

Agenda item 19.2

Report on the Convention's 40th Anniversary celebrations and activities

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to note the report of the Convention's 40th anniversary activities and consider any new ideas for using the occasion of the 40th anniversary year to raise awareness of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention.

From May 2009 to the present

1. At the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC40) in May 2009 it was noted that 2011 would mark the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention in the city of Ramsar, Iran, and Decision SC40-36 urged Parties to consider planning local, national and regional celebrations for the 40th. At that meeting the I.R. of Iran announced that it would be holding a commemorative festival in the city of Ramsar.
2. At the Secretariat two internal 'brainstorming' meetings took place in November and December 2009 to discuss a plan of action to launch the Convention's 40th anniversary year and encourage a year of activities to celebrate 40 years of wetland conservation from the Contracting Parties, the International Organization Partners (IOPs), other NGOs, the wetland-related Multilateral Environment Agreements, and others. This resulted in an internal plan of activities driven by the Secretariat to launch and sustain the celebrations throughout 2011 as well as suggestions for Administrative Authority activity. A 40th anniversary Coordination Group was set up within the Secretariat to oversee activity plans and products.
3. In January 2010, a diplomatic note was sent to the Parties with formal advance warning of the 40th anniversary and an annexed document highlighting what the Secretariat was planning for the 40th, 10 key messages about wetlands and the Convention (subsequently increased to 12), and a number of suggested activities that the Ramsar Administrative Authorities might wish to consider for their involvement at the national level. Parties were encouraged to inform the Secretariat of any concrete suggestions regarding national and/or regional actions that could be shared with other Parties. The same information was sent by e-mail to Ramsar National Focal Points and CEPA Focal Points, and a similar message was sent to the IOPs and selected MEAs.
4. Since that advance warning in January, the following steps have been taken:
 - **April 30, 2010:** the 40th anniversary logo was launched at Standing Committee 41 in Georgia and a special 40th area created on the Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org/40-Anniversary/).
 - **June 7, 2010:** the formal launching of the 40th celebrations began with the release of the animated 40th anniversary logo in Oman at a workshop for Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties in the Arabian Peninsula (www.ramsar.org/pdf/Ramsar40_booklet/Ramsar_LiquidAssets_E.pdf).

- **September 1, 2010:** a 40th anniversary ‘pin’ was made available for distribution at meetings and events.
- **November 19, 2010:** *Ramsar’s liquid assets*, a fully-illustrated commemorative booklet was launched through the website and by e-mail in PDF format in the Convention’s three official languages: it offers a brief reflection on, and celebration of, the evolution and achievements of the Convention since 1971, as well as a look at the challenges before us.
- **February 2, 2011:**
 - A Media Advisory entitled *A wave of activities for Ramsar Convention’s 40th anniversary* was sent to several hundred media contacts, the Ramsar constituency, the MEAs, and IOPs and was broadly used to raise awareness of the 40th anniversary.
 - Many MEAs, our IOPs, and other key contacts sent video and text messages to the Secretariat and to their own constituencies to congratulate the Convention on its 40 years and key achievements, and these have been made available on the Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org/40th_VideoContest/).
 - The hard copy of *Ramsar’s liquid assets* was formally launched at Huatulco, Mexico, where the two Ramsar regions, North America and the Neotropics, jointly celebrated the 40th anniversary with 320 participants, including the Ramsar Administrative Authorities from both regions, the Ramsar Secretariat, IOP and STRP representatives, and representatives from the MEAs and many NGOs in a 3-day celebration.
 - The three winners of the Ramsar video contest at the IPAC Design School were announced and all 25 videos submitted were made available online (www.ramsar.org/40th_VideoContest/).
 - The first of the 12 key Ramsar messages was launched with supporting materials via the Ramsar website and the Ramsar e-lists, and through key communication contacts among the IOPs (www.ramsar.org/40th_KeyMessages/).
 - A web page was dedicated to reporting on the special 40th activities and products from our many wetland contacts worldwide (www.ramsar.org/40th_WorldwideActivities).
- **March 5-6, 2011:** Organized by the Department of Environment, I.R. of Iran, and the Ramsar Secretariat, the *Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future* was held in Tehran and Ramsar city to celebrate the 40th Anniversary. Some 300 people participated, including ministers, ambassadors and senior officials from around 50 countries, and a *Tehran Declaration on Wetlands and Sustainable Development* was agreed and disseminated (www.ramsar.org/pdf/ramsar_40/Tehran_Declaration%202011.pdf).

Still to come

5. On May 19th, 2011, during Standing Committee 42, the Secretariat is organizing a celebratory reception to be held at the Museum of Natural History in Geneva. This evening event will bring together the diplomatic community in Geneva with senior representatives of the Convention’s IOPs, key players of the UN conventions with which we work, UNEP, representatives of the Swiss Confederation at the federal, cantonal and city level, participants at Standing Committee 42, and of course the Secretariat.

6. An online photo exhibition is planned for launch in May 2011 which will provide an opportunity to share the diversity and beauty of wetlands. Wetland photographers (amateur and professional alike) will be encouraged to send images to a dedicated e-mail address at the Secretariat and these will be uploaded to a database and be visually available online, each image forming part of one or several photomosaics which will be developed. An important long-term output of this activity will be a photo database which will be of use to the Secretariat well beyond the 40th anniversary celebrations for storage and easy retrieval of wetland images for publication and other purposes.
7. The preparatory Regional Meetings prior to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties have been identified as another key opportunity for celebrating Ramsar's first 40 years, and discussions within the Secretariat and with the host countries are underway.

What have we achieved so far?

8. While the Secretariat is proud to share the activities and materials it has prepared for the 40th, it is important to remember the initial intention: to launch and sustain a celebratory 'campaign' during the anniversary year with the active involvement of the Contracting Parties, IOPs, relevant MEAs, NGOs and many other wetland supporters in a full year of celebration of the value of wetlands and their ecosystem services, and of course their natural beauty. The Secretariat is aware of the many excellent products and activities we have been informed about by the Parties, NGOs, and IOPs and of other special efforts that have been, and are being, made to raise awareness about wetlands and the Ramsar Convention. From the production of Ramsar commemorative stamps, to calendars, agendas, translations of the 40th anniversary brochure, wetland videos, to extensive use of the 40th anniversary logo, it is clear that the extended Ramsar family has made considerable effort to use World Wetlands Day and indeed the whole year to date to celebrate wetlands and the Ramsar Convention.
9. It is worthy of note that in some countries, while there have been no 'special' products or activities for the 40th, there has been an increase in World Wetlands Day events beyond the normal level of activity and very broad use of our 40th logo. This has been reported to the Secretariat by several national contacts and is evident in the WWD reports received.
10. The Secretariat would like to express its appreciation to the many people who have made special efforts to make this celebratory year a success. The Secretariat invites the Contracting Parties and all stakeholders again to continue using the opportunity presented by the 40th anniversary to draw attention to the vital contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and biodiversity.