

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**RESPONSE TO THE LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE
RAMSAR AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM
DATED 22 JULY 2010**

**Review of the possible change in institutional host
for the Ramsar Secretariat**

7 October 2010

Revised version



UNEP Review of the possible change in institutional host for the Ramsar Secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

In response to the letter to the UNEP Executive Director from the Co-chairs of the Ramsar Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform dated 22 July 2010 (Annex 1), UNEP has undertaken a further comprehensive review of the issues related to the possible change in institutional host for the Ramsar Convention Secretariat from an IUCN host arrangement (IUCN/Ramsar) to a UNEP host arrangement (UNEP/Ramsar).

The purpose of this document is to respond to and provide further clarification on the issues contained in Annex 1 of the above-mentioned letter. Those issues are categorized under the following headings:

- A. Further options for reducing the costs of a UNEP administered Ramsar Secretariat;
- B. Transition arrangements;
- C. Timing and a timeline for implementation;
- D. The best possible staff arrangements; and
- E. The added benefits to the Convention

UNEP wishes to note that as part of this review, a comprehensive analysis of the Ramsar budget for the period 2009-2012, as approved by the Contracting Parties at the Ramsar COP10 and contained in Resolution X.2, entitled "Financial and Budgetary Matters" has been undertaken.

UNEP further wishes to note that in undertaking this review, UNEP has held a meeting with, and sought a significant number of clarifications from the Secretary General of the Ramsar Secretariat. UNEP has also held meetings with the Ramsar Finance Officer on a number of specific issues related to the approved Ramsar budget and staffing tables. UNEP wishes to extend its acknowledgement to the Ramsar Secretariat staff for their hospitality, collaboration and cooperation.

In order to ensure coherence with United Nations formats and standards, UNEP has converted the COP10 approved Ramsar budget for the year 2011 into the format and structure applied by the United Nations. In doing so, UNEP hereby aims at presenting a more easy accessible and transparent budget for 2011, for consideration by the Ad Hoc Working Group. This approach also intends facilitating making comparisons with the budget of other UNEP Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and could be beneficial for future referencing. In presenting the Ramsar budget in the United Nations format, UNEP has consulted the Ramsar Secretariat.

In UNEP's review of available documentation and during our consultations with the Ramsar Secretariat, the following key issues related to budget calculations have emerged regarding UNEP's initial submission and the Ramsar Secretariat to the Ad Hoc Working Group:

1. That the year used for budget comparison purposes in UNEP's initial submissions has not been consistent in all instances;
2. That the staffing tables presented by Ramsar and UNEP have not in all cases been based on the same number of approved posts as contained in the Ramsar core budget;
3. That the Documentation Officer (50%) currently employed by Ramsar is a temporary post not approved by the Ramsar COP under the core budget;
4. That the Partnership Officer is under recruitment and that this position has not previously been classified and incorporated in UNEP's calculations, although the post falls under the core budget;
5. That the SPREP Officer is not a UN 'international staff' position, but for comparative purposes against the Ramsar budget, it is included in UNEP's financial analysis (page 9) under the budget line 1100 for international staff;
6. That the salary for IUCN/Ramsar staff is negotiable upon entry by the staff member; That the IUCN/Ramsar salary scale at all levels has a "minimum", "mid-point" and "maximum" level with up to CHF 90,000 difference in the annual salary between a "minimum" and a "maximum" salary;
7. That the Ramsar staff costs are based on 2008 actual costs of the staff members and a 4% annual increase rather than on a "fixed maximum" which is the case when the United Nations calculate staff costs. This has as a result that, for example, each Senior Regional Advisor is budgeted for at a different amount under IUCN/Ramsar while under UNEP/Ramsar the same conservative amounts are budgeted;
8. That the Ramsar staff costs do not include "staff termination and repatriation provisions" contrary to the UN staff costs. These amounts are considered part of a reserve under the IUCN/Ramsar arrangement;
9. That in the calculation of the assessed contributions under IUCN/Ramsar, the Swiss tax returns for international staff are deducted from the approved budget.

Based on the above critical information, UNEP wishes to encourage the members of the Ad Hoc Working Group not to refer to the budget, finance and staff figures contained in the documents previously submitted by UNEP and possibly also by Ramsar and the consultant to the Ad Hoc Working Group, as they may present information that is not entirely accurate.

This report has been prepared by UNEP based upon the best available knowledge and data to date, which might be subject to change. This review does not intend to bind the UNEP Governing Bodies in any way.

PART A: FURTHER OPTIONS FOR REDUCING THE COSTS OF A UNEP ADMINISTERED RAMSAR SECRETARIAT

A.1. Feasible/realistic cost scenarios

As requested by the Ad hoc Working Group, UNEP is presenting three budget scenarios for consideration, namely:

- Scenario 1 – Staffing level based on the UNEP’s initial submission;
- Scenario 2 – Cost-neutral budget scenario; and
- Scenario 3 – Reduced budget scenario (of 5%).

A.1.a. In addition to the specific assumptions made under each scenario, the following general assumptions have been made by UNEP in order to ensure that comparable figures are presented in the three scenarios and vis-à-vis the approved Ramsar budget:

A.1.a.1. General budget assumptions

- a) All budget figures relate to the year 2011, which are the latest budget figures available by UNHQ for the calculation of staff costs;
- b) As Ramsar’s budgets are in Swiss francs (CHF) and United Nations budgets are in United States Dollars (USD), UNEP has used one exchange rate for calculation purposes. As future exchange rates are difficult to estimate, and as there has been some fluctuation in the CHF-USD exchange rates in past weeks and months, UNEP has used as an exchange rate USD/CHF 1.000 that is close to the average USD/CHF exchange rate for the period 13 – 24 September 2010 as per rates published by the Swiss National Bank;
- c) That the staff costs of a UN trust fund does not include “staff assessment”;
- d) That the office maintenance costs, currently covered under the IUCN charges, are budgeted for in the UNEP/Ramsar budget;
- e) That audit costs currently paid by Ramsar will be covered in the UNEP PSC;
- f) That bad debt and exchange rate loss are included in the UNEP budget figures in line with UN financial rules and regulations and not accounted for separately as under Ramsar.

A.1.a.2. General human resources assumptions

- a) That only posts approved by the core budget are considered in the three scenarios;
- b) That the SPREP Officer is reflected under “international national staff” in all three budget scenarios;
- c) That the costs for the current arrangements for interns under Ramsar will increase by USD 128,000 with effect from 2011, based on changed rules and regulations by the host country¹.

¹ Ramsar estimates that the costs of per intern may increase by CHF 2,000 monthly, plus social charges. The effective date and exact amount is being negotiated with the Swiss authorities.

A.1.a.3. Other general assumptions

- a) That office space at the International Environment House (IEH) in Geneva will be provided in line with prevailing office space norms for UNEP and its MEAs in IEH;
- b) That the Ramsar Secretariat will enjoy the same conditions as UNEP from the host country, namely rent-free premises and subsidy for maintenance costs;
- c) That the costs associated with office maintenance, electricity and cleaning, and security services are based on current applied figures (Annex 2).

A.1.b. Scenario 1 – Based on UNEP’s initial submission

A.1.b.1. Under this scenario the total costs under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement is estimated at USD 5,596 million which is 11% higher than the current approved Ramsar budget for the year 2011². This scenario envisages that 16 international staff and 4 local level staff are funded under the Ramsar core budget.

In addition to the general assumptions, this scenario makes the following specific assumptions:

A.1.b.2. That the initial job classification as contained in UNEP’s initial submission and undertaken by UNEP, in consultation with UNON/HRMS, of 20 staff positions (including 16 international positions and 4 local level positions/general service) is maintained³;

A.1.b.3. That the four Assistants/Interns will be upgraded to full-fledged international staff positions at the P2 level⁴ (Associate Programme Officers);

A.1.b.4. That no critical review of the structure of the Ramsar Secretariat and the functions and levels of each position currently funded under the core budget has been undertaken by UNEP;

A.1.b.5. That the administrative and finance staff (1 professional and 2 general service positions) will continue to be paid under the Ramsar core budget;

A.1.b.6. That Ramsar will pay a 13% Programme Support Cost (PSC) to UNEP for administrative services, in line with relevant and applicable UN Rules and Regulations, and that only a small percentage of these PSC is used for the Ramsar secretariat staffing.

² Ramsar COP10 Resolution X.2

³ Classification undertaken by UNEP in close consultation with the UNON Human Resources Management Section.

⁴ In line with UN job classification guidelines the Assistant/Intern positions will be reclassified and upgraded to Associate Programme Officers.

A.1.c. Scenario 2 – Cost-neutral Scenario

A.1.c.1. Under this scenario the total costs under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement is estimated at USD 5,022 million which is cost neutral compared to the current approved Ramsar budget for 2011 and additional costs for interns. This scenario envisages that 15 international staff and 2,5 local level staff are funded under the Ramsar core budget.

A.1.c.2. In addition to the general assumptions, this scenario makes the following specific assumptions:

- a) That a critical review has been undertaken of the structure of the Ramsar Secretariat and the current functions of each approved position, in line with UN rules and regulations and in comparison with the structure, functions and responsibilities of MEAs of a similar size. UNEP assesses that the Senior Regional Advisor positions should be classified at the P4 level compared to the P5 level under Scenario 1;
- b) That the position of Finance Officer and Administrative Assistant will be covered by the 13% PSC;
- c) That the four Assistants/Interns will be upgraded to full-fledged international staff positions at the P2 level (Associate Programme Officers);
- d) That the Administrative Officer position (at general service level, according to UN classification) will be reduced to 50% under the core budget, noting that significant parts of the functions of this post relate to the management of the Assistant/Internship Programme and to activities, which would be undertaken by UNEP HQ paid under the PSC;
- e) That Ramsar will pay 13% Programme Support Costs to UNEP for administrative services, and that the Finance Officer and Administrative Assistant positions will be paid from these PSC, therefore largely utilizing the amount available to the Secretariat.

A.1.d. Scenario 3 – Reduced budget Scenario (5%)

A.1.d.1. Under this scenario the total costs under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement is estimated at USD 4,804 million which is 5% below the current approved Ramsar budget for 2011. This scenario envisages that 14 international staff and 2,5 local level staff are funded under the Ramsar core budget.

A.1.d.2. In addition to the general assumptions and the specific assumptions made under Scenario 2, this scenario makes the following assumptions:

- a) That one of the positions of Assistants/Interns is upgraded to a Junior Professional Officer position funded under the Junior Professional Programme of the United Nations. This would be dependent on voluntary donor funding for this purpose;
- b) That the position of Partnership Officer is classified at the P3 level, noting that the representational functions of the Partnership Officer could be undertaken by the Secretary General and/or the Deputy Secretary General.

A.1.e. Summary of the three scenarios

A.1.e.1. In summary, UNEP wishes to underline that although three different scenarios have been presented above, additional scenarios could be developed, both through further review of functions, posts and levels and through further analysis of the costs associated with activities and operational costs. UNEP further wishes to note that under Scenario 3 it is possible to have different options based on different post constellations. The possible change in host organization could be used as an opportunity for a new staffing structure of the Secretariat, if the Parties and/or the Secretary General so wish. This would also be fully in line with the decision of the Ramsar Standing Committee to further explore the synergies within the Ramsar Secretariat (decision SC41-37).

A.1.e.2. UNEP further stresses that the budgeted staff costs in average and based on experience are 10-15% higher than the actual staff costs. The budget figures used are those provided by the Programme Planning and Budget Division⁵ at UN Headquarters. Contrary to the current practices by Ramsar, UNEP is not in a position to budget staff costs using actual costs. Due to UN accounting practices, and from a precautious approach, the UNEP budget for staff costs is calculated based on maximum costs in order to be able to cover any unforeseen costs as well as costs related to appointment, repatriation etc.

A.1.e.3. As per common practice, it is recommended that 15% reserve is build. In addition to the existing reserve, UNEP has allocated USD 96,000 to increase the reserve in all three scenarios. The Parties may however wish to use (part of) this amount under other budget lines.

⁵ <http://ppbd.un.org/default.asp>

A.1.f. Ramsar-UNEP Financial Analysis

Exchange	1.000				
	Ramsar 2011 Budget CHF	Ramsar 2011 Budget USD '000	Ramsar/UNEP 2011 Scenario 1 USD '000	Ramsar/UNEP 2011 Scenario 2 USD '000	Ramsar/UNEP Details 2011 Scenario 3 USD '000
SUMMARY, UNEP format					
1100 International staff (incl. SPREP Officer)	2,765,186	2,765	3,342	3,020	2,829 See A.1.g.
1300 Support staff	515,596	516	475	292	292 See A.1.g.
1200 Consultants	-	-	-	-	-
1600 Travel	123,627	124	124	124	124
2200 Subcontracts	100,000	100	100	100	100
2300 Commercial contracts	170,000	170	170	170	170
3100 Secr meetings Standing Committee	72,812	73	73	73	73
3200 Meetings and Workshops re programme implem.	292,230	292	292	292	292
4100 Expendable Equipment (Office supplies)	10,000	10	10	10	10
4200 Non-Exp Equipment	12,000	12	-	-	-
4300 Premises, rent and maintenance	-	-	88	84	82 See B.1.d.
5100 Misc: Other (rental of photocopy machine)	29,529	30	24	24	24 See B.1.d.
5200 Misc: Printing and Reporting	150,903	151	151	151	151
5300 Misc: commun & postage	18,000	18	18	18	18
5400 Misc: Hospitality	1,000	1	1	1	1
5500 Misc: monitoring/evaluation/audit fees	18,000	18	-	-	- Auditor fees paid from PSC
SUBTOTAL	4,278,882	4,279	4,867	4,360	4,166
Programme Support Cost (PSC), 13%	-	-	633	567	542
IUCN charges	556,255	556			
Reserves	75,000	75	96	96	96
GRAND TOTAL (a)	4,910,137	4,910	5,596	5,022	4,804
Other: Intern increase	128,000	128			
GRAND TOTAL (b)	5,038,137	5,038	5,596	5,022	4,804
DIFFERENCE 2011 (UNEP vs Ramsar)			558	-16	-234
DIFFERENCE 2011 IN % (UNEP vs. Ramsar)			11%	0%	-5%

A.1.g. Summary and overview of the three scenarios (part 1)

Staff No.	Core posts approved in Ramsar Budget 2009-12	Scenario 1			Scenario 2			Scenario 3		
		<u>UNEP's initial proposal</u>			<u>Cost neutral</u>			<u>Cost decrease (5%)</u>		
		Post level	US\$ '000	Notes	Post level	US\$ '000	Notes	Post level	US\$ '000	Notes
		Year 2011			Year 2011			Year 2011		
	<i>(Ramsar titles)</i>									
1	Secretary General	D1	276.7		D1	276.7		D1	276.7	
2	Deputy Secretary General	P5	249.7		P5	249.7		P5	249.7	
3	Senior Regional Advisor	P5	249.7		P4	214.7	1	P4	214.7	1
4	Senior Regional Advisor	P5	249.7		P4	214.7	1	P4	214.7	1
5	Senior Regional Advisor	P5	249.7		P4	214.7	1	P4	214.7	1
6	Senior Regional Advisor	P5	249.7		P4	214.7	1	P4	214.7	1
7	Partnership Officer	P4	214.7		P4	214.7		P3	181.6	8
8	Finance Officer	P3	181.6		P3		2	P3		2
9	Communications Officer	P3	181.6		P3	181.6		P3	181.6	
10	CEPA Officer	P3	181.6		P3	181.6		P3	181.6	
11	Regional Affairs Officer	P3	181.6		P3	181.6		P3	181.6	
12	STRP Support Officer	P2	157.9		P2	157.9		P2	157.9	
13	Assistants/Interns	P2	157.9		P2	157.9		P2	157.9	
14	Assistants/Interns	P2	157.9		P2	157.9		P2	157.9	
15	Assistants/Interns	P2	157.9		P2	157.9		P2	157.9	
16	Assistants/Interns	P2	157.9		P2	157.9		P2		5
17	Administrative Officer	G7	143.7		G7 (50%)	71.85	3	G7 (50%)	71.85	3
18	Executive Assistant	G5	110.3		G5	110.3		G5	110.3	
19	Administrative Assistant	G5	110.3		G5		2	G5		2
20	Administrative Assistant	G5	110.3		G5	110.3		G5	110.3	
	SPREP Officer		85.0	7		85.0	7		85.0	7
Total International staff		3,256			2,934			2,743		
Total Support staff		475			292			292		
Total SPREP Officer (MOU)		85			85			85		
Total staff (core posts)		3,816			3,312			3,121		

A.1.g. Summary and overview of the three scenarios (part 2)

Other posts		Scenario 1			Scenario 2			Scenario 3		
Staff No.	Other posts 2009-2012	UNEP's initial proposal			Cost neutral			Cost decrease (5%)		
		Post level	US\$ '000	Notes	Post level	US\$ '000	Notes	Post level	US\$ '000	Notes
		Year 2011			Year 2011			Year 2011		
21	Project Officer (Danone)	P3	181.6		P3	181.6		P3	181.6	
22	Documentation Officer (50%)	P2	79.0	6	P2	79.0	6	P2	79.0	6
Total staff (other posts)		261			261			261		

Notes:

Source: Year 2011 figures - Standard Salary Costs version 5 (<http://ppdb.un.org>)

Established by the UN Programme Planning and Budget Division as used in the Initial Appropriation for 2010-2011

- 1 Based on analysis of functions, post classified at P4 level compared to P5 level in scenario 1
- 2 Post funded from 13% Programme Support Costs (PSC)
- 3 Functions to be carried out by G7 (50%)
- 4 The total staff costs in the UNEP original submission is US\$ 4,028,3 (with an exchange rate of 1.0920)
- 5 Post to be funded through UN Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme subject to availability of resources
- 6 Post not budgeted for in core budget but funded from 4% increases in staff costs.
- 7 SPREP Officer is funded from Ramsar core budget but not as an established Ramsar post. The Officer is a national officer recruited by SPREP based on a subcontract from Ramsar
- 8 Post reclassified from P4 to P3 compared to scenario 2

A.2. Contributions of each Contracting Party under each of the three cost scenarios

A.2.a The assessed contributions for 2011 have been calculated based on the existing scale of contribution as provided by the Ramsar Secretariat.

A.2.b. In calculating the assessed contributions, UNEP builds on the following assumptions in scenarios 1, 2 and 3:

- It is not expected that any new party to the Ramsar Convention will have a significant impact on the assessed contributions to be paid by existing parties;
- The minimum contribution per party will remain USD 1,000 as currently is the case (CHF 1,000);
- The year 2011 is used in calculating the assessed contributions although a UNEP/Ramsar scenario would not come into effect until 2013 at the earliest;
- That under a IUCN/Ramsar scenario, the Parties would approve the increased costs for the four Interns/Assistants (CHF 128,000) as part of the core budget with effect from 2013;
- That yearly accrued interests of CHF 12,000 are continued to be deducted from the budget in calculating the assessed contributions;
- That the annual actual Swiss tax refund would be CHF 200,000 which is expected to be closer to reality compared to CHF 250,000 which is currently used for budgetary purposes in the approved Ramsar budget for 2011.

A.2.c. In addition to the above assumptions and scenarios, UNEP has developed a new Scenario 2B that takes the cautious approach, based on experience from other MEAs and the UNEP Secretariat, to assume that minimum 5% the total staff costs are saved against staff budget lines on an annual basis. Scenario 2B further assumes that the Parties can decide to carry over such savings from one year to another and deduct these savings from the budget in calculating the annual assessed contribution. This approach is similar to the current approach in deducting Swiss tax refund against the approved budget.

A.2.d. The assessed contribution per contracting party in scenario 1, 2, 2B and 3 as contained in Annex 3 is based on the following total budget figures:

	2011 Ramsar Budget USD '000	2011 UNEP Scenario 1 USD '000	2011 UNEP Scenario 2 USD '000	2011 UNEP Scenario 2B USD '000	2011 UNEP Scenario 3 USD '000
2011 Budget	4,910	5,596	5,022	5,022	4,804
Additional cost for interns	128	0	0	0	0
Annual staff cost savings (1)	0	0	0	-166	0
Retained Swiss Tax Income	-200	0	0	0	0
Interest income	-12	-12	-12	-12	-12
Total budget used for calculation of assessed contribution	4,826	5,584	5,010	4,845	4,792

Notes:

(1) 5 % of staff costs annually

A.2.e. In Scenario 2B, UNEP presents a cost neutral budget that would not result in an increase in the assessed contributions to the Contracting Parties.

PART B: TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

B.1. Foreseen practicable costs and their impacts on the Ramsar Secretariat's budget

B.1.a. For transition arrangements, one-time only costs may need to be reserved by the Parties. However, it would only be possible to determine the additional costs a transfer would entail once the details of the administrative arrangements have been clarified, especially regarding the individual staff arrangements regarding transfer, remaining under IUCN, or a possible termination of contract. The maximum costs for staff indemnity payment will be USD 634,481.03⁶ – this will only be the case in the unlikely event that all current Ramsar staff eligible to such termination payment would require such payment. However, as we have indicated above under section A, it is likely that no indemnity payments will be required for any staff member if the Ramsar staff members will remain on board, and for those who are for example close to retirement, a transitional solution with IUCN could be agreed upon. Under the Ramsar reserves as per January 2010, CHF 135,000 has been specifically reserved for the purpose of staff termination and associated legal costs. In addition, Ramsar also has an amount of CHF 68,000 in reserve for staff repatriation purposes.

B.1.b. Other monetary costs will include among others acquisition of new office furniture as well as IT equipment, platforms, applications and data transfer, office equipment, stationary, public relations costs, and moving costs. Other monetary costs could include costs associated with termination of lease or legal agreements, and of other contracts, if applicable; however, it is to be expected that these contracts mainly run through IUCN, and can be terminated without incurrance of costs when given sufficient notice.

B.1.c. For moving costs of the Secretariat, those will be mainly dependent on the size of volume of archives and records, of which UNEP is not aware, since currently all furniture and office equipment including computers, are the property of IUCN. Non-monetary costs foreseen would mainly be time and effort of Ramsar, IUCN as well as UNEP and UNON/HRMS staff.

⁶ Indemnity costs provided by IUCN/Ramsar based on IUCN rules and regulations.

B.1.d. Cost of furniture and non-expendable equipment in accordance with current UN negotiated prices

	Quantity	Price USD	Total USD
Desks with drawers	22	1'802.25	39'650.00
Chair, ergonomic	22	572.00	12'584.00
Cupboards 100 x 42,5 x 198 cm	22	598.00	13'156.00
Cupboards 80 x 42,5 x 72 cm	18	456.30	8'214.00
Bookshelves	44	300.00	13'200.00
Meeting room table	1	4'000.00	4'000.00
Meeting room chairs	22	325.00	7'150.00
Visitors chairs	18	325.00	5'850.00
Storage room bookshelves	15	300.00	4'500.00
Other furniture			5'000.00
Computers	22	860.00	18'920.00
Personal printers	5	260.00	1'300.00
<u>Total Costs for furniture and non-expendable equipment</u>			<u>133'523.00</u>

B.1.e. As far as can be established at this stage, the transitional costs without indemnity payments may be:

Purchase of furniture and non-expendable equipment	133,523	
Moving costs	25,000	(estimated)
Miscellaneous	40,000	(estimated)
TOTAL	193,823	

B.1.f. UNEP is not in a position to indicate how Contracting Parties wish to budget for these transition costs, which could be funded either from the core budget, existing reserve or likely by an extraordinary and one time contribution from one or more donors.

B.2. Impacts of various proposed budget scenarios on the overall UNEP budget and Programme of Work

B.2.a. The three budget scenarios, as elaborated above under Part A as well as in the Annexes, will not have an impact on the overall UNEP budget and Programme of Work. The budget for the operation of the Ramsar Convention, including the Secretariat, will remain to be fully financed by the Contracting Parties. UNEP has consistently indicated that the budget of the Ramsar Secretariat and the activities undertaken under the Ramsar Convention, including any adjustments due to change of host organization, should continue to be borne by the parties to the Ramsar Convention itself.

B.2.b. The possible supplementary support foreseen for to be provided by UNEP at no costs to Ramsar include, among others:

- The MEA biodiversity focal points in the region;
- The Resource Mobilization Unit;
- Support in technical assistance and capacity-building activities;
- Legal-oriented advice will be taken up and integrated in existing UNEP posts;
- Staff members working with the biodiversity MEAs and on ecosystem management will also include Ramsar-related tasks in their daily activities.

No increase in UNEP's budget is foreseen for the purpose of providing implementation expertise to the Ramsar Secretariat, should it come under the UNEP umbrella.

B.2.c. UNEP intends, as far as can be envisaged at this stage, to internalize the additional work that a transition of host institution will generate through its current staffing structure.

PART C: TIMING AND A TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

C.1. Timeframe for the provision of the Ramsar Secretariat by UNEP

C.1.a. Under this section, UNEP is requested to provide a possible timeframe for the provision of the Ramsar Secretariat by UNEP. In the schedule below, the following tentative and indicative timeframe is provided, which is also dependent on the decision-making process under the Ramsar Convention. If the Contracting Parties agree on a change in institutional host, it would require an amendment to the Ramsar Convention, in line with Article 8 paragraph 1 that stipulates: “The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources shall perform the continuing bureau duties under this Convention until such time as another organization or government is appointed by a majority of two-thirds of all Contracting Parties”. This is to be read together with article 10bis on amendments⁷.

C.1.b. The timeframe below is developed in the event that the Ramsar COP11 adopts a decision to change host organization; however, it also belongs to the realm of possibilities that Contracting Parties could consider convening a special meeting for this purpose, at another date either before or after COP11.

⁷ (...) .5. Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Contracting Parties present and voting. 6. An amendment adopted shall enter into force for the Contracting Parties which have accepted it on the first day of the fourth month following the date on which two thirds of the Contracting Parties have deposited an instrument of acceptance with the Depositary. (...)

C.1.c. Timeframe

Date	Action
May 2012	Approval by the Ramsar COP11 by a majority of 2/3 of the Contracting Parties indicating that all Parties will deposit an “instrument of acceptance” of the amendment before the 27 th session of the UNEP Governing Council, in February 2013 with 2/3 of the Parties doing so at least four months in advance of the Governing Council.
May 2012	In line with the Letter of Agreement on Provision of Services between IUCN and Ramsar, the Ramsar Secretariat to terminate the service level agreement (Section K2 stipulates a term of 12 months of advance notice). After these 12 months, <i>ad hoc</i> arrangements will need to be agreed upon for the transition period, between UNEP, IUCN and Ramsar.
May 2012 – November 2012	Deposit of an “Instrument of Acceptance” by all Parties. This should be done preferably before November 2012, since an amendment adopted shall enter into force on the first day of the fourth month following the date on which two thirds of the Contracting Parties have deposited an instrument of acceptance with the Depositary. (Article 10 paragraph 6)
May 2012 – February 2013	<p>UNEP in full consultation with IUCN and Ramsar to make tentative preparations for the move of the Ramsar Secretariat to UNEP in anticipation of the depositions of the “instruments of acceptance” and approval by the UNEP Governing Council at its 27th session.</p> <p>Tentative preparations include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. employee consultation process; 2. discussions and negotiations with IUCN on transitional arrangements, if any; 3. review transitional arrangements for each individual staff member; 4. review of Ramsar organizational structure, final classification of job descriptions and prepare advertisement of posts in INSPIRA, as appropriate; 5. identify and prepare office space, including IT infrastructure; 6. identify office furniture and IT hardware and software requirements; 7. prepare physical relocation 8. other measures
February 2013	Authorization by the 27 th session of the UNEP Governing Council for the UNEP Executive Director to host the Ramsar Secretariat and the establishment of relevant trust funds, as appropriate.
Starting February 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate and undertake recruitments, as appropriate 2. Implement transitional arrangements for existing staff 3. Finalization of office space 4. Physical move of the Ramsar Secretariat from Gland to IEH, Geneva
September 2013	Ramsar to be a UNEP administered convention and all operational arrangements in place.

PART D: THE BEST POSSIBLE STAFF ARRANGEMENTS

D.1. Specific staff arrangements

D.1.a. Information on staff about to go on retirement

D.1.a.1. The mandatory retirement age with IUCN is 65 years, while with the UN it is fixed at 62 years for staff members recruited after 1 January 1990, for positions up to, and including, the D2 level. Recruitment and extension of staff contracts beyond the mandatory retirement age is normally not given.

D.1.a.2. According to retirement information provided by IUCN/Ramsar to UNEP in September 2010, only 1 staff member has at this point in time reached the UN mandatory retirement age; 4 staff members have up to 5 years until reaching the UN mandatory retirement age, including 2 general service staff; 4 staff members have up to 10 years until retirement, including 2 general service staff; and 6 staff members have more than 10 years until retirement.

The above staff numbers do not include assistants/interns, staff recruited against positions not approved under the core budget of Ramsar.

D.1.b. Situation of the present interns and the internship programme as a whole

D.1.b.1. Under a UNEP/Ramsar scenario, the current internship programme can not continue under its current constellation.

D.1.b.2. Therefore, UNEP is recommending that the positions of Assistants/Interns are upgraded to Associate Programme Officer positions at the P2-level making the positions more substantive and with the opportunity of attracting more experienced candidates to the jobs. In the cost-neutral scenario as presented as Scenario 2 above, four such positions can be established in 2011 with no increase in the budget.

D.1.b.3. For interns possibly onboard at the time Ramsar becomes a UNEP administrated convention –should the Parties decide so- UNEP would recommend that their internships continue under the current arrangements with IUCN until the expiry of their contracts or until the Associate Programme Officer positions would have been filled. When those positions have been filled, the current Ramsar internship programme should come to an end.

D.1.b.4 In addition, UNEP is recommending that Ramsar considers exploring the use of the UNEP administered internship programme, which has no cost implications to the receiving organization. This programme has been widely recognized across UNEP and MEAs as very successful in attracting qualified applicants for positions between 3 and 6 months.

D.1.c. Whether the Secretariat's staff members would have to apply for their positions

D.1.c.1. Under a UNEP/Ramsar scenario, the Ramsar staff members currently holding an IUCN contract would have to re-apply for their positions in line with UN staff rules and regulations, in order to be eligible for a UNEP contract and the related benefits such a Laissez-

Passer, home leave, education grant, rental subsidy, etc. Following consultations with the Office of Legal Affairs at UN Headquarters through UNON/HRMS, there is no recent precedence of staff from external entities, such as Ramsar, having been offered a contract with the UN Secretariat without recruitment through the UN recruitment processes and staff selection system.

D.1.c.2. The Conference of the Parties may, however, request the UN Secretary General, through the UNEP Executive Director to seek an exceptional endorsement by the UN Secretary-General. Should the UN Secretary-General wish to provide such an exception, it is to be expected that the staff members would be offered a contract with service limitations to UNEP, as is currently the case with the majority of UNEP staff members. The UN Secretary General's office and the Department of Management are only able to consider such a request upon receipt of an official demarche by the UNEP Executive Director, upon the request of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention. The likelihood that such a request will be granted is very difficult to predict.

D.1.c.3. In the course of the discussions of the Ad Hoc Working group, the precedent of the CITES Secretariat was brought to the fore and UNEP was requested to comment on it. UNEP was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1972, while CITES was adopted only a few months thereafter, in March 1973. Article XII of CITES stipulates that a Secretariat shall be provided by the Executive Director of UNEP, and that he may be assisted by suitable intergovernmental or non-governmental, international or national agencies and bodies technically qualified in protection, conservation and management of wild fauna and flora.

D.1.c.4. Fully conscious of the responsibility laid upon it by the Convention, the Executive Director of UNEP concluded that the best way to discharge this responsibility would be by means of a project agreement (in effect, a contract) with IUCN whereby IUCN would provide the staff and the facilities to undertake the Secretariat function. The fact that UNEP contracted IUCN for these purposes by no means reflected an abdication of interest or responsibility. At the tenth meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, in 1983, it was decided to establish a Working Group, which made recommendations in July 1984 to the UNEP Executive Director to exercise more direct control over the Secretariat: to move it out of IUCN, and to maintain the present staff and their functions. Subsequently, the change in administrative control took place on 1 November 1984. On that date, the staff of the CITES Secretariat became UNEP staff members, the UNEP financial and administrative rules became applicable to the operations of the CITES Secretariat, and it moved to new premises. At the same time, IUCN and UNEP agreed by MOU that the physical separation of CITES from IUCN should not reduce cooperation between the organizations in the pursuit of their common objectives.

D.1.c.5. The situation described above is rather different from the situation that we are facing now, since from the date of CITES' adoption, 2 years after Ramsar, it has always been the intention that UNEP would provide Secretariat services, and this was explicitly included in the text of the Convention. Further, the transitional arrangements, including pertaining to staff, cannot be applied anymore as the UN staff rules and regulations have undergone a complete change since then.

D.1.c.6. In addition to the above option, the Parties may wish to consider other options, as presented below, related to the management of staff under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement during a transitional period. These options anticipate that all new vacant and vacated posts will be advertised in line with UN rules and regulations.

D.1.c.7. Additional options for staff management during a transitional period include that:

- Staff members who are above the UN mandatory retirement age of 62 years at the official transition date but not yet having reached the IUCN mandatory retirement age of 65 years would be given the opportunity to continue under IUCN contractual arrangements until they reach the age of 65 years, while performing their functions for the Ramsar Secretariat, on loan from IUCN to UNEP;
- Staff members with up to 5 years to reaching the UN mandatory retirement age of 62 years would be given the opportunity to continue under IUCN contractual arrangements, on loan from IUCN to UNEP;
- All staff members holding a contract of one year or longer would be given the opportunity to remain under IUCN arrangements, on loan to UNEP, for a maximum period of e.g. 2 years, after which their posts will be advertised in line with UN rules and regulations.

D.1.c.8. Please note that the above options would require that IUCN would agree, during a transitional period of a fixed duration, to continue to provide contracts to a limited number of Ramsar staff members holding IUCN contracts, possibly associated with some administrative costs to be paid to IUCN for the administration of these contracts. It would further require that UNEP, Ramsar and IUCN jointly agree on the modalities of such an arrangement, including the legal instrument to be used. Such modalities would be:

- The status of the staff members holding IUCN contracts;
- Supervisory relationships;
- The type of legal recourse to be employed related to any disputes;
- Avenues to be pursued to guarantee equity in treatment of staff.

UNEP believes that a suitable arrangement can be found in the mutual interest of the organizations concerned (IUCN, Ramsar and UNEP) and the staff members.

D.1.d Changes in staff status and provisions under the UN system regulations

D.1.d.1 Staff members holding a contract with the UN-secretariat which includes UNEP are governed by the UN Staff Regulations (ST/SGB/2009/6) and the UN Provisional Staff Rules (ST/SGB/2010/6). Under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly provides Staff Regulations which set out the broad principles of human resources policy for the staffing and administration of the Secretariat and the separately administered funds and programmes. The Secretary-General is required by the Staff Regulations to provide and enforce such Staff Rules, consistent with these principles, as he considers necessary.

D.1.d.2. In UNEP's initial submission, under section D.5.1 and D.5.2, a comparison of staff status and provisions is provided. UNEP does, however, wish to reiterate that under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement the rights and entitlements in Switzerland for staff members holding a UNEP contract are governed by the host country agreement between the Swiss Government and the United Nations. UNEP, including the MEAs, are covered by this agreement. This agreement is attached to the UNEP's initial submission as Annex XIV. During the transitional period, staff members who will possibly be on loan from IUCN will remain to be governed by the IUCN staff rules.

D.2. Review the job classifications already undertaken by UNEP based on the positions and job descriptions of the Ramsar Secretariat

D.2.a.1. Following discussion with the Secretary General of Ramsar, UNEP has further reviewed the functions and duties of each of the posts contained in the Ramsar COP10 approved budget for the period 2009-2012. In UNEP's discussion with the Secretary General of Ramsar and in UNEP's review, particular focus has been attributed to:

- The distribution of functions and responsibilities across the Secretariat;
- Interactions between the post and external partners and actors as outlined in the approved job descriptions as well as possible future changes in these interactions;
- Existing reporting lines; and
- Supervisory responsibilities.

D.2.a.2. As part of the review, UNEP has also analyzed the structures and staffing tables of MEA Secretariats of a similar size to Ramsar, including:

- The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), including its agreements;
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal;
- The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;
- The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

D.2.a.3. Based on the above review and compared to the classifications contained in UNEP's initial submission (Scenario 1), UNEP proposes the following for consideration by the Contracting Parties:

- a) The positions of Senior Regional Advisor be classified at the P4 level. UNEP notes in particular that the Senior Regional Advisors have limited direct interaction with key actors at the ministerial and senior government level in the countries where Ramsar is active. Such interaction is mainly being performed by the Secretary General or by the Deputy Secretary General under the leadership of the Secretary General.
- b) The position of Partnership Officer is classified at the P4 level (Scenario 2). UNEP notes in particular that the Partnership Officer is responsible for managing a large portfolio of external partners. In the event that the main responsibilities related to liaison with external partners are undertaken by the Secretary General, UNEP believes that the post of Partnership Officer could be classified at the P3 level (Scenario 3).
- c) The positions of Assistant/Interns are upgraded to the P2 level, thereby significantly strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat. UNEP notes in particular that by establishing these positions as core posts within the Secretariat, more long-term, sustainable and technical capacity is created compared to the existing arrangement where the term of the Assistants/Interns is limited to an average of about 18 months. UNEP further understands that under the current arrangements significant time is invested by the Senior Regional Officers in providing ongoing training and support to the Assistants/Interns due to the relatively high turnover of these temporary staff members.
- d) That the position of Administrative Officer is classified at the G7 level and reduced to a 50% position under Scenario 2 and 3. With the abolishment of the existing Assistant/Internship programme, a significant portion of the responsibilities of the Administrative Officer will disappear and a full staff post would not be required. With a possible increase in extra-budgetary resources for project implementation, the Parties may wish to consider adding project related functions to the G7 post and funding the other 50% of that part from extra-budgetary resources.

D.2.a.4. Finally, UNEP also recommends that the positions of Finance Officer and Administrative Assistant are funded from the PSC and not from the Ramsar core budget. The classified level of these posts is recommended at the same in all three scenarios.

D.3. Provide staff costs scenarios comparing the present situation and a UNEP administered convention

See above under Part A.

PART E: THE ADDED BENEFITS TO THE CONVENTION

E.1. Detailed information on the added benefits of a UNEP administered Convention vis-à-vis the present situation of the Ramsar Convention

E.1.a. In the UNEP's initial submission, and later in our replies to questions from individual countries, UNEP has provided information on how a change in institutional host is expected to transform the image, visibility and recognition of the Ramsar Convention and enhance the appreciation of wetlands as important assets for conservation and sustainable development. Without repeating in its entirety, UNEP is of the opinion that institutional integration into UNEP, and therefore the United Nations system, would have various positive effects for the image, visibility and recognition of the Convention and for wetlands as vital assets for conservation and sustainable development. As the environment programme of the United Nations, UNEP has the lead mandate within the United Nations system to deal with the environment and achieving coherence.

E.1.b. Integration in UNEP would contribute to a more coherent system of international environmental governance to solve existing and emerging environmental problems of global and regional significance. It would also strengthen the Convention's integration into global environmental governance structures and processes, and Ramsar will be increasingly recognized as a partner on equal footing to the other biodiversity-related conventions such as CITES and CMS. Enhanced cooperation between related conventions will also promote complementarities and mitigate the problem of institutional and legal fragmentation in international environmental law; improved collaboration could contribute to preventing conflicts of norms and duplication of work.

E.1.c. UNEP's set-up and institutional structure, including its regional offices with their regional legal officers and biodiversity focal points, and the expertise of the UNEP substantive divisions, UNEP collaborating centres and scientific advisory groups, will be at the disposition of the Ramsar Secretariat. It will also benefit from being able to be represented, through UNEP, in a variety of partnerships such as the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and many other fora.

E.1.d. The Convention would benefit from the distinct roles that UNEP plays apart from the administrative side of its multilateral environmental agreements, while furthering their causes. In addition, UNEP concentrates on issue-specific areas and the importance of identifying synergies and linkages between various multilateral environmental agreements, so as to facilitate greater coherence and collaboration with a view to achieving greater effectiveness in dealing with environmental issues. In addition to scientific and technical capabilities, UNEP possesses expertise related to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, desertification, ecosystem management, human health, tourism, poverty reduction, regional seas and green economics, to name but a few that are of relevance to the Ramsar Convention.

E.1.e. A change in institutional host will also enhance the implementation of the Convention at the national level, since designated Ramsar authorities in national Governments

may have easier access to personnel in other government sectors to make them aware of national commitments to and rationales for wetland conservation and wise use thus facilitating national coordination, especially as the conventions would be on a more equal footing. Through all of the above, implementation of the Convention at country-level will experience new possibilities, since partnering with UNEP and the UNEP conventions will be more frequently undertaken. More specific, UNEP and its MEAs are already undertaking a range of national and regional technical assistance and capacity building activities, including among others training to MEA negotiators, legal drafting assistance, policy analysis. A broadened funding base that might instigate new activities, such as under the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the Global Environment Fund will be fully explored.

E.1.f. In the following tables, we have set out these “added benefits” under UNEP in a table format, following the structure as provided by the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009–2015 as included in Resolution X.1 of COP-10. The Ramsar Strategic Plan aims, among other things, to contribute to a common understanding at the global, national and subnational levels of the Convention’s purposes and principles. It also identifies that synergies and partnerships with other multilateral environmental agreements are an important requirement, including harmonized information management and reporting systems.

E.1.g.Added Benefits under UNEP	
<p>E.1.g.1. Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 Goal 1: ‘Wise Use’</p>	<p>The wise use of all wetlands being achieved in all Parties, including more participative management of wetlands, and conservation decisions being made with an awareness of the importance of the ecosystem services provided by wetlands</p>
<p>E.1.g.2. Wetlands inventory and assessment; global wetland information; science-based management of wetlands; wetland restoration</p>	<p>UNEP possesses excellent and up-to-date scientific expertise and adopts a science-based approach as the basis for all its operations. This is strongly underpinned by the work of the UNEP Chief Scientist and the Division of Early Warning and Assessment combined with UNEP’s wide network of collaborating centres, scientific institutions and wider partners. Examples are the UNEP-World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (WCMC), the Global Resource Information Database (GRID), the information portals of UNEP and its scientific databases and inventories, as well as UNEP’s work in the knowledge management area, in particular as it relates towards support of MEAs. UNEP publishes well-recognized high-quality scientific publications that include cutting-edge research, and is among others focusing on threats to ecosystems and their management, including wetlands. UNEP also provides summaries for policy-makers to translate scientific information into the policy arena, and to the broader public, in order to bring science to relevance outside the scientific community. Ramsar will be able to benefit directly from UNEP’s growing expertise in this area, including the advisory capacity of the Chief Scientist, and relevant wetland status data might become easier available. Wetland observation systems might also be easier developed.</p>

E.1.g.3. Policy, legislation and institutions; incentive measures

UNEP has profound experience and capacity in the area of development of environmental framework laws, subject-specific laws, and environmental policies, and has on many occasions provided assistance to States in drafting these and the follow-up legislative processes. UNEP has been instrumental in advocating integration of environmental instruments and processes in broader processes at the national level, and will continue to do so taking into account Ramsar-specific goals. National assistance could be organized that focuses on Strategic Environmental Assessments and the development and/or implementation of incentive measures. UNEP provides technical and capacity building support to MEA negotiators as part of its Programme of Work and such support is likely to also include the Ramsar negotiators.

E.1.g.4. Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services; recognition of the role of the Convention; integrated water resources management

UNEP's integrated approach to environment and its dedication to link environment to related areas including poverty, food security, climate change and others, might benefit the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in its attempts to make wetlands part and parcel of decision-making processes in other areas, and to link and apply Ramsar mechanisms to other MEAs. UNEP's emphasis on the ecosystem approach is also fully supportive of Ramsar's objectives and Ramsar would be able to benefit directly from UNEP's work in that area through possibly joint activities at the national level.

E.1.g.5. Invasive alien species

UNEP is paying much attention to the problem of Invasive Alien Species, in support of programmes and projects under the CMS and CBD, in GEF funded projects as well as in (scientific) publications such as in UNEP's African Environmental Outlook. Parties could be assisted in drawing up national inventories, and the foreseen increased collaboration with CBD to address in international regulation could be facilitated.

E.1.g.6. Private sector

Cooperation between the Ramsar Secretariat and the private sector will remain possible, and could increase. Some companies will see it as a strong incentive to be able to be associated with the United Nations, and UNEP in particular. The 2009 "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community" provide ample opportunity for working with the private sector, engaging them in wetlands management, and accepting funding from the business community. It is noteworthy that UNEP has very good experience in the private sector taking over suggested principles and approaches, such as in the banking and tourism sectors.

E.1.g.7. Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015

Goal 2: 'Wetlands of International Importance'

Parties designating and managing Ramsar sites within their territories with a view to supporting an international network of Wetlands of International Importance, fully implementing their reporting commitments, and using the Montreux Record as part of the Convention's governance process.

E.1.g.8. Site designation; management planning; site ecological character

The implementation of the Ramsar Convention requires action by parties, including the preparation of national plans, and consideration of site designation. The aim of having effective management planning in place before designation as such, to foster compliance, is an issue UNEP MEAs have come across as well and lessons can be shared. The pivotal role of wetlands managers in maintenance of the site ecological character through planning and management is also an issue of technical assistance and capacity building, which is one of UNEP's main areas of expertise, also by offering the possibility of utilizing UNEP's presence in and knowledge of the regions, including the regional biodiversity focal points placed in the UNEP Regional Offices in support of the MEAs at the regional and national **level. Parties' implementation** of and compliance with the Convention and its management at the national level might further benefit from being of equal (UN) parentage as other conventions, and be therefore taken more seriously in their work with national counterparts and donors, and have easier access within governmental bureaucracies.

E.1.g.9. Site management effectiveness; site information; site status

Reviews are required to determine effectiveness of management arrangements, as well as database development and implementation and monitoring status of the environment. All these elements, including governance aspects and the use of indicators are part of a wide array of tools to promote implementation of and compliance with the Convention. The actions that are required here could be undertaken in collaboration with UNEP's collaborating centres and more jointly with other MEAs. UNEP's expertise in database development, knowledge management, assessment and monitoring would be more easily accessible for the Ramsar Convention and linkages at the national level could be more easily established, as well as strengthened coordination at the national level among biodiversity focal points.

E.1.g.10. Management of other internationally important wetlands

The guidance of the Ramsar Convention, and the experiences learnt are of great importance for wetlands that are not (yet) under Ramsar. In some instances, they might fall under the scope of other MEAs. In such cases, management of these areas to maintain their ecological character will benefit from Ramsar's direction, including areas that might fall under UNEP MEAs.

E.1.g.11. Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015

Goal 3: 'International Cooperation'

Parties developing their coherent national approaches to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in such a way as to benefit from developing effective partnerships with related conventions and international agencies and with other Parties.

E.1.g.12. Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs

Noting UNEP's mandate on coordination among MEAs, UNEP would be able to contribute towards achieving this goal. Development and implementation of the CBD/Ramsar and the CMS/AEWA/Ramsar joint work plans will be expedited, also since the same rules and regulations will be applicable including financial rules, and reporting and evaluation regulations. This would also pertain to the development of joint activities with the UNCCD and UNFCCC. The additional partnerships envisaged with entities in the UN system such as WHO, ITTO etc. will most certainly be easier to be achieved by joining the system of UN administered conventions. Further, the harmonized reporting and information management systems envisaged will also benefit from the change in institutional host since UNEP is already addressing this issue in great detail and is promoting this at national levels. Enhanced cooperation and coordination among biodiversity focal points at the national level is also anticipated, and Ramsar is like to benefit from such enhanced cooperation and coordination if among the UN administered conventions.

E.1.g.13. Regional initiatives

The planned development of regional arrangements and regional initiatives will have the added benefits of UNEP's network in the regions and in an increasing number of countries also at the national level. Regional and national expertise is available in UNEP regional, country and liaison offices, which is frequently used by the UNEP MEAs. Being a UNEP administered convention, Ramsar will also be in a position to benefit from the UNDP networks globally at the policy and substantive level. Also UNEP's contacts with stakeholders and major groups would be beneficial to the setting up of these regional initiatives.

E.1.g.14. International assistance

The added benefits would pertain clearly to this element; putting pressure on development projects that affect wetlands to take conservation and wise use into account will be taken more seriously when it has UN-backing. Since UNEP is in regular high-level contact with its counterparts such as the World Bank and other international and regional financial institutions, wetlands considerations will become a more integral part of these interactions that will ultimately benefit wetlands. UNEP's pioneering work with UNDP on poverty and environment will benefit Ramsar and might support the case for linking wetlands projects with initiatives that address poverty. Other financial sources that are exclusively earmarked for the United Nations could be accessed by Ramsar if it were a UNEP MEA, such as the UN Development Account, the UN Fund for International Partnerships, and the Millennium Development Goal Fund. UNEP is also closely collaborating with its MEAs on GEF-funded projects, their development and implementation. As is the case with other MEAs, UNEP's elaborate resource mobilization expertise and experience will also benefit Ramsar in executing its fundraising efforts.

E.1.g.15. Sharing information and expertise

UNEP is increasingly focusing on this issue, how related information, such as on biodiversity, can be used by parties for their national reporting, in order to increase efficiency in time and finances. From a parties' perspective, gathering and interpretation of data is time-consuming and it would be beneficial if data could be used for (harmonization of) reporting to MEAs. The initiatives of UNEP such as InforMEA and TEMATEA, and its work on knowledge management among MEAs, are exactly addressing these concerns. Dissemination of research findings and technical/scientific outputs also between parties and the secretariat needs technical capabilities that UNEP has been developing in the past years. Web-based tools have been developed. Joint evaluations and review mechanisms could be developed.

E.1.g.16. Shared wetlands, river basins and migratory species

UNEP's intergovernmental convening power is often used for promoting and facilitating transboundary cooperation, which will benefit the identification of shared wetlands and the development of collaborative mechanisms, including joint management authorities. In particular UNEP's longstanding experience with transboundary riparian ecosystem would be of direct relevance for the further development of the convention regime. The work on wetland-dependent migratory species will be facilitated by a closer cooperation with the UNEP administered Convention on Migratory Species and its agreements and memoranda of understanding.

E.1.g.17. Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015

Goal 4: 'Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness'

Increasing success of the Convention in achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands, as measured by agreed effectiveness indicators, and increased recognition of the Convention's achievements by other sectors of governments and civil society.

E.1.g.18. Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)

The wider awareness of the Convention and its goals and mechanisms, through national action plans, education centres, and participation of stakeholders, will benefit from attaching to UNEP. UNEP has a range of information material specifically for educational purposes, including magazines and interactive material for children and youth. UNEP has also intensive contacts with a wide network of universities and academic centres around the world, as well with education professionals. Also the envisaged training at national and local level could benefit from joining UNEP, as well as in particular the addressing of the training needs of parties referring to political and legislation and institutional governance mechanisms.

E.1.g.19. Convention financial capacity

The financial capacity in the secretariat will be enlarged through the financial officer being part of a team of financial and budget officers. The budgetary preparation for decision-making in the Conference of the Parties will maintain the transparent and accessible UN standards that have proven to be effective. The management of trust funds and procurement will become more transparent, and UN auditing will further ensure efficient use of financial means.

Joint resource mobilization exercises for example for biodiversity-related activities including under the UNEP MEAs are successfully being undertaken.

New and additional financial resources will be explored including funds earmarked for UN organizations and entities. A more transparent and efficient use of administrative and financial resources might occur through enhanced cooperation and coordination among the biodiversity-related MEAs.

E.1.g.20. Convention bodies' effectiveness

The preparation of timely national reports is a responsibility for the parties and they will benefit from the initiatives that are under way under UNEP and its MEAs on harmonization of reporting. National focal points will also benefit from contact with other MEA focal points at the national level.

The secretariat and other convention bodies will benefit from services provided by UNEP and the UN such as security services, legal services etc. Secretariat staff morale might go up because of increased mobility and rotation opportunities and access to elaborate and sophisticated learning and training programmes, including leadership and management training, teamwork, language training and a broad range of other skills that will benefit the operations of the Secretariat.

Representation in international meetings will be improved and will reap additional benefits through increased visibility and standing of secretariat representatives.

The facilitation of issuance of visas for meeting participants and travel documents for secretariat staff holding UNEP contracts will result in a smoother operation of the Convention.

E.1.g.21. Working with IOPs and others

Ramsar's cooperation with its IOPs will not have to undergo main changes. The relationship of the current IOPs can be recognized and maintained, especially as the organizations are already accredited to UNEP and/or UNEP MEAs. Joint activities can also include other relevant organizations working closely with UNEP. Finding other partners for high priority issues might benefit from being administered by UNEP.

E.1.g.22. Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015

Goal 5: 'Membership'

All countries eligible for accession to have joined the Ramsar Convention by 2015.

E.1.g.23. Ramsar has currently 160 parties. Some UNEP MEAs have more parties, some less. Joining the UN, with its global and neutral reputation, and its widely recognized convening power, might for some countries take away impediments to become a party to the Ramsar Convention. The goal to make resources available for recently acceded parties might benefit from funding specifically targeted for UN organizations.

E.1.h. UNEP is of the opinion that under the scenario where Ramsar would join UNEP the overall implementation of the Convention would improve significantly, in particular referring to the key issues for the Convention's future, as set down in the Strategic Plan.

E.1.i. All five goals of the Ramsar Strategic plan are in line with UNEP and the UNEP MEAs Programmes of Work; moreover, many opportunities can be detected for mutually reinforcements. In particular Goals 3, 4 and 5, and to a somewhat lesser extent Goal 1 will benefit from a change in institutional host. The least impact is expected regarding Goal 2, that pertain to core wetlands issues that are already well taken care of by the Ramsar Convention and its Parties, but also under this goal some added benefits may arise.

E.2 Benefits to Parties in case the Ramsar Convention would be under UNEP administration

E.2.a Financing for capacity building and cooperation projects

E.2.a.1. By being a UNEP administered convention, Ramsar will benefit from the resource mobilization capacity of UNEP, and its presence in the regions. UNEP has positive experience in working closely with the biodiversity conventions as well as chemicals and wastes related conventions towards successful capacity building. In addition, the work of the MEAs are normally raised during UNEP's annual bilateral consultations, and those consultations are used as an avenue for UNEP to promote the work of the conventions under its administration as well as advocate for additional financing resources towards the implementation of the UNEP Programme of Work, including those activities that complement the POWs of the MEAs. Under a UNEP administration there will be an increased opportunity for securing additional funding for capacity building and cooperation projects being implemented by the Ramsar Secretariat, and an avenue of creating further coordination between the PoW of Ramsar and UNEP in their implementation at the national level.

E.2.b. Flexibility of finance and project approval

E.2.b.1. Under a UNEP administered scenario, the current project approval procedures and process under the Ramsar Convention will not be affected. The UNEP programme and project approval procedures and process will not apply to Ramsar, just as this is the case with the other UNEP conventions; thus it remains exclusively within the realm of the Ramsar.

E.2.b.2 The same applies to decisions of financing for Ramsar projects. Those decisions rest entirely with the Ramsar Conference of the Parties and with the Ramsar Secretary General based on the COP approved Programme of Work. Under a UNEP/Ramsar scenario the use of financial resources will be undertaken in line with UN financial rules and regulations. These rules are similar to those currently used by IUCN/Ramsar.

E.2.c. Civil society and private sector participation

E.2.c.1. As already indicated in this submission, being a UNEP administered convention will not influence the current possibilities Ramsar uses to engage with civil society and the private sector.

E.2.c.2. UNEP wishes to reiterate that the engagement with the private sector is regulated in the 2009 "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector". These guidelines define the Business Sector as: 1) For-profit, and commercial enterprises or businesses; and 2) Business associations and coalitions, including but not limited to corporate philanthropic foundations. These guidelines intend to serve as a common framework for all organizations of the UN system as a basis for their collaborative efforts with the Business Sector. The Business Sector has played an active role in the work of the United Nations since its inception, and recent political and economic changes have fostered and intensified the search for collaborative arrangements. Over the past ten years the Business Sector and other stakeholders have increasingly become active partners in helping the UN in achieving its goals, as a complement to Government action. Strategic engagement with the Business Sector and

other stakeholders is proving to be an effective method for advancing United Nations goals. Collaboration has evolved based on an understanding that although the UN's goals are quite distinct from those of the Business Sector, there are overlapping objectives including building markets, combating corruption, safeguarding the environment, increasing food security, and ensuring social inclusion.

E.2.c.3. The United Nations Global Compact (www.unglobalcompact.org) provides an overall value framework for cooperation with the Business Sector. The principles of the Global Compact on human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption are based on intergovernmental agreements and are specifically relevant for business. UN entities should use them as a point of reference when developing their own guidelines, including guidelines for choosing a Business Sector partner. The use by partners of the UN and UNEP logos should follow the organizations' guidelines, meaning that the Ramsar Secretariat may need to consult UNEP on potential partnerships to avoid possible discrepancies.

E.2.c.4. In general, UNEP does not foresee any contradictions or conflict with the "Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector" as welcomed in Resolution X.12. If anything, cooperation with the business sector might increase since from our experience there is much interest from companies to be associated with the United Nations.

E.2.c.5. Also in relation to Ramsar's engagement with civil society no major changes are to be expected. UNEP has strong convening powers and proven ability to catalyze multi-stakeholder processes, including with civil society. UNEP has vibrant interaction with civil society, which cooperates and engages on many levels with UNEP as well as its MEAs. A change in host organization might create opportunities for Ramsar to further diversify its interaction with civil society. UNEP MEAs all have their specific practice for civil society engagement, within the broader overall UN framework. For further information, see also http://www.unep.org/civil_society.

E.2.d. Regional initiatives

E.2.d.1. The regional initiatives in their current constellation as recognized in Resolution IX.7 on "Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention", and as endorsed in that resolution and in later decisions, as well as the Guidelines for International Cooperation as included in Resolution VII.19, will not be affected by a move of Ramsar to UNEP.

E.2.d.2. However, due to UNEP's strategic presence in the regions and the posting of Biodiversity Focal Points in the UNEP Regional Offices, UNEP believes that Ramsar will be able to better engage directly with existing initiatives, including monitoring of implementation and identify possible future regional initiatives. Furthermore the Biodiversity Focal Points can work directly with the Ramsar Regional Advisors, in support of their work and represent them and the interests of Ramsar in meetings in the regions, as appropriate.

E.2.e. Institutional strengthening

E.2.e.1. The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009–2015 aims to contribute to a common understanding at the global, national and sub-national levels of the Convention's purposes and

principles. It may be easier to achieve these goals since incorporation into the UNEP institutional framework would undoubtedly raise the Convention's global, regional and national profile and could promote its usefulness and its mechanisms as a possible means of implementation to meet the goals and targets of other global conventions and processes.

E.2.e.2. Becoming a MEA secretariat under UNEP would improve, facilitate and institutionalize cooperation and bring about enhanced cooperation, coordination and interlinkages with other biodiversity agreements at all levels. The benefits of cooperation among conventions and international organizations with related or overlapping missions have been widely recognized for improving their respective effectiveness. This cooperation is of utmost importance for enhancing the visibility and recognition of wetlands and the Convention. By pointing out the importance of wetlands and the interrelation with other environmental issues, the Convention could, through an institutional link, also benefit from the greater public awareness generally attributed to those issues – and vice versa. Enhanced awareness would inevitably improve public knowledge and understanding with regard to wetlands' importance and their crucial role for environmental protection. Integration into UNEP could also facilitate closer and more effective cooperation with other, non-UNEP, United Nations conventions.

E.2.e.3. Incorporation into the UNEP institutional framework could further facilitate the implementation of the Convention and therefore contribute to its effectiveness. The Convention would benefit from the vast UNEP expertise with regard to treaty implementation and enforcement. It would profit from the long-standing experience and knowledge that UNEP has gained in relation to implementation and the mechanisms developed in this regard.

Institutional hosting by UNEP would also assist in the development and maintenance of quality staff in the Ramsar Secretariat. Staff would enjoy access to an established international organization in the field of environment and a wealth of institutionalized capacity in terms of staff resources, training possibilities and exposure. A UNEP setting would thus almost certainly have a positive effect on staff development and provide impetus for staff to remain within the Secretariat. In addition, UNEP could possibly provide targeted support to the Convention in specific situations by temporarily deploying to it financial and human resources from UNEP as done with other conventions.

E.3. Information on obligations that could arise as a result of transfer of funds

UNEP is not aware of any additional obligations that would arise under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement related to the transfer of funds from contracting parties or other donors to the Ramsar Secretariat for the implementation of activities as approved in the Ramsar Programme of Work. It is understood that compliance with UN financial rules and regulations, ethics requirements, reporting requirements, evaluation practices etc would be adhered to. Furthermore, in general under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement, budgets including contributions would be accounted for in USD.

E.4. How quickly can a programme or project receive funding, comparing the Ramsar Convention practice under IUCN and a UNEP administered convention

Under a UNEP/Ramsar scenario, a programme or project can receive funding in a similar fashion as under the current arrangements as communicated to UNEP and as available in the public domain.

The provision of such funding will, however, be undertaken in line with UN financial rules and regulations. It is however required that project and programme budgets are developed in line within prevailing standards and practices. As indicated, the project approval process will remain an internal Ramsar process.

E.5. How will the move facilitate the efficient working of the Ramsar Secretariat and its impact on staff

Under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement, the current working modalities of Ramsar would, in principle, continue unchanged.

A move to UNEP would, however, provide the opportunity for the Secretariat to undertake an overall review of the structure and current working modalities, processes and procedures of the Secretariat. Such a review would also entail a review of staff functions and be fully in line with the decision SC.41/37 in which the Secretary General of Ramsar is requested to develop and implement a strategy to maximize synergies within the Secretariat.

In light of the above, UNEP believes that a move of Ramsar to UNEP would provide opportunities for more efficient workings of the Secretariat and with the opportunity of creating new opportunities for staff with revised responsibilities in a new environment and with exposure beyond Ramsar to the broader UNEP and UN system. For staff holding UNEP contracts, career development opportunities will also have been enhanced for staff at all levels.

E.6. How would the Ramsar Convention under UNEP be affected regarding specific issues?

E.6.a. Access to funding

Under a UNEP/Ramsar scenario it can be assumed that Ramsar will continue to have access to minimum the same funding as today, including assessed contribution, voluntary contributions as well as financial support from the private sector. In addition, Ramsar would be able to use the services of the UNEP Resource Mobilization Section, including its outposted staff at the UNEP Regional Office for Europe in Geneva and Brussels taking into consideration that Ramsar currently has no post dedicated to resource mobilization. It could also be anticipated that Ramsar will receive financial support from UNEP towards implementing activities in support of the Programme of Work of Ramsar and UNEP as well as in-kind support such as legal services, administrative support services, IT services and public information services.

E.6.b. Management of data between different wetland organizations

It is not foreseen that the management of data between different wetland organizations will change under a UNEP/Ramsar scenario compared to the current practices. The Framework for Wetland Inventory as annexed to Resolution VIII.6 will remain valid and usable, including the thirteen steps as comprised in this structured framework for planning and designing a wetland inventory, which provide the basis for making decisions in relation to the purpose, objectives, and the available resources, for an inventory. It is also noted that this framework does not provide prescriptive guidance on particular inventory methods, but that it rather provides guidance to the Contracting Parties and others who are planning to undertake wetland inventory by drawing attention to different methods and wetland classifications already in use and of proven utility under different circumstances.

However, if Ramsar were to join the UNEP family, the Secretariat's scientific and technical capability would be boosted. UNEP has recognized the value of collaborating with acclaimed centres of excellence worldwide and has established an extensive network of specialists, scientists and centres. It provides technical and analytical support and assistance and improves the knowledge base by, among other things, sharing best practices. It also aims at developing and strengthening environmental data and knowledge management and assessment at the national, subregional and regional levels to provide a sound basis for environmental governance. Integration into UNEP could therefore foster data collection, storage and analysis and might facilitate scientific assessment, technical support and capacity-building.

Being under the UNEP umbrella might also facilitate the exchange of scientific and technical knowledge and data between relevant bodies, including improving the inter-accessibility of available web-based data. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel has already increased its cooperation with the subsidiary scientific bodies of other agreements such as the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Such cooperation and communication could therefore be intensified by closer and institutionalized cooperation, which could also prevent data discrepancies and duplication of work.

E.6.c. Facilitate the development linkages between the regional offices of UNEP

Under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement, Ramsar will have direct access to the capacity and network of UNEP regional offices. As indicated in UNEP's initial submission (Items B.1.5-B.1.8, page 2), Ramsar will be supported by the UNEP Biodiversity Focal Points located in the UNEP Regional Offices. Those officers have as main mandate to support the implementation and assist in the coordination of the biodiversity conventions at the national level. In addition, the biodiversity focal points can be called upon by the conventions to represent them in meetings in their respective regions. The Legal Officers and the Ecosystem Management focal points in UNEP's Regional Offices are in practice also working with the UNEP biodiversity MEAs.

E.6.d. Maintenance of existing linkages and partnerships

UNEP does not foresee any change in the maintenance of existing linkages and partnerships under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement. However, it could be anticipated that existing partnership agreements would have to be reviewed to ensure that these agreements fully comply with UN

rules and regulations, although we do not have any indication that they would not be able to be maintained.

The relationship with the current International Organization Partner (IOPs), as included in Resolution IX.16 and Resolution VII.3 and its Annex containing the rules for conferring the status of IOP, and in particular the characteristics as elaborated in paragraph 4 of this Annex, will be able to be continued as is. The status of these international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and their historical relationship with the Convention, will keep continue to contributing to the mission of the Convention as stated in its Strategic Plan.

E.6.e. Facilitate collaboration of wetlands within the UNEP regions

UNEP foresees that under a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement the capacity of Ramsar at the regional level will be strengthened through the use of the UNEP Biodiversity Focal Points placed in the regional offices and through the capacity of the regional offices. Therefore, it is anticipated that a UNEP/Ramsar arrangement will contribute towards better collaboration among existing and future wetlands at the national and regional level.

E.6.f. Promote regional initiatives

See E.2.d above.

E.7. What would be the legal status of the Ramsar Convention as a UNEP administered Convention?

Article 102 paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations states that “Every treaty and every international agreement entered into by any Member of the United Nations shall as soon as possible be registered with the Secretariat and published by it.” This Article constitutes a legal obligation for member states to register treaties with the Secretariat; its original intention was to eliminate secret diplomacy. The Ramsar Convention has consequently been registered with the UN Secretariat.

When a treaty is registered, it does not imply a judgement by the UN of the nature of the instrument, the status of the parties, or similar. The acceptance for registration does not confer on the instrument the status of a treaty or international agreement if it does not already possess that status.

This process of registration is to be distinguished from the role of UNESCO as Depository, as per Article 9 paragraph 3 of the Ramsar Convention.

The legal status of the Ramsar Convention will not be affected if the Contracting Parties decide that it will become a UNEP administered convention. The Secretariat itself would have no decision-making powers and would remain directed by the Conference of Contracting Parties; it would not have an international legal personality but derive its legal status from UNEP, like it does now from IUCN (see the fourth preambular paragraph of the Letter of Agreement on Provision of Services between IUCN and Ramsar).

E.8. How will UN staff and financing rules and regulations affect Ramsar operations?

Following a review by UNEP of the available IUCN staff rules as well as financial rules and regulations, UNEP believes that there is a large similarity between the rules and regulations under IUCN and the UNEP, respectively.

From UNEP's review, the main differences related to the recruitment of staff which follows specific procedures and processes as set out in the administrative bulletin governing the UN staff selection system (ST/AI/2010/3).

UNEP does not anticipate that the UN staff as well as financing rules and regulations, including the operation of trust funds and the 13% programme support costs will in practice, after the initial transition period, have an affect on Ramsar's operations and the Secretariats ability to deliver against its approved programme of work and timelines.