

MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION between

The Bureau of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971) and The Niger Basin Authority (NBA)

CONSIDERING that the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) recognizes the general objectives and principles of the Ramsar Convention about the conservation and wise use of wetlands;

CONSIDERING that the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), the Ramsar Bureau and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) have established regular cooperation in the promotion of wetland conservation and their sustainable management at basin scale;

CONSIDERING the active participation of both the Ramsar Bureau and WWF at NBA Ministerial meetings and Summits of Heads of State;

RECALLING the active participation of the NBA and WWF in Ramsar regional and subregional meetings;

FURTHER RECALLING Decision Nr 6 of the Seventh Summit of the Heads of State and Government held on 16th February 2002 in Abuja, Nigeria, to designate a network of wetlands of international importance in the Niger River Basin, including those with the most significant biological diversity and the highest value for local communities;

NOTING the partnership developed between the NBA, the Ramsar Bureau and WWF in the framework of the GEF (World Bank/UNDP)-NBA project on Reversal of Land and Water Degradation in the Niger River Basin;

RECOGNIZING the interdependence between the sustainable use of freshwater resources and the conservation and sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems (wetlands);

CONSIDERING the importance of wetlands for the conservation of biological diversity as well as for the alleviation of poverty at basin scale;

RECOGNIZING that a healthy and productive environment is a prerequisite for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and

CONSIDERING that a core objective of the Environmental Initiative of the NEPAD must be to combat poverty and to contribute to the socio-economic development in Africa,

THEREFORE THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OF THE NIGER BASIN AUTHORITY
AND THE BUREAU OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION DECIDE:

Article 1: the wise use of all wetlands in the Niger River Basin

The partners will seek to reinforce the role of wetland ecosystems for sustainable development through the provision of clean water and a variety of wetland products that can be derived from the demonstration of integrated management approaches.

The Partners will promote and support the implementation of the major conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa (26 August - 4 September 2002).

The partners will explore the possibility of reinforcing the institutional partnerships at basin level and national level between all stakeholders – Governmental entities, Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders concerned with the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

Article 2: Mobilise funding resources for conservation and sustainable use of wetlands basin-wide

The partners will collaborate and work to ensure that projects for wetland conservation and wise use appropriately focus on the key role of wetlands for biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation – in particular through their provision of goods and services to the most vulnerable sectors of society.

The Partners will utilize the designation of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar Sites) and management mechanisms to indicate priority areas for project development to maintain or restore globally important biodiversity.

Article 3: Designation and management of wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites)

The partners will explore the possibility of reinforcing the establishment of a coherent national and regional network of Ramsar sites at the basin level, as the basis for their sustainable management.

Article 4: International cooperation and transboundary management of shared water systems

The partners will collaborate on joint initiatives and on assessment of common challenges, and will take action on common solutions to transboundary issues at basin scale.

The partners will promote transboundary wetland management initiatives at all levels, particularly with assistance of potential international donors.

The partners will take into account innovative approaches to transboundary wetland management in the subregion, by promoting partnerships between Conventions (Ramsar, CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC), regional and subregional organizations, Governments, IGOs, NGOs, etc., as models for global replicability.

The partners will use the Convention's mechanisms for Ramsar site designation and management to promote transboundary cooperation in shared wetland ecosystems.

The partners will promote a more systematic cooperation between Ministries responsible for biodiversity and freshwater ecosystems and Ministries responsible for water resources management/hydraulics.

The partners will invite each other to attend relevant meetings that would help in pursuing the implementation of this Memorandum of Cooperation.

On behalf of the Ramsar Bureau
Delmar Blasco
Secretary General

On behalf of the Niger Basin Authority
Mohammed Bello Tuga
Executive Secretary

Done at Valencia, Spain, on the 23rd day of November 2002