

Agenda item 11

**Collaborative review with the International Organization Partners  
of the Convention's relationships with the IOPs**

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to note the progress made with the International Organizations Partners in response to Decision SC41-26 and to advise on future steps.

1. In response to Decision SC41-26, the Secretariat has taken the following actions with the International Organization Partners (IOPs):

**Meeting with the IOPs**

2. From 27 to 28 September 2010, a meeting was held between the Secretariat and the IOPs to undertake a strategic review and consider future priorities for IOPs' collaboration with the Ramsar Convention. The meeting was attended by Birdlife International, IUCN, Wetlands International, and WWF International representatives. IWMI sent apologies.
3. The meeting provided an opportunity to strengthen the partnerships strategically, to discuss and find common ground amongst the strategic priorities of all the organizations present, and to strengthen working relationships at the regional and country levels.
4. The IOPs and the Ramsar Secretariat recognized the need for a more practical Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC), one that could be used as an agreement on mutual commitments and would be sufficiently focused to serve as a guide, not just for the IOPs' headquarters but also so that their on-the-ground offices can understand what commitments have been made and why.
5. Discussions were not only focused on bilateral relations with the Convention but also upon the nature of the relationship with all of the partners and what binds the partnership together. Therefore, the meeting also explored Ramsar-related collaborations amongst the IOPs in order to clarify lead roles where possible. The agreed values should be effectively communicated to the Parties as well.
6. Since the strategic directions of some of the IOPs have changed since the last MOCs were agreed, it was important to gain an overview together as to which IOPs are working where. In addition, the meeting discussed IOPs' perspectives on benefits, opportunities, and challenges related to the partnership with Ramsar as well as the Secretariat's perspectives on these matters.

7. Many action points were agreed during the meeting, including an effort to make sure that the new MOCs take account of the Convention's Strategic Plan and the IOPs' priorities in order to identify areas of collaborative opportunities and new ways to achieve communication at all levels. The MOCs should also spell out the Secretariat's and the IOPs' responsibilities in achieving regional coordination.

**Key conclusion of the meeting with IOPs:**

8. A new structure for the MOCs was agreed, along with the following timeline:
  - a) The Secretariat will draft a first cut of a generic front-end and this will be discussed with WWF and IUCN, then circulated to everyone for comment.
  - b) Each IOP will draft a second part outlining common high-level objectives, based on its strategic priorities and the Ramsar Strategic Plan.
  - c) Then the respective Joint Work Plans (JWP) of activities and priorities, mapped against objectives in the Ramsar Strategic Plan and each IOP's strategy, will be agreed to be added as annex.
9. It was agreed that steps 1 and 2 should be completed by 15 December, with a view to finalizing the MOCs by 15 April and, hopefully, signing them at a ceremony associated with the Standing Committee 42 meeting in May.

**Steps forward**

10. The Secretariat has drafted the generic part of the MOCs, and this has been shared with all of the IOPs for comments and amendments. The Secretariat has received comments and the first part of the MOCs is being finalized.
11. In accordance with the agreed timetable, the Secretariat is presently taking steps to finalize the MOCs in April 2011 so as to sign the MOCs during the 42th session of the Standing Committee in May 2011.