

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
47th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 24-28 March 2014

DOC. SC47-04

Progress in the development of the fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan, for 2016 onwards

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- note the progress for the development of the fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan;
- consider and advise on the issues and options concerning the focus, structure and content of the next Strategic Plan for the Ramsar Convention and the agreed process through which it will be developed for due consideration by COP12; and
- consider and agree on the terms of reference for the Strategic Plan Working Group.

Background

1. Through Decision SC46-11: "The Standing Committee established a Strategic Plan Working Group, to include Contracting Parties, STRP, the CEPA Oversight Panel, International Organization Partners, Regional Initiatives and other Ramsar stakeholders, in order to take forward the preparation of the 4th Strategic Plan."
2. SC46 established the core membership of the open-ended Working Group as: Finland and France (co-chairs), Australia, Burundi, Chile, Cuba, Indonesia, I.R. Iran, Switzerland, USA, UNEP, BirdLife International, STRP Chair, and the Secretariat.
3. During SC46, the Working Group developed some initial views on different aspects of the scope, content and structure of the Plan, and anticipated the need to engage a consultant to facilitate the further scoping and drafting processes.
4. The Working Group stressed the importance of having contextual information on the status and trends of wetlands available to inform and guide the drafting process, and reinforced the importance of Decision SC46-14 iv) in adding the preparation of the *State of the World's Wetlands* report as a highest priority for the work of the STRP.

Progress made so far and ways forward

5. After SC46, the Secretariat, with the inputs of the chairs of the Working Group, has prepared the terms of reference for a consultant (Annex 1) and is in the process of selecting and appointing a suitable candidate.
6. Likewise, the Secretariat has prepared, under instruction from the chairs, terms of reference for the Strategic Plan Working Group for the consideration of Contracting Parties (Annex 2).

7. After further consultation with the chairs, a short questionnaire has been prepared (Annex 3) to enable SC47 representatives and permanent observers to make some preliminary inputs that can serve as a basis for the consultant.
8. The Secretariat has also prepared, at the request of the chairs, a list of the main regional priorities, challenges and threats, based on national reports submitted to COP11 (Annex 4).
9. The Standing Committee representatives and permanent observers will have been advised of the questionnaire to be filled in using the SurveyMonkey system, and the last date for feedback of 18 March 2014, to enable them to be presented during the Working Group meeting.
10. Based on the above documents, the Standing Committee is invited to provide further input on the scoping document and process for the development of the fourth Strategic Plan.

Annex 1

Terms of reference for consultancy support to the Ramsar Convention's Standing Committee Working Group on the Strategic Plan 2016 onwards

Background

The Ramsar Convention's third Strategic Plan 2009-2015 was adopted by Ramsar COP10 in 2008 through Resolution X.1, and adjusted by COP11 (2012) Resolution XI.3. This Strategic Plan, similar to the previous Plans, is essentially an 'implementation strategy' for Ramsar Contracting Parties and other Convention bodies. It is structured as a Mission and five Goals (addressing the main 'pillars' of Convention implementation). Under each Goal there are a number of implementation Strategies, and for each of these, a small number of 'Key Result Areas', which may also be seen as targets.

Recognizing that a fourth Strategic Plan needs to be prepared for consideration by Parties at Ramsar COP12 (1-9 June 2015), in April 2013 the Convention's Standing Committee, at its 46th meeting, established a Strategic Plan Working Group to progress this preparation of the fourth Strategic Plan. The core membership of this Working Group was established as: Finland and France (co-chairs), Australia, Burundi, Chile, Cuba, Indonesia, I.R. Iran, Switzerland, USA, UNEP, BirdLife International, STRP Chair, and the Ramsar Secretariat.

At its 46th meeting the Working Group undertook initial discussions on the scope, structure, content, duration and title of this next Plan, based on an issues paper prepared by the Ramsar Secretariat (DOC. SC46-9, available at: <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/46/sc46-doc09-strategy.pdf>). This includes consideration on how and to what extent the next Ramsar Strategic Plan should be aligned with the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity* and its 20 Aichi Targets adopted by CBD COP10 in 2010, in recognition that all biodiversity-related conventions have committed to contributing to its implementation. Further consideration of these issues has since been made by the Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support for Implementation of the Ramsar Convention (Changwon, Republic of Korea, October 2013) and in the Ramsar Secretariat.

The Standing Committee working Group has recognized the need to engage an expert consultant to support its work, in conducting further consultations with Ramsar stakeholders on the scope, structure and content of the 4th Strategic Plan, and in preparing a draft Plan for consideration by the Standing Committee Working Group. In undertaking such work, the consultant should also assess the relevance to the Ramsar Convention process of the processes and approaches taken by other biodiversity-related conventions (e.g. Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on Biological Diversity and CITES) in their recent or current strategic plan redevelopment, including in relation to approaches to alignment with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

The consultant will work under the guidance of the Standing Committee Strategic Plan Working Group and the Secretary General of Ramsar.

Expertise and profile of the Consultant

The consultant should have the following experience and profile:

- Experience and expertise in undertaking survey-based consultations on governmental/ intergovernmental processes and issues;

- Expertise in strategic planning, and the preparation and drafting of strategic plans for international organizations;
- Knowledge of the roles, functions and *modus operandi* of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);
- Knowledge of the scope, implementation and priorities of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on wetlands and water, including in relation to those of other MEAs;
- Fully fluent in spoken and written English, including the ability to write clearly and simply in the English language; fluency in another Convention language (French and/or Spanish) is a major advantage.

Work to be undertaken

1. In consultation with the Working Group Chairs and Ramsar Secretariat, prepare and conduct a structured questionnaire-based survey of views of Ramsar 'stakeholders' on the scope, content and structure of the 4th Strategic Plan.

A list of those consulted should include, among others, Contracting Party national focal points, STRP and CEPA national focal points, other Conventions, including water-related Conventions, organizations operating in the water management sector, and other organizations and bodies which have connections (such as Memoranda of Cooperation). The Secretariat has prepared a working list (with contact points) of such organizations.

Consultations may be undertaken through a variety of methods, including email, telephone and face-to-face interviews, and web-based tools such as Skype, SurveyMonkey and the listserves and web-portals maintained by the Ramsar Secretariat.

2. Prepare and submit a report summarizing the consultation survey results in relation to each aspect of the scoping paper.
3. Prepare a first outline draft of the fourth Strategic Plan, for consideration by the Standing Committee Working Group. It would be helpful to consider preparing an earlier outline draft (draft skeleton) for the consultations under s.1. Such a draft might contain a contents list, based on the scoping paper, to inform the consultation review.
4. On the basis of further advice from the working Group, prepare a full first draft of the fourth Strategic Plan, for consideration by the Working Group, and the Standing Committee at its 48th meeting (24-28 November, 2014).
5. Following this consideration, work with the Working Group and Secretariat to prepare a final draft Strategic Plan for COP12 consideration for adoption.
6. The consultant should expect to participate in meetings of the Standing Committee and its Strategic Plan Working Group from 24-28 March 2014 (47th meeting of the Standing Committee) and 24-28 November 2014 (48th meeting of the Standing Committee). Depending on their timing, the consultant should also expect to participate, resources permitting, in one or more regional COP12 preparatory meetings.

7. The work shall be deemed to commence on 1 March 2014 and will terminate upon satisfactory and timely completion of all tasks to be undertaken, but no later than 31 January 2015.

Deliverables and timeline

- Preliminary draft skeleton of Strategic Plan for consultation by end of April 2014;
- Version of draft Strategic Plan reflecting stakeholders' comments and inputs by end of May 2014;
- Version of draft Strategic Plan after review and discussions (Regional Meetings and others) by end of October 2014;
- Final version of the Strategic Plan combining SC48 comments and inputs by end of November 2014 for submission to the Twelfth Conference of the Contracting Parties, 1-9 June 2015.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Indicative timeframes</i>
1. Discussion of process with Chairs	January 2014
2. Prepare and send questionnaire on Strategic Plan contents and issues	End of February 2014
3. Consultation with SC47 stakeholders on Strategic Plan contents and issues	March 2014 during SC47
4. Agree upon planning process and strategy	March 2014 during SC47
5. Preparation of draft Strategic Plan from all inputs and comments	By end of April 2014
6. Consultation on draft Strategic Plan	May to August 2014
7. Finalization of revised draft Strategic Plan	September 2014
8. Discussion of revised draft Strategic Plan in regional meetings	Second half of October 2014
9. Presentation and discussion of final draft Strategic Plan	November 2014 during SC48
10. Incorporation of revisions to final draft of Strategic Plan	
11. Endorsement & Communication of Strategic Plan	June 2015 during COP12

Annex 2

Proposed terms of reference for the Ramsar Strategic Plan Working Group

Task:

The Strategic Plan Working Group set up by Ramsar's Standing Committee at its 46th meeting in April 2013 (SC46) has the task of preparing the final draft of a Strategic Plan for the Convention for the period 2016-2021. To this end, it must launch and coordinate wide consultation with relevant partners and stakeholders and ensure that a final draft document is ready in time for sign-off by the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee, which in turn will submit it to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) in 2015.

Composition of the Working Group:

During SC46, a provisional core working group was set up, consisting of Finland (lead, Kristiina Niikkonen), with Ramsar Parties Australia, Burundi, Chile, Cuba, France, Indonesia, Iran and Switzerland showing interest in participating. The group is open to other Ramsar Parties and Ramsar representatives (Culture Network, CEPA oversight panel, STRP, etc.).

In addition, other relevant institutions should be invited to actively participate in the work of the group, notably UNESCO, UNECE, GWP, UNEP and Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IUCN, IWMI, WWF, Wetlands International and BirdLife International). However, the working group must be small enough for management purposes, with fewer than 15 participants. The larger number of all other Contracting Parties and other organizations will need to be included in the process as consultees in the review of draft documents, and the original list will be increased in line with the consideration of the Working Group.

Organisation of the Work:

The Working Group will establish a small Core Group of experts willing and available to provide expert and timely advice and input to the Plan. It will communicate mainly via e-mail, and work occasionally through face-to-face workshops and meetings. It may hire consultants, to facilitate the consultation process and to write draft texts for the Strategic Plan and to revise such drafts, based on feedback from the consultation process, in order to be able to deliver a final draft in time for SC48 (i.e. by the end of September 2014).

The Working Group will work through the Chairs, who will be in regular contact with the Secretary General, in order to make sure that the work progresses as planned and that it is delivered on time.

The Working Group works on a voluntary basis, except for the costs of hired consultants and of any consultative workshops, which may be managed by the Secretariat. These costs can be covered from the available Ramsar budget allocation, but it is likely that the Working Group will need to raise complementary funds (e.g. by a host country), should the Ramsar budget provision not suffice to cover costs of workshops or design and layout of the final Strategic Plan.

Annex 3

Questionnaire for SC Representatives and Permanent Observers on matters of the Preparation of Ramsar Strategic Plan for 2016 onwards

Taking as a reference some of the elements from Document SC46-9 on “Issues and process for the development of the fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan, for 2016 onwards”, please find below a short questionnaire on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the current third Strategic Plan (2009 – 2015), to seek views of the regional representatives and permanent observers to the 47th Standing Committee meeting in relation with the process of preparing the fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan (2016 onwards).

Thank you for sending your answers by 18 March 2014.

Name of Contracting Party _____

Your name _____

Job Title _____

Email _____

Name of Observer _____

Your name _____

Job Title _____

Email _____

1. What are the main strengths of the current Strategic Plan 2009-2015?

2. What should be the structure of the next Strategic Plan?

3. What should be the scope and focus of the new Strategic Plan?

4. What changes in the current situation or external factors could serve as good opportunities for the preparation of the new Strategic Plan?

For example:

- to what extent should the new Strategic Plan be aligned with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets?

- to what extent should the new Strategic Plan invite other sectors, and notably the water management sector, to better value, restore and maintain wetland ecosystems and their services?

5. What time period should the new Strategic Plan cover? Should the current approach of six years (two triennia) be continued for the period 2016-2021?

6. How should the new Strategic Plan be titled?

7. Which situations should be avoided in the preparation of the new strategic plan?

8. How should the outcomes of the new Strategic Plan be measured and the impact of the Plan be evaluated?

Annex 4

Regional needs, challenges and strategic priorities for regions, as derived from national reports prepared by Contracting Parties for COP11

The Americas

1. Raising awareness at all levels – national, regional and local – of wetland benefits and services, so that decision makers at all levels have a full understanding of what is really at stake for present for future generations.
2. Increasing the political commitment to support, technically and financially, the effective management of their Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.
3. Implementation of legal frameworks, policies and specific wetland regulations, application of strategic land use planning and use of impact assessments in decision-making processes.
4. Effective engagement of different authorities and territories and of sectors other than the environmental sector in the conservation of wetlands and sustainable use of their natural resources.
5. Increasing work with the water management sector and productive sectors in the implementation of best practices that promote the wise use of wetlands and water.
6. Improving the implementation of collaborative regional approaches to deal with common issues, such as effective management of water and wetlands, climate change and invasive species.

Asia

7. Provision of sufficient staff within Administrative Authorities and at the Ramsar Sites to implement the Convention, and increasing the capacity of the staff through regular 'on-the-job' training.
8. Raising of awareness of the importance of wetlands, particularly among decision-makers since wetland conservation has not been fully integrated into development planning and strategies across the different government departments, and at the different levels of government.
9. Development and implementation of mechanisms to promote greater coordination for wetland conservation at the regional, national and site levels. Wetlands are often multiple-use areas, with many diverse stakeholder groups, but in many cases there is insufficient coordination between them, and sometimes a lack of cooperation and trust.
10. Development and implementation of land and water legislation, policies and regulations which are compatible with wetland conservation and wise use, and fit to protect wetlands from harmful investment projects.
11. Development of mechanisms to provide sustainable funding for wetland conservation activities including surveys, site management, monitoring and training.

12. Development of integrated basin or coastal-scale plans for the conservation of Ramsar Sites, since many threats to wetland conservation originate from outside the wetlands themselves.

Africa

13. Addressing issues on healthy wetlands and human health.
14. Developing strategies to reduce the impact of extractives industries on wetlands.
15. Mainstreaming Ramsar principles within local, national and sub-regional planning processes.
16. Strengthening partnerships to address issues of wetlands and climate change.
17. Improving national efforts to link the wise use of wetlands and valuing of ecosystem services to poverty eradication.
18. Financing wetland-related projects and developing knowledge-sharing systems to improve access to information.

Europe

19. Creating the inter-sectoral cooperation needed for the integration of sectoral policies (water, agriculture, forestry, energy, transport, fisheries, conservation).
20. Encouraging more widespread recognition and valuation of wetland services (eg Payment for Ecosystem Services models, Wetland TEEB report) and ecological accounting (taking such services into account), to create more political understanding and will, and through this more financial support.
21. Increasing cooperation with the water management sector, enabling better management of effects of underground aquifer abstraction and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.
22. Better communication and outreach for greater awareness and understanding of wetland values, through coordinated CEPA and outreach programmes, via targeted partnerships and more complete support from the communications sector.
23. Promoting and recognizing the huge potential for wetland restoration and its large return on investment.
24. Development of effective response strategies to manage alien invasive species and cope with climate change impacts.
25. Development of effective response strategies to manage alien invasive species and cope with climate change impacts.

Oceania

26. Provision of sufficient staff within Administrative Authorities and at the Ramsar Sites to implement the Convention, and increasing the capacity of the staff through regular 'on-the-job' training.
27. Raising of awareness of the importance of wetlands, particularly among decision-makers since wetland conservation has not been fully integrated into development planning and strategies across the different government departments, and at the different levels of government.
28. Developing of strategies to maintain functioning wetlands and the ecosystem services that they provide for both people and the environment in view of climate change.
29. Development and implementation of mechanisms to promote greater coordination for wetland conservation at the regional, national and site levels, and to mainstream the Ramsar message into the policies, plans and strategies of different stakeholder groups. This is especially important for policies concerning wetlands and water management, and for the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation and mitigation.
30. Finding mechanisms to balance development and wetland conservation in view of the growing demands for water and other resources such as oil, gas, timber and minerals.