



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

**ACEPA**

## **Memorandum of Cooperation between the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA)**

### **Preamble**

#### **Role of parliaments in environment**

The parliaments or national assemblies in Africa, as legislative bodies of democratic states, are vital partners for promoting sustainable development, environmental governance and law. Parliamentarians are key decision makers in countries and play a role in developing the rule of law and policy in the field of environment.

The main roles of parliaments in Africa are to develop, review, debate and enact laws, including those relating to environment. Parliamentarians also oversee the Executive Branch of government and represent citizens and their needs. In some countries, parliaments are also involved in ratifying or approving treaties, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Parliamentarians, in many instances, develop law through debates of bills for adoption and act to oversee the enforcement of, and compliance with, environmental law.

Parliaments form the legislative arm of the state, which makes law and can liaise or seek information from the other arms of the state, i.e. the executive and judiciary (including ministries, departments, courts of law and other institutions responsible for environmental management), when making laws and institutions that address environmental issues.

Parliamentarians also have a responsibility for following up efforts towards protecting the environment, achieving sustainable development, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Sound environmental management has been proven to help reduce poverty, thus contributing to its eradication (Millennium Development Goal number 1: *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*). Several African nations have demonstrated sensitivity in promoting the rule of law in the field of sustainable development through legislation and political pronouncements, in which parliamentarians have been an integral part of the process.

Therefore, the technical capacities of parliamentarians, insofar as environment management is concerned, would benefit from support to help them fulfill their constitutional obligations and other mandates and effectively represent constituencies who have entrusted their confidence in the parliamentarians to care for them and their country.

### **The Convention on Wetlands**

Since its adoption in 1971, the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) has provided the most important intergovernmental forum on wetland conservation issues. According to the Convention's mission statement, the Contracting Parties are committed to realizing "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

The Convention is founded upon three pillars:

- promoting the wise use of wetlands;
- developing international cooperation; and
- developing a network of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

The conservation and wise use of wetlands, through the designation of Ramsar Sites and sound management of all important wetlands, with the obligation to maintain the ecological character of designated sites as a vital resource for life, deserves special recognition. This obligation recognizes the importance of wetlands for the maintenance of healthy and productive inland freshwater and coastal systems. In the context of water and wetlands, the Convention on Wetlands addresses issues which guide its Contracting Parties on ways to achieve sustainable development and improve the livelihood of those living around or being served by the wetland.

Within the general commitments set out by the treaty, Contracting Parties, meeting as the Conference of the Parties (COP), identify priorities for action through a Strategic Plan. Implementation of this Memorandum of Cooperation shall be through joint actions within the framework of the Strategic Plan, detailed in the attached annex.

## **The African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA)**

The African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs is an African not-for-profit organization, registered in Ghana and dedicated to building the capacity of African Parliaments and elected representative bodies. ACEPA supports African countries in ensuring effective performance throughout the governance chain - from local to national representative institutions. ACEPA, through its dedicated staff and leadership, has excellent relationship with more than 20 African Parliaments. ACEPA is the first African institution that is dedicated to supporting African Parliaments.

ACEPA was created to respond to the urgent need for an indigenous African outfit that truly understands the needs and demands of African elected representative institutions.

Given the importance of parliamentarians in the government decision-making process and in strengthening the rule of law, it is valuable for the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and ACEPA to partner together in order to safeguard and improve the condition of healthy wetlands in African countries and ensure that their functions and ecological character are maintained to support the lives and livelihoods of people. This will contribute, for example, to improving and providing safe water to the populations, improving food security, and providing livelihoods for the local populations. Without healthy wetlands, poverty increases, local populations lose their livelihoods and thus migrate to the cities to search for work. Maintaining healthy wetlands plays a role in the conservation of biodiversity and contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation, while degraded wetlands can serve to increase the rate and effects of global warming, and thus wetland restoration is an important step in addressing climate change challenges.

Therefore, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA), agree the following:

### **Article 1. Mechanisms for programme cooperation**

- A) The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA, will develop a collaborative programme for sustainable wetland and water resource conservation and management by increasing current consultation and cooperation between them.
- B) The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA will inform their partners at regional and national levels of their cooperative activities. For general matters, the focal points for the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA are respectively the Secretary General and the Executive Director of ACEPA, or their delegates, as assigned.

- C) The focal points, or assigned delegates, will meet from time to time (at least once a year) to assess the implementation of this Memorandum, exchange documents and review ongoing activities.

## Article 2. Joint activities

- A) Common areas for joint activities relate clearly to the Convention on Wetlands' 2009-2015 Strategic Plan and the Resolutions currently in force, and will be reviewed annually or at the request of either party. The following are the thematic areas for cooperation between the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and ACEPA:

- 1) increasing cooperation, exchange of information and networking between parliamentarians at regional, subregional, and national levels on current and emerging issues on wetlands in Africa;
- 2) raising awareness of the value of wetlands in Africa;
- 3) promoting parliamentary capacity and actions to mobilize citizens and promote citizens' participation in sound wetlands management;
- 4) enhancing the role of parliaments in budget approval, scrutiny of budget implementation, and audit findings especially related to wetlands programmes;
- 5) improving the capacity of parliaments to make better and pro-poor laws (i.e., laws for the benefit of poor people) affecting wetland capacity to support livelihoods; and
- 6) meeting annually to review how to cooperate, share information and help inform and build capacity about the Ramsar Convention and values of wetlands through ongoing work under the Convention.

Against the above general areas of cooperation, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA will carry out the following activities for the period 2011-2015:

- develop and disseminate policy briefs and other awareness materials for parliamentarians on key wetland issues and governance challenges in Africa;
- with joint fundraising, aim to hold five meetings for parliamentarians at subregional levels in Western Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, Northern Africa and Indian Ocean on various environmental and governance matters relating to wetlands;

- organise awareness and training workshops at subregional and national levels on various wetland subjects relevant to parliaments such as law making (drafting), budgeting, monitoring, promoting citizens' participation, and financial scrutiny for wetland conservation and wise use; and
  - assist in advancing the sustainable development agenda through parliaments' role in the budget process, influencing policy through debates and through the relevant committees.
- B) The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA will communicate their agreement on common areas to their respective networks, and ACEPA will endeavour to mobilise the expertise available on wetlands and water resources within its organisation in support of these activities.
- C) The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA will provide each other with details of their annual work programmes, at least once per year but more frequently as needed, to ensure harmonisation of activities at global, regional and country levels.
- D) The extent to which the collaborative programme and the joint activities are implemented will be subject to the availability of resources.
- E) The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ACEPA will develop initiatives and projects to support the implementation of this Memorandum of Cooperation.

### **Article 3. Obligation, review and termination**

- A) This Memorandum of Cooperation constitutes an expression of shared objectives and vision. However, each party's actions will be considered to be that party's sole and separate action, for all purposes, and neither party shall claim to be acting on behalf of, or as agent for the other party to this Memorandum of Cooperation.
- B) The term for this Memorandum of Cooperation is five years. The agreement will be reviewed annually or at the request of either party and may be terminated by either party subject to six months' advance notice in writing.
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Anada Tiega  
Secretary General  
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran,  
1971)



Done at Gland, Switzerland

Date: 28-06-2013

Rasheed Draman, PhD  
Executive Director  
African Centre for Parliamentary  
Affairs



Done at Accra, Ghana

Date: 24/6/13