

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

51<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 23-27 November 2015

SC51-10

**Progress on implementing Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions* and plan on how to increase cooperation with other MEAs**

**Actions requested:**

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the progress on implementing **Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and Synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*** and the plan on how to increase cooperation with other MEAs and provide advice as appropriate.

**Background**

1. Following previous Standing Committee discussions during the 2013-2015 triennium, the Secretariat has reported on the main activities undertaken under Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions* and Resolution XI.1 on *Convention languages, visibility and ministerial COP segment, enhancing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities*.
2. Resolution XII. 3 on *Enhancing the languages of the Convention and its visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* instructs the Secretariat to report annually on progress in implementing Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions* to the Standing Committee.
3. Paragraph 43 of Resolution XII. 3 instructs the Secretariat to continue working to strengthen collaboration with IUCN World Heritage Outlook, UNEP, UNEP-GRID, UNDP, UNESCO, Regional Economic Commissions of the UN, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and others, and report on progress to the Standing Committee and the Contracting Parties on a regular basis.
4. The Secretariat is also requested, in paragraph 44, to continue its work with the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) to enhance coherence and cooperation and to continue efforts to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication at all relevant levels among the biodiversity-related conventions.
5. Resolution XII.7 on *Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention*, in paragraph 21, requests the Secretariat to strengthen partnerships with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as *inter alia* the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and others, in order to enhance synergies and sharing of resources, avoid duplication and enhance implementation, respecting the mandate of each Convention; and requests the Secretariat to

provide to the Standing Committee at its 51<sup>st</sup> meeting (SC51) a plan on how to increase cooperation with other MEAs and report regularly on its actions to the Standing Committee.

6. Accordingly this report covers the main activities undertaken under Resolution XI.6, specifically activities under the BLG and the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions (CSAB) (paragraph 23 and 43), work with the Secretariats of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) (paragraph 24) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and progress made with UNEP and other institutions. It also presents a plan to increase cooperation with other MEAs.

#### **Work under the Biodiversity Liaison Group and the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions**

7. The Ramsar Secretariat has continued to participate in the meetings and joint actions of the BLG according to its Plan for Joint Activities for the Biennium 2013-2014. In the last BLG videoconference in January 2015, key issues were discussed such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process and next steps, joint reporting information systems, GEF expanded workshops and the updated framework for cooperation and communications and public awareness. The Secretariat will attend the next meeting of the BLG in September 2015, as well as the newly formed Informal Advisory Group that now accompanies the BLG process.
8. The STRP Chair participated in the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). CSAB 7, scheduled for June 2014, was not held but STRP 18 received a briefing on CSAB from CITES.

#### **Work with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**

9. The Secretariat participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS in November 2014 and has requested advice on the experience on the preparation of the Online Reporting System (ORS) developed by UNEP-WCMC for the National Report Format for COP13. The Secretariat will continue to follow these developments and the resulting functionality. A visit to the Secretariat in Bonn in July gave a chance to update on our two COPs and their processes and exchange experiences.
10. The renewal of the Joint Work Plan 2012-2014 is in process and will be presented for approval at the CMS Standing Committee in October 2015 and at the Ramsar SC51 in November 2015.
11. To further strengthen the work of both Conventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Secretariat will participate in the CMS regional workshop for Latin American and Caribbean non-Contracting Parties in September 2015.
12. During 2014, the STRP contributed to the CMS/FAO Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds convened by the UN, and made statements on H5N8 in response to irresponsible use of disinfectants in wetland habitats in outbreak areas in Asia. In addition, an STRP expert wrote to the editors of a high-profile scientific journal (CDC's *Emerging Infectious Diseases*) with respect to a paper promoting the culling of wild birds in response to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), highlighting obligations under Ramsar and existing contrary guidance. The paper was changed in response.

## **Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

13. The STRP remains fully engaged in IPBES. The STRP Chair is an observer to the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP), and participated in IPBES-2 and IPBES-3. The Chair, or another STRP representative, has also participated in MEP meetings, emphasizing the need for assessments to include wetland and wetland restoration experts. The Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment and Regional Assessments, which are expected in early 2018, prior to Ramsar COP13, will be of particular interest to the Ramsar community. The STRP and the Secretariat have nominated some expert candidates for appointment to IPBES processes, some of whom have been appointed.

## **Actions to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and other international institutions**

14. As noted in the Secretary General's last triennium reports, the Secretariat is continuing to work to strengthen collaboration with UNDP, UNESCO, UNECE, the World Bank, WHO, WMO and others.
15. The MOU with UNEP is in the last stages prior to signing, and will be shared with the Executive Team of the Standing Committee for consideration and next steps.
16. UNEP-GRID has successfully developed our new Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) in close collaboration and we will continue to work with them on its refinement. UNEP-WCMC has been instrumental in enabling Ramsar to develop the metadata and statistical note for the monitoring of Target 6.6 of the SDGs. Closer relations with UNEP-WCMC and UNEP in Nairobi will allow us to explore better Ramsar's needs for big data and satellite analysis of the state of wetlands including Ramsar Sites, as well as informing the preparation of the National Report Format for COP13. Finally, in July 2015, Ramsar provided a letter of support to UNEP-DHI for the next phase of the Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme and will exchange information with this programme on transboundary wetland areas.

## **Collaboration with UNESCO**

17. Follow up on the successful 2013 launch of the Ramsar Chair on Wise Use of Wetlands, the costs of the Ramsar Chair are being covered by Charles Sturt University and the UNESCO centre, and he is giving us support to prepare technical training material for distance learning for wetland managers and for policy work, in close cooperation with the STRP and Secretariat and in response to actual needs.
18. The Secretariat is also collaborating with a new global GEF project with UNESCO's groundwater group, following up from our successful project in the groundwater-fed wetlands of the Mediterranean.
19. A joint Ramsar/IUCN/UNESCO project is now in full swing on how to manage sites that have more than one designation under Ramsar, the World Heritage Convention (WHC), GeoParks or MAB. This is a new project with Republic of Korea funding for better management of internationally important sites with multiple designations, and is a positive step in getting substantial equivalence. The Secretary General participated in a side event on this project at UNESCO's 39<sup>th</sup> meeting of Parties and discussed the further development of the project in Jeju, R.O.Korea with officials. The DSG participated in the detailed workshop on the project in Jeju in April 2015, and the project was presented in a side event at Ramsar COP12 in June 2015. The

draft report of the project is now available, and the final report will be presented at the IUCN Congress in Hawaii in October 2016.

#### **Plan to increase cooperation with other MEAs**

20. The Secretariat has signed Memorandums of Cooperation and agreed Joint Work Plans with three of the biodiversity-related conventions, the CBD, the CMS and the WHC.
21. The Secretariat has also been involved in collaborations with the biodiversity-related conventions such as the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (INFORMEA), and has been part of the project *“Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies”* with UNEP.
22. An MOU has also been signed with the UNCCD and, in the 2014 World Parks Congress, an alliance was announced to work with UNCCD to ensure restoration of drylands and wetlands. Planned interventions in the UNCCD COP13 in Ankara in October and in events in UNFCCC COP21 in Paris are already in hand, while discussions are continuing on ways to work together to help Parties access a UNCCD-led large scale private sector-funded programme to assure Land Degradation Neutrality and restore 12 million hectares of land into productive ecosystems every year, with a potential emphasis on the restoration of wetlands and the high returns on this restorative effort.
23. The Secretariat has been developing closer relations with the UNFCCC and received their direct assistance for COP12 and in preparation for their COP21 in Paris and will seek to increase engagement and signature of a possible MOU in light of the alignment of the goals of the two conventions. The high value of wetlands in relation to carbon capture and possible release is fully realized and actions to maintain or increase the carbon stocks in wetlands are understood to be within the scope and interests of the UNFCCC.
24. Close relations are maintained with UNECE as part of our efforts to link Ramsar with the implementation of water policies at the basin level and especially as the UNECE Water Convention moves to become a global convention where the synergies between our two conventions will be even more relevant and mutually advantageous. We will be involved in the upcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwater as we were involved in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assessment. Our Parties are keen to see greater relationships between the programmes of UNECE and Ramsar at the national level, and we are working to facilitate this by mutual support to all meetings and initiatives.
25. More remains to be done to ensure that the full potential of the relationship is realized, but counterpart UNECE staff and European Parties are all supportive of this collaboration. Our network of contacts around the world will be of assistance to UNECE as it expands the membership around the world. The formation of a Water Hub in Geneva by the Swiss government will also help us to cement closer relations between all the bodies working in the water and wetlands arena.
26. As indicated in the previous section the Secretariat participates actively with other MEAs, and as paragraph 44 of Resolution XII.3 indicates, the Secretariat will investigate, within limited resources, how to concentrate efforts:

- a. To increase cooperation, coordination and attention to synergies in the exploration of reporting systems, including future online reporting systems and indicators, as a means to increase synergies in national reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions;
- b. To consider ways and means to increase cooperation on outreach and communication strategies;
- c. Find options for enhanced cooperation with regard to work on cross-cutting issues;

Based on the above, the Secretariat presents to SC51 the annexed plan to increase cooperation with other MEAs for their consideration and advice.

**Plan to increase cooperation with other MEAs**

Convention	Action	Indicator	Deadline
Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG)	Participation in meetings of the BLG and implement agreed actions.	Implementation of agreed actions and report to Standing Committee as appropriate.	SC52, 53, 54
	Provide inputs for the update of the biennial framework for cooperation for 2013-2014 agreed by the BLG at its eighth meeting.	Agreed framework for cooperation 2015-2016.	SC52, 53, 54
	<p>Under paragraph 44 of Resolution XII.3:</p> <p>a. To increase cooperation, coordination and attention to synergies in the exploration of reporting systems, including future online reporting systems and indicators, as a means to increase synergies in national reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions;</p> <p>b. To consider ways and means to increase cooperation on outreach and communication strategies;</p> <p>c. Options for enhanced cooperation with regard to work on cross-cutting issues.</p>	Increased synergies in national reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions, cooperation actions and communication strategies and cross-cutting issues. Report to Standing Committee.	SC52, 53, 54
Convention on Biological Biodiversity (CBD)	<p>Implementation of 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Work Plan with the CBD in areas of common interest including:</p> <p>a. supporting complementary and/or harmonized national reporting, including the role of CBD and Ramsar national reports in measuring the implementation of this JWP</p> <p>b. collaborating to meet the goals of both conventions' strategic plans, to best monitor and assess the respective achievements in the context of biodiversity and wetlands;</p> <p>c. engaging with major groups and partners in the full implementation of the</p>	Effective implementation of the joint actions and reporting to respective Convention bodies	SC52, 53, 54

Convention	Action	Indicator	Deadline
	provisions of both conventions as related to priority issues for the conservation, wise use and international cooperation around wetlands.		
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)	<p>Under the framework of the MOU of Cooperation and Joint Work Plan 2015-2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. To support national policy initiatives for coordinated implementation of the CMS and Ramsar Conventions.</li> <li>b. To take opportunities for facilitating mutual participation in relevant meetings under either Convention, including Ramsar Regional Initiatives and those organized under CMS auspices and workshops of technical topics of mutual interest.</li> <li>c. To define and operate (monitor, assess, report on) relevant biodiversity indicators to evaluate effectiveness of Convention implementation.</li> <li>d. Information, outreach and capacity building.</li> </ul>	Implementation of agreed activities of mutual interest and report to Standing Committees as appropriate	SC52, 53, 54
Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, World Heritage Convention)	<p>Under the MOU:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Exchange of information on a regular basis on specific aspects which are of mutual interest and benefit;</li> <li>b. Sharing of information with the view to identification and designation of potential wetland sites that may meet the criteria for nomination as World Heritage and/or as Wetlands of International Importance, including transboundary sites and habitats that may be critical for the protection of watersheds and catchments.</li> <li>c. Sharing information, databases, staff mission reports and other materials as well as to undertake joint missions to enable early detection of threats to Ramsar Sites which are designated as World Heritage Sites and undertake necessary studies and analyses to identify measures for the mitigation of such threats;</li> </ul>	Implementation of priority and common areas of interest and report to convention bodies as appropriate.	SC52,53, 54

Convention	Action	Indicator	Deadline
	<p>d. In cooperation with the Contracting Parties to the Conventions, develop programmes and projects for strengthening conservation of specific sites which are recognized by the two Conventions</p> <p>e. invite each other's participation, and concurrence as appropriate, in meetings, field visits to sites, design, organization and conduct of training, education and information dissemination activities and other activities to promote awareness of the Parties on the relationships between the application of the two Conventions.</p>		
<p>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (UNCCD)</p>	<p>Under the MOU, prepare a work programme and develop a Joint Work Plan on the following areas of collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore the possibility of harmonizing the reporting requirements of Contracting Parties under both Conventions;</li> <li>• institutional cooperation;</li> <li>• exchange of information and experience;</li> <li>• capacity building or training;</li> <li>• science and technology;</li> <li>• “Bonn Challenge” to help restore 150 million hectares by collaboration to achieve wetland and dryland restoration;</li> <li>• establish an appropriate platform for cooperation aiming at providing scientific and technical support as well as easing the access to financial resources for affected countries.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed work programme and annual Joint Work Plan on areas of common interest and report as appropriate to the Standing Committee.</p>	<p>SC52, 53, 54</p>
<p>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</p>	<p>Participation on IPCC and preparation of a Joint Work Plan under Ramsar framework on climate change.</p>	<p>Agreements achieved on work areas for collaboration with the IPCC and Joint Work Plan with the UNFCCC prepared.</p>	<p>SC52, 53. 54</p>