

25th Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee

Wetlands International – Opening Statement

Chairman, Colleagues

Thank you for providing this opportunity for Wetlands International to re-express its support and commitment to the Ramsar Convention.

Wetlands International sees this meeting of the Standing Committee as critical for the consideration of the need for the mainstreaming of wetlands for people when considering poverty alleviation, and that wetland restoration and wetland rehabilitation are a key component of this.

As you know Wetlands International continues to support the implementation of the convention and of the Strategic Plan by:

- translation of wise use into action through applied research
- training and capacity building
- promoting and assisting countries to join the Convention and designate Ramsar Sites
- managing information on Ramsar sites
- providing information concerning wetlands not on the Ramsar list
- assisting in the organisation of technical workshops, and input to the work of the STRP
- facilitating technical compatibility between Ramsar and other relevant Conventions and Agreements concerning wetlands
- assisting with conservation measures for sites of common interest, including participation in Management Guidance missions

Recent highlights in our supporting role include:

- The continued upgrading of the Ramsar Sites Database to the new web friendly map based interface.
- Collaboration with CIESIN and Ramsar and other partners on the development of the Ramsar data gateway project
- Continued support for Inventory work including the Asian Wetland Inventory which aims to determine the status of Asian wetlands for the 21st Century and develop an Asian Wetland Inventory Database
- Support for the River Basin Initiative

Other major initiatives in support of the Convention and for which we will be seeking SC endorsement are:

- The Wetlands Training Framework and advisory service aimed at enhancing the capacity of Ramsar Convention Contracting Parties in their delivery of the principles and practice of the conservation and wise use (sustainable development) of wetlands. Please refer to Doc. SC25-19 Addendum 1.
- Support for the development of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Strategy: 2001-2005 and initial scoping for a Pacific Coast Flyway agreement
- The development of GROWI 2 – the Global Review of Wetland Inventories stage 2 which build on the STRP requirement for database and assessment protocols
- The development of a roundtable on Wetlands Stewardship aimed at bringing together corporate leaders, business school academics, wetland scientists and government representatives, to mutually explore the framework for wetland conservation and sustainable usage.
- More effective and systematic use of waterbird inventories and habitat condition
- The implementation of more communicative approaches with our partners on data holdings according to the BCIS framework, including the IUCN Species Information Service and the BirdLife Worlds Birds Database
- And of course what better way to support the Convention than by the grooming and development of future Bureau staff of which Nick Davidson is a prime example.

Wetlands International

Some of you will be aware that in the past 18 months WI has been through a somewhat disruptive period, there has been a large turn over of senior staff and this has meant that the organisation has been unable to deliver to the levels expected.

Thus we are currently undertaking a complete review of our organisational effectiveness. The review will be multi-faceted and will focus on ascertaining the status of our current structures and processes.

In-depth consultations with our main stakeholders, including our convention partners and international NGO partners are taking place to ensure that the changes required in the organisation reflect and meet the needs of our partners.

The clear message already emerging from the review is for the organisation to remain focussed on its core mandate which is to provide sound scientific baselines for wetland conservation.

There is also a necessity for transparent and effective communication internally and externally with our partners and networks.

Effective communication is often taken for granted however it is the area of our work which requires the greatest effort.

In closing, Wetlands International re-states its belief that the Convention is the most important international tool available for harnessing governmental commitment for wetland conservation and bringing about major change in current thinking about how wetlands are perceived globally.

Finally, we would also like to re-state our commitment to working strongly with our partners - BirdLife, IUCN and WWF - in support of the Convention.

Wetlands International
24 October 2000

Word Count 717