

13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

“Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 21-29 October 2018

Ramsar COP13 Doc.10

Report on implementation of the CEPA Programme 2016-2018 and recommendations on future directions

Summary

1. This paper provides both a review of progress in implementing the CEPA Programme during the 2016-2018 triennium and recommendations by the CEPA Oversight Panel on a new approach to CEPA implementation.
2. In terms of progress over the last Triennium, significant activity has been undertaken against the nine goals of the CEPA Programme, with achievements in terms of leadership, support and capacity-building for site managers, engaging new stakeholders, World Wetlands Day and other campaigns and a variety of promotional and educational materials. Yet, the impact of these activities is difficult to assess, and there is a need to build in evaluation methodologies for refining future CEPA activities. Outcome reporting at national and global scales, evaluations of specific activities and the review of the Ramsar Strategic Plan are potential mechanisms for measuring impact.
3. Recommendations on a new approach to CEPA have been developed to inform a Draft Resolution for COP14 on the future of CEPA and to provide input to the review of the Ramsar Strategic Plan and the CEPA Programme, and the broader approach to Ramsar implementation beyond 2024.
4. Key issues for consideration include:
 - Continuing to seek and refine operational efficiencies for delivering CEPA by integrating CEPA into every aspect of Ramsar Convention implementation.
 - Streamlining governance and aligning reporting for Contracting Parties and the Secretariat relating to CEPA.
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of CEPA activities at all levels, to identify priorities and better focus limited resources
 - Providing targeted support for Contracting Parties, including capacity-building and practical tools.
 - Building a stronger capability within the STRP to communicate its findings.
 - Encouraging Contracting Parties to lift their commitment to CEPA, recognising its importance in raising awareness and advocacy.

Introduction

5. Communication, capacity-building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) activities have a long history within the Convention evolving from the Outreach Programme in 1999 to the CEPA programmes of 2009-2015 and the current 2016-2024 programme.
6. Resolutions of the Ramsar Convention (including Resolutions VII.9, X.8 and XII.9) show a clear recognition by Contracting Parties of the important role of CEPA in the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan, by engaging, enlisting and enabling people to act for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
7. At the 12th Conference of the Parties in 2015, the Contracting Parties approved a new CEPA Programme for 2016-2024, through Resolution XII.9. The Programme includes nine CEPA goals and 43 targets.
8. Responsibilities for implementation are shared between Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Secretariat, the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs), NGOs, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. Contracting Parties are the key implementers of the CEPA Programme, working through their National Focal Points, CEPA Focal Points, community-based organisations, Ramsar Regional Initiatives and wetland education centres. Contracting Parties are invited to formulate CEPA National Action Plans to identify priority CEPA activities, and to report on their progress through three-yearly National Reports to the COPs.
9. The Secretariat supports CEPA implementation, and developed a CEPA Action Plan 2016 to 2018 to guide its actions. The Plan was reviewed to improve its focus and, at Standing Committee 53, a [report on progress in implementing the Action Plan](#) was published. Moving towards a more cohesive approach, the CEPA Action Plan was integrated into the Secretariat's annual and triennial work plans.
10. International Organisation Partners (Birdlife International, the International Water Management Institute, IUCN, Wetlands International, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Worldwide Fund for Nature) have been active in promoting the Convention and implementing the Ramsar Strategic Plan.
11. The CEPA Oversight Panel was established in 2006 (by Standing Committee 34, following Resolution IX.18) to monitor and report on CEPA issues at the national level within the Convention and the progress of implementation of the CEPA Programme.
12. The Secretariat and the CEPA Oversight Panel have provided input to this report.

CEPA achievements during 2016-2018

13. The following assessment of progress in implementing the CEPA Programme draws on an analysis of Contracting Parties' National Reports to COP13, and reporting by the Secretariat on its implementation of the CEPA Action Plan.
14. In terms of the nine Goals of the CEPA Programme 2016-2024, the following progress was made during the triennium:

Goal 1 – Leadership, institutional support and networks

- The Secretary General and Contracting Parties raised the visibility of Ramsar and improved engagement in strategic policy processes, through contributions to indicators for Sustainable Development Goals, IUCN World Conservation Congress (Sep 2016), the UN Ocean Conference (Jun 2017), International Partnership for Blue Carbon (Sep 2017), Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (Sep 2017), CMS (Oct 2017), UNFCCC (Nov 2016 and Nov 2017), the UN Environment Assembly (Dec 2017) and the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (July 2018).
- The visibility of the Ramsar Convention is raised thanks to InforMEA, the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The portal currently includes 17 MEAs from 12 Secretariats. It is open to observers involved in MEA information and data management. The InforMEA Portal presents Ramsar Convention COP decisions and resolutions, country membership, national focal points, national reports and Ramsar Sites (see www.informe.org/en/treaties/ramsar). The InforMEA learning platform includes a popular introductory course on Ramsar, and others of relevance, such as an introduction to environmental governance. The Ramsar Secretariat will seek to expose an increasing range of content available on this portal.
- Action plans for wetland CEPA are in place in 24% of Contracting Parties (a slight fall from the 27% reported at COP12). There are local site level plans in place in 36% of Parties. This low uptake needs further investigation to understand the factors influencing this trend (low priority, no value-add, lack of resources, institutional impediments, etc). Improved CEPA planning at the national level is likely to contribute to a better focus on key priorities.
- Only around 50% of Parties reported that communication mechanisms are in place to share Ramsar guidance and information with Ramsar site managers, other MEA focal points and other ministries, departments and agencies. This low figure is concerning, as such mechanisms are critical to support site managers in their management of Ramsar wetlands, and to engage relevant agencies in understanding and implementing the Ramsar Convention.
- Regarding operational cross-sectoral national Ramsar/wetland committees, a significant fall has been reported, from 63% at COP12 to 49% in this reporting period. This is also of concern, as these committees are an important tool to integrate wetland conservation and wise use into national policy considerations, and ensure decision-making takes account of the ecological services provided by wetlands. In particular, Targets 1 and 13 of the Strategic Plan encourage Contracting Parties to feature wetland benefits in national/local policies and plans relating to key sectors, and to enhance the sustainability of key sectors when they affect wetlands.

Goal 2 – Integration of CEPA into Convention activities

- CEPA is an integral part of Ramsar implementation, playing a key role in promoting the values of wetlands, in engaging wetland managers and the broader community in wetland conservation and wise use, in building capacity to understand and manage wetlands and address emerging issues, and in reporting locally and globally on progress.
- The Ramsar website is an important element of Ramsar implementation, including through compiling decisions and information from Convention meetings, holding data on Ramsar sites (in the Ramsar Site Information Service), disseminating scientific and technical material and promoting Ramsar sites and wetland news stories. There were significant additions to the website over the triennium (including meeting papers, publications, videos and other resources) with nearly half a million visitors to the site in the last year.

- The Ramsar Newsletter, published every 3-4 months, provided a regular means of communication between the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties, in addition to the Ramsar and CEPA email forums.

Goal 3 – Support on wise use for Ramsar site and other wetland managers and

Goal 4 – Capacity-building

- The Secretariat strengthened its role in providing direct support to capacity in individual Contracting Parties through a variety of materials and tools, including webinars, tutorials and tools to assist in online reporting, particularly on reporting “wetland extent”.
- Information on sites continued to be uploaded to the Ramsar Site Information Service. A training manual and videos were produced.
- A Ramsar Sites Management toolkit, providing guidance to site managers on the key steps and components involved in managing a Ramsar Site, was developed with the Secretariat and published online, at: <https://www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-sites-management-toolkit>
- The Secretariat produced a number of wetland publications which were shared with CEPA networks, and produced seven short videos about wetland benefits.
- Nominations were sought for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards which will be presented at COP13 to recognise and honour the achievements of individuals, organisations and governments around the world for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Danone Group offered an Evian Special Prize of USD 10,000 in each category.
- Ramsar Regional Initiatives continued to support the Convention. This includes the four Ramsar Regional Centres promoting scientific and technical cooperation, training and capacity-building, and the fifteen Regional Networks supporting collaboration between governments, experts, international NGOs, local communities and the corporate sector. Details are available in RRI Annual Reports, with achievements for 2017 including:
 - Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia – organised an International Workshop for WWD 2017, entitled, ‘Wetlands, our natural safeguard against disasters’, with the National Wetland Centre and the Korean Wetland Society, and prepared a guidebook on Designation and management of Ramsar sites.
 - The Centre for Eastern Africa – published a wetland assessment tool, updated 11 Ramsar Site Information Sheets and maps for Uganda, and prepared best practices for three Ramsar Sites
 - The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership - - adopted an Action Plan and CEPA Strategy, ran a site managers training course in China, worked on a new Flyway Network Sites database and on single species action plans (including for the Far Eastern Curlew).
 - The Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative – held a workshop on ecosystem services, and disseminated the results of the peatland project in 16 languages.

Goal 5 – Multi-stakeholder participation

- A number of initiatives, many reflecting the World Wetlands Day themes, were undertaken to engage additional sectors in wetland conservation and wise use.
- NGOs continued to play an important role, internationally and within Contracting Parties, in promoting awareness and engagement of people in wetland conservation and wise use.
 - In 2016, the Nagao Natural Environment Foundation (NEF) in Japan established the Nagao Wetland Fund to provide support to developing countries in the Asia and Oceania Region to implement the Convention, including communication, education, awareness and training.

- Working with the Society of Wetlands Scientists and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the World Wetland Network delivered the first part of the [Global Wetland Survey](#) in 2017, with over 600 responses from across the world, identifying key issues for wetlands. These included urban/industrial pollution, invasive species, agricultural run-off, erosion, urban and industrial development. Positive influences included local community awareness, implementation of conservation measures and tourism.
- The Star Alliance Partnership supported the World Wetlands Day Youth Photo Contest, held in 2016 and 2017, which was designed to engage young people in understanding and promoting wetland values.
- To align with the theme of COP13, ‘Wetlands for a sustainable urban future’, nominations were sought in 2017 for Wetland City Accreditation to recognise cities that demonstrate strong and positive relationships with wetlands. This has proved a successful process with a broad international response, engagement from many parties, and the profile of the Convention lifted across the many nominating cities. Successful cities will be announced at COP13.
- A ‘Culture and wetlands’ web page was established, to highlight work relating to the cultural values of wetlands, the livelihoods they provide and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to participate in their management.

Goal 6 – Programmes and campaigns to promote wetlands

- World Wetlands Day (WWD) celebrations focused attention on important wetland issues over the Triennium, including the role of wetlands in sustainable livelihoods (2016), disaster risk reduction (2017) and liveable cities (2018).
- In 2018, there were 1,500 registered events in 118 countries, more than 1,800 online articles mentioning WWD and social media extending to almost 9 million people. Numbers of visits to the WWD Ramsar website were around 50,000 in 2016 and 2017, but increased significantly to 200,000 in 2018. Parties are to be congratulated on their efforts in lifting the profile of the Convention through these many successful events. There were over 151,000 downloads of WWD materials.
- A total of 87% of countries reported holding Ramsar-branded World Wetland Day activities during the Triennium (similar to the report to COP12). This is also reflected in the strong numbers of events reported on the event map held on the Secretariat’s website (e.g. over 1,500 events in 2018).
- In partnership with Danone, the Secretariat provided resources for World Wetlands Day and the Ramsar Awards.
- There has been widespread activity on other campaigns, programmes and projects relating to wetland CEPA, with 83% of countries reporting such initiatives over the Triennium. These have included making use of other international days, such as World Environment Day, World Water Day, World Migratory Bird Day and World Turtles Day, to support global campaigns and draw attention to national and local situations.
- Contracting Parties are undertaking a variety of activities, which demonstrate effective approaches to engage and build capacity across a wide range of stakeholders and sectors. Examples are at [Annex A](#).
- The Secretariat continued its communication outreach through social media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) with a 30% increase in engagement in the year to April 2018.

Goal 7 – Wetland education centres

- In 2016, a survey was undertaken by Wetland Link International (WLI) of wetland education centres, and a database of centres was published online.

- The WLI network of centres has been an effective mechanism to link centres and provide an opportunity for sharing experiences, materials and innovative education and engagement ideas. WLI has over 300 member centres and has established several regional networks.
- Wetland education centres undertook a variety of World Wetland Day and other activities to engage their local communities. Details of many of these events were uploaded to the Secretariat's online map and register of events.

Goal 8 – Education materials

- Ramsar publications during the Triennium included:
 - A poster on the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 (2016);
 - 5th Edition Ramsar Handbooks (2016) on *An Introduction to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* and *The Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024* ;
 - Fact Sheet on *Wetlands: a natural safeguard against disasters* (2016);
 - Policy Briefs on *Wetlands for disaster risk reduction* and *Integrating multiple wetland values into decision-making* were produced in 2017;
 - World Heritage and Ramsar Convention: *Converging Towards Success* (2017);
 - *Wetlands for the Future Fund: Celebrating 20 years of the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico* (2017);
 - Policy Brief and Briefing Note on *Ramsar Advisory Missions* (2018), which highlighted Ramsar Advisory Missions as valuable tools to address actual and potential change in ecological character at Ramsar sites;
 - *Scaling up wetland conservation, wise use and restoration to achieve SDGs* (2018);
 - *Global Wetland Outlook* (2018).
- A variety of training materials, webinars and web-based tools were developed by the Secretariat, Regional Centres and Contracting Parties on wetland issues and management.

Goal 9 – Development and communication of STRP materials

- During its 2016-2018 triennium the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) published the following outputs, pursuant to the requests of Contracting Parties, as reflected in its work plan:
 - The first edition of the *Global Wetland Outlook: State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People*
 - Ramsar Technical Report No.10: *The use of Earth Observation for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring: An information source for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*. [production to be finalised]
 - Ramsar Briefing Notes on: *Ramsar Advisory Missions: Technical advice on Ramsar Sites* (No. 8), *Best practice guidelines for conducting tropical peatland inventories to facilitate their designation as Ramsar Sites* (No.9) and *Wetland Restoration for Climate Change Resilience* (No. 10). [production to be finalised]
 - Ramsar Policy Briefs on: *Wetlands for disaster risk reduction - Effective choices for resilient communities* (No.1), *Integrating multiple wetland values into decision-making* (No.2), *Ramsar Advisory Missions: A mechanism to respond to change in ecological character of Ramsar Sites* (No. 3) and *Implementing environmental flows with benefits for society and different wetland ecosystems in river systems* (No.4).
 - An online Ramsar Sites Management toolkit was developed (see above).

Resourcing

15. A new Director of Resource Mobilization and Outreach was appointed in September 2017, to oversee communications, partnerships and mobilize resources for implementation of the Convention. This role will be particularly important given that a number of Ramsar partnerships are coming to an end:
 - With a shift in Danone's priorities, from 2019 the Secretariat will need to raise additional funds for World Wetlands Day and the Ramsar Awards.
 - The Star Alliance partnership with both the Convention and the IUCN ended in 2017.
 - The culture project funded through an agreement with the MAVA Foundation was completed in March 2018
16. Standing Committee 54 endorsed a Ramsar Convention Resource Mobilization Work Plan to guide the Secretariat in its fundraising and outreach. The Secretariat looks to COP13 to provide guidance on priority non-core funding needs in support of CEPA.
17. Draft Resolution 18.6 to COP13 on "Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention" identifies the importance of allocating adequate resources to CEPA and requests the Secretariat to strengthen its support for the implementation of the CEPA Programme through sufficient staff resources for this purpose, subject to the availability of resources. It also invites Parties, other governments, financial institutions and other implementing partners in a position to do so to make resources available for the implementation of the CEPA Programme.

A new approach on advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention

18. Resolution XII.9 in 2015 requested the Standing Committee to establish a mechanism to guide the communication activities of the Secretariat, including setting priorities and guiding the design of the Secretariat's CEPA Action Plan, monitor the effectiveness of the Plan, and work to develop, with advice of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), a new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention. Standing Committee 50 established a Working Group on CEPA Implementation to fulfil these functions, and to work in parallel with the CEPA Oversight Panel.
19. At SC54, the CEPA Oversight Panel provided a report with advice to the CEPA Working Group to guide their considerations. At that meeting, it was decided to make recommendations to streamline arrangements for CEPA advice and retire the CEPA Working Group.
20. The CEPA Oversight Panel was tasked to continue to report on CEPA issues and CEPA implementation, advise the Secretariat and Standing Committee on work priorities at the national, regional and international levels, and to "recommend to the Standing Committee at its 57th meeting a new approach to supporting CEPA implementation, taking into account work already carried out by the Panel and the Working Group on CEPA prior to COP13".
21. In addition, COP13 Draft Resolution 18.6 on "Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention", instructs the CEPA Oversight Panel to review the implementation of the CEPA Programme, coordinate its efforts with the Strategic Plan Working Group, and report to Standing Committee 58 on the results, which will then be considered at COP14.
22. The Strategic Plan review is an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the CEPA programme and the work of the Secretariat by targeting efforts on a reduced set of more

focused goals, and by building in an effective evaluation strategy on which to base further programme refinements.

23. The CEPA Oversight Panel has prepared, at [Annex B](#), initial guidance and recommendations on principles and priorities to be considered in future approaches to CEPA support and the review of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.
24. Further consideration will be given to these issues, and a report prepared for Standing Committee 57 on a new approach to supporting CEPA implementation. This paper will also inform a review of the CEPA Programme and cooperative work with the Strategic Plan Working Group on their recommendations to Standing Committee 58 and COP14.

Annex A

Campaigns, programmes and projects by Contracting Parties relating to wetland CEPA during the 2016-18 triennium

- In Mexico, the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas prepared and distributed through the website and social media a digital brochure on the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Mexico and the relevance of wetlands for people.
- In Hungary, the Wild Goose Festival which is held annually at the Lake Tata Ramsar Site, gains more attendance every year, attracting more than 14,000 on a peak day of the festival. The festival features presentations on wetland values and viewing of a flight of thousands of geese to the lake.
- In the Netherlands various programmes were carried out to illustrate the importance of wetlands for people and nature such as “Room for the River” (at more than 30 locations, measures are taken to give the river space to flood safely), and “Natuur Monumenten”, a campaign to protect the Dutch coast from urbanization.
- In Jamaica the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and the Jamaica National Heritage Trust organized school expositions on wetlands and disaster risk reduction. Education about wetlands is integrated into the public education programmes of the National Environment & Planning Agency (NEPA), other government agencies such as the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), and the Institute of Jamaica. Through its “Adopt-a-Beach” Programme schools, community groups and churches are encouraged to conduct clean-up of beaches located in areas across the island including Ramsar Sites.
- In the United Kingdom, the Flight of the Swans expedition gathered information and promoted wetland and waterbird conservation along the flyway of the Bewick’s Swan, for 7000 kilometres from Russia through northern Europe to England.
- In the United States, federal and state governments as well as NGOs have carried various campaigns, such as 25th anniversary of American Wetlands Month and the Wetlands Project which is championing wetland conservation projects across the country.
- In Canada each year (2015, 2016, 2017) the North American Waterfowl Management Plan partners publish “Habitat Matters”. The report highlights success stories around the country showcasing “Joint Venture” projects for each region. Habitat Matters 2017 showcased the Hogan family and their farm conservation efforts in the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture. Between 2003 and 2017, the farm’s operations expanded and the family signed 18 conservation easements, permanently protecting 1,977 hectares of natural lands, including 817 hectares of wetlands.
- Environment and Climate Change Canada uses social media to promote funding opportunities and the benefits of conserving wetlands under various programmes (e.g. National Wetland Conservation Fund, Eco Action).
- In Australia, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has worked to raise awareness in the Great Barrier Reef catchment about ecosystem benefits provided by wetlands. The Authority’s Reef Guardian schools programme in particular encourages and supports students to learn about wetlands so they can restore, protect and maintain wetlands in the Great Barrier Reef catchment. In 2017, 300 schools, more than 127,000 students and 7,900 teachers participated in the Programme. The Authority’s Reef Guardian Council programme showcased activities carried out by local government which recognize the importance of managing and supporting wetlands for all beneficiaries.

- In New Zealand, the Kiwi Guardians programme, launched in 2015 with sponsorship support from Toyota New Zealand, is an activity programme for children to learn more about nature and earn a medal in the process. Several Ramsar Sites are included in the programme and involve children visiting lakes, streams, swamps and bogs to collect information.
- The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation organised a side event on peatlands and climate change as part of UNFCCC COP23.
- In Grenada, a project called “Climate change adaptation/mitigation in the Levera Ramsar Site” has been implemented by Ocean Spirit International (NGO) in collaboration with the Administrative Authority of the Convention, to address climate change mitigation/adaptation related issues in the site.
- In the United Arab Emirates, the number of visitors to the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary Ramsar Site has increased: 48,659 in 2015 to 92,309 in 2016; and 136,751 visitors in 2017. A total of 600 students from schools have visited Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary over the past two years. There is also a Volunteers Programme. University students volunteered to participate in Mangrove Management Activity. Another programme which encourages the participation of the public is the International Coastal Clean-up that is held at the Jabal Ali Marine Sanctuary. The activity engaged students, corporate organizations, divers and the general public. In 2016, more than 2 tons of trash was removed along a 2 Km stretch of the beach.
- In Ecuador, the Ministry of the Environment leads an annual initiative to clean beaches in the framework of the celebration of the International Beach Cleanup Day including also rivers, lagoons, streams and lakes. This event also generates awareness and disseminates information on the treatment of waste and how waste mismanagement affects aquatic ecosystems. 39,000 people volunteered in 2017.
- In China the State Forestry Administration and the University of Nanjing co-hosted the Tenth International Conference of Wetlands to share best practices for wetland conservation and management. It was the first time for Asia to hold such an event in the past forty years. 7,200 participants from 72 countries attended.

Annex B

A new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention - Initial guidance and recommendations by the CEPA Oversight Panel

Draft Resolution 18.6 to COP13 proposes that the CEPA Oversight Panel reports to Standing Committee 57 on a new approach to supporting CEPA implementation, and then undertakes a review of the CEPA Programme, coordinating its efforts with the Strategic Plan Working Group, to report at Standing Committee 58. The results will then be taken forward to COP14.

The CEPA Oversight Panel has given initial consideration to a new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention, to ensure that there is a focus on making CEPA more strategic, integrated and effective in achieving wetland protection and wise use.

It has identified the following issues which should be considered as part of the review of the CEPA programme and the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

Communications objectives

The CEPA Oversight Panel emphasises the fundamental importance of the engagement of people to implement the vision and goals of the Ramsar Convention, and the need to continue to deliver particular CEPA initiatives as well as incorporate it as an important element in all initiatives of the Convention (locally, nationally, regionally and internationally).

The current goal of the CEPA Programme is “People taking action for the wise use of wetlands”, and the Panel continues to support the need for all wetland stakeholders to develop appropriate actions to engage, enlist and enable people to act for the conservation and wise use of wetlands (Resolution XII.9).

Target audiences

While there is a large variety of audiences for the CEPA initiatives of the Convention, there would be value in specific audiences and partners being identified as a focus for each year or triennium, to achieve effective and coordinated effort. These could be aligned with the World Wetlands Day themes.

The Panel recognises that Contracting Parties will need to consider their own situation when identifying their highest priority target groups (guidance is available in Appendix 3 of Resolution XII.9).

Effectiveness of CEPA interventions

The reviews of the CEPA Programme and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan should take account of information from Contracting Parties (including from NFPs and in National Reports), from the Secretariat, Ramsar Regional Initiatives and other stakeholders on the implementation and effectiveness of CEPA interventions to date. The review should consider their relevance, effectiveness and impact, and how well they have met the needs of the Ramsar Contracting Parties.

Specifically, the review should consider the tools and mechanisms used, and their effectiveness in reaching their audience, engaging them, and leading to behaviour change.

Strategic Approach

The Oversight Panel has identified the need for a more strategic approach to CEPA implementation, to focus limited resources on CEPA activities that will contribute most effectively to achieving the goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan. This strategic approach will need to be reflected in the implementation of CEPA Programme activities and approaches, whether this is as a separate programme or where CEPA is integrated into the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

Given the fundamental importance of outreach activities to delivery of the Ramsar Convention, and the value of clarifying and simplifying both planning and reporting, the CEPA Oversight Panel specifically recommends:

- limiting the number of and integrating the CEPA Goals and Targets into the Ramsar Strategic Plan, rather than having a separate CEPA Programme. The Plan would include both stand-alone CEPA initiatives, and CEPA elements integrated into other initiatives.
- better aligning CEPA reporting with the needs of Contracting Parties and with reporting requirements in other international Conventions and initiatives, including the Aichi Targets (particularly Targets 1 and 18) and the Sustainable Development Goals (including Indicators 6.B1, 11.16.1 and 12.8.1).

At the Contracting Party level, a more strategic approach is needed, with CEPA activities prioritised and integrated into national planning and approaches to wetland management and wise use.

A number of questions will need to be addressed to achieve effective messaging and public engagement and action, recognising that different approaches will be needed in different countries. These include:

- What types of messages will work to motivate and engage the community regarding wetland conservation?
- What platforms are effective in getting the message out?
- How can we institute lasting change?
- Is the wetland message being crowded out by other messages?
- Is wetland conservation seen as a low priority against other societal goals?
- Are we spreading our effort too broadly (too many targets, not enough focus and direction)?

Governance arrangements

The Strategic Plan review should consider how advice and support on Ramsar CEPA can be provided in the most effective way. If a CEPA expert panel is to be retained, it must fill a gap and play a useful role in improving Convention Implementation. Its ongoing role, membership and reporting arrangements would need to be considered. Further advice on support arrangements will be provided to SC58.

The positions of National NFPs and CEPA NFPs within Contracting Parties are considered important to ensure a coordinated and strategic national approach to Ramsar implementation. These networks should be used as a key tool in disseminating information to and gaining feedback from Contracting Parties.

Resourcing of CEPA activities

Funding for CEPA activities should be included in the Convention Budgets for the next triennium. This should include further resource mobilisation and partnerships, funding for specific CEPA initiatives, and requirements for CEPA to be integrated in all funded initiatives and activities.

Consideration should be given to new partnerships, including with conservation NGOs, international organisations, corporate sector organisations and other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), which could be identified by the Secretariat or by Contracting Parties and IOPs, and implemented globally, regionally and by individual Contracting Parties.

Directions for future implementation

The CEPA Oversight Panel recommends that consideration should be given to the following priorities and issues in order to optimise the contribution of CEPA to implementation of the goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan:

Goal 1 – Addressing Drivers of Wetland Loss and Degradation

- Prioritising global CEPA activities that promote the Convention and its objectives, including wide promotion of COP13 and its outcomes, and continued contribution of wetland input by the Ramsar Secretary General and Contracting Parties to the debate on global policy issues, including the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Giving priority to CEPA actions which will effectively support Contracting Parties and their NFPs, and assist Ramsar site and wetland managers to engage stakeholders, address threats and better manage their wetlands.
- Identifying current and emerging threats, including the umbrella threat of climate change, and developing, and sharing between Parties, practical tools and guidance for managing Ramsar sites and other wetlands in the long-term.
- Identifying mechanisms for greater sectoral input to Ramsar and CEPA planning, including recognising the value, experience and resources of IOPs, NGOs, Contracting Parties and business partners in planning, resourcing, developing and implementing Ramsar CEPA messages and products.

Goal 2 – Conserving and managing the Ramsar site network

- Continuing Secretariat communication with and support for Contracting Parties' NFPs and CEPA NFPs (both government and NGO) in promoting conservation of Ramsar sites and wise use of wetlands, as well as effective use of other networks and structures (Wetland Link International network, Ramsar Regional Initiatives) to improve awareness, engagement and capacity-building. Attention to building capacity at the national level will enable more effective planning and implementation by Contracting Parties.
- Undertaking a survey of NFPs to identify useful tools and approaches that would support NFPs in a pragmatic way to implement outcomes for the Convention through better engagement of people.

Goal 3 - Wisely using all wetlands

- Giving priority to engaging sectoral decision-makers in integrating wetland values in their planning and decision-making. This would include
 - Focusing on messages and tools for Contracting Parties that support the concept of wise use, to assist decision-making to involve communities and negotiate trade-offs between wetland users.
 - Specifically highlighting the role of wetlands as green infrastructure and the values of wetlands for water supply, water quality, transport, food production and livelihoods, flood regulation, coastal protection, climate regulation, pollution control, fishing and hunting, recreation and tourism.

Goal 4 – Enhancing implementation (including scientific advice, resource mobilisation, public awareness, visibility and capacity-building)

- Better alignment of STRP outputs to support CEPA objectives and for CEPA related use by Contracting Parties, to enable outcomes of the STRP's work to be effectively communicated with Contracting Parties, other wetland stakeholders and the broader community.

- Ensuring adequate communications expertise within the membership of the (STRP), and a close relationship with the Secretariat's communications staff. Resolution XII.5 Annex 1 calls for greater alignment of the STRP's work with CEPA, including that the Secretariat's Head of Communications serve as a CEPA expert on the Panel (Para 6), and that NFPs be engaged in the development of the STRP Work Plan (Para 50).
- Further refining understanding of gaps in implementation, and priority needs of Contracting Parties for practical engagement, communications and training/capacity building, in order to target Secretariat activities. It is recognised that needs may be different across Regions/Contracting Parties.
- Building on the effective activity and engagement achieved through World Wetlands Day, and Ramsar Regional Initiatives.
- Using various media channels which are appropriate for the purpose, such as social media to raise public awareness (and potentially lead to public concern and pressure on decision-makers) along with other approaches to engage sectoral decision-makers. Identifying new communication avenues and opportunities to promote Ramsar goals.
- Improving the usefulness of National Reports from Contracting Parties as a tool for the Convention to obtain feedback on effectiveness of implementation, to identify gaps, support needed and emerging issues. It is important that the National Report format is not so extensive that it is a burden to Contracting Parties, but that it can focus on gathering the key information needed to assist the Secretariat and Contracting Parties to identify priorities for future action.
- Providing effective access to Secretariat materials, including:
 - searchable access to or portals with information on wetland issues, research and management techniques (both Secretariat and Contracting Party materials).
 - access to a user-friendly RSIS to enable Ramsar site managers to update/upload/download site information and use it for management.
- Building an emphasis on capacity-building, to support people with a range of roles in wetland conservation and wise use. This would involve using the expertise of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), communications and networking by the Secretariat, and sharing of experiences between Contracting Parties.