



12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Ramsar COP12 DOC.16

Considerations by the Strategic Plan Working Group on mechanisms to enhance the visibility and stature of the Ramsar Convention and increasing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other international entities

Background

1. Standing Committee 47, through Decision SC47-07, decided to address issues of visibility, stature and synergies “within the Strategic Plan Working Group and in follow-up to Resolution XI.1 for discussion at SC48 as appropriate”.
2. Accordingly, during the preparation of the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan, the consultant included considerations on this matter and the Strategic Plan Working Group discussed the themes.
3. The Contracting Parties have identified key elements to increase the visibility and stature of the Convention and synergies with MEAs and others, through discussions at SC47, Strategic Plan Working Group meetings and reviews of the National Reports received. These are summarized below and included as part of the proposed draft resolution on follow-up to Resolution XI.1 for Parties’ consideration at COP12.

Elements to enhance the visibility and stature of the Ramsar Convention

High-level segments at the Conference of the Parties

4. For some years now, at Standing Committee meetings, some Parties have indicated that the establishment of high-level segments during the Conference of the Parties would be a useful mechanism to increase the visibility of the Convention and political engagement in it at the global, regional and national levels.
5. Taking into consideration the different views on this topic, it has been indicated that all Parties who might host future meetings of the Conference of the Parties could consider the establishment of a high-level ministerial segment to improve the visibility of the Convention.
6. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and more recently the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) have successfully included such segments at COPs.

Global Wetland Indicators

7. The Ramsar Secretariat will enhance the work of the STRP in further implementing Resolutions XI.6 (2012) and VIII.26 (2002) on developing global wetland indicators on the state of wetlands

and wise use and on the results of the Convention's activities, in collaboration with other biodiversity MEAs and agencies (e.g. UNEP-WCMC) so as to achieve a coherent approach to indicator development.

Elements to increase synergies with other MEAs and other international institutions.

8. The Contracting Parties have adopted Resolutions X.11 and XI.6 for enhanced synergies with other Conventions and other international institutions. Under this framework the Secretariat remains closely involved in the work of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) established under the aegis of the CBD, and facilitates the continuing participation of the Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in the work of the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions through the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Boards (CSAB) meetings.
9. The Ramsar Secretariat is also involved in other coordination and collaboration mechanisms between the biodiversity-related conventions, such as the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative. It has also established a range of bilateral Memoranda of Understanding or Cooperation as well as joint work plans or programmes with other conventions and international organizations.
10. As part of the project "Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies" undertaken by UNEP, the Ramsar Secretariat also provided inputs to the *Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions at national and regional level*. The aim of the *Sourcebook* is to provide possibilities for enhancing the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national and regional levels, including through coordination between MEA focal points. The Secretariat will continue to take an active part in the project's coming activities and meetings.
11. The Secretariat is continuing to work to strengthen collaboration with UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, UNECE, the World Bank, WHO, WMO and others.
12. In 2014 CBD in its COP12 and CMS in its COP11 addressed the need for enhancing synergies between MEAs.

Coordination with other Conventions' Focal Points

13. The Contracting Parties have mentioned the importance of increasing the coordination between Ramsar Focal Points and focal points of other conventions, to enable them to inform their counterparts of Ramsar activities and agree on areas of common interest and collaboration.
14. Mechanisms to promote such coordination include the establishment of National Ramsar Wetlands Committees or similar bodies that invite the participation of the focal points of other MEAs. In this regard, according to National Reports to COP11, only 37% of the Contracting Parties involved other focal points in their National Wetlands Committees as of 2011 (N.B This figure will be updated with the information from COP12 National Reports).
15. 47% of the Contracting Parties had established other communication mechanisms in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and other MEA focal points.

16. Similarly, 43% of Contracting Parties had established mechanisms in place for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the national focal points of UN and other global and regional agencies and bodies.
17. The *Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions at national and regional level* points out six areas where cooperation and coordination could be improved for the biodiversity cluster:
 - a. Institutional arrangements;
 - b. Information management and reporting;
 - c. Science-policy interface;
 - d. Capacity building;
 - e. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020; and
 - f. Resource mobilization.

For more background information please visit the project website: wcmc.io/Sourcebook.

Implementing the guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention

18. As part of the discussions, the Contracting Parties have noted the importance and increasing need to work more in implementing the management of shared wetlands, including transboundary Ramsar Sites and hydrological basins, under the international cooperation objective of the Convention.
19. In line with this recommendation, the Contracting Parties have committed under Article 5 of the Convention to consult with other Contracting Parties about implementation of the Convention, especially in regard to transboundary wetlands, shared water systems, and shared species.
20. In order to assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of this obligation of the Convention, in 1999 the Conference of the Parties adopted the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (Resolution VII.19). The Guidelines cover the following areas:
 - Managing shared wetlands and river basins;
 - Managing shared wetland-related species;
 - Ramsar working in partnership with international/regional environmental conventions and agencies;
 - Sharing of experience and information;
 - International assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - Sustainable harvesting and international trade in wetland-derived plant and animal products;
 - Regulation of foreign investment to ensure wetland conservation and wise use.
21. In adopting the Guidelines, the Conference called upon Contracting Parties to give special attention to identifying shared wetlands, river basins, and wetland-dependent species and to cooperate with other Parties in their management; to harmonize the implementation of the Ramsar Convention with that of other treaties; to increase the number of site twinning arrangements; and to raise the level and effectiveness of international development assistance programmes directed at the long-term conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.
22. From COP11 National Reports, only 22% of Contracting Parties have established effective cooperative management in place for shared wetlands (3.5.2) and 36% have established

networks or twinning arrangements, nationally or internationally, for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands that share common features.

23. Ramsar Regional Initiatives are intended as another operational means of providing effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan, and of raising the visibility of the Convention in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern, involving all relevant national and regional stakeholders.

The Ramsar Convention is a Biodiversity, and a Water Convention

24. The Ramsar wise use concept, and the Ramsar mission to secure the wise use of all wetlands , are recognized as applying to all wetlands and water resources in a Contracting Party's territory, not only to those sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance. The concept's application is crucial to ensuring that wetlands can continue fully to deliver their vital role in supporting maintenance of biological diversity and human well-being as well as a full range of wetland services and benefits.
25. Over the years, the Conference of the Contracting Parties has adopted a considerable body of scientific, technical, and policy guidance to assist the Parties in addressing the issues embodied in the Convention's "three pillars": the wise use of all wetlands, Wetlands of International Importance, and international cooperation. All of the guidance is gathered into *The Ramsar Handbooks for the Wise Use of Wetlands*, known as the "Ramsar Toolkit".
26. Since the adoption of the Ramsar Strategic Plan for 2003-2008, the Parties have recognized that a broader approach to wetland conservation and sustainable development is needed, notably in relation to poverty eradication and food and water security, integrated approaches to water management, climate change and its predicted impacts, increasing globalization of trade and reducing of trade barriers, the increasing role of the private sector, and the increasing influence of development banks and international development agencies.
27. At COP6 in 1996, the Contracting Parties adopted the first resolution related to water, Resolution VI.23 on *Ramsar and water*, which called upon Contracting Parties to ensure, through partnerships with water related organisations such as the World Water Council, that the Ramsar Convention becomes an audible voice in water debates.
28. Subsequently many guidelines have been adopted highlighting the role of wetlands in the water cycle, water allocation and integrated water resource management among others. A clear example is in Resolution IX.1 Annex C "An Integrated Framework for the Ramsar Convention's water-related guidance" presents a framework for Ramsar's current and developing suite of water-related guidance.

Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

29. The Open Work Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not have completed its work prior to COP12. However, there is clear interest by the Ramsar Contracting Parties in maximizing synergies between any future agreed SDGs that are relevant to the Ramsar Convention. As a result, it was recognized in the Strategic Plan Working Group discussions that once the SDGs are agreed, the Ramsar Contracting Parties should seek to identify any potential linkages to the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan and whether any modifications to the Plan to leverage those anticipated synergies would be beneficial to the Convention.