

Annex VI

Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting on the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) for COP9

Sub-Regional Working Groups, 4th April 2005

Indian Ocean Island States

PARTICIPANTS

- Mr. Manikchand Puttoo, Mauritius delegate, Deputy Director of National Park and Conservation Service.
- Dr. Pugazhendhi Murugaiyan, Seychelles delegate, Senior Project Officer/Wetlands, Ministry of Environmental and Natural Resources, Wetlands Units.
- Mrs. Rabesihanaka Sahondra, Madagascar, technical Ramsar focal point for the Forests and Water of Madagascar.
- Chairman: Mr. David E. Pritchard, International Treaties Adviser, RSPB, Birdlife International
- Rapporteur: Ms. Emilie Mottier, IUCN Dar Country Office, Tanzania, JPO

PROGRESSION OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop first considered examples of the main benefits and positive experiences of Ramsar Convention implementation in each country.

These benefits were examined in particular in relation to the specific added value of membership of the Convention; the particular factors applying to Islands States situations; and the relevance to livelihoods and poverty alleviation.

The workshop then looked at the global target for the Ramsar strategic plan set for 2003-2005, concentrating on those requiring action by contracting parties (Resolution VIII.26). Problems, obstacles and difficulties were identified in relation to each of these targets.

Selecting eight of these targets, or clusters of them, as high priorities for discussion at the current meeting, the workshop drew up recommendations aimed at addressing the identified problems for each of these.

The workshop also considered possible recommendations aimed at the relationship between Ramsar and NEPAD; and on the possibility of an islands-based sub-regional grouping at COP9.

I. POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF RAMSAR IMPLEMENTATION

I.a) Seychelles

- From observer, became Ramsar member in 2004.
- Awareness: to be Ramsar member helps to inform the public about wetlands.

Annex VI

- After the ratification of the Convention, the country was receiving more assistance from Ramsar. It has been helped in designating one Ramsar site (RIS), and also in the preparation of RIS for one more site.
- All the wetlands of Seychelles are mapped with GIS.
- The National Wetlands management Conservation Policy will be amended soon.
- Seychelles makes good outreach use of World Wetlands Day.
- Seychelles is basing a major part of its revenue on tourism and economy. It is hoped that the ratification of the Ramsar Convention will help the country to develop more eco-tourism sites in the future.

I.b) Mauritius

- Mauritius has adapted a definition of wetlands from the International definition produced by Ramsar (for example peat lands fens) which applies better to Mauritius.
- Mauritius has set up a National Ramsar Committee of 18 members including also the stakeholders from the different institutions involved with wetland matters.
- A wetlands protection bill has been drafted. It should be reviewed and voted soon.
- A visitor center on Ramsar sites has been built to facilitate visitors to the site.
- A second Ramsar site (Marine Park) is in process of being nominated.
- Survey of wetlands: All the wetlands in Mauritius have been earmarked. The country would like now to get some assistance to come up with a comprehensive survey using the GIS, etc.
- Public awareness: celebration of World Wetlands Day every year; publication of 2 pamphlets on migratory birds and wetlands.
- International cooperation: One NGO from Mauritius got funds from Ramsar small grants to implement one of their projects. Another NGO has submitted a second project for funding from SGF scheme in the National Parks and other working institutions.
- Training has been provided to government officers.
- A national training strategy involving all the stakeholders is planned.

I.c) Madagascar

- Madagascar is member of the Ramsar Convention since November 1998. Since the country is a member, 5 Ramsar sites have been designated. 3 of them have now a management plan that includes the participation of the local population as well as the local authorities. The sites are now well managed. Although it was fairly difficult to convince the local populations of the

Annex VI

benefits and advantages of having Ramsar sites, these populations have experienced benefits from designation and are now strong supporters of it.

- Madagascar has elaborated a national strategy of wetlands management. The document is now ready.

- International Cooperation: Madagascar is supported by several international organisations (e.g. BirdLife International, WWF). The French Ministry has elaborated a training module for the wetlands management and Madagascar has been selected as one of the 4 participating countries. Several international organizations have supported Madagascar financially and technically in the designation of Ramsar sites.

-Implementation of Wetlands management: Madagascar has benefited from 2 small grants fund awards.

Conclusion: main benefits of Ramsar

- Inventory:** strong experience for all wetlands of the country.
- Assistance:** Ramsar has opened possibilities for technical and financial assistance.
- Sites management:** improvement in the quality of management of sites through Ramsar designation.
- Legislation:** new wetland sites have been designated.
- Awareness:** more public awareness of wetlands.

I.1. Added value from Ramsar

I.1.a) Seychelles

- Ramsar gave the opportunity to focus attention on wetlands, specifically.
- Ramsar created awareness among public.
- Ecotourism potential is growing with Ramsar.
- Seychelles is exploring the potentials of Ramsar on wetland development.

I.1.b) Mauritius

- The ratification of the Ramsar Convention makes Mauritius more aware of its obligation to the Convention in front of the International Community.
- Awareness increased on the importance of wetlands with the signature of the Convention.
- The circulation of information is facilitated with the Ramsar Convention.

Annex VI

- The Ramsar Convention provides guidelines for the wetlands management to the contracting parties.
- It is easier to get financial and technical assistance under the Ramsar umbrella.
- The wetlands nominated as Ramsar sites is an asset for our tourism investing as it is on the Ramsar website.

I.1.c) Madagascar

- Since the country is a Ramsar Convention member, more consideration is given to wetlands.
- In the Ramsar sites, a lot of local groups are organizing themselves to manage the natural resources. The population living in Ramsar sites is more aware of the benefits of responsible management of wetlands.
- The Ramsar is attracting economic, eco-touristical and cultural interest.

Conclusion: Added value directly from Ramsar

- ❑ **Specific focus** on wetlands
- ❑ **Profile:** The Ramsar Convention facilitates the awareness process
- ❑ **Imperative/ Incentive:** the signature of the country to the Ramsar Convention creates a political imperative.

I.2. What is particular to Islands?

I.2.a) Seychelles

- The size: being small facilitates inter-department coordination for example.
- The Island is facing more impacts on wetlands areas for development.
- The Island is indirectly dependant on coastal fish stock.

I.2.b) Mauritius

- In most of the islands, tourism plays an important part in the economy, and is concentrated in coastal areas. Pressures on wetlands are therefore higher.
- The tendency of human settlement to concentrate on the coast also creates a growing pressure on these wetlands.
- Importance of the lagoons for tourism and indirectly for economy (e.g. fishing industry). The need to protect lagoon is high.

Annex VI

- In many islands, groundwater forms a significant proportion of total water resources. This is a key issue beneficially affected by maintenance of wetlands.

- Vulnerability of Islands to climate change and natural catastrophes on coast.

I.2.c) Madagascar

- less problems of sharing international support with other countries.

Conclusion: Islands particularity

- Coordination:** Internal coordination can be easier in Islands
- Tourism, settlement on coast**
- Underground water**
- International Cooperation:** not “transboundary”, but still important
- Vulnerability** to climate change and natural disasters on coasts

I.3.Particular relevance of Ramsar to poverty alleviation – what difference is attributable to Ramsar?

I.3.a) Seychelles

- Direct economic uses of wetlands in Seychelles are small but have a lot of indirect benefits.

I.3.b) Mauritius:

- Higher use of wetlands as ecotourism sites which results in the creation of new jobs and develop new economic opportunities.

I.3.c) Madagascar:

- The population is generally more organized concerning resource management in Ramsar sites and therefore the livelihoods are improved in these sites. The population has improved its livelihood level through the self management and the regulation of activities in Ramsar sites.

- Creation of groups (e.g. fishermen, peasants, artisans groups)

Conclusion: Relevance of Ramsar to livelihoods?

- Eco tourism
- Increased productivity in Ramsar sites
- Awareness of the values of wetlands

II. PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THOSE MAIN 2003-2005 GLOBAL TARGETS FOR THE RAMSAR CONVENTION WHICH REQUIRE CONTRACTING PARTY ACTION

Annex VI

<p>1.1.1</p> <p>1.1.2</p> <p>1.1.3</p> <p>1.1.6</p>	<p>By COP9, all Parties without completed inventories to have initiated action in line with the Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory, and as far as possible to have completed and disseminated comprehensive national wetland inventories.</p> <p>All national wetland inventories initiated after COP8 to include information on wetland importance; potential Ramsar sites; wetlands for restoration; location of under-represented wetland types; and values and functions, in particular in relation to poverty eradication strategies.</p> <p>All wetland inventories to have full data management, custodianship, and metadata records in place.</p> <p>By COP9, all Parties with wetland inventories to have made these available to all stakeholders.</p>	<p>- lack of expertise/ lack of external assistance</p> <p>- lack of adapting standards methods</p> <p>- lack of resources</p>
<p>1.2.7</p>	<p>At least 50 CPs to have undertaken water quality and quantity assessments.</p>	<p>- It was only possible to make sampling.</p> <p>- Lack of clear picture</p>
<p>2.1.1</p>	<p>National Wetland Policy or equivalent instrument initiated by all Parties not having it, incorporating WSSD targets and actions, as appropriate.</p>	<p>-needs to get survey and legislation first.</p> <p>-time and human resources needed.</p>
<p>2.2.1</p> <p>8.1.1</p>	<p>SC/Bureau to identify at least 100 Parties to initiate and if possible complete by COP9 comprehensive reviews of their laws and institutions.</p> <p>SC/Bureau to have identified at least 50 CPs to have reviewed policy and legal and institutional frameworks and sought to remove measures adversely affecting wetland conservation and wise use.</p>	<p>-no comment</p>
<p>2.2.2</p>	<p>SC/Bureau to identify at least 50 Parties to have in place Strategic Environmental Assessment for policies, programmes and plans impacting on wetlands.</p>	<p>-no comment</p>
<p>2.2.3</p>	<p>All CPs to have required EIA, as appropriate, for proposed projects, developments or changes which may impact on wetlands.</p>	<p>- no big problems</p>
<p>3.1.3</p>	<p>All CPs to consider how to adapt and to incorporate, as necessary, into national practice the new management planning guidelines to the wise use of all wetlands.</p>	<p>- problems of interpretation of guidelines.</p> <p>-Problem of coordinating institutions.</p>
<p>3.4.6</p>	<p>All CPs to have made available the guidance on water allocation and management for ecosystems to support</p>	<p>- Coordination problems between departments</p>

Annex VI

	decision-making on water resource management in all CPs, as a contribution to achieve the WDDSD target on water resources management and water efficiency plans.	
3.4.8	COP8 information on wetlands and mitigation and adaptive management for climate change made available.	- a structural link exists but the liaison is not strong enough.
3.4.9	All relevant CPs to have assessed implications of Kyoto Protocol implementation on wetlands (including applying COP8 restoration guidelines).	- big challenge. Nothing has been done. Very difficult.
4.1.2	All CPs with lost or degraded wetlands to have identified priority sites for restoration; restoration projects underway or completed in at least 100 CPs.	- lack of criteria - lack of sustainability
4.1.3	Continue to add new case studies and methods to Ramsar wetland restoration Web site.	- the priority has not been given to this point.
5.1.1	Address the problems posed by invasive species in wetland ecosystems in a decisive and holistic manner, making use, as appropriate, of the tools and guidance developed by various institutions and processes.	- the methods are labour-intensive + need repeating -invasive species are not appreciated enough as a serious threat on wetlands (awareness problem).
9.1.2	At least 50 CPs to have established national CEPA action plans.	- There is a real will. However lack of financial and human resources.
9.1.10	At least 75 CPs to have established at least one wetland education centre at a Ramsar site.	No real comment
10.1.1	Report on implementation progress to the Ramsar Bureau by 31 December 2003, with consolidated Bureau report circulated to all Parties by 31 March 2004. Each CP which has not designated a Ramsar site since accession to the Convention to have designated at least one new site. Designation of a further 55 million ha and 250 Ramsar sites, as progress towards global targets of 2500 sites and 250 million ha by 2010.	- limited scope for lots of sites in small islands - problem of institutional coordination (+ political tensions) - lack of stakeholders engagement/support. - it takes a lot of time
11.2.5	For all sites on the Montreux Record, and which have not been subject to a Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM), CPs to	Does not apply

Annex VI

	request such a Mission prior to COP9.	
12.1.1	All CPs to have identified their transboundary wetlands (see also 1.1.1). 50% of CPs to have identified cooperative management mechanisms.	Does not apply
12.1.2	50% of CPs with shared basins and coastal systems to be part of joint management commissions or authorities.	
14.1.3	At least 75 twinning arrangements to be in place and reported to the Bureau for Web publicity on the Ramsar Web site.	No comments, no experiences
20.1.2	At least half of CPs to have assessed national and local training needs.	- no internalization of the needs, lack of perspective of needs - no focus for an overview of all needs
13.1.6	NEPAD's Action Plan to have fully incorporated Ramsar issues and mechanisms, and being implemented by relevant CPs, in lines with WSSD targets.	- some fragmented responsibilities? - not yet clear about NEPAD delivery.

III. TOPICS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1. Inventory: find external assistance which can deliver “modular” inventory project assistance according to Ramsar framework.

2.1. National Policy: each country to clarify its own preferred sequence/ relationship between national policy/ legislation/ inventory and to define pre-requisite sites.

3.1.3. Management plans: Ramsar guidelines to be interpreted in each national context; especially in relation to responsibilities of different authorities.

3.4.6/3.4.8. Sectors: Water, climate change: supplement formal “paper” linkages between sectors with more practical day-to-day contact opportunities (including informal ones?)

4.1.2. Restoration: each country to decide criteria for choosing priority sites for restoration.

10.1.1. Designation: document + feed back experiences of positive stakeholder benefits to future site designation; especially regarding poverty alleviation.

20.1.2. Training needs: as first step, identify who can make needs assessments, and equip them with information/ time etc. to do so.

13.1.6. NEPAD: each country to “map” responsibilities of relevant departments/officials in relation to NEPAD.

Annex VI

IV. THE WAY FORWARD IN RECOMMENDATIONS?

1. To invite governments of all island states in the African Region to seek ways to consult each other, as a group, on issues of common concern, during COP9.
2. To request the Ramsar Secretariat to assist in facilitating the process recommended in (1) above.
3. To explore with other Ramsar regions whether island states from those regions also would wish to join in such a process.