

## Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

### Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the report on progress in implementing Resolution XIII.7 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*.

### Background

1. Resolution XIII.7 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* instructed the Secretariat to report regularly to the Standing Committee on progress in implementing this Resolution and Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*.
2. The Secretariat, Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others are urged in paragraph 22 of Resolution XIII.7 to enhance synergies, coherence and effective cooperation among the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to strengthen the contribution of these instruments to a post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
3. Paragraph 33 of the same Resolution requests the Secretary General to include in future reports information on the results of existing cooperation with other Conventions, international organizations and partnerships and on the exploration of new activities with possible partners.
4. The Secretariat is requested in paragraph 34 of the Resolution to provide inputs to the synergy process as appropriate, and in particular on matters that are relevant to the Ramsar Convention, and report to the Standing Committee.
5. Paragraph 35 of the Resolution instructs the Secretariat to continue working to strengthen collaboration with UN agencies, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and other regional economic commissions of the UN, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), MEAs such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on the

Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and others, and to report progress to the Standing Committee on a regular basis.

6. The Secretariat is instructed in paragraphs 39 and 40 of the Resolution to continue working actively with the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and Contracting Parties on the completion of national wetland inventories and wetland extent to report on SDG Indicator 6.6.1.
7. Paragraph 41 of the Resolution instructs the Secretariat to participate as appropriate in relevant international efforts to address the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs, including the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the discussion of SDGs 14 and 15 and SDG Targets 14.2 and 15.1 in international fora.
8. In Paragraph 47 of the Resolution, the Secretariat is requested to continue the cooperation efforts with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to support the operations of the Secretariat.
9. Accordingly, this report covers the main activities undertaken since COP13 in accordance with Resolutions XIII.7 and XI.6, and specifically the activities related to the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the progress made with SDGs, MEAs, UNEP and other institutions.

#### **Work under the Biodiversity Liaison Group**

10. The Ramsar Secretariat has continued to participate in the meetings and joint actions of the BLG according to the Group's Plan for Joint Activities. The Secretariat participated in the meeting of the BLG in September 2018. Issues covered included: inputs of the biodiversity-related Conventions to the process for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework; cooperation and synergies among the biodiversity-related Conventions; the next IPBES work programme; and joint outreach and communications on biodiversity, including joint input to meetings of the Conventions and other processes.

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

11. Resolution XIII.8 on *Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2019-2021* adopted guidelines for developing thematic requests to IPBES for its future work programmes. Accordingly, the Secretariat issued a call for proposals in November 2018 to Contracting Parties, IOPs, Ramsar Regional Initiatives, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and MEAs. The Secretariat received three proposals in response to the call:
  - *Profiling Harare's wetlands for a sustainable future*, submitted by Zimbabwe (Environmental Management Agency);
  - *Thematic assessment on peatlands*, submitted by the STRP; and
  - *Thematic assessment on connectivity conservation*, submitted by CMS.
12. According to the procedure described in the guidelines, the proposals were sent to the Standing Committee, along with the STRP's review and comments, for their consideration. Priority was given to the *Thematic assessment on peatlands* and the Secretariat thus submitted that proposal to IPBES before 31 December 2018, the deadline for MEAs to submit proposals.

13. On 28 February 2019, the IPBES Secretariat notified the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention that the Convention's proposal for the *Thematic assessment on peatlands* had been reviewed by the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) and Bureau. They noted that the theme could be "addressed as a specific thematic assessment or as a component of a global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services". However, they have recommended to the IPBES Plenary to undertake a future global assessment at its tenth session, given that the first IPBES global assessment will be finalized at the upcoming seventh session of the Plenary.
14. The STRP Chair attended the 11th meeting of the IPBES MEP from 26 to 28 June 2018 in Bonn, Germany. Among the items discussed were the future IPBES work programme, the deadline for MEAs to submit thematic assessment requests, the external review of IPBES and the incorporation of IPBES products into Ramsar outputs.

### **Cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements**

15. The Secretariat continues to collaborate actively with other MEAs, and has concentrated its efforts in accordance with paragraph 44 of Resolution XII.3.

#### *Convention on Biological Diversity*

16. The Secretariat has continued to work to strengthen collaboration with the CBD, providing inputs to different processes such as to the follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the post-2020 biodiversity framework, to ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), synergies and attendance at the 22nd meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. At SBSTTA22, themes discussed of relevance to the Convention included: updated scientific assessment of progress towards selected Aichi Biodiversity Targets and options to accelerate progress; protected areas and other measures for enhanced conservation and management; biodiversity and climate change: ecosystem based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; and the second IPBES work programme.
17. The Secretariat participated in the UN Biodiversity Conference held from 13 to 29 November 2018, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, under the theme "Investing in biodiversity for people and planet". The Secretary General delivered a statement at the ministerial-level African Summit on Biodiversity and participated as a panellist in the session on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and vision to 2050, at which she delivered a statement on behalf of the eight biodiversity-related Conventions. The Secretariat also worked with the Secretariats of the BLG members in the preparation and delivery of joint statements on the post-2020 biodiversity framework and on cooperation with other Conventions. Along with the other BLG members, the Secretariat participated as a panellist in the event "The Conventions landscape in a post-2020 context" organized by UNEP, and in "Target 11 Day" to launch the "Partnership for Achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 with Attendant Multiple Benefits" organized by the CBD Secretariat and IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas with the support of the European Union.
18. The main focus in the triennium is to participate actively to raise the visibility and relevance of the role of wetlands in the process of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (CBD Decision 14/34) and other processes in line with Ramsar Resolution XIII.7 and CBD Decisions 13/24 and 14/30, which are relevant to the work of the Ramsar Convention.

### *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

19. The Secretariat participated in the Energy Task Force of the CMS and in two side events at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, on CMS contributions to the post-2020 framework and beyond and on mainstreaming flyway conservation across Conventions, organized by the CMS Secretariat and BirdLife International.

### *Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds*

20. The Ramsar Secretariat actively participated in the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP7) to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) held from 4 to 8 December 2018 in Durban, South Africa. The Secretariat held a side event providing an overview of the Global Wetland Outlook and Ramsar's key practical tools to address threats to wetlands. Resolutions adopted by Ramsar COP13, on peatlands (Resolution XIII.12, Resolution XIII.13), blue carbon (Resolution XIII.14) and sustainable urbanization, climate change and wetlands (Resolution XIII.16) were mainstreamed within AEWA Resolutions and documents.
21. The Ramsar Secretariat continues to work with the AEWA Secretariat on finalizing the preparation of the AEWA training-of-trainers course on flyway conservation for francophone West and Central African countries, to be held from 6 to 10 May 2019 in Cotonou, Benin. The workshop targets technical experts from 17 countries in the region. At the time of writing, the identification of suitable candidates for the training was underway with the collaboration of the Ramsar Secretariat. AEWA had secured funding from the European Commission.

### *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*

22. The Secretariat continues to focus efforts with the UNFCCC on processes to promote the relationship between climate change and wetlands in the context of mitigation and adaptation measures. It also works towards supporting Ramsar Contracting Parties in integrating wetland ecosystem services ("natural solutions") into climate change policies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement by promoting the role of wetlands as carbon sinks, and thereby, their contributions to mitigating the effects of climate change. In the 24th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP24) in Katowice, Poland, from 2 to 14 December 2018, the Secretariat participated actively in the events: "Adapting to water scarcity in agriculture"; "Towards a joint peatland declaration: Synergies of MEAs to reverse the trend on peatlands degradation"; and "Getting to the Point: The relevance of wetland ecosystems for increasing NDC ambition". The Secretariat also participated as speaker in the events: "Marrakech partnership for global climate action, water-wise solutions to mitigate, adapt and thrive"; "International updates on Blue Carbon science and knowledge"; "Forests first – from 10 years of REDD+ to the full scope of nature-based climate solutions"; and "Raising the bar on nature-based solutions in NDCs". At these events, the Secretariat and partners highlighted the importance of peatlands as a key and often overlooked ecosystem for climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services.
23. The Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI), launched by UNEP and the Ramsar Convention at UNFCCC COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco, continues to offer a platform and focus on building a better understanding of peat status and trends. With partner countries and experts, the GPI is working on ensuring the maintenance and restoration of carbon stocks in the key peatland countries of Indonesia, Peru, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The GPI aims

to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by increasing knowledge on peatlands (their extent, thickness, changes and drivers of change).

24. The Secretariat joined the International Partnership on Blue Carbon to help better connect the efforts of governments, research organizations and NGOs. In late 2018, it participated in a panel discussion on blue carbon of the European Parliament Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development in Brussels, Belgium.
25. Wetland-based solutions using ecosystem services for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures still need to be put forward more visibly and convincingly in the UNFCCC agenda. Based on COP13 Resolutions on synergies (Resolution XIII.7), peatlands (Resolutions XIII.12 and XIII.13) and blue carbon (Resolution XIII.14) the Secretariat will work with Contracting Parties and partners to raise wetlands issues at the upcoming UNFCCC COP25.

#### *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*

26. The Secretariat has been liaising with the UNCCD Secretariat with regard to the second edition of the UNCCD's Global Land Outlook (GLO2) to be published in September 2021 and launched at UNCCD COP15, on the basis of the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan and the Global Wetland Outlook. Specific inputs will be provided to the GLO2. The Secretariat is also exploring links between wetlands and the implementation of voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets.
27. In accordance with paragraph 23 of Resolution XIII.7, the Secretariat will present, at SC58, a plan to strengthen synergies with other MEAs and contributions to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

#### **Sustainable Development Goals**

28. In accordance with Decision SC53-17 and Resolution XIII.7, the Secretariat continues its engagement in ongoing work on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in the meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the target team target on indicator 6.6.1 led by UNEP.
29. In this context, the Secretariat participated in the eighth meeting of the IAEG-SDGs in Stockholm, Sweden from 6 to 8 November 2018.
30. As noted in Resolution XIII.7, the IAEG-SDGs decided at its seventh meeting to reclassify Indicator 6.6.1 and to approve two reporting lines to the SDG database hosted by the UN Statistics Division, such that UNEP will be responsible for the internationally comparable methodology with national data, regional and global aggregations for Indicator 6.6.1, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands will contribute data from National Reports based on Ramsar definitions and requirements. The Convention and UNEP, as co-custodians for SDG Indicator 6.6.1, will be responsible for their respective reporting lines and will jointly contribute to the SDG target 6.6 storyline. At its eighth meeting, the IAEG-SDGs decided to upgrade Indicator 6.6.1 to a Tier I Indicator based on the review of data availability in the global SDG Indicator database. In line with Resolution XIII.7 and the National Reports to COP13, the Secretariat is preparing a gap analysis to continue working with Contracting Parties on the completion of national wetland inventories and wetland extent to report on SDG Indicator 6.6.1.
31. In support of the achievement of SDG 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development", the Secretary General of the Convention and

the IUCN Director General, as focal points for the UN Ocean Conference (SDG 14) Community of Ocean Action on Mangroves, invited Contracting Parties and delegates to the Ramsar COP13 special side event “UN Ocean Conference Community of Ocean Action on Mangroves: Progress and Opportunities”.

32. At the event, Government representatives presented insights from existing voluntary commitments, including actions on restoration, protection and blue carbon. The Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs and the Regional Partnership for the Conservation of the Coastal and Marine Zone of West Africa stated as a goal to submit their work as a voluntary commitment under the UN Ocean Conference Community of Ocean Action on Mangroves. Ambassador Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean, highlighted the critical role of mangrove ecosystems for coastal and ocean resilience and described the Ramsar Convention as the heartland to support actions for the Community of Ocean Action on mangroves conservation. He encouraged the submission of new voluntary commitments, and urged countries and other stakeholders to update existing ones.

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

33. As noted in previous reports to the Standing Committee, the Secretariat is continuing to work to strengthen collaboration with the United Nations agencies and other international institutions.

#### *Collaboration with UNEP*

34. The Secretariat and UNEP will renew their Memorandum of Understanding at UNEA4 in March 2019. They have been developing cooperative activities to promote synergies and improve the implementation of the Convention. The Secretary General of the Convention participated in the 7th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Nairobi from 17 to 21 September 2018. AMCEN provided an opportunity to enhance cooperation with African Contracting Parties to support the implementation of the objectives of the Convention.
35. The Secretariat will engage actively in the High Level Segment of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi (UNEA4, 11-15 March 2019), emphasizing the role of wetlands in sustainable production and consumption, and their contribution to the SDGs.
36. The Secretariat is engaged in the synergies project “Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity” led by UNEP and with the participation of the other biodiversity-related Conventions. The project consists of five outputs, which respond to UN Environment Assembly Resolution 2/17. It is designed to support countries in implementing environmental treaties and improve international environmental governance in order to achieve the SDGs.
37. In the framework of the project a meeting of Public Information Officers from the biodiversity conventions, namely Ramsar, CMS, CBD, CITES, the International Plant Protection Convention and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, was held on the margins of Ramsar COP13. The objectives of the meeting were: 1) to relay the discussions from the CBD Global Biodiversity Communications meeting which took place in April 2018 in Cambridge, the United Kingdom; 2) to conduct a 2019 stocktake of communications needs by each Public Information Officer which the group can support; 3) to review use of the Meltwater

media monitoring tool along with findings/data to date; and 4) to determine collective post-2020 communication opportunities and synergies.

38. The Secretariat has continued to engage in the activities of the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), a global alliance of UN agencies, NGOs, and specialized institutions. In December 2018, the Secretariat contributed to the PEDRR seminar organized by UNEP in Geneva, Switzerland, to present the DRR-related decisions adopted at COP13 and update partners on progress in implementation of DRR-related activities.
39. In February 2019, the Secretariat also participated in the International Science-Policy Workshop in Bonn organized by UNEP to present the progress made in the field of DRR and share the identified science-policy gaps, challenges and opportunities. This session provided participants with an important bridge to the work and progress taking place within and across several international agreements and organizations, namely CBD, Ramsar, UNESCO, and UNCCD. The main purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity to share and exchange experiences on the role of eco-DRR in these international agreements in the hope of finding a collective and common path forward.
40. The Secretariat continued to contribute to the InforMEA initiative. It participated in the Steering Committee meeting in June 2018. The Ramsar documents exposed on the InforMEA platform have been updated to include the Resolutions adopted at COP13 (see: <https://www.informea.org/en/event/13th-meeting-conference-parties>).

#### *Collaboration with CITES*

41. In addition to programmatic collaboration, the Secretariat is also promoting exchange of experiences and mutual operational support with the CITES Secretariat. In particular, the CITES Secretariat seconded a Documentation Officer to join the Ramsar Secretariat Team for Ramsar COP13 and the Ramsar Secretariat will second its IT Officer to the CITES Secretariat team for CITES COP18.

#### *Collaboration with International Organizations Partners*

42. The Secretariat continues to collaborate with IOPs. A meeting to review implementation of the Joint Activities for Collaboration in the new Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) was held on the margins of COP13. During this meeting, a number of joint communications activities were agreed, including joint statements, production of World Wetlands Day materials and dissemination of the Global Wetlands Outlook. New areas of collaboration include featuring the Convention more prominently in IOPs' visibility and engagement campaigns, joint outreach to the private sector, and shared post-2020 messaging. A follow-up teleconference was held on 8 March 2019 to review progress and discuss future plans.

#### *Collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature*

43. The Secretariat continues to collaborate closely with the IUCN through the IUCN/Ramsar Liaison Group annual meetings to support the operations of the Secretariat under the service agreement between the Convention and IUCN. Regular meetings are also held on the different areas under the service agreement, such as financial management. As part of this cooperation, the IUCN Oversight Unit conducted the review of non-core resources requested by and presented to the Standing Committee. Programmatic collaboration also takes place in the context of the IOP work above.