

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: **Government of the Republic of the Philippines**

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority:

Full name of the institution:

Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau

Name and title of the head of the institution:

Wilfrido S. Pollisco, Director

Mailing address for the head of the institution:

**Quezon Avenue
Diliman, Quezon City
1100
PHILIPPINES**

Telephone: **(632) 924-60-31 to 35**

Fax: **(632) 924-01-09**

Email address: **pawb-bio@psdn.org.ph**

Name and title (if different) of the designated contract officer for Ramsar Convention matters:

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Mailing address (if different) for the designated contact officer:

-

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

Ramsar Strategic Plan-General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

The Philippines has been invited to host the Asian Regional Meeting which is preparatory for COPVII in Costa Rica. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has officially endorsed to the Department of Foreign Affairs acceptance of the hosting of the Meeting.

Ramsar Strategic Plan-General Objective 2

To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.

Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:

Yes.

What are its main features?

The Plan sets out a series of actions in response to the various issues confronting the management of Philippine wetlands. Three programmatic areas are proposed, namely: Policy Review and Formulation, Institutional Development and Strengthening, and Projects. These grouping will hopefully provide focal areas for more specific time-bounded plans to be prepared in the future.

Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

The Action Plan is intended to be adopted by the whole government through a National Wetland Policy and Coordinating Committee (NWPCC). It has been proposed to be composed of heads of various national agencies representing the Executive Branch of the government and representatives from non-government organizations and peoples organizations to oversee the Plan implementation.

The NWPCC has been proposed to be created through an Executive Order and the documents have been forwarded to the Office of the President as of May 1998. The change in national administration has pushed back the approval of the Executive Order and there is a need to re-send it to the Office of the President for approval.

How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

It forms part of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the Philippines (NBSAP). The NBSAP is part of the Philippine commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Action Plan has been incorporated into the Medium Term Development Plan (1999 – 2004) of the national planning agency, the National Economic Development Agency.

Wetlands have also been highlighted in the National Physical Framework Plan. They have been more specifically placed under the “Protection Land Use” of the Framework Plan.

If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

There are financial constraints in the implementation of the priority activities in the Action Plan.

If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with:

a single Government Ministry,

a committee drawn from several Ministries, or

a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

Full implementation of the Action Plan is through the proposed National Wetlands Policy and Coordinating Committee, a cross-sectoral committee composed of government agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (as lead agency), the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education Culture, and Sports, the Department of Tourism, the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Energy, the National Economic Development Authority, the University of the Philippines System, one (1) representative each from the League of Governors and Mayors and two (2) members from the NGO/PO groups. Aside from the implementation of the Action Plan the Committee shall provide the mechanism for the formulation of policies affecting wetlands and to promote inter-agency and cross-sectoral cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources.

While awaiting the issuance of the Executive Order creating the NWPCC, the DENR through the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau has incorporated the Action Plan in its Plans and Programs. Copies of the Action Plan have also been distributed to the relevant government agencies, the academe, the private sector, non-government organizations and people’s organizations.

2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these.

None yet.

Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:

National:

Coastal Environment Programme. The sincere commitment of the DENR to the ideals of both national and international declarations towards the protection and management of the environment was crystallized through the institutionalization of the Coastal Environment Program (CEP) created by virtue of DENR Administrative Order No. 19, Series of 1993. The CEP was founded on the concept of community-based coastal zone management, the essence of which are to rehabilitate, protect, conserve and sustainably manage the country's coastal zone through the active participation of coastal communities and stakeholders. The CEP is an example of a programme which takes into consideration an integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management process.

Community-Based Coastal Resources Management Project. The Community-Based Coastal Resources Management Project (CB-CRMP). The CB-CRMP is a USAID-funded project which aims to address serious over-fishing issues and problems, and threatening collapse of fishery resources in coastal waters. It aims to achieve sustainable management of fishery resources in selected areas in the Philippines in such a way that current trends in resource degradation are offset.

Programme for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pollution in the East-Asian Seas. The Regional Programme for the Prevention and Management of Pollution in the East-Asian Seas is a GEF-funded programme the major thrust of which is to strengthen the capacity of participating governments to mitigate marine pollution from land- and sea-based sources.

Coastal Zone Environment and Resource Management Project. The Coastal Zone Environment and Resource Management Project is under the ASEAN Australia Economic Cooperation Programme. The objectives of the Project are: to support sustainable development of the coastal zone by enhancing national and regional management capacity and supporting necessary infrastructure (2) to derive maximum development from data on biophysical and socio-economic development by making them available on a wider scale, and (3) to facilitate the more efficient transfer of data and information from resource collection and storage agencies.

2.7 Have there been any publication produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise use of Wetlands Guidelines?
Yes/No

2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since the "to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands" (Operative paragraph 9).

The Philippine Environmental Impact Assessment System applies to a project planned by any government agency or instrumentality, including government-owned or controlled corporations, private corporations, firms, individuals or other entities which fall within the definition of an environmentally critical area.

Listed under Section 4 of Presidential Decree No. 1586, are some projects and areas declared by the President as environmentally critical. The projects considered as environmentally critical are infrastructure projects (major dams, reclamation projects) while the environmentally critical areas are: national parks (protected areas, watershed areas, forest and wildlife reservation and marine sanctuaries); flood prone areas, recharge areas of aquifers, waterbodies, mangrove areas, and coral reefs.

Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

On March 21, 1997, Executive Order No. 406 was issued “institutionalizing” the Philippine Economic Environmental and Natural Resources Accounting (PEENRA) System and creating units within the structure of DENR, the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB). The primary task of NSCB’s PEENRA unit is to compile environmental accounts, serve as repository of all PEENRA-related data, and provide technical and secretariat services to the inter-agency committee and task forces that will be created by the PEENRA Steering Committee, while the NEDA’s PEENRA Unit is to establish mechanisms for the integration of environmental considerations in planning, policy, project development and implementation based on PEENRA results. The DENR’s PEENRA unit’s main responsibility is to compile sectoral resource accounts, conduct research in support of policy development related to PEENRA and provide environmental and natural resources data.

Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

There is no legislation for the conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment specifically and only for actions impacting on wetlands. It is, however, covered by the provisions of Presidential Decree 1586 as mentioned earlier in Sec. 2.8 of this document.

Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? Yes/No.

Yes.

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

Mangroves by far receive the most resources for rehabilitation. Areas for rehabilitation have been identified through the recently concluded Mangrove Rehabilitation Project of the Fishery Sector Program and the on-going Coastal Environment Program. In the Fishery Sector Program alone, a total of 30,000 hectares of coastal mangrove areas have been rehabilitated to restore the degraded mangrove areas in our country.

Of the lakes, only Laguna de Bay receives a substantial amount of financial resources for its management. The Lake is managed by the Laguna Lake Development Authority.

Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

A distinction should be made between wetlands which are included in the National Integrated Protected Area System and those which are not. Protected areas in the Philippines as provided for in Republic Act 7586 are governed by Protected Area Management Boards (PAMB). PAMBs are composed of representatives of the heads of barangays (local villages), municipal mayors, provincial development officers, representatives of indigenous communities, non-government organizations, people’s organizations and other government agencies.

The Indigenous People’s Rights Act or Republic Act 8371 (IPRA) goes one step further by declaring that indigenous peoples have rights of ownership over lands, water and natural resources and all improvements made by them at any time within ancestral domains/lands.

2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this

included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use? Yes/No

If yes, Please Provide details.

Private sector involvement in the conservation of wetlands has been mainly limited to their membership in the Management Boards of wetland protected areas. It has not gone to a level where the private sector has been encouraged to be more actively involved in wetland conservation beyond membership to the Board.

Ramsar Strategic Plan – General Objective 3

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

Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

There is no comprehensive national programme which includes or focuses on wetlands. An information or awareness component is, however, usually included in existing programmes such as the Coastal Environment Program or as a regular activity of the protected areas and wildlife sector of the DENR field offices.

Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar's Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

None.

Ramsar Strategic Plan – General Objectives 4

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

Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and modus operandi.

The mechanism to increase cooperation between various institutions for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and wise-use of wetlands is envisioned to be instituted with the creation of the National Wetland Policy and Coordinating Committee which is described in Section 2.3 of this document.

In view of the fact that the mechanism is not yet formally and officially in place, there is an informal working group led by the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau with cross-sectoral representation that can be called on to take up issues or plan for wetland conservation related activities

Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?

the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

People from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

Yes.

Interwader, then Asian Wetland Bureau, then Wetlands International-Asia Pacific had been conducting training programmes for shorebird banding and coastal resource assessment in the Philippines which started in 1984. They have conducted at least six (6) training sessions with participants coming from the DENR field offices, from the academe and from local NGOs.

The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, later Australian National Conservation Agency, later Environment Australia also sponsored the participation of two Filipinos in the Northwest Australia Wader Study Expedition. The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) sponsored a Filipino participant to a training course on bird banding and wetland conservation in Japan. Japan's Yamashina Institute for Ornithology through its Bird Migration Research Center has also sponsored a total of five Filipino participants for bird banding training (including shorebirds) in Japan.

It should be noted that as far as the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau is concerned there is nobody who has undergone a formal course in wetland management.

Ramsar Strategic Plan – General Objectives 5

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

Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:

One (1). Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary (OIWS) – Being updated.

being prepared?

fully prepared?

being implemented?

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?

For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties", please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time

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.

Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No.

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains.

A Directory of Philippine Wetlands, a preliminary compilation of information on Wetlands of the Philippines compiled for Asian Wetland Bureau Philippine Foundation, Inc. (AWBFI) by Jon Davies, Perla Magsalay, Rogelio Rigor, Amuerferio Mapalo and Homer Gonzales which contain two (2) volumes. This is a joint project of AWBFI and the Haribon Foundation in conjunction with DENR in 1990.

The Directory contains the following information on individual wetlands: location; area (size in hectares); climate; wetland type; site description; principal vegetation; fauna; land tenure; wetland use and value; threats/plans for the site; conservation measures (for the site); special floral/faunal values; research conducted and facilities; references used, and source of information.

Does there exist a list or directory of "important" wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for "important" were used, and the types of information it contains.

If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

There is no estimate of loss or conversion of wetlands, except for mangroves where it has been estimated that there was originally a total mangrove cover of 450,000 ha. in 1918, then reduced to ca. 146,000 has in 1978, then to ca. 126,000 ha. in 1983 and only about 100,000 ha. remain at present. Most of the loss can be attributed to conversion of mangrove areas for brackishwater aquaculture.

Coral reefs has been estimated to cover an area of 27,000 sq. km. down to the 10 fathom contour around the Philippines. The result of a 1981 survey of the Marine Science Institute of the University of the Philippines showed that only 5.5% of the reefs were in excellent condition and only 24% were in good condition. Of the lakes, Laguna de Bay is in the worst condition since it is the recipient of pollution from Metro Manila and outlying municipalities where development activities are at a fast pace. It also used to be overburdened by fishpens, but the immediate past

LLDA Administration has been able to limit the total area allocated to fishpens to only 10,000 hectares out of the total 90,000 hectares water area of the lake. Many other lakes especially those that are located near population centers have fishpens stocked beyond their carrying capacity. Many lakes are also suffering from loss of native fish fauna due to the introduction of exotic food fish.

It is difficult to estimate the loss or damage to other wetlands because of the lack of reliable data.

6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
meet the 1 % criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

The documentation for Naujan Lake and Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park is still being prepared.

Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

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.

Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or internationally?
Yes/No.

Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

Convention on Biological Diversity
Framework Convention on Climate Change
Convention to Combat Desertification
Convention on Migratory Species
World Heritage Convention

The responsible agency for the implementation of all the conventions mentioned above except for the World Heritage Convention is the Department of Environment and Natural Resources through its various bureaux such as the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB). The World Heritage Convention is being handled by the Philippine's Department of Foreign Affairs by virtue of its being the national focal agency for UNESCO. The DENR, through, PAWB is represented in the UNESCO National Commission.

There is very minimal problem as regards dialogue and cooperative actions between the Ramsar Administrative Authority, the focal agency for the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Migratory Species since they are all handled by the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau. There is very little chance for interaction between the personnel responsible for the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification since they are housed in different bureaux although they are also within the DENR.

Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

The Philippines has been a participant to the annual Asian Waterfowl Census. It is also involved in the designation of sites for the Shorebird Reserve Network along the Asia-Pacific Flyway.

Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

The US Agency for International Development is currently funding the Community-Based Coastal Resources Management Project. The United Nations Development Project (UNDP) also financed the conduct of a comprehensive profiling of the Naujan Lake National Park and its adjacent watershed.

The World Bank through the GEF and the European Union are indirectly contributing to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Philippines through their financial support to the establishment and management of protected areas among which are wetlands.

Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No.

Starting CY 1999.

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

The DENR and its different units are required to have an approved Work and Financial Plan at the start of the Fiscal Year. The wetland conservation related activities are contained in the Work and Financial Plans of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau and the Protected Areas and Wildlife Sector in the DENR Regional or Field Offices. Government allocated funds for the implementation of the Work and Financial Plan are usually released in lump sum and so are not very specific for wetlands related activities.

As mentioned earlier in this document the inclusion of wetland conservation related activities have also been proposed under the Philippine Medium Term Development Plan (1999 – 2004). Its inclusion the Medium Term Plan increases the chances of it getting financial support from the government for the period.

If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No.

If yes, what is that process.

Ramsar Strategic Plan – General Objective 8

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

Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

Optional section – Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

These are optional questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this optional section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in your country?

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

International

World Wildlife Fund (as represented by Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas)

National

Pamalakaya-Pilipinas (Pambansang Lakas ng Kiluang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas or the National Federation of Fishermens` Associations in the Philippines)

Tambuyog Development Center

Provincial

AKLAS (Alyansa ng mga Kilusan sa Lawa ng Laguna para sa Sambyanan, an alliance formed by peoples` organizations within Laguna de Bay)

Philippine Wetlands and Wildlife Conservation Foundation

Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:

to each other? Yes/No

to the government? Yes/No

If yes in either case, please give details.

There is no regular mechanism through which these NGOs could express their views on wetland conservation. Opportunities only come in when symposium or similar activities are held.

Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No

Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details

The Protected Area Management Board of Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary has a representative of the Philippine Wetlands and Wildlife Conservation Foundation.

Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

The NGOs are generally more active in reinforcing the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise-use of wetlands, as well as, ensuring the conservation of sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Final comments:

General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

The Ramsar Standing Committee

The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The Ramsar Bureau

The Ramsar NGO partners

The Ramsar Bureau of all the institutions within the Convention has been the most effective in touching base with and providing guidance to the Contracting Parties. It is a wonder that the Bureau can still keep in constant touch in spite of the many Contracting Parties within the Region. The post of regional representative is very crucial in keeping things moving especially in Asia.

Wetlands International-Asia Pacific as well as Wetlands International- Oceania (to some degree) has been most visible and effective in pushing things along within the Region.

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.