

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

4-8 April, 2005, Arusha, Tanzania,

DRAFT

Terms of Reference of the Sub-regional Working Groups

Introduction

The 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) will take place in Kampala, Uganda, from 8-15 November 2005.

As part of the groundwork relating to this Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention has decided that a series of meetings should be held in 2004 and 2005 in the six Ramsar regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Neotropics, North America, and Oceania) to review the current implementation of the Convention and prepare for the Conference of the Parties. In the case of Africa, Asia and the Neotropics, there should be regional meetings, instead of sub-regional meetings for budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, to allow for more in-depth analysis among those Contracting Parties which, due to geographical proximity and other factors have more things in common, the Secretariat of the Convention has decided to organize sub-regional sessions back-to-back with the regional meeting.

The following 6 sub-regional breakdowns have been proposed:

- Central Africa (Congo Basin)
- East Africa
- Northern Africa
- Southern Africa
- West Africa
- Indian Ocean Island States

To this effect, the sub-regional sessions are organised in such a way that it will provide space for thematic discussions and plenary sessions for reporting back.

Objectives of the workshops

The objective of these sessions will be to:

- Analyze major issues and concerns that characterize the expansion of the Convention in the sub-regions;
- Review and debate progress with the current Convention Work and Strategic Plans
- Make a series of recommendations to solve the problems identified and indicate the needs for the future.

Thematic clusters

The discussions will be centred on the Ramsar strategic objectives as identified in the strategic plan 2003-2008, they are five (5) in total:

- i) **The wise use of wetlands,**
- ii) **Wetlands of International Importance,**
- iii) **International cooperation,**
- iv) **Implementation capacity,**
- v) **Membership,**

A number of cross-cutting issues will be discussed during the workshops; they include: NEPAD and wetlands, links to poverty eradication; knowledge sharing and access to information.

Issues for discussion

Those issues will be discussed bearing in mind the so-called Valencia (COP8) legacy, the Millennium Development Goals and the overall NEPAD objective of poverty alleviation and wetlands management. Participants will attempt to answer the fundamental questions, given the current status of Africa's development:

i) The wise use of wetlands

The Conference of the Contracting Parties has determined that the concept of wise use applies to broad planning affecting wetlands, and has therefore adopted *Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept* (Recommendation 4.10) and *Additional guidance for the implementation of the wise use concept* (Resolution 5.6). The "wise use" of wetlands has become one very important concept and *modus operandi* of the Convention, of particular relevance to developing countries where fighting poverty and social exclusion continues to be the highest priority. The Ramsar COP-8 approved guidance on the application of the wise concept has been published in the Ramsar Handbooks 1 to 6.

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 ?;
- b) addressing the interaction between wise use and public awareness and education, public participation, legislation, institutions, training, policy development, planning, and general decision-making ?
- c) managing wetlands adaptively in response to the impacts of global climate change and sea-level rise ?
- d) developing more sustainable agricultural practices ?
- e) restoring and rehabilitating the many degraded or lost wetlands and their values and functions, whilst recognizing that it is ecologically, economically and culturally more appropriate to maintain existing wetlands than to permit their damage and then seek to restore them ?
- f) addressing the major threats posed by invasive alien species to the future of wetlands ?
- 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 ?
- h) involving the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands?
- 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?

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

ii) Wetlands of International Importance,

The List of Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar List) constitutes the flagship of the Convention. As such, it deserves special attention by all those responsible for, or interested in, the implementation of the treaty.

1. How many sites your country/sub-region has submitted for designation since last COP?
 - a) Have you observed any change in the ecological character of your (current) designated Ramsar sites?
 - b) Have management plans been prepared and are currently implemented in your Ramsar sites?
 - c) How many sites under the Montreux Record?
 - d) How many sites under the San José Record?
 - e) Any potential transboundary Ramsar sites in your region?
2. What are the constraints you are facing in sites designation and management?

iii) International cooperation,

Under Article 5 of the Convention, Contracting Parties have committed themselves to consult one another “about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties”. This Article also refers to Parties coordinating their present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna

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;
 - b) developing further the coordination of activities with other relevant global and regional conventions (UNCCD, UNCBD, CITES, CMS, UNFCCC, WHC, etc.) and organizations (sub-regional economic groupings such as ECOWAS, ECCAS, UMA, SADC, EAC, IOC, etc);
 - c) promoting the further development of regional wetland sustainable use initiatives;

- 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;
 - e) encouraging growth in the flow of international financial resources to eligible Parties;
 - f) promoting the application of sustainable agriculture and sustainable harvesting practices where wetland-dependent plants and animals are being traded both nationally and internationally; and
 - g) making efforts to ensure that wetland-related investment is consistent with the principles of conservation and wise use.
2. What are the constraints in implementing the international cooperation concept in your region/country.

iv) Implementation capacity

This General Objective relates to the operation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and of Ramsar subsidiary bodies and mechanisms, including the Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com), Ramsar Bureau and its MedWet Coordination Unit, Small Grants Fund and its Endowment Fund, Voluntary Fund for the Convention's Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Programme, Montreux Record, San José Record, Ramsar Advisory Missions, and partnerships with national, regional and international bodies. It also relates to the resources and capacity required for the effective functioning of the Convention.

We will emphasise here on the resources and capacities required for the effective implementation of the Convention in your country/region and address the following questions:

- 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/regions?;
- b) have you established effective and efficient institutional mechanisms for implementing the Convention (National Wetlands Committee, National Wetlands Policies, etc.)?
- 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 Contracting Parties?
- d) have you maximized the mutual benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (WWF, IUCN, BLI and WI) and their membership and expert networks, and other collaborating organizations? And
- e) have you been provided with effective mechanisms for training and capacity-building to equip you to implement the Convention?

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

v) Membership

In order for the Convention to achieve its Mission, all States should become Contracting Parties. While membership has grown steadily to encompass all regions of the world, there remain notable gaps, namely in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and amongst the Small Island Developing States.

As for Africa States, it appears that ALL the sub-regions include countries that are not parties to the Ramsar Convention yet.

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

Organisation of the workshops

Given the number of issues to be addressed, participants will be assigned to a group depending of the sub-region of origin, breakdown was done as follows.¹

- Central Africa (Congo Basin) (Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe).
- East Africa (Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania).
- Northern Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia).
- Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe).
- West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).
- Indian Ocean Island States (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sao Tome & Principe, and Seychelles).

Workshops facilitation

A Facilitator will be identified for each workshop as well as a Rapporteur.

- The Chair/Facilitator/Moderator
The Facilitator will initiate discussions and raise the issues to be addressed by the working groups. He will facilitate participation of all participants present during the working groups.
- The Rapporteur
He will be in charge of the group report writing.

¹ (based on AU, IUCN and UN geographical breakdown)