



**Programme of joint work between the Convention on Wetlands  
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971) and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere  
Programme (MAB)**

**(Accepted by the Ramsar Standing Committee (Decision SC26-51, 7 December 2001) and MAB's International Coordinating Council at its 17th session in Paris on 20 March 2002).**

**Introduction**

1. This programme of joint work is in implementation of Action 7.2.4 of Ramsar's Strategic Plan 1997-2002: "Develop cooperation with the World Heritage Convention and UNESCO's Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB) especially as regards wetlands designated as World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves and/or Ramsar sites." It is also in implementation of the recommendation by the MAB International Coordinating Council, at its sixteenth session (Paris, 6-10 November 2000), to continue synergy with the Convention on Wetlands on developing concrete site-based cooperation and in the broader area of developing common approaches to ecosystem science.
2. The joint programme has been developed in recognition of the fact that there is mutual interest in the activities of the Ramsar Convention and the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) particularly in the areas of the identification and designation of sites, site management planning, assessment and monitoring, and communication, education and public awareness.
3. The provision of joint guidance and assistance in these areas of common interest can assist countries in implementation of their commitments under Ramsar and MAB, particularly where wetland protected areas have been designated, or may be designated, and managed as both Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) and Biosphere Reserves.
4. Of the 1107 Ramsar sites and 411 Biosphere reserves worldwide (as of 14 November 2001), 59 sites in 36 countries have so far been designated wholly or partly as both Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves, and some of these sites have also been declared as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The programme recognises that many other wetlands have the potential for designation under these instruments.
5. The implementation of the joint programme recognises that successful implementation of the wise (sustainable) use and conservation of Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves depends upon the full participation of all stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous people, as well as a balanced approach in relation to the maintenance of wetland goods and services and the socio-economic and cultural features.

6. The Ramsar Convention Bureau and MAB Secretariat have therefore agreed to develop the following activities, with a programme of joint work initially to cover the period 2002-2003, but recognising that some activities will be ongoing, subject to joint agreement. The programme of joint work will furthermore be kept under review so as to permit a prompt response to new and emerging opportunities for cooperative work.

7. This first phase of joint activities focuses on joint secretariat actions to review and harmonise information and guidance concerning Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves where closer synergy may be beneficial to Ramsar Contracting Parties and MAB participating countries. It is anticipated that, on the basis of these initial reviews, subsequent phases will focus more upon joint implementation activities at site and national levels.

8. It is recognised that to implement fully this programme additional resources and capacity will be required, and the Ramsar Bureau and MAB secretariat are committed to working together to seek such resources as necessary.

[This programme has been accepted by the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Ramsar's Standing Committee (December 2001) and by the MAB International Coordinating Council at its 17<sup>th</sup> session (March 2002).]

## **Joint activities**

### **9. Memorandum of Cooperation**

9.1 Review options of extending the existing Ramsar/World Heritage Convention Memorandum of Cooperation to include the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), and other relevant UNESCO Programmes, including the International Hydrological Programme, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and the World Water Assessment Programme, as well as the relevant sections in UNESCO dealing with education of interest for Ramsar's Outreach Programme, under an overall Memorandum of Cooperation between Ramsar and UNESCO, under which this Ramsar/MAB programme of joint work would then operate.

Note. Since the inception of the Ramsar Convention, UNESCO has acted as its legal depositary. A Memorandum of Cooperation between Ramsar and the World Heritage Convention was signed in 1999, but it is recognised that other programmes and activities operating under UNESCO are also relevant to the enhanced implementation of the Ramsar Convention – hence the development of this joint activity programme between Ramsar and MAB. In order to enhance fruitful collaboration with all relevant parts of UNESCO, the Ramsar Bureau and MAB Secretariat have recognised that it may be more effective to develop a comprehensive MoC between Ramsar and UNESCO which would identify a framework for broader-based cooperation. Under such an overall approach, the Ramsar/World Heritage MoC, this Ramsar/MAB joint activity programme, and other joint activities with other parts of the UNESCO work would operate in implementation of the MoC.

### **10. Cooperation between secretariats and scientific and technical subsidiary bodies and working groups**

10.1 Maintain regular contact between relevant staff of the Ramsar Bureau and MAB Secretariat on matters of common interest, including holding an annual meeting to review progress on the programme of joint work, and to agree amendment and/or updating the programme as necessary.

10.2 Establish contact between the Chair of the MAB International Coordinating Council and the Chair of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in order to identify and act on common issues in the programmes of work of their respective bodies.

10.3 Invite a representative of the Ramsar Bureau to attend MAB's International Coordinating Council meetings as an observer, and to participate as a member of MAB's expert working groups on integrated monitoring and urban issues, and other relevant working groups.

10.4 Recommend to Ramsar's COP8 that the MAB Secretariat be approved for observer status on Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and to participate, as appropriate, in any expert Working Groups established by the STRP.

10.5 Invite contributions by representative(s) of the secretariats and/or scientific and technical advisory bodies to other technical meetings and workshop, as appropriate.

10.6 Seek jointly any additional resources necessary for the full implementation of the programme of joint work.

10.7 Report to the Ramsar Standing Committee and MAB International Coordinating Council on progress in the implementation of this programme of joint work.

## **11. Identification and designation of sites**

11.1 Assess the status of those sites wholly or partially designated as Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves, and those joint sites also designated as World Heritage Sites (including natural heritage sites and those designated as cultural landscapes), and review their status, boundary relationships, and inclusion of the requirements of both instruments in management planning.

11.2 Identify and review the status of those areas that include wetland ecosystems designated only as Biosphere Reserves, and work with relevant Ramsar Administrative Authorities and National MAB Committees to encourage the designation of those meeting Ramsar designation Criteria as Ramsar sites.

11.3 Identify wetlands designated only as Ramsar sites, and encourage the designation of these areas as Biosphere Reserves, where appropriate.

11.4 Review the criteria and supporting guidance for the selection and designation of Ramsar sites (Resolution VII.11, and additional guidance to be considered by Ramsar COP8 in 2002) and Biosphere Reserves, prepare guidance on the joint application of the criteria for sites qualifying under both instruments, and make available to Ramsar Contracting Parties and MAB participating countries (Seville Strategy and Further Guidance, Statutory Framework and Guidelines for Transboundary Biosphere Reserves) so as to assist in further designations.

11.5 Develop joint guidance on establishing Ramsar site boundaries in relation to core and buffer zone boundaries on Biosphere Reserves, especially in relation to Ramsar Resolution VII.12 concerning buffer zones on large sites [and the further guidance on zonation in wetland management planning to be considered by Ramsar COP8], and ensure that the guidance available to COP8 incorporates the best practice from MAB guidance and experience.

11.6 Ensure that those organizations and personnel responsible for designation of sites under each instrument in each country are aware of, and work closely, with their counterparts through, *inter alia*, circulation of joint national listing of focal points and encouragement of

the participation of MAB focal points in National Ramsar/Wetland Committees where these are in place. Encourage the participation in National MAB Committees and MAB's Information and Communication Strategy of Ramsar Administrative Authorities, the focal points of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the focal points for wetland communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) under the Ramsar Outreach Programme, where designated.

11.7 Through the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan ensure MAB contribution, as appropriate, to the preparations for the CBD COP7 debate on biodiversity in protected areas, concerning the designation of joint Ramsar sites/Biosphere Reserves.

11.8 Collaborate on the further development of guidance and tools for wetland management, including *inter alia* GIS under the Biosphere Reserves Integrated Monitoring Programme (BRIM), the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), noting also the relevance of the European Space Agency's TESEO programme concerning the application of earth observation to wetland management.

11.9 Publish, jointly with the World Heritage Centre, a review of coral reef sites designated under each instrument, to serve as assistance to countries in the identification and designation of wetland types recognised as under-represented in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, and seek opportunities for preparation of similar reviews of other under-represented wetland types.

## **12. Site management planning, assessment and monitoring**

12.1 Develop procedures for sharing and harmonising site management planning guidance, and site management planning experience, for both MAB and Ramsar sites, and particularly for sites designated under both instruments.

12.2 Ensure that the Ramsar 'toolkit' of Wise Use Handbooks, especially those relating to the management planning process (including, once available, the further guidance adopted by Ramsar's COP8), is made available to those responsible for Biosphere Reserves and that the MAB guidelines on the implementation of the ecosystem approach are made available to Ramsar site managers.

12.3 Develop collaboration with UNESCO's MAB and International Hydrological Programme (IHP) to assist implementation of the joint Ramsar/CBD "River Basin Initiative", especially in the identification of good practice and lessons learned, case studies demonstrating the incorporation of wetlands and biodiversity into river basin management, including the participation, as appropriate, of UNESCO's representative(s) on the RBI's Advisory Committee, and in the implementation, as appropriate, of specific activities under the main joint MAB/IHP line of action, and UNESCO Science Sector's priority on "water and ecosystems" in the context of UNESCO's programme and budget for 2002-2003.

12.4 Ensure that the proposed MAB BRIM monitoring procedure (see 11.8 above), once developed, is evaluated by the relevant Ramsar STRP working groups; also ensure that Ramsar site managers are made aware of the monitoring procedure; and seek to test the monitoring procedure, including the use of indicators, on jointly designated sites.

12.5 Develop demonstration projects for the co-management of jointly-designated sites, exemplifying the delivery of requirements of both Ramsar and MAB, to include initially a suitable candidate site to be identified for each Ramsar region, such that together the selected sites may also demonstrate management in a range of different wetland types and management issues.

12.6 Develop in the Caribbean area demonstration projects to illustrate the joint delivery of the requirements of Ramsar, MAB, and the protocol to the Cartagena Convention on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA Protocol).

12.7 Review procedures under Ramsar and MAB for reporting and addressing change in ecological character and the socio-economic factors causing threats to ecological character, and seek ways of improving information sharing and harmonisation of procedures. In this regard, MAB representative(s) should contribute to the Ramsar STRP's further work on ecological character and change in character, with a view to ensuring that a wetland ecosystem assessment framework is jointly established and made available to site managers, noting the relevance of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment's conceptual framework to this activity.

12.8 Arrange, as appropriate, for joint Ramsar/MAB advisory missions to sites designated under both instruments and listed on Ramsar's Montreux Record "of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance 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", in order to assist in the provision of expert guidance on addressing and managing issues of threat and change in ecological character.

12.9 Include the MAB programme in the development of projects on major wetlands which would demonstrate the joint delivery of commitments to all global Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

12.10 Promote, in association with Wetlands International's development of a Ramsar Training Service, opportunities for training in wetland inventory, assessment, monitoring and management for managers of Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves, including the development, as necessary, of training modules, and seek opportunities to hold training courses at joint Ramsar sites/Biosphere Reserves.

12.11 Explore opportunities for the development on joint Ramsar sites/Biosphere Reserves of ecotourism projects demonstrating sustainable use of wetlands.

### **13. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA)**

13.1 Promote jointly the value and benefits of participation in each instrument, and the tools and guidance available for wetland management, including production of a brochure on Ramsar and MAB and the co-management of wetland sites.

13.2 Identify existing wetland education centres, and promote the establishment of further centres, at joint Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves, as part of the priority implementation of Ramsar's Outreach Programme, and encourage their full participation in the wetland education centres' network being developed through Wetland Link International on behalf of Ramsar.

13.3 Seek opportunities to establish regional site manager networks for managers of joint Ramsar sites/Biosphere Reserves in order to encourage sharing of information and experience, including the management of invasive alien species.

13.4 Maintain and update joint MAB/Ramsar Web site pages so as to raise awareness amongst those responsible for site designation and management under Ramsar and MAB, and encourage access and consistent use of the available tools and assistance under each instrument. The Web pages initially should include links to:

- Listing of sites designated under both instruments;
- Listing of wetland Biosphere Reserves not currently designated as Ramsar sites;

- Links to the Ramsar *Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance*;
- Links to the MAB Directory site descriptions;
- Links to the Ramsar Sites Directory;
- Site photographs, where available; and
- Links to key documents on site designation, management planning and monitoring.

13.5 Consider, in further developing the joint Web pages, the establishment of electronic discussion groups on wetland management planning for Ramsar sites/Biosphere Reserves.

13.6 Ensure MAB involvement in the planned Ramsar-led Virtual Forum on wetland management planning in preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum (Japan, 2003), including, as appropriate, contributing to any wetland management planning workshop that may be organized as part of the Global Biodiversity Forum (GBF) immediately prior to Ramsar COP8 (November 2002).

13.7 Seek opportunities, working with the IUCN Protected Areas Programme, for presenting joint Ramsar/MAB and World Heritage Convention activities and outputs concerning protected areas management at the World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003).

13.8 Regularly publicise and promote the activities of Ramsar and MAB through each others' Web sites.