

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Second Meeting of the Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative

July 5th - 8th 2011

Kralendijk, Bonaire

REPORT



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



Ministry of Economic Affairs,
Agriculture and Innovation



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Tuesday July 5, 2011

Opening remarks

Mr. Delno Tromp, Commissioner of Bonaire opened the meeting by welcoming the participants to Bonaire and highlighting the island's leading role in the conservation of vulnerable habitat such as Corals Reefs. He also underlined the importance of wetlands and their services including sediment retention, shore stabilization, disaster mitigation, and provision of habitat for biodiversity as determinants of social and economic development and well-being.

The Senior Advisor for the Americas Ms. María Rivera thanked the Island government of Bonaire, the National Office of the Caribbean Netherlands and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation for hosting the first Ramsar meeting in Bonaire. She also welcomed the Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties and the international and national institutions and observers. She summarized the development of the initiative from its inception during the 5th Pan-American meeting in 2007 in Merida, Venezuela up until now and further highlighted the main activities and expected results for the meeting. The Secretariat encouraged an active participation in order to have a productive collective construction process.

Mr. Ainsley Henry on behalf of the Initiative's coordinator countries, Cuba and Jamaica and as Standing Committee Caribbean representative, thanked the government and people of Bonaire and the Office of the Caribbean Netherlands for hosting the meeting, the participants for their attendance and stressed the importance of this meeting in moving forward the initiative's development by setting priorities and finalizing the work plan in order to seek the mechanism for a financial sustainability. He also encouraged the participants to give their best efforts in developing the agenda and looked forward to a highly productive meeting.

The meeting agenda's was approved (Annex II) and the Secretariat summarized as the main results expected from the meeting to advance in the formulation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of Caribbean Wetlands document, agreed on mechanisms for the development of a regional project proposal to implement the initiative's work plan and agreed on activities to highlight the initiative visibility in the upcoming Pan-American meeting that will be held in Jamaica in mid-December 2011 and the 11th Conference of the Parties (COP11) to be held in June 2012 in Romania.

Overview of ongoing activities in the Caribbean Region

During this session, the national and international institutions, organizations and project experts presented the activities they are undertaking in wetlands conservation in the Caribbean.

During the plenary session moderated by Jamaica, the interventions were focused on the management of Bonaire Ramsar sites and the wish of the island to extend two of those sites, the importance of including the Ramsar sites of the Caribbean Netherlands with their coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses, etc. in the Caribbean database rather than the European database, and determine future funding sources, the potential of the education curricula presented by the Mangrove Action Project representative and the synergies between the Ramsar Convention and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Marine Turtles.

Presentations of Countries: Implementation of the Convention

All the presentations were given in a CD to the participants along with other complementary documentation.

From the different presentations it was clear the progress of the CP in the implementation of the Convention but also that the main threats to wetland ecosystems among the Caribbean countries continue being the Coastal development for tourism and other urban needs.

Bahamas highlighted the importance of their wetlands restoration project in Exuma with the collaboration of the University of Miami and UNESCO. Regarding the National Wetland Committee it stated that it has been working using electronic means but not meeting for the past year and a half.

The Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire (STCB) stressed the importance on NGO's, the governments and the Ramsar Secretariat to work together in conservation efforts. The Secretariat mentioned the collaborative partnership of the IOP's associated to the Convention.

Aruba responded to the Secretariat question that the main current challenge for the management of the Ramsar site Het Spaans Lagoen is the inexistence of an authority for nature management, and the work is done by several institutions which gives it an atomized and confusing perception to most people.

Curacao mentioned that they have designated a focal point to address Ramsar issues and are working in the designation of a new Ramsar site.

The Netherlands expressed its willingness to assist Curacao in its designation process and the Secretariat expressed its disposition to support the countries by all means possible.

The Secretariat stressed the importance of clarifying the procedures, channels and institutions for the communication between the Caribbean Netherlands and the Ramsar Secretariat. The **Netherlands** responded that the official channel should be, as always, through the Kingdom of the Netherlands as it holds the responsibility for the global representation of all its territories. However, The Netherlands, as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is now directly involved with the Caribbean through the three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands and will consequently be actively involved in Caribbean issues.

France coincided that its decision regarding the territories are taken in Paris but that further enquiries should be done in order to establish clear communication and procedural channels regarding the initiative.

Dominican Republic mentioned some of the existing regional initiatives' like the Caribbean biological corridor which includes Haiti and Cuba and highlighted the synergies between the tourism and environmental ministries in favor of the application of the wise use principal in project development.

The Secretariat stressed the importance of having France and the Caribbean Netherlands representation in the meeting, and that efforts will continue to get UK representation later in the future, as well as the follow-up through the means and channels established by each Contracting Party.

Jamaica stressed its role as regional representative for the Caribbean and requested the focal points to communicate more actively in order to adequately represent their interest in the Standing Committee, which next meeting will take place in November 2011 in Gland.

The Secretariat underlined the importance of tourism in the region and for the Convention and announced that "Wetlands, tourism and recreation" will be the theme for the next COP 11 which will take place in June 2012, hosted by Romania.

Jamaica made reference to challenges faced in various wetlands across the island including the Falmouth wetlands, Palisadoes-Port Royal Ramsar sites and a proposal to develop the Pelican Cay located within the Portland Bight Ramsar Site. Jamaica also stressed the importance of signature days such World Wetland Day in knowledge generation on Ramsar and the importance of wetlands. Also highlighted were the role of the National Ramsar Committee and the status of activities outlined in their 2009 – 2012 work plan.

Several countries including **Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Jamaica,** and **Surinam** expressed their intention to designate additional Ramsar Sites (list of sites in Annex IV).

Wednesday July 6th, 2011

Continuation Countries Implementation of the Convention

Grenada gave a brief overview of the country and the activities undertaken regarding mangrove ecosystem and the importance to protect them. It also announced that they are close to submit all the required documents to access the Ramsar Convention.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stated that after its participation and report on the Convention's 40th anniversary celebration activities in Huatulco, Mexico interest was renovated among various national agencies on the Ramsar Convention and now they are seeking national approval in hope to accede by the next Pan-American meeting. It also highlighted the identification of a potential Wetland of International Importance in Tobago Keys on southern Grenadines which fulfill Ramsar criteria and already have management activities in place.

The Secretariat highly praised Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadine's news and reiterate the Secretariat's disposition to support through any mean within its possibility the accession of these two countries including an official mission in the short term.

Working Plan and Strategy document of the Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative

The participants worked on the framework of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of Caribbean Wetlands documents by working groups and plenary sessions to formulate a mission, vision, and general objective (Annex III).

Thursday July 7th, 2011

During the plenary session the participants worked and agreed on the specific objectives, and actions for the Regional Strategy document (Annex III).

The countries agreed to finalize the internal consultation with their GEF Focal Point for the support in the preparation of the regional project for the initiative's work plan implementation.

The **Caribbean Netherlands** noted that the European territories in the region are not eligible for GEF support, but suggested that there might be some alternative funding sources through the European Union that would need to be researched further

France agreed they would make the proper consultation on the feasibility to apply to the regional project.

Discussion preparations for the Pan-American and COP11 Meeting

The participants discussed the preparations of activities for the initiative's visibility in the upcoming Pan-American meeting to be held in Jamaica in mid-December 2011 and the 11th Conference of the Parties (COP11) to be held in June 2012 in Romania. They agreed on the following activities:

- a) Present the progress report on the preparation of the regional project for the initiative's implementation and the strategy document of the initiative.
- b) Jamaica will lead the preparation of a logo for the Caribbean Initiative and suggested and participants agreed that it will be renamed as CaRIWet. They will inform the Secretariat later on the timeframe for the preparation of the logo and consultation among the initiative members.
- c) Bonaire and Bahamas with the assistance of the Secretariat will lead the preparation of two case studies about benefits of Ramsar site designation.
- d) The Secretariat will support with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines the preparation of a video based on high resolution pictures (provided by the CP) on the cultural aspects, communities, types of wetlands and wise use activities including tourism.
- e) The Parties with the support of the Secretariat will prepare a brochure on the main wetlands of their territories as well as Ramsar sites. The Secretariat will circulate a draft format (based on IAC format) with standard criteria for consideration by the parties.
- f) The Secretariat will inform Jamaica and Cuba on the funds available for the production of materials such as brochures and other initiative's activities as well as for sponsor delegates to the Panamerican meeting.

Conclusions

The Contracting Parties made progress in the formulation of the strategic document of the regional initiative and agreed in the formulation of a regional project for the implementation of the work plan of the initiative. To move forward these processes the focal points will report to the Secretariat by July 29th on the results of their consultation with their GEF focal points on the support to the regional project.

The Secretariat will send for the Parties consideration a consolidated version of the document of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of Caribbean Wetlands by July 29th.

Regarding the political support to the initiative the Ramsar Secretariat will send a new request to the Contracting Parties who have not yet sent the support letter to the initiative.

Through the work of the Caribbean wetlands regional initiative it has been possible to maintain a collaborative effort among the Parties for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. Likewise, it has provided the opportunity to integrate the Caribbean Netherlands, Aruba, Curacao and hopefully in the short term France and United Kingdom in the regional processes of the Ramsar Convention in the Caribbean.

Annex I

Second Meeting of the Caribbean Wetlands Initiative

5-8 July 2011

Kralendijk, Bonaire

Participant's List

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11:20-11:40 Plenary discussion (Moderator *Jamaica*)

11:40-12:30 Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Caribbean, Ramsar Secretariat and country presentation: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Caribbean Netherlands, Cuba, Dominican Republic (*10 minute presentations*) (Moderator *Caribbean Netherlands*)

12:30-14:00 Lunch break

14:00-16:00 Continue: Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Caribbean, country presentation: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Caribbean Netherlands, Cuba, Dominican Republic (*10 minute presentations*) (Moderator *Bahamas*)

16:00-16:15 Coffee break

16:15-17:30 Continue country presentations: Jamaica, Suriname (Moderator *Bahamas*)

18:00- Welcome cocktail party

Wednesday- 06.07.11

8:30-9:30 Non Contracting Parties presentation: Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Moderator Belize)

Working Plan of the Initiative and Strategy Document of the Initiative (Moderator *Ramsar Secretariat*)

9:30-10:00 Background and status

10:00-10:15 Coffee Break

10:15-12:30 Working session Strategy Document of the Initiative

12:30-14:00 Lunch break

14:00- 16:00 Continue session Strategy Document of the Initiative

16:00-16:15 Coffee Break

16:15-17:30 Synthesis of the working session of the day

Thursday –07.07.11

8:30-10:00 Definition of priorities and financial plan for 2010-2012 (Working session)

10:00-10:15 Coffee break

10:15-12:30 Continue definition of priorities and financial plan for 2010-2012 (Working session)

12:30-14:00 Lunch break

14:00-14:30 Synthesis of the working session

Plenary discussion preparation for the Pan American Meeting and COP11 (Moderator *Ramsar Secretariat*)

14:30-15:30 Discussion of activities for the Pan American meeting and COP11 in Rumania 2012

15:30-16:00 Field trip information

16:00-16:15 Coffee Break

16:15-17:00 Conclusions and closing remarks

Friday–08.07.11

Field Trip:

Visit to the Ramsar sites

Ramsar site Lac and Klein Bonaire

8:00-17:00

Saturday – 09.07.11

Departure of participants

ANNEX III

Strategic Framework

Mission

Promote regional cooperation and involvement for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention to ensure the conservation and wise use of Caribbean wetlands and associated ecosystems to preserve the biodiversity and services that they provide through capacity building and education.

Vision

All countries of the Caribbean region become signatories of the Ramsar Convention by 2020, ensuring the conservation and wise use of their wetlands and associated ecosystems, including at least 15 new Ramsar Sites.

Main objective

Promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands and associated ecosystems in the Caribbean through regional cooperation, improving the capacities and clear wetland management processes and actions, as well as the exchange of best practices and information to address regional problems and challenges related to wetland management including climate change.

Specific objectives and actions

Objective 1

Completing and improving scientific and technical knowledge about wetlands and associated ecosystems in the Caribbean in order to support their conservation and wise use.

Specific actions:

- a. Develop a situational analysis by country, to determine whether an assessment has been performed in the country in accordance with the Ramsar guidelines.
- b. Enable countries to carry out an inventory and assessment where necessary.
- c. Carry out a regional inventory for the Caribbean wetlands and associated ecosystems with existing information by country.
- d. Enable shared use of knowledge, expertise and information among Caribbean countries to support conservation efforts.
- e. Commission an assessment of the interactions and connectivity between species among the Ramsar Sites/wetlands and associated ecosystems in the Caribbean.

Objective 2

Strengthen the conservation, management and wise use of natural and cultural resources in wetlands and associated ecosystems in the Caribbean as well as related goods and services.

Specific actions:

- a. Conduct a management planning workshop for Ramsar Site managers in the Caribbean.
- b. Facilitate the formulation/review of management plans including the provision of technical advice and support their implementation.
- c. Enable updating of Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS).
- d. Encourage each country to complete an RIS for their wetlands and associated ecosystems even if they are not designated Ramsar Sites where possible.
- e. Promote the formulation of clear terms and guidelines with the involvement of all stakeholders to regulate the use of wetlands and associated ecosystems which includes zoning plans and recommended activities to ensure the conservation and wise use of these areas.

Objective 3

Strengthen training, education and communication processes to increase public awareness of the importance and value of wetlands and associated ecosystems.

Specific actions:

- a. Promote the development of a communications/CEPA plan for each country.
- b. Enable the development of materials and tools that enhance education, public awareness and outreach.
- c. Provide support to pilot projects for awareness-raising on wetlands and associated ecosystems.
- d. Create a Web site for the Caribbean Initiative.
- e. Promote synergies and collaboration with other organizations or bodies in the region relevant to the initiative.

Objective 4

Encourage the development and review of policies towards a coordinated approach for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and associated ecosystems among countries of the region.

Specific actions:

- a. Conduct an experience sharing workshop in the Caribbean.

Objective 5

Facilitate the development, dissemination and implementation of measures for mitigation and adaptation to increase resilience of wetlands and associated ecosystems to climate change.

Specific actions:

- a. Develop region-wide monitoring systems and networks using standard protocols/methods to identify potential effect of climate change on wetlands and associated ecosystems.
- b. Identify measures of mitigation and adaptation synthesizing global information that could be used in the region.
- c. Initiate and develop a research program on climate change mitigation and adaptation in wetlands and associated ecosystems in collaboration with appropriate institutions.

ANNEX IV

List of New Ramsar Sites designation per country

Country	Name of the Sites
Antigua and Barbuda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North East Marine Management Area (NEMMA)• Cades Bay Marine Reserve (CBMR). Both to be designated by early 2012
Bahamas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• West Side of Andros• Harold & Wilson Ponds- finalizing designation process
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ozama Wetlands National Park• Zona del Bajo Yuna• Jaragua (Coral Reef)-after the previous two have been designated
Jamaica	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mason River Protected Area-designated by next Pan-American meeting
Suriname	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bigi Pan Multiple Use Management Area (MUMA)• Wia-Wia Nature Reserve

Annex V



