

Agenda item 12.2

Secretariat activities since January 2011 in implementing its Work Plan for this year

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the activities undertaken since January 2011 to implement the Ramsar Secretariat 2011 Work Plan, and the Committee may wish to advise on further actions.

Introduction

1. The Secretariat is happy to report that the 2011 Work Plan approved by the Standing Committee via electronic communication is being implemented through the actions summarized here for the period January through March 2011. The Work Plan 2011 itself is available in Excel format as DOC. SC42-15-02 for this meeting.

11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11)

2. The Secretariat continues to work closely with the relevant Romanian authorities to move forward the preparations for COP11. In this regard, the following actions have been taken:
 - developed a COP11 working team within the Secretariat to begin the planning process;
 - sent two diplomatic notes to all Contracting Parties, one in January on the COP11 dates and one in February on the National Report Form for COP11;
 - welcomed a Romanian planning team from the central government and the Mission in Geneva to Gland on 10 January, where significant progress was made in planning;
 - followed up on information exchange on various aspects of the COP and together with Romania prepared the SC42 COP11 document to be considered by the Subgroup on COP11 at the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC42);
 - made tentative arrangements for a Ramsar logistics team to visit the COP venue, likely in early June 2011.

Ramsar Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform

3. Representatives of 29 Contracting Parties attended the 7th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform in Geneva, Switzerland, on 14 January 2011. UNEP, IUCN and the Ramsar Secretariat also attended the meeting. The draft report has been sent to participants for comments.

4. The Co-Chair of the Working Group from Chile has been moved from Geneva to Chile and it is advisable to find a replacement. The Secretariat is expecting the Working Group to take action and find a new Co-Chair before SC42.

Actions taken to implement Decision SC41-37

5. The Secretariat has taken steps to develop a new 360° performance assessment process for the Secretary General in line with Standing Committee Decision SC41-37. In the meantime, IUCN is developing a 360° mechanism designed to cover all employees of the “M” or Management grade, but, according to IUCN, this will take some time to be completed. The Secretariat’s actions are described in DOC. SC42-03 for this meeting.

Celebration of the Conventions’ 40th anniversary

6. The Secretariat has taken action to implement its internal planning for activities driven by the Secretariat and actions to support all celebrations throughout 2011. In this regard, a 40th anniversary Coordination Group was set up within the Secretariat to oversee plans and products. These activities are described in DOC. SC42-22 for this meeting.

Increasing recognition of the role of water and wetlands for conservation and sustainable development

7. The Secretary General took part in the celebration of the 2011 World Water Day in Geneva on 22 March to highlight the linkages between water and wetlands and raise awareness about the vital role of wetlands for sustainable development. About 10 international organizations as well as representatives of the UN Missions to the UN in Geneva attended the symposium.

Working relationships between the Ramsar Convention and the biodiversity-related conventions

8. The Secretariat is strengthening communication with the other biodiversity-related conventions through a number of channels, as for example:
9. The Ramsar Secretariat hosted the 4th meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) of the biodiversity-related conventions in Gland on 13 February.
10. Discussions with the biodiversity-related conventions are underway to prepare the next meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group. This meeting will examine how we are collaborating in relation to the implementation of the outcomes from Nagoya, and in particular the review of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). In addition the meeting will also discuss the following items:
 - how the other biodiversity-related conventions can contribute to the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of Ramsar; and
 - joint contributions to the preparatory process for the UNCSD in 2012 (RIO +20).

Personnel issues

11. A Partnership Officer, Ms Claudia Fenerol, has taken office in Gland on 18 January 2011. The recruitment of the Assistant Advisor (Intern) for Asia and Oceania is underway. The Staff Performance Evaluation for 2010 is underway at this time.

Participation in major events and meetings

12. It should be noted that in its participation in the following events and meetings, the Secretariat staff has been diligent in moving forward the Convention's objectives, especially the purpose and content of the Changwon Declaration.
13. Some recent meetings with Ramsar participations, in no particular order, include: The 2nd meeting of the Environment management Group (EMG) consultative process on environmental and social safeguards from 14-15 March 2011 in Geneva. Joint work with Wageningen International staff on a guidance document for Ramsar CEPA Workshops from 16-18th March 2011. The FAO expert technical workshop for the preparation of the report on the state of the world's aquatic genetic resources from 1-4 March. The 26th session of the UNEP Governing Council /Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Nairobi, Kenya from 20 to 25 February. A Congress bringing together Mayors and City Executives to discuss "Local Climate Solutions for Africa 2011". The celebrations of Ramsar 40th Anniversary in Tehran and Ramsar City, Iran from 3-7 March. Meeting of the Wings over Wetlands (WOW) partnership of Ramsar from 19-26 February Workshop organized by the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) from 1-3 March in Wageningen, The Netherlands.
14. Others include: "Subregional workshop on transboundary water cooperation in Central and Western Europe" from 8 to 10 February in Budapest, Hungary. "The life-cycle of Water and Biodiversity" meeting at the European Parliament, Brussels, on 9 February. The World Wetlands Day celebrations in Kehl, Germany in the Transboundary Ramsar Site Oberrhein-Rhin supérieur. Celebration of the 40th Anniversary in Kasane, Botswana A Wetland festival in Huatulco, Mexico, from the 31 January to 2 of February 2011 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Convention in the Americas region. From 26 to 28 January, the MedWet Steering Group meeting in Athens, to review progress of this oldest Ramsar Regional Initiative and to appoint a MedWet Coordinator for the years 2011-2012. Celebration of the WWD events in Irún, Spain, from 1-3 February. The 10th anniversary of the wetland education centre at the urban Ramsar Site Txingudi at the French border in the Basque Country. Ministerial event in Madrid organized by the Ramsar Administrative Authority. meeting in Geneva on Thursday, 27 February, to discuss how the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) can contribute to the biodiversity conventions' synergies in the region, in particular in terms of facilitating implementation at country level. A special UN-Water meeting on "Water and UNCSD 2012 (Rio+20)", in Bangkok (Thailand) from 19-21 January. The 3rd Collaborative Management Board meeting of the Ramsar Regional Regional Centre - Central and West Asia from 22-25 January, Iran (I.R. Iran). STRP workshop on Ramsar Information Needs, Cambridge, UK, at UNEP-WCMC from 18-20 January 2011. A meeting with Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) to prepare press arrangements for the 40th Anniversary of the Convention, in Paris, France, from 12 to 14 January 2011.

Financial matters and business partnerships

15. The Secretariat has reviewed all financial reports and prepared the necessary documents for these for the present SC42 meeting.
16. The new Partnership Coordinator, Ms Fenerol, took up her position in January 2011 and reports the following activities since that time:
 - **February:** undertook a situation and needs analysis on the role and function of the Partnership Programme and the Secretariat operations and function; reviewed work programmes, structure, work flow and processes of the Secretariat which relate to partnerships and fundraising (this information provides the basis for the development of a medium-term strategy for partnerships); appraised the list of current partnerships in terms of how their function and role affects the Secretariat's operations and the Contracting Parties' ability to implement the Convention; assessed some key funding needs expressed by members of the Senior Regional Advisors and STRP to better understand what types of partnerships and fundraising that may be needed.
 - **March:** began work on a strategy for engagement of the business sector for the Secretariat; initiated a comprehensive prospect research programme and began identifying wealthy individuals who are highly supportive of wetland conservation and wise use (this list will expand to foundations, banks and other business leaders and organizations having relevance to the Convention and its mission); initiated work on a partnership and fundraising strategic framework for the next year 2011-2012; researching and outlining a compelling case for support for fundraising with new donors (The document would be a tool for fundraising in that it will provide the rationale why it is important to support the Ramsar Convention.); developing a portfolio of projects relating to top three priorities over the medium term; working to standardize products relating to fundraising to ensure systematic and comprehensive branding of the Convention and its products completed.
 - **April:** will be attending the Commission of Sustainable Development meeting (CSD) 19 in New York (shall participate in meeting, network with participants; and meet with UN counterparts attending the meeting); will participate in the partnership forum at CSD 19 and hold side meetings with participants of CSD 19 to raise awareness about the Convention, and will meet with potential partners and donors to discuss the Convention and priority projects and programmes for which funding is needed; will begin developing a special strategic framework for the first year of the partnership and fundraising programme; shall begin more comprehensive work of streamlining priorities of the Secretariat for fundraising purposes.

CEPA activities

17. The Secretariat-designed and Danone-funded materials for World Wetlands Day were sent out free of charge to interested government and non-government planners of WWD activities around the world, and many reports of those celebrations have been coming in. The Secretariat has made arrangements with a local part-time helper to post those reports in PDF format, and as of late March 2011 technical difficulties are being ironed out and the reports should be appearing soon.
18. The Secretariat continues to support activities to raise awareness about wetlands. In particular, it is worth noting that Star Alliance through our Biosphere Connections

partnership has decided to produce five films with National Geographic for inflight entertainment, and they asked the partners (UNESCO-MAB, IUCN, Ramsar) to suggest interesting sites and contacts; National Geographic has selected the Secretariat's suggestions of the Chilika Lake Ramsar Site in India and Abrolhos Ramsar Site in Brazil. The launch of the films via a marketing company is scheduled to take place soon, but short video clips have been launched on the Ramsar website and on YouTube.

Other communications activities

19. In addition to continuing the ongoing maintenance and updating of the Ramsar website, including news of Ramsar Sites and other Convention activities, the Communications Officer has introduced a number of innovations to the site. These include the capacity to host videos on the site and the creation of a YouTube channel dedicated to Ramsar, a system for manually creating "short URLs" for some of our most important sections of the website where the very long URL addresses given us by the hosting company are too awful, and a new section of the website for dealing with Ramsar Regional Initiatives.
20. Progress is still being made in the preparation of the 4th edition of the Handbooks for the Wise Use of Wetlands, despite a number of setbacks and delays. As of the end of March, all but one of the 21 Handbooks are ready in English, Spanish translations have been received for nearly all and only about six still await layout, and the French translations are about half completed.

STRP-related activities

21. In February 2011, about 60 persons participated in the 16th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to discuss and update the progress and status as well as finalization and timelines of the different STRP products intended for Ramsar COP11. This 16th meeting was the last formal plenary meeting of the panel during the 2009-2012 cycle.

Activities of the Secretariat's regional teams

22. **Africa:** List of activities undertaken since January 2011:
 - Updating Ramsar Information Sheets: Algeria- 4 RIS ; Benin- 2 RIS; Cameroon- 2 RIS; Mali- 2 RIS; Madagascar- 10 RIS ; Mauritius- 1 RIS; Tunisia- 5 RIS;
 - Small Grants Fund: Follow-up SGF 2006 (Togo/Benin, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Cape Verde, Kenya);
 - Swiss Grant for Africa (SGA): Preparation of the 2010 Report and proposal for 2011; Follow up activities with: Kenya (2003), Develop CEPA Manual (2006), Senegal Project + RAM (2006), Mozambique (2008), Niger (2008), Seychelles (2008), Kenya-Uganda-Tanzania (2008), Benin Project (2009), Namibia Project (2009), Morocco RAM (2009), Congo RAM (2009);
 - Implementation of Article 3.2: South Africa: letter to Administrative Authority; Democratic Republic of Congo, Virunga: Reply to UNESCO for a joint action;
 - Celebration of WWD and the 40th Anniversary of the Convention: joint activities with WacoWet Ramsar Regional Initiative (Benin);

- Development of new projects and fundraising activities: working on the Ramsar-MAVA Initiative for Integrated Mangrove Conservation and Wise Use; preparation of a draft Project on *Ramsar African Wetlands: Preliminary Inventory: Data, Indicators*; draft a Project on Ramsar contribution to the implementation of the *Great Green Wall Initiative*; contribution to the development of the project *Improving Ecosystem Services and Functions under a Changing Climate and Increased Climate Variability* in Burkina Faso;
 - Joint work with Regional Initiatives: with WacoWet in West Africa coastal areas, NigerWet in on the Niger Basin, and RAMCEA in East Africa;
 - Partnership development: initial steps taken to start development of partnership with EAC Secretariat, SADC Secretariat, West African Economic and Monetary Union Direction of Environment, ECOWAS and the Senghor University in Alexandria, Egypt; discussion with African Parliament (Committee in Charge of Budget and Finance), a draft MoU is available;
 - Assistance to countries for accession to the Convention: Ethiopia, Angola, and Zimbabwe
 - Preparation of the Africa Region PreCOP meeting: working with possible host country and fundraising activities; participation to regional workshops and meetings in Africa: experts and ministers consultative meeting in Bonn on “the Great Green Wall Initiative and Lake Chad”; ICLEI-Congress in South Africa (“Local Solutions for Climate Change”).
23. **Americas:** The main activities undertaken in the Americas from January to March 2011 are:
- Celebration of the 40 Anniversary of the Convention in the Americas in Huatulco, Mexico, from the 31 of January to the 3 of February. Overall, the event contributed a great deal to raising awareness about the Convention in the Americas at different levels but, what is more important, it demonstrated that the key to success in wetland conservation is to build partnership through collaborative work of relevant organizations sharing these common objectives.
 - Launching of a publication on *Wetlands in the Americas: the Role of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the benefits of Ramsar Site designation* on 31 January as part of the 40 Anniversary celebration. The main purpose is to raise awareness among different stakeholders in the Americas region about the benefits of being part of the Convention and designating wetlands for the Ramsar List.
 - Ramsar Advisory Mission to Refugio de Vida Silvestre del Rio San Juan as requested by the Nicaraguan Government.
 - Designation of Complejo Jaltepeque- El Salvador; Refugio de Vida Silvestre Laguna el Cabral, Dominican Republic. There are 19 proposals for designation that are in process in the Americas.
24. **Asia-Oceania:** From January to March 2011, the regional team for Asia and Oceania has undertaken the following activities:
- Translation of further Ramsar documents into Arabic funded by the Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA). These included the Ramsar 40th anniversary booklet; information and application for the Ramsar Small Grant

Fund; leaflet on ‘Wetland Ecosystem Services’; and Handbook 15 on ‘Addressing Change in Ecological Character’.

- January 23-24: The 3rd Collaborative Management Board meeting of the Ramsar Regional Center -CWA in Tehran (I.R. Iran) attended by the SRA Asia-Oceania. A 2011 workplan for the centre was developed at the meeting.
- February 1-3: Attended the ‘International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change’, Manila (Philippines), as well as participating in the World Wetland Day event in the Philippines.
- March 5-6: The government of the I.R. Iran and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat organized a ‘Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future’ to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention. The event was held in Tehran and the city of Ramsar.
- March 21–25: IUCN organized a ‘Workshop on the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong River Basin’ in Vientiane (Lao DPR) which was attended by the SRA Asia-Oceania.
- Designation of new sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance: The Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) review process was completed for a number of new Wetlands of International Importance, including Choghakhor Wetland, Kanibarazan Wetland (I.R. Iran), Gochang & Buan Tidal Flats (Republic of Korea), Son-Kol Lake (Kyrgyz Republic), Kumana Wetland Cluster (Sri Lanka), Wadi Wurayah National Park (UAE), and Ba Be National Park (Vietnam).

25. **Europe:** From January to end of march 2011, the Secretariat team for the European Region has undertaken the following activities:

- Work to finalize the Ramsar contribution the 2nd Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters, including highlighting a selection of Transboundary Ramsar Sites in Europe of the UNECE Water Convention, together with a workshop on western and northern Europe in Budapest in February.
- Participation in a side event of the conference on the “Future of European Waters” in Budapest on “international development cooperation and sustainable water management”, stressing Ramsar’s focus on ecosystem services and their recognition, valuation and need for correct payments. The panel discussion at the Hungarian Academy of Science was jointly organized by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central European University.
- World Wetland Day (WWD) focus in Spain, including a media information by the Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs (our Administrative Authority-AA), a special event at the Txingudi Ramsar Site (RS), a potential Transboundary RS at the mouth of the Bedasoa River catchment shared with France, the launch of the film on the use of Mediterranean RS in Spain by migratory birds produced by the Spanish Wetland Centre (CEHUM), and the joint Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) with the World Heritage Centre and its advisory body, IUCN.
- The first ever meeting of the steering group of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Mediterranean (MedWet) with full participation, appointing Mr Nejb Benessaiah as MedWet Coordinator until the end of 2012. The next formal meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee will take place during Ramsar COP11 in Bucharest.

- Presentation of Ramsar and its 40th anniversary to the Swiss National Committee of IUCN.
- Preparation with the Slovak National Focal Point and AA plus the European members of Standing Committee of the 7th European Ramsar Meeting, to take place from 26 to 30 September 2011 in the western part of Slovakia.

Conclusion

26. The Secretariat remains committed to continuing its efforts to enhance the relevance of the Convention for sustainable development, including constructive land use and efficient water management, biodiversity conservation and wise use, climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Secretariat is collaborating with many organizations to ensure complementary and supportive joint actions that integrate wetland issues into local, national and international priorities.

Reminder: The Secretariat's Work Plan for 2011 is available for this meeting as DOC. SC42-15-02.