

Annex V

AFRICA REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING ON THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) FOR COP9

Arusha, Tanzania

4 – 8 April 2005

Southern Africa Sub-regional Working Group

Attendance:

The Southern Africa working group met in the Manyara Hall on 4 April 2005 from 11.00 am up to 5.00 pm. The working group comprised representatives of the following countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. Representatives of Zimbabwe, Swaziland, IUCN ROSA and WWF attended as observers. The meeting was chaired by Tabeth Chiuta, Regional Programme Coordinator, IUCN-ROSA

Proceedings:

Following a round of self-introduction by the members of the group and a reiteration of the objectives of the working group session by the chairperson, the group spent some time debating procedural issues relating to the terms of reference for the session and the most appropriate approach to guide the group's discussions. The Chairperson briefed the group on a regional conference on Phase II of the SADC Wetlands Conservation Project which was held in Arusha on 1 and 2 April 2005, and whose outcomes were of direct relevance to the discussions of the working group. A report of the regional conference was distributed to members of the group and a more detailed briefing on the background and outcome of the conference was provided by Mr. Lenka Thamae, SADC Wetland Project Coordinator. On the basis of this briefing, the working group resolved to use the report of the conference as a key input in responding to the set of questions listed in the Terms of Reference for the session. The discussions of the group are summarised below.

I: The wise use of wetlands

1. *How effective has been the implementation of the wise use concept in your country/sub-region?*

Has your country been able to achieve (initiate) the following:

a) undertaking wetland inventory, assessments and monitoring?

Although the Ramsar Convention has developed guidelines to assist parties in conducting inventories of wetlands in their respective countries, it would appear that a few countries in the Southern Africa region have conducted such inventories. However, most have completed surveys of individual wetland sites, mainly those designated as wetlands of international importance. The problems and constraints cited as obstacles to the process of conducting inventories include:

- Lack of adequate financial resources
- Lack of appropriate technical capacity and related training programmes

- Inventories are not high on the list of priorities in the wider national development processes
- Methodologies for conducting inventories are complicated and do not lend themselves to comparability across one country and across countries in the sub-region
- Lack of appreciation of the work of the Convention

Botswana is the only country in the sub-region which has completed their national wetland inventory and their experience would therefore serve as a good model for replication in the other countries of the sub-region.

b) addressing the interaction between wise use and public awareness and education, public participation, legislation, institutions, policy development, planning and general decision-making

As indicated in (a) above, **public participation** was cited as a serious challenge that requires investments in terms of time and effort by various levels of stakeholders. Examples cited by WWF and Tanzania with regard to their respective experiences with public participation seem to indicate that a measure of success has been achieved that could be shared across the sub-region and therefore assist others in overcoming this obstacle.

The working group noted that **legislation** specifically focusing on wetlands has not been well articulated in the countries of the sub-region although some countries have included provisions for wetland conservation, protection and wise use in water, environment, agriculture and biodiversity conservation laws. Enforcement of legislation related to wetlands conservation and protection was cited as one of the key challenges in the sub-region. The group further noted that in almost all the countries of the sub-region, the establishment of **institutions** specifically designated to address wetlands issues has been fairly successful and considerable progress has been achieved in the scope of work of these institutions. In addition, the sub-region has received a number of **training and education** programmes and courses for various levels of stakeholders although a lot more needs to be done. The report of the SADC Conference on the SADC Wetlands Conservation Project identified a set of recommendations concerning additional efforts required in training and education in integrated wetland management that could provide valuable inputs in the preparatory work of the sub-region for COP-9. With regard to the issue of **policy development**, the group noted that 3 countries (Botswana, Namibia and Zambia) in the sub-region have drafted wetlands policies while a few others are in the process of integrating such policies into existing frameworks. The same is true of national level **planning** for wetlands with respect to the efforts underway to align such planning to the overall national development planning processes including the Millennium Development Goals in one particular case. In view of the foregoing, it would appear that a lot more needs to be done and the sharing of positive experiences would go a long way in further development of the above processes.

c) managing wetlands adaptively in response to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

The working group noted that although the countries of the sub-region have national adaptation plans within the framework of implementing the provisions of the UNFCCC, these plans do not specifically address the impacts of climate change on wetlands resources. However, these plans could serve as potential opportunities to identify approaches for addressing this issue within the sub-region.

d) developing more sustainable agricultural practices

Several representatives cited examples of on-going projects related to wetlands and sustainable agriculture including Tanzania and Zambia. These projects represent fragmented efforts to the development of sustainable agricultural practices but what is required is the application of a more integrated approach in addressing this issue both at the national and sub-regional level. These examples nonetheless have important lessons that need to be shared across the sub-region. One of the representatives specifically requested that the issue of environmental flows related to irrigation systems should be taken up as a major challenge for further review at COP-9.

e) restoring and rehabilitating the many degraded or lost wetlands and their values and functions, whilst recognising that it is ecologically, economically and culturally more appropriate to maintain existing wetlands than to permit their damage and then seek to restore them.

Some countries in the sub-region have attempted to address the issue of rehabilitation of degraded wetlands (Lesotho on the highlands wetlands, South Africa under the Working for Wetlands Programme, Tanzania on the Songwe River basin and Zambia on the Kafue flats) and the sub-region as a whole has therefore registered considerable differences in the levels of success achieved. Not much has been done with respect to the issue of restoration. A key challenge cited during the discussion of this particular item concerns the high expenses and the lack of technical capacity required to undertake rehabilitation and restoration work. In addition, the lack of public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands when taken together with the lack of appropriate management policies contribute to the difficulties the countries often experience in their attempts to rehabilitate and restore degraded wetlands. The working group recommended the development of appropriate models and the sharing of methodologies, success stories and case studies to support rehabilitation and restoration efforts in the sub-region. The example of a trans-boundary joint programme between Tanzania and Malawi specifically focusing on the Songwe River basin could serve as such a case study for replication in the rehabilitation of other transboundary wetlands.

f) addressing the major threats posed by invasive alien species to the future of wetlands

The working group noted that despite successes achieved by a number of countries in addressing alien invasive species, they still constitute a major challenge in most of the major river systems in the sub-region. Several representatives cited examples of the on-going work related to addressing the threats posed by alien invasives (Botswana on the Okavango Delta, South Africa under the Working for Water Programme, and Tanzania on Lake Victoria). Some of these efforts are fairly comprehensive in approach and scope and could very well serve as positive experiences for sharing

across the region. In particular, the approach adopted by Botswana in compiling an inventory of alien invasives and their threats is particularly noteworthy and could be cited as an example of how parties could become more proactive in addressing this issue. The working group further recommended the development of strategic alignments with the SADC Water Division Alien Invasives Project and build on the success of this regional initiative and thus strengthen the shift in emphasis from a reactive to a proactive approach.

- g) promoting and improving existing incentives for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and making every effort to eliminate those incentives which are incompatible with sustainable use*

The sub-region has made limited progress in terms of promoting and improving incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use, in particular in developing incentives and disincentives to address upstream catchment degradation that impacts on the wetlands. The working group cited incentives such as employment creation for local communities as part of wetland rehabilitation as important components of wetland conservation and management. Further development of incentives should be informed by wetland characteristics, economic surveys of goods and services, and contribution to poverty alleviation. The engagement of regional stakeholders within the framework of river basin authorities and commissions is essential to development incentives and disincentives on transboundary wetland systems.

- h) involving the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands*

The engagement of the private sector in the wise use of wetlands has received a measure of attention in a number of countries (South Africa and Zambia in particular) but a lot more needs to be done because the efforts of other countries in getting the interest of the private sector seems not to have achieved much progress. In the case of Tanzania, the national poverty reduction strategy considers private sector engagement as an axis for enhanced economic development. This strategy and the example cited of the Namibia experience could provide important lessons for processes aimed at engaging the private sector in wetlands management at national and sub-regional level.

- i) where contracting parties are developing National Wetland Policies (or other policies encompassing conservation and wise use of wetlands) have such policies been cross referenced to other national environmental and development planning measures.*

The regional conference on the SADC Wetlands Conservation Project reviewed this issue in detail and the outcome of this review is included in the summary of discussion item 1 (h) above. However it is worth noting that the regional Conference recommended that the review of relevant policy and legislation (including EIA regulations) should also take cognisance of Ramsar provisions and commitments and that the integration of wetlands issues into other relevant programmes and policies including those that address biodiversity, water, etc. should be encouraged.

2. *What are the constraints you are facing in implementing the wise use of concept in your country/region?*

This question was address concurrently with questions 1 (a) through (i) above and the constraints and challenges related to the wise use of wetlands as noted by the working group are described in the summary set forth above.

II: Wetlands of international importance

1. *How many sites your country/sub-region has submitted for designation since the last COP*

Lesotho, Mozambique and Tanzania have each designated one site since COP8 while Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia are in the process of designating additional 2, 1, 2 and 5 sites respectively. It is worth noting that the following sites have been designated by the countries of the sub-region with some dating back from the early nineteen seventies:

<u>Country</u>	<u>number</u>
Mozambique	1
Lesotho	1
Malawi	1
Zambia	2 (proposal to have 5 more and baseline surveys completed)
Botswana	1 (and 2 potential)
Tanzania	4 (proposal to submit 2 by 2006)
Namibia	4
South Africa	17 (proposal 1 additional site)

a) *Have you observed any change in the ecological character of your (current) designated Ramsar sites*

All countries of the sub-region reported no observed changes in the designated sites.

b) *Have management plans been prepare and are currently implemented in your country/region?*

The working group noted that many of the countries of the sub-region have developed management plans although the quality of some of these plans may be questionable given that they have no targets and the specific roles and responsibilities of the potential implementing institutions have not been articulated. The overall implementation of these plans presents a challenge for the individual countries and the sub-region. The following summary is worth noting:

Tanzania: one of the designated sites is currently being managed according to the plan in place but on a pilot basis in view of the large size of the site. Plans are underway to put in place are more comprehensive integrated management plan for the site.

South Africa: 15 of the 17 designated sites have management plans and one is also designated as a WHC with a management plan that addresses both categories of designation. These sites previously exercised formal management plans in their capacity as integral components of the South Africa National Parks protected area network.

Namibia: 2 of the sites have management plans although these have not been endorsed through the established procedures.

Mozambique: There are no plans yet although preparation for such plans is underway.

Lesotho: As in the case of Mozambique, there are no management plans yet but preparation for the plans is also on-going

Malawi: There is a management plan in place but its implementation has not been carried out yet.

Zambia: The management plan for the Kafue Flats is in draft form. It is worth noting that there exists pressure exerted from the periphery of the site in question and the completion of the management plan will of necessity need to take into consideration this pressure and address it from an ecosystem approach perspective.

Botswana: A management plan for the Okavango delta is in preparation. The completion of this plan will take into consideration the outcome of efforts to revisit the boundaries of the site and the possibility of designating a new WHC site in the proposed boundaries.

c) *How many sites under the Montreux record?*

South Africa is the only country in the sub-region that has sites designated under the Montreux record. These are Blesbok Spruit and the Orange River Mouth. Specialised expertise to address the unique problems of this site has been identified.

The working group recommended the establishment of an effective network of monitoring and assessment systems for wetlands of international importance in order to proactively determine degradation that may lead the listing of such sites under the Montreux Record.

d) *How many sites under the San Jose Record?*

The working group did not mention any sites that fall under the San Jose Record.

e) *Any potential transboundary Ramsar sites in your region?*

The SADC regional conference on the SADC Wetlands Conservation Project discussed this issue and noted the following as prominent potential transboundary sites: Lake Malawi/Nyasa/Niasa, the Maluti-Drakensburg Highlands System, the Orange River Mouth (this is managed separately on either side of the river but the plan is submit these sites as joint transboundary site), the Kavango-Zambezi wetland system, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Chilwa .

2. *What are the constraints you are facing in sites designation and management?*

The working group noted the following constraints in the designation and management of sites:

- a) management of sites in relation to activities that fall outside the site
- b) poor management plans
- c) Need for national and/or regional criteria
- d) Tendency of inventories to focus on sites that may be easy to manage
- e) Difficulties in incorporating inventories in existing planning processes and related frameworks
- f) The need for baseline information to build on existing processes
- g) Responsibilities for signing and implementation fall under different national institutions which often creates problems of coherence and consistency in terms of follow-up at international level especially with respect to transboundary sites.
- h) Differences in prioritisation in transboundary sites
- i) Response time from the Ramsar Bureau
- j) The more sites are designated the more commitments countries are obliged to honour, thus more investments in terms of time, effort and resources.
- k) Need to devote sufficient time to involve and secure the buy-in of stakeholders

III: International Cooperation

1. How efficient has your country/region been in delivering the following;

- a) *intensifying its international cooperation activities , inter alia those related to transboundary freshwater and coastal wetlands and river basins, as well as transboundary water resources and shared wetland-dependent migratory species*

The region has made significant progress in terms of establishing regional arrangements for managing natural resources, within the framework of SADC. A number of transboundary arrangements exist within the region, around water resources management, but these are not necessarily making explicit mention of wetlands. The SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses and other related regional protocols provide a framework for transboundary cooperation on management of water and related resources, and these are relevant to management and conservation of wetlands. Specific examples provided by the working group included the institutional arrangements on the Orange river under ORASECOM, the Okavango River under OKACOM, and the Limpopo River under the Limpopo River basin Commission. The challenge for the sub-region is in ensuring that provisions of the Ramsar Convention and its tools are incorporated into the river basin management programmes.

- b) *developing further the coordination of activities with other relevant global and regional conventions (UNCCD, UNCBD, CITES, CMS, UNFCCC, WHS, etc.) and organisations (sub-regional economic groupings such as ECOWAS, ECCAS, UMA, SADC, EAC, IOC, etc.)*

Representatives of countries provided a number of models for promoting coordination of wetland programmes with other relevant global and regional conventions. These include: the creation of a multi-convention committee being initiated by Lesotho to promote coordinated joint implementation and assessment of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); and provision for all MEAs to be coordinated and managed by a single government institution, which is the case in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.

The main challenge identified, under this section was the weak coordination, as a result of differing priorities among agencies responsible for components of the wetlands programme, unsustainable external influences which tend to promote creation of sectoral approach to implementation of MEAs and weak strategies and action plans for implementation of wetland related programmes.

c) promoting the further development of regional wetland sustainable use initiatives.

Achievements on further development of regional wetland initiatives, over the period 2003-2005 include: the SADC Regional Wetlands Conservation Project, the WWF Partners for Wetlands Project, the FAO-IUCNROSA-IWMI project on the best practices of wetlands use for agriculture, the IWMI-IUCNROSA-FAO project on sustainable agriculture on wetlands, and the IUCNROSA Zambezi basin wetlands project.

d) promoting the sharing of expertise and information, particularly through enhanced training opportunities, twinning and site networks, and Internet-based resource kits and knowledge and information sharing.

The sub-region has had appreciable opportunities on training as well knowledge and information sharing. There has not been appreciable achievement in relation to twinning and site networks, as well the use of Internet-based resource kits. Training opportunities were provided within the SADC Regional Wetlands Conservation Project. Training at the regional level was provided on wetland ecosystem dynamics and integrated management techniques, conflicts and participatory approaches, as well as targeted training at national level covering topics such as wetland inventories, assessment and monitoring, economic valuation of wetlands, institution and policy establishment, environmental impact assessment, as well as wetland rehabilitation. Knowledge and information sharing at the regional level is being provided for under the SADC wetlands Website www.sadc.int/wetlands which is being hosted by the SADC Secretariat and supported by IUCN ROSA. Twinning and site networks were supported although there was a call for technical guidance on arranging effective twinning and networks. This could also be built around the creation of a regional network of wetland focal points.

e) Encouraging growth in the flow of international financial resources to eligible parties.

The sub-region as a whole has attracted considerable financial resources for management and wise use of wetlands (see section c, above). At the national level the sub-region has witnessed an increase in financial commitment by governments through allocation of budget for operationalising wetland agencies and development as well as implementation of wetland management plans. The Ramsar Convention Secretariat has also provided financial support to a number of countries under the Ramsar Small Grants Fund. These include Lesotho, Mozambique and Tanzania. The challenge identified by the working group, is in promoting exchange of information on further funding opportunities, and

continually mobilising support of governments to sustain wetland management and institutions.

f) Promoting the application of sustainable agriculture and sustainable harvesting practices where wetland-dependent plants and animals are being traded both nationally and internationally.

The working group noted some existing initiatives under this topic, but also noted that these are disjointed and not coordinated at the sub-regional level (see section i.1d). The challenge therefore is to establish coordination mechanisms that will promote sharing of experiences and information dissemination on best practices regarding sustainable agricultural practices in wetlands.

g) making efforts to ensure that wetland-related investment is consistent with the principles of conservation and wise use.

All countries in the sub-region are utilising environmental impact assessment (EIA) as a tool for decision making and planning for development projects, including those affecting wetland ecosystems. The EIA regulations are at different stages of approval within government systems, although their application is already well entrenched within countries in the sub-region. A major challenge under this section is in relation to consistency of methodologies applied to transboundary systems, enforcement and monitoring of mitigatory measures recommended for development projects, and the need for specialised skills for effective application of the EIA tool. Other tools highlighted by the working group include district and local level land use guidelines and planning frameworks, which also provide a framework for integrated management of natural resources including wetlands.

The working group recommended more support for training on EIA and related decision making and planning tools, GIS, as well as strategic environmental assessment. The SADC Wetlands Project Phase II is providing some training under this topics, which is targeted at members of national wetland working groups/committees. Recommendations were made, for this type of training to be integrated into curricula of existing competent institutions working in the field of wetland training.

2. What are the constraints in implementing the international cooperation in your region/country

The working group identified standardisation of methodologies, prioritisation of wetland issues, and mobilisation of resources as some of the main constraints limiting implementation of international cooperation on wetlands in the region. The sub-region is making progress in international cooperation and regional integration within the framework of SADC, but wetlands still remain low on the regional agenda and the management of transboundary wetlands has not as yet featured on the regional programme. The need for consistent and comparable products and information mainly in relation to transboundary wetland systems was identified as a challenge, emanating from lack of standardised methodologies. The prioritisation of sites by different countries which share transboundary wetlands leads to partial designation of wetlands hence contributing to application of the wise use concept on only a part of the wetland ecosystem.

IV: Implementation Capacity

- a) *are the Conference of the Contracting Parties, subsidiary bodies and other convention mechanisms able to support efficiently the implementation of Convention in your countries/region.*

Representatives of the countries reported on the support they have received from the convention mechanisms. Support has mainly been received from the Secretariat, although there is a view that not all available support has been exploited. Botswana reported that they received technical support from the Secretariat during compilation of a national inventory, and in the development of the Okavango Delta Management Plan; Lesotho reported on the support they are receiving through the Secretariat under the Ramsar Small Grants fund, which they intend to utilise to compile a national inventory of wetlands. The working group generally expressed lack of access to information on the array of support available from the convention, including the nature, structure and functions of subsidiary bodies hence the low level of support received and/or requested from these bodies. It was recommended that there is need for the Secretariat to engage alternative media to promote the support and services available under the Convention. The Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org) may contain these information, but access to the website is limited within the sub-region. An example was quoted, that perhaps members of the STRP and other specialist groups under the convention should be supported, by the Convention to undertake consultancy that address pertinent and priority issues in member States.

- b) *have you established effective and efficient institutional mechanisms for implementing the Convention (National Wetlands Committee, National Wetlands Policies, etc.).*

Countries within the sub-region have established institutional structures to guide the implementation of the Convention and these are have taken different forms in different countries. Limited progress has however, been attained in establishment of national wetland policies. All countries have appointed agencies to coordinate wetland issues and these are embedded within water, wildlife and national parks, environment and tourism departments with varying human resource capacities. Mechanisms for ensuring coordination with other relevant sectors have also been established, and these are in the form of national committees, reference groups and working groups. In cases like Tanzania a high level (Permanent Secretary level) National Wetlands Steering Committee has been established to provide strategic and policy level support and guidance to the implementation of wetland issues in the country. In other countries (e.g. South Africa, Namibia) the groups are informal, although they are active and provide support in monitoring wetland problems in the specific countries. Some of the challenges identified under this section include: maintenance of interest, and financial support and lack of a regional network on wetlands.

In the sub-region, three countries have draft wetland policies. It was however highlighted that a number of countries have opted to mainstream wetland issues into relevant existing policies, and do not intend to develop stand-alone wetland policies. The related policies being targeted include those for water, biodiversity conservation, agriculture, forestry, environment. A caution was made that there is need for review of policies to ensure that wetlands issues are adequately covered by these sectoral policies, in the absence of a stand-alone wetland policy.

- c) *do you think that the Secretariat provided the necessary financial resources to enable the Convention's mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expanding expectations of the Convention Parties ?*

Under this item it became apparent that there is general limited awareness on the available financial opportunities and other support from the Convention mechanisms. Only a few countries have accessed the Small Grants Fund. The working group recommended that the parties themselves should be more proactive in seeking information on the available mechanisms, funding opportunities, and other technical support under the Convention mechanisms. It was also recommended that there is need for broader means of communication between the Secretariat and the Administrative Authorities to ensure full access to support provided by the Convention. An expertise exchange mechanism was also recommended, to facilitate exchange of experiences, lessons learnt and access to best practices in similar ecoregions.

- d) *have you maximised the mutual benefits of working with the Convention's International Organisation Partners (WWF, IUCN, BLI and WI) and their membership and expert networks, and other collaborating organisations? And*

The working group noted that extensive work has been carried out in collaboration with WWF and IUCN and to a limited extent with BLI and WI. The working group therefore recommended that efforts should be made to explore mechanisms for expanding engagement with BLI and WI in the work of the sub-region.

- e) *have you been provided with effective mechanisms for training and capacity building to equip you to implement the Convention?*

The regional meeting on the SADC Wetlands Management Project addressed this issue and proposed a number of recommendations for consideration and further development. These are listed below:

- Government agencies in particular, need to formulate retention strategies for national skills, effectively utilise available skills in the countries and within the region, and should view mobility of trained personnel as a means for integration of wetland issues into other sectors through the multiplier effect.
- We need to have a holistic approach to development – Focus on mainstreaming environmental issues (including wetlands) in development planning of countries in order to have access to resources (including in wetland rehabilitation).
- Traditional leaders, land owners, and other sectors impacting on wetlands such as infrastructure development, mining, and economic planning should be included in capacity building/training on wetlands. Communities should also be empowered to effectively engage developers and promote wetland protection e.g. through the process of EIA.
- Need to include/build on indigenous knowledge as part of capacity building/training on wetlands.

- Training should be a continuous process and mobility of staff is inevitable
- There is need for an exit strategy in community projects.
- Need to involve/consult traditional leaders and community to ensure building of trust and ownership.
- Rehabilitation has to have purpose and be context, location specific.
- Agencies should effectively manage consultants and utilise reports produced by consultants and other specialists.

The working group also noted the need to support training institutions in order to expand the pool of trained professionals in wetland management in the sub-region.

What are the major constraints in implementing the Convention at the national and regional level?

The main constraints identified within the sub-region, in relation to implementation capacity were; lack of retention strategies for skilled personnel; the need for training community members, traditional leaders and land owners, insufficient research to support programme implementation; mobility of skilled personnel; and general low levels of skills in coordinating agencies.

V: Membership

1. What is the support needed for countries in your sub-region that are not party yet to the Convention to ratify it?

Angola, Swaziland and Zimbabwe remain the only non-party countries in the sub-region although both Zimbabwe and Swaziland have embarked on processes to become parties to the Convention in not too distant future and at least before COP-10 in the case of Zimbabwe. In view of the absence of a representative of Angola in this preparatory meeting, there is no indication of what steps, if any, the country may have taken to become a party to the Convention.