



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Synergy, networking, and international cooperation

Synergies with other environment-related conventions

The benefits of coordination and collaboration amongst conventions and international organizations with related or overlapping missions have been widely recognized for some time. The Ramsar Secretariat has devoted a great deal of effort to developing synergies with other environment-related instruments, and continues to do so. In some cases, follow-up assessments of the tangible progress of these relationships have shown that the initiative has been well worth it to all parties concerned. Similarly, the Secretariat has been taking vigorous steps to encourage Ramsar's "Administrative Authorities" (national focal points) to build close working relationships with their counterparts for the other conventions at national level.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

In January 1996, the secretariats of the Ramsar Convention and the CBD signed a first Memorandum of Cooperation, and in November of that year, the CBD's COP3 invited Ramsar "to cooperate as a lead partner" in implementing CBD activities related to wetlands. That relationship has flourished since then, and the two conventions are presently collaborating under their Fourth Joint Work Plan, this one for the period 2007-2010. Their subsidiary scientific bodies, Ramsar's STRP and the CBD's Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) also work closely together on issues of common concern.

The Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

The Ramsar Secretariat and the CMS Secretariat first signed a Memorandum of Understanding in February 1997, and a three-way joint work plan between the secretariats of the CMS, the CMS's African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), and the Ramsar Convention was signed in April 2004.

UNESCO World Heritage Convention

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ramsar Secretariat and the World Heritage Centre in May 1999, and under that framework, the two conventions have worked extraordinarily closely on joint expert advisory missions in recent years to Ichkeul in Tunisia, to Djoudj and Diawling in Senegal and Mauritania, and to Lake Srebarna in Bulgaria.

Regional conventions and basin commissions

The Ramsar Secretariat also has MoCs with UNEP's **Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region** (Cartagena Convention), first signed in May 2000 and a new version concluded in June 2005, and with the **Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the Convention for the**

Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), first signed in February 2001, with a newly-agreed MoC signed in February 2006. An MoC was signed with the **Convention on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians** (Carpathian Convention) in December 2006. The **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme** (SPREP) is a partner with the Ramsar Convention under a Joint Work Plan that began in 2002 and now includes the basing at SPREP offices in Samoa of a Ramsar Officer for the Oceania region, and the **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River** (ICPDR) cooperates under the terms of an agreement first signed in November 2000. Furthermore, the Ramsar Convention is closely involved in the work of the **Lake Chad Basin Commission** and the **Niger Basin Authority**, with both of which the Ramsar Secretariat has memoranda of cooperation signed in November 2002, and a new agreement has been concluded with the **Commission Internationale du Bassin Congo-Ougangui-Sang** (CICOS) in 2006.

Other close relationships with official bodies

In addition, Ramsar works closely with the **UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme** under the terms of a joint programme of work first agreed in 2002, and has a recent cooperative agreement, February 2006, with the **European Environment Agency**. An agreement was signed with the **Global Terrestrial Observing System** (GTOS) in June 2006, and the Secretariat has been working very closely with the **European Space Agency** on its GlobWetland project, which is developing monitoring and management tools based on earth observation data in a pilot project involving fifty Ramsar sites around the world. A great deal of collaboration has occurred recently between Ramsar and the **UN Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO), and cooperative agreements are under discussion with both FAO and UNITAR. The most recent agreements that have been concluded are with UNEP's **Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities** (GPA) and with the **Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** (OCHA).

Coordination among conventions

The Ramsar Secretariat participates in the conventions' coordinating meetings organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and has contributed staff time and financial resources to joint working groups and studies aimed at harmonizing the requirements of the biodiversity-related conventions, as for example a study carried out by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) on the feasibility of harmonizing reporting requirements under the different instruments, and participates in UNEP's **Environmental Management Group** (EMG).

A decision by the UNFCCC's COP8 invited the Ramsar Convention to participate in the work of the **Joint Liaison Group** (JLG) of the "Rio Conventions", UNFCCC, the CBD, and UNCCD. In addition, the five biodiversity-related conventions – the CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, and World Heritage – have a Joint Web site hosted by the CBD secretariat, initiated in March 1999, and the Ramsar Convention participates actively as a full member of the **Biodiversity Liaison Group** (BLG), which is composed of those five conventions.

Cooperation with other organizations

The Ramsar Convention, through the Secretariat and its other bodies, maintains close working links with other international, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organizations to achieve a strategic alliance for wetland conservation.

UNESCO

The Secretariat maintains close relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which acts as Depositary for instruments of accession and ratification to the Convention and advises on related legal matters if required.

International Organization Partners

The Convention works especially closely with five global non-governmental organizations (NGOs), four of which have been associated with the treaty since its beginnings and were confirmed in 1999 in the formal status of International Organization Partners of the Convention. In Resolution IX.16 (2005), the Parties judged that IWMI meets the qualifications for Ramsar IOP status that were outlined in 1999 and endorsed the addition of that organization as the fifth official partner of the Convention. The five IOPs are:

- BirdLife International
- IWMI – The International Water Management Institute
- Wetlands International
- The World Conservation Union (IUCN)
- WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) International



The IOPs provide invaluable support for the work of the Convention at global, regional, national, and local levels, chiefly by providing expert technical advice, field level implementation assistance, and financial support, both from their headquarters units and from their national and regional offices and affiliates and from their expert networks. In addition, they themselves embody the philosophy of the Ramsar Convention and its wise use concept and support the use of the Ramsar guidelines in their own work around the world. The IOPs also participate regularly as observers and key actors in all meetings of the Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee, and as full members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

Other non-governmental organizations and related bodies

In many countries, there is also an “NGO constituency” around the Ramsar Convention that works with the government and is active in promoting and implementing the goals of the treaty. The Ramsar Secretariat tries to maintain as much contact as possible with as many local, national, and international NGOs (in addition to the five partners listed above) as are in sympathy with Ramsar principles and whose work intersects with the Convention’s objectives.

Specifically, as of September 2007, the Ramsar Secretariat benefits from formal cooperative agreements of various kinds with Ducks Unlimited, Eurosite, the Global Nature Fund, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), the International Ocean Institute, LakeNet, the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS), The Nature Conservancy, and Wetland Link of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Some of these memoranda amount, in practice, to little more than a formal recognition of common objectives, good will, and mutual support, whereas other involve detailed programmes of collaborative projects.

Moreover, several additional organizations have been officially invited to participate as observers in the work of the Convention’s Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), including the Global Water Partnership, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), the

International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG), the International Peat Society (IPS), World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the World Resources Institute (WRI), and the World Water Council.

An increasing number of national and international NGOs make a point of participating in the meetings of the Ramsar Conference of the Parties, which are perceived as good opportunities for networking and influencing government policy and action. The 8th meeting of the COP (2002) in Spain was attended by 27 international NGOs and 109 national non-governmental organizations working directly or indirectly in the field of wetland conservation and sustainable use; at COP9 in Uganda (2005), 26 international NGOs and 71 national NGOs were present as observers.

External support agencies and the private sector

The Ramsar Secretariat maintains active contacts with a number of external support agencies, such as the World Bank and the regional development banks, and has invited observer status with the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). All of them provide funding both for wetland projects and for projects that affect wetlands. Contacts are also maintained with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and with the European Commission. Financial assistance for projects, meetings, reports, and Ramsar-related work on the ground in the developing world has frequently been provided by a number of national development assistance agencies, with which the Secretariat maintains close contacts.



Since 1998, the private sector Danone Groupe has been providing generous financial support to the Convention's communications, public awareness, and training activities in the so-called "Evian Initiative".

DANONE In 2007, the Star Alliance Network of airlines initiated a partnership with Ramsar, The World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme, called "Biosphere Connections", to support the work of these three environmental organizations.



All memoranda of understanding and cooperation, as well as other documents mentioned here, are available on the Ramsar Web site, www.ramsar.org/index_mou.htm.

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