

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

52nd Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 13-17 June 2016

SC52-15

Progress on implementing Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*

Actions requested:

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

Background

1. 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.
2. 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 Science-Policy 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.
3. 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.
4. Paragraph 33 of Resolution XII.3 requests the Secretariat to consult Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) about their experiences in hosting high-level ministerial segments, so as to identify possible ways to utilize such opportunities to improve the visibility, political support and impact of the Convention.
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 MEAs such as *inter alia* the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 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 51st

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 Resolutions XII.3 and XI.6, specifically activities under the BLG, IPBES and progress made with MEAs, UNEP and other institutions.

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. The Deputy Secretary General chaired the meeting of the BLG in September 2015, where key issues were discussed including:
 - the BLG session on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
 - the request of IPBES to the Secretariats of the MEAs to develop strategic partnerships, modelled on the existing strategic partnership arrangement with the Secretariat of CBD;
 - the CBD COP decision XII/6 on the established party-led process concerning cooperation among the biodiversity-related Conventions and the workshop on synergies for this purpose (Geneva, February 2016);
 - synergies in the development of reporting systems, including future online reporting systems;
 - contributions of the biodiversity-related Conventions and other organizations to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
 - outreach and communication; and
 - CBD COP decision XII/30 on the financial mechanism.
8. The Secretariat also participated in the Workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related Conventions organized by the CBD Secretariat and the Informal Advisory Group (IAG) that took place from February 8-11 in Geneva. The National Focal Points of the seven biodiversity-related Conventions discussed options, including elements of a possible road map, for increasing synergy and improving the efficiency of the Conventions in fulfilling their mandates. The findings and recommendations of the workshop will be transmitted to the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation of the CBD in May 2016, so that it can negotiate a draft decision for consideration by the COP at its 13th meeting in December 2016. The agenda and documents of the meeting are available on the CBD website at:
<https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=BRCWS-2016-01>.

Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

9. The STRP remains fully engaged in IPBES. The STRP Chair is an observer to the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP), and participated in the 4th meeting (IPBES-4). Most significantly, IPBES issued its first thematic assessment, which was fast-tracked and focused on pollinators, pollination and food production. IPBES-4 welcomed the progress made in the land degradation and restoration assessment, which is scheduled to be considered at IPBES-6 in 2018. The scoping report for the assessment on invasive alien species and their control was approved, but the decision on whether to undertake this assessment will be made at IPBES-5 in 2017. Similarly, a revised scoping report for the assessment on sustainable use and biodiversity will also be considered at IPBES-5.

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

10. As noted in previous reports to Standing Committee, the Secretariat is continuing to work to strengthen collaboration with UNDP, UNESCO, UNECE, the World Bank, WHO, WMO and others.
11. The MOU with UNEP is included for SC52 approval as an annex of SC52-16 *Update on formal agreements and joint work plans of the Ramsar Convention and partners*.
12. The Secretariat continues to work with UNEP-GRID on the refinement of the new Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS), as well as on a new project entitled "Live Monitoring of Earth Surface" (LIMES). UNEP-WCMC has been instrumental in informing the preparation of the National Report Format for COP13 in the online reporting system and the Secretariat expects to continue to work with them on this matter.

Collaboration with UNESCO

13. Following up on the successful 2013 launch of the Ramsar Chair on Wise Use of Wetlands at UNESCO-IHE, a number of publications have been produced and a keynote presentation on the SDGs and wetlands delivered to the International River Symposium in September 2015. The costs of the Ramsar Chair are being covered by Charles Sturt University and the UNESCO centre.
14. A joint Ramsar/IUCN/UNESCO project has been carried out with a view to harmonizing the integrated management of areas with multiple international designations under Ramsar, the World Heritage Convention (WHC), Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks. This is a new project with Republic of Korea funding. The DSG participated in the kick-off workshop on the project in Jeju in April 2015, and the project was introduced to Parties in a side event at Ramsar COP12 in June 2015. A guidance document has been prepared, intended as a manual for site managers of multiply designated sites, and also relevant for national authorities and international organizations. It will be launched at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawaii, USA. The final report is now available and the list of multiply designated sites has been updated.

Plan to increase cooperation with other MEAs

15. As indicated in the previous section the Secretariat participates actively with other MEAs, and according to paragraph 44 of Resolution XII.3, the Secretariat has concentrated efforts to:
 - a. 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. consider ways and means to increase cooperation on outreach and communication strategies; and
 - c. find options for enhanced cooperation with regard to work on cross-cutting issues.
16. The Secretariat has signed memoranda of cooperation and agreed joint work plans with two of the biodiversity-related Conventions, namely the CBD and the WHC, as well as with the UNCCD. The joint work plan with the CMS is being finalized and will be submitted for the approval of the

next Standing Committees of each Convention (SC45 of CMS in November 2016 and SC53 of Ramsar in 2017).

17. 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 Law and Environment Ontology (LEO) project, to develop an internationally accepted semantic standard for environmental law and policy, and the project *“Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related Conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies”* with UNEP. The Secretariat will continue to engage on these through participation in the InforMEA working group.
18. A joint Ramsar/UNECE/FAO celebration will take place on World Forests Day, 21 March 2016. The event is organized jointly by the UNECE Secretariat of the Water Convention, the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit, FAO, and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, with support from the Governments of Switzerland and Finland. This year’s event will be organized under the theme “Forests and Water” and will aim to raise awareness of the multiple links between forests and water sources. The event will feature country experiences and case studies emphasizing forest ecosystem services safeguarding water balance and supply as well as forests’ role in increasing landscape resilience to water-related hazards. Through the Secretariat’s efforts, the private sector will also present some experiences through WBCSD.
19. With regards to hosting high-level ministerial segments, the Secretariat consulted the Secretariats of the CMS, CBD, CITES and WHC about their experiences. The advice received is summarized below.

Nature of the high-level ministerial segment and main outcomes

20. Except for the CBD, for all other Conventions the segments are often high level ministerial panels or ministers’ roundtables, all with the aim of discussing specific thematic issues. The segment can take place before or at the end of meetings of the COP or committees with advantages and disadvantages for each case. For some, it is better for the segments to take place before the main meeting in order to provide inputs to relevant issues being addressed at the meeting. Others consider that it is better at the end, in order to include relevant issues in the conclusions.
21. In the case of high-level ministerial segments the main outcomes are often the adoption of declarations that are separate to the negotiations of the COP meeting. For high level panels or ministers’ roundtables the main outcomes are in the form of a chair’s statement from the segment or joint statements.
22. In general, it is considered that the high-level segments (high-level ministerial panels or ministers’ roundtables) offer opportunities to improve the visibility, political support and impact of the Conventions. However, one of the main challenges is to guarantee the attendance of the relevant ministers.

Organization and cost

23. In all cases, the high-level ministerial segments or high-level ministerial panels/ministers’ roundtables are organized and funded by the host country. The Secretariats collaborate in the preparation of the agenda but in general all aspects of logistics and protocol, including invitations, are prepared by the host country.