

**Implementation of the Ramsar convention in general,
and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular,
during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995
For Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998**

Contracting Party: Namibia

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority

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**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1
To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.**

- 1.1 Namibia and South Africa jointly manage the Orange River Mouth Ramsar site. Regular meetings are held between the two countries to discuss various issues concerning the site, and to draft the management plan. A trans-boundary reserve is planned for the site.

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2
To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further
developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.**

- 2.1 There are two policies which are directly relevant to wetlands in Namibia. Firstly, the policy on "*Land -use planning: towards sustainable development*" of May 1994. This includes a section on wetland systems which states the policy of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism as follows: "...to encourage the rational and integrated planning of wetland systems, in accordance with the philosophies of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, based on the ecological principles of preservation of biotic diversity, maintenance of life support systems and sustainable use". Secondly, the policy on "*Conservation of biotic diversity and habitat protection*" of May 1994 makes

- it the policy of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to ensure adequate protection of ecosystems, including wetlands. An explicit national wetland policy is under preparation. Many wetland species are the subject of general conservation policies.
- 2.2 The major constraint with regard to the above mentioned policies is that they are only the policy of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and hence do not apply to other government ministries. This constraint will largely be addressed in the draft Environmental Management Act.
 - 2.3 The responsibility for implementing the above policies is spread amongst the different directorates of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Primary responsibility would lie with the Directorate: Resource Management which is the directorate responsible for managing all protected areas and hence would apply the policies in their park management activities.
 - 2.4 Although Namibia is divided into several political regions, the implementation of a national wetland policy and strategy would rest with central government.
 - 2.5 Currently a review of national conservation legislation is underway. The new Environmental Management Act will include legislation pertaining to the conservation of wetlands. Currently all new developments are subject to voluntary environmental assessments. These will become compulsory once this legislation has been passed.
 - 2.6 The Walvis Bay Ramsar site is included in a land use/ development plan currently being drafted for Walvis Bay town and its surrounds and it is foreseen that the site will become part of a proclaimed protected area.
 - 2.7 No publications relating to wise use of wetlands have been produced.
 - 2.8 The land use/ development plan for the Walvis Bay area (see 2.6 above) addresses possible pollution incidents from the harbour and fish factories and how to remedy it.
 - 2.9 An economic valuation of Namibia's wetlands has never been performed.
 - 2.10 Currently EAs are performed on a voluntary basis for all new developments but once the Environmental Management Act is promulgated, EAs will be compulsory.
 - 2.11 Wetland restoration and rehabilitation is not considered a priority in Namibia.
 - 2.12 Several "Community Based Natural Resource Management" programmes exist in Namibia which have as their purpose the training of rural communities in sustainable resource utilisation. However, these are very broad programmes addressing resource utilisation in general i.e. none of these CBNRM programmes is explicitly aimed at wetlands but some of them do include a wetland component.
 - 2.13 As far as could be established, there is no private sector involvement in wetland conservation apart from the NGOs running the CBNRM programmes mentioned in 2.12 above.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels.

- 3.1 Lack of staff and resources has so far limited the government from getting involved in any programmes on wetland issues specifically. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism nevertheless has two environmental education centres that present general conservation education courses for teachers and school children.
- 3.2 Wetlands were included in the national curricula for primary schools the first time in 1996.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

- 4.1 Informal consultation between the government ministries working with wetlands and water occurs on an irregular basis but recently a group called the "Namibian Wetlands Working Group" has been formed to facilitate cooperation between scientists working in wetland related fields in Namibia. This group has not yet formally met but informal contact between members occurs regularly.
- 4.2 A major workshop, hosted by IUCN, was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 23-25 April 1997 to identify training needs for wetland management in southern Africa. The findings of the workshop were that most countries lack enabling legislation and policy, appropriate organisational and institutional arrangements, have insufficient information and research, planning, management, awareness, education and training. These issues should be addressed in an appropriate training programme and through funding of the implementing agencies. The wetland biologist of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism attended a two week course on wetland and watershed management in Malawi.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

- 5.1 Thanks to a SGF grant, management plans for all Namibian Ramsar sites are in preparation and some will be completed by the CoP in Costa Rica.
- 5.2 All management plans include monitoring of the wetland as an integral part of management.
- 5.3 The Orange River Mouth Ramsar site has been listed on the Motreux record by South Africa because of serious degradation of a saltmarsh on the South African side. No serious ecological change has yet been detected on the Namibian side although the proposed construction of a gas-fired powerstation near the site may have some negative impacts.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6

To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.

- 6.1 A national inventory is in preparation and a first edition will be available at the CoP in Costa Rica. The inventory consists of a database linked to GIS, and a printed copy, both of which are regularly updated. For wetlands which are Ramsar sites or which would qualify as Ramsar sites, a Ramsar Information Sheet has been completed and incorporated into the database. For most of the other wetlands only geographical coordinates and a wetland type are known.
- 6.2 The national inventory lists **all** wetlands on record and even includes some borehole data.

- 6.3 Wetland area varies tremendously because of the high variability in Namibia's rainfall. It is estimated that approximately 4-5% (\pm 4 million ha) of Namibia's surface area can be classified as wetlands using the Ramsar definition, but this figure really is only an estimate because no proper quantitative analysis of remotely sensed images has yet been done.
- 6.4 Of the eleven sites in Namibia that currently are considered potential Ramsar sites, two qualify exclusively because of the criteria based on fish. They are two sinkhole lakes in Namibia's Karstveld, Lakes Guinas and Otjikoto. Currently no actions have been taken to list these sites. The Walvis Bay Ramsar site regularly supports over 100000 wetland birds, including 1% of the global population of several species.
- 6.5 Although Namibia did not explicitly state that it would list further sites, there are plans to list probably two further sites within the near future. These will be listed once the existing four Ramsar sites have management plans which are being implemented.
- 6.6 The Orange River Mouth is currently Namibia's only transfrontier wetland.
- 6.7 One of the sites alluded to in 6.5 above is the lower Okavango River, which could also become a transfrontier wetland (between Angola, Namibia and Botswana).

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

- 7.1 The Orange River Mouth Ramsar site is a trans-boundary site and the proclamation of a reserve which will include the site will be proposed late in 1998 or early in 1999. Throughout the process of proclamation there has been extensive consultation between the Namibian and South African authorities and the drafting of the management plan has been a collaborative effort between the two conservation authorities involved. Namibia is also represented on OKACOM, a committee established with the aim of managing the Okavango River basin. Similar initiatives are under way for the Zambezi basin under the ZACPLAN project.
- 7.2 Currently none of Namibia's Ramsar sites are twinned with others.
- 7.3 Namibia is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the national biodiversity country study has just been completed. Furthermore, Namibia is also signatory to the Convention to Combat Desertification and to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Namibia is not a signatory to the Convention on Migratory Species and the World Heritage Convention. Since the body of scientists active in Namibia is very small, most scientists are involved in all of these Conventions.
- 7.4 A large group of volunteers takes part twice annually in the wetland bird counts under the auspices of Wetlands International, plus an additional count done in May, which is when the Namibian wetlands contain the maximum number of birds.
- 7.5 Currently, the SGF grant apart, there are no donor funded projects that directly address the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Namibia. Several donor funded projects however, will produce outputs that could be used for the implementation of the Convention e.g. a DANCED funded project to produce a coastal zone management plan and a Dutch funded environmental profiles project. A German funded project to produce management plans for Namibia's north eastern parks is about to be completed. This area contains the majority of Namibia's permanent wetlands and thus

this project also contributed indirectly to the implementation of the Convention in Namibia.

- 7.6 The Ministry of Environment and Tourism has a Conservation Scientist with responsibility for wetlands. Also, several of the Ministry's other specialist scientists perform research related to wetland biota. It is also the responsibility of the Ministry to plan and manage all parks in Namibia which *inter alia* also include some wetlands.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

- 8.1 Namibia is unfortunately not in a position to make any voluntary financial contributions to further the work of the Convention globally.
- 8.2 Namibia's annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention are up to date.

Namibia

Name of site	date	area	Map	RIS	MR	MGP	MR off	Mgt Plan	Mgt + mon.
Etosha Pan	23/08/95	600,000	4	4				P	4
Orange River Mouth	23/08/95	500	4	4				±C	4
Sandwich Harbour	23/08/95	16,500	4	4				±C	4
Walvis Bay	23/08/95	12,600	4	4				P	4

Legend:	
date	Date of designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance
area	Surface area of the site in hectares
maps	Maps were provided for the site
RIS	Ramsar Information Sheet has been provided for the site
MR	Montreux Record site
MGP	Management Guidance Procedure has been undertaken for the site
MR off	Site has been removed from the Montreux Record
Mgt Plan	Management Plan is in preparation (P), completed (C), or being implemented (I)
Mgt + mon.	Management Plan includes monitoring