

Agenda item 19.1

Summary report from the CEPA Oversight Panel

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to note the report of the CEPA Oversight Panel and the annexed report on the CEPA impact of holding SC41 in Georgia.

Introduction

1. The CEPA Oversight Panel was formed in accordance with Resolution IX.18 in Uganda in 2005 and Standing Committee Decision SC34-12.
2. The Panel has met once during this triennium on the 1st and 2nd of May, 2010, immediately following Standing Committee (SC)41 in Kobuleti, Georgia. A full report of this meeting has been posted on the Convention's website (www.ramsar.org/outreach_oversight_panel.htm). Since that meeting, the Panel has continued working by e-mail.
3. This report is focused on the outcomes of the Kobuleti meeting and on a review of the Panel's tasks for this triennium both completed to date and still to be completed before SC43 and COP11.

Progress in implementing the work plan for the CEPA Panel 2009-2012

4. This section looks at the work completed and the key components of the plan likely to be delivered by COP11.
5. *Develop a short advisory document which shows the relationships between Resolutions VII.9 and VIII.31 and Resolution X.8 in order to assist CEPA Focal Points in the ongoing implementation of the CEPA Programme (this is a priority for the Panel as identified in Resolution X.8 para. 10).* This task has been completed and the document distributed to CEPA National Focal Points; it has also been made available both on the Web and in the annex of the 4th edition of the CEPA Handbook. It is available on the CEPA Panel's web page at www.ramsar.org/pdf/outreach_oversight_panel_fourthreport.pdf.
6. *Review CEPA implementation demonstrated through the National Reports submitted to COP10. The Panel discussed the need to consider whether the National Reports submitted triennially by Parties are an appropriate mechanism for assessing the level and scope of CEPA implementation. An assessment of this, using the COP10 National Reports, should be made by the Panel.* In their review of the National Reports to COP10 the Panel noted the higher turnover within the Government CEPA National Focal Point position as compared to the NGO NFP position, where these exist, and suggested that less turnover in Government CEPA Focal Point responsibility would improve the continuity and enhance the CEPA outcomes within countries. The Panel also noted during their discussions on this task the utility of the Resolution X.8 mandate

regarding the inclusion of the CEPA Focal Points on National Wetland Committees where they exist.

7. *Advise the Convention on improving the performance of the CEPA National Focal Points (NFPs), including the need for training workshops in using the new CEPA planning tool launched at the COP.*
 - i) The Panel noted that beginning in October 2009 and continuing to the present, the Secretariat has been organizing a series of CEPA workshops to improve the capacity of the CEPA National Focal Points especially in the key task of action planning. To date, four workshops have been completed, covering Asia, some European countries and southern Africa, and at least two more are planned for 2011. One workshop planned for late 2011 will cover those Parties that are part of the Ramsar Regional Initiative NorBalWet.
 - ii) The Panel noted that two of the Ramsar Regional Centres (Central and West Asia, and East Asia) have been instrumental both practically and financially in assisting the Secretariat with three of the four workshops already carried out. The Panel, as one of its work plan areas, is currently gathering information from the Ramsar Regional Centres (RRC) via the RRC representative on the CEPA Panel to look more broadly at the role they play in delivering objectives under the CEPA programme. This will be reported on at SC43.
 - iii) Although invitations to CEPA workshops conducted by the Secretariat have been directed only at the CEPA National Focal Points, the Panel noted that there have been many requests to send an alternative person from countries. In some cases it is clear that a very senior person has been nominated to the post and would be unlikely to attend such a workshop and, in other cases, that another person has been sent for unknown reasons. The CEPA Panel has suggested that Parties should be strongly discouraged from sending alternative participants and that funding should be directed only to nominated CEPA Focal Points.
8. *Advise the Secretariat on the indicators included in the draft National Reporting Form that assess the implementation of the CEPA component of the Strategic Plan.* The Panel has suggested changes to indicators for CEPA in the COP11 National Reporting Form, and these have been incorporated in the final document disseminated to Parties in February 2011.
9. *Continue work with the Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention on identifying priorities for capacity building for wetland management.* Due to ill health of the consultant and limited financial support, the completion of a Capacity Building Framework targeted primarily at the Ramsar National Focal Points was delayed during 2010. The Panel has been in contact recently with the Advisory Board, and it seems very likely that the draft will be completed during the first half of 2011. The Board will oversee the review of the draft by the Board members, the Ramsar Senior Regional Advisors and other Secretariat staff, and the CEPA Oversight Panel and will release the final product for distribution to the Ramsar constituency and beyond.
10. *Advise the Secretariat on how regular Convention meetings and Ramsar-related meetings can be used to help raise the profile of the Convention and the performance of the Secretariat, e.g. Georgia's offer to host a Standing Committee meeting.* The Panel felt it was not in a position to advise on the 'performance' of the Secretariat but considered that there was merit in addressing the rest

of the task by taking a broad look at the advantages and disadvantages of hosting SC meetings in a location other than Gland. The annexed report “Raising the profile of the Convention through Ramsar-related meetings: Standing Committee 41 in Georgia” has been compiled from discussions held during the CEPA Oversight Panel meeting in Georgia, from input following Standing Committee 41 from Secretariat staff meetings, and from the Georgian Ramsar Administrative Authority. It shows significant advantages for the Secretariat staff, SC members and the host country in hosting SC away from Gland as well as a number of disadvantages.

11. The tasks in progress that the Panel will endeavour to complete by the end of the triennium include:

Advise the Convention on the development of some general guidance on CEPA for site managers that could be easily incorporated into site manager training programmes.

Review the two Convention Resolutions relevant to participation, Resolutions VII.8 and VIII.36, and advise the Convention on whether there is value in consolidating their contents into one Resolution.

12. The Panel has removed the following task from its work plan since it felt it had neither the capacity, mechanism nor remit to deliver it:

Identify what the Secretariat does well that can be shared with Parties, e.g. using the Secretariat experience with Danone/Evian to share knowledge and know-how on working with the private sector. Perhaps successful experiences from the IOPs in working with the private sector could be identified. All this advice should be delivered to the Parties through the Standing Committee.

Annex

Raising the profile of the Convention through Ramsar-related meetings: Standing Committee 41 in Georgia

Introduction

1. The CEPA Oversight Panel’s work plan for the period 2009-2014, as reported in DOC. SC40-19, included the following task, among others:

Advise the Secretariat on how regular Convention meetings and Ramsar-related meetings can be used to help raise the profile of the Convention and the performance of the Secretariat, e.g. Georgia’s offer to host a Standing Committee meeting.

2. In response, this paper has been compiled from discussions held during the CEPA Oversight Panel meeting in Georgia, from input from Secretariat staff meetings following Standing Committee (SC) 41, and from the Georgian Ramsar Administrative Authority. It is structured to show advantages and disadvantages of holding SC41 in Georgia rather than in Gland, Switzerland, from two key perspectives: that of the Secretariat staff and of the Georgian hosts.

Advantages and disadvantages of holding SC41 in Georgia rather than in Gland, Switzerland

For Ramsar staff and SC members:

3. Advantages:

- i) More time for Ramsar staff and SC members to talk to each other than is usual: with everyone in the same hotel there was more opportunity for both formal and informal discussions between the regional teams and their SC members. In Gland, Ramsar staff usually go home at the end of the meeting and do not meet with SC members in the evenings or at breakfast.
- ii) For administrative staff and other staff who do not travel for their work, it is the only time apart from COPs that they have an opportunity to meet in person with Contracting Party representatives: this builds better understanding and rapport between staff and Parties and makes later e-mail communications a little easier.
- iii) The informal moments (breakfast, evenings, field trip) are important settings for interaction on a different level from the formal meeting and are valuable both practically and psychologically in improving the rapport between the Secretariat and the Contracting Party representatives.
- iv) During the working day at SC41, all Ramsar staff tended to stay more engaged in the meeting since they could not go back to their offices to deal with other ongoing issues.
- v) For the Ramsar staff, the experience away from Gland is very different in terms of its effect on the Ramsar 'team': as with the COPs, having the staff in a working situation in a different location is important in reinforcing good teamwork, cohesion, and morale.
- vi) Raising awareness about the Convention and about wetlands is enhanced in the host country for COPs and other meetings and hosting the SC meeting away from Switzerland brings this advantage.

4. Disadvantages:

- i) In terms of logistics, it is more time-consuming for certain staff leading up to the meeting (four staff members were particularly affected). For two of these staff members with logistic tasks, it was estimated that preparing for the meeting required three times the amount of work that it would have done had the meeting been held in Gland.
- ii) Staff needed to be away from Gland over two weekends. The IUCN rules on compensation for weekends worked differ between administrative and professional staff, but applying the rules resulted in the 'loss' of 54 working days.
- iii) Locating the SC meeting away from the Geneva area meant that few people from the Geneva missions were able to participate.
- iv) Depending upon the delegates' countries, some SC members (and certainly the Ramsar Secretariat) spent more time in traveling to the SC41 location, and many

sponsored delegates and all Ramsar staff traveling from Gland had to overnight in Istanbul – this meant more financial cost and of course more time. We have no cost or time information on non-sponsored delegates, but in terms of Secretariat costs, there is no doubt that these were considerably higher (around 40%) since all staff attended. It must be noted, however, that the costs were not necessarily greater for the Convention, since Georgia contributed a significant sum to the financing for the meeting.

For the Georgian hosts

5. Advantages:

- i) The Georgians arranged for one TV channel to have the reporting rights, and their film crews filmed the opening and traveled with participants on the field trip. This gave excellent visibility both for Ramsar and for Georgian wetlands and helped raise awareness of the general public and decision-makers in the country.
- ii) Holding a wetland painting competition locally brought together children, their families, the TV station and their reporters, and SC participants as well. Again this increased awareness about Ramsar and Georgian wetlands.
- iii) The Georgian authorities used quite a number of student volunteers (all from Batumi University) throughout the meeting. The volunteers clearly enjoyed this interaction with SC members and Secretariat staff and quite likely know much more about wetlands and the Convention than they did before.
- iv) The staff at the field trip sites clearly felt that the presence of international SC members was very important and had gone to quite some trouble to welcome the members in three groups. It seems likely that the SC's presence reinforced the importance of Ramsar and the extent to which the Convention values their efforts in managing their wetlands.
- v) A number of the Ramsar Administrative Authority staff noted their lack of experience in planning such a meeting (see below) but were quite clear that they had gained experience as a result of SC41 and have since put this experience to good use in another meeting.

6. Disadvantages:

- i) It is important to remember that it takes a lot of time, effort, determination, and funding for an Administrative Authority to go through the national processes required for hosting such an event. Although Georgia originally intended to host SC40, the funding was not available at that time and only became possible for SC41. It is also noteworthy that the practical planning had to be done mainly by other administrative divisions of the Ministry under the Ramsar Administrative Authority's guidance rather than directly by the AA; the latter had not had much experience in organizing such a large international meeting and thus found the work quite challenging.