synergies with initiatives under other MEAs (e.g., CBD's work on impact assessment, peatlands, biodiversity).

**Action: NFPs should proactively find out about existing networks and initiatives and link up with them.**

### **III.1) Recommended actions by European STRP NFPs before COP10:**

- As a group, identify up to three tasks which can be undertaken and delivered during the next triennium.
- As individuals, identify areas of work within the current STRP work plan which you would be interested in being involved in, and inform the Secretariat.
- Take the initiative to contact the other Ramsar NFPs (i.e. AAs, CEPA NFPs) in your country and engage them in discussions in order to identify appropriate in-country mechanisms to enhance delivery of the Ramsar Convention.

### **III.2) Recommended actions in the longer term:**

- NFPs should play a proactive role at the national and regional levels in the process of developing COP Resolutions and determining the Convention's scientific and technical priorities. Priority issues can then be fed back into tasks for the STRP.
- NFPs in the region should be working together to address common issues and share knowledge and expertise across borders.
- NFPs should be involved in all Ramsar processes in the country (e.g., participation in wetland projects, National Wetland/Ramsar Committees, national reporting, creating national wetland conservation strategies).