



10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

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Agenda item XV

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Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector

1. RECOGNIZING the importance of the ecological and socio-economic values of wetlands and the vital roles of wetland ecosystems in delivering a wide range of critical benefits and services to all human beings;
2. RECALLING that in Resolution VIII.31 (1999) on the Convention's CEPA programme, the Parties recognized that wetland issues can increasingly become part of the business of other sectors and not just that of the environment sector, thereby mainstreaming the conservation and wise use of wetlands into society and government;
3. AWARE of the fact that several business organizations and networks have developed and adopted their own guidelines to seek to share good practices relating to ecosystem management;
4. CONSIDERING the potential that the wise use of wetlands can offer to sustain the economic and social activities of a wide range of public and private stakeholders;
5. RECOGNIZING the vital role of an effective communication between policy makers, decision makers, managers, and various groups of interests, including governments, business leaders and communities in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention;
6. NOTING that the business sector is under-represented in the Ramsar family and that promoting greater involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands is emphasized [in Strategy 1.10 of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014]; but
7. EXPRESSING GRATITUDE for the material contributions of the Danone Group, through the Evian Initiative, to the outreach work of the Ramsar Convention over ten years' time and for the more recent contributions of the Star Alliance airline network, in two excellent examples of mutually beneficial partnerships between the Convention and the business sector;

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THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. WELCOMES the “Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector” provided in the annex to this Resolution;
9. URGES Contracting Parties, the Secretariat and the Ramsar partners to make good use of it as appropriate, including within the frameworks of existing national, regional, and global initiatives and commitments;
10. URGES Parties to draw these principles to the attention of relevant stakeholders, including *inter alia* private companies, government ministries, departments and agencies, water and basin management authorities, non-governmental organizations, and civil society at large;
11. ENCOURAGES business companies to seek practical ways, in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat as resources permit, to understand the linkages between their activities and wetlands ecosystems, to avoid negative impacts, and to mitigate unavoidable effects; to assess the status and trends of conservation of wetlands, including the threats and opportunities; and to understand and appreciate the values of the ecosystem services and products on which they rely and the wetland types that produce those benefits;
12. ENCOURAGES decision makers, especially business leaders, to develop and adopt policies, strategies and operational approaches for ecosystem management, including wetlands, guided by the desire to avoid, minimize, mitigate and “offset” adverse impacts on wetland ecosystems;
13. SUPPORTS joint efforts between the Ramsar structures and partners and the business sector in building alliances with scientific and research organizations, with a view to improving understanding of wetland ecosystem services, identifying and scaling up solutions, and sharing their tools and experience;
14. ENCOURAGES governments, donors, international organizations, and the civil society at large, including business companies, NGOs and local communities to join their efforts to stop and reverse the degradation of wetlands in order to sustain the services they provide as a prerequisite for future growth opportunities;
15. INVITES concerned business enterprises to discuss with the Ramsar Secretariat possible ways and means of developing mutually beneficial partnerships, in accordance with the annexed principles; and
16. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat to be mindful of the annexed principles when exploring new opportunities and pursuing new joint initiatives with private companies.

Annex

Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector

Taking into consideration the following guiding principles, the Ramsar Contracting Parties encourage the Secretariat to further develop partnerships with the business sector, [in the spirit

of Strategy 1.9 of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014], in order to promote practical synergies between development and environment with a view to maintaining the ecological values of wetlands as assets for sustainable development.

Objectives

- To expand the resource base of the Convention and its activities by developing mutually beneficial relationships with the private sector.
- To promote the engagement of the private sector directly in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- To facilitate dialogue between business and key stakeholders of wetlands, particularly governments and relevant communities, in order to build trust, stimulate and develop concrete partnership activities.
- To increase local, national and regional investments in promoting wetland conservation, wise use, restoration and rehabilitation.
- To promote a better understanding of the values of wetlands and the mission of the Convention in order to minimize barriers and negative associations between wetlands and profitable business.
- To nurture and intensify the synergy between the ecological requirements for sustainable development and the socio-economic benefits derived from sound wetland management.
- To explore new areas and develop appropriate measures for further cooperation between government and the private sector at national level.
- To identify and apply methodologies for innovative compensation of wetland loss and for offsetting negative impacts on biodiversity and climate change.

General principles

1. There is an increasing recognition that the business sector is not only part of environmental problems but can also be part of the solutions, that sustainable development can be best achieved by the commitments and interactions of governments and civil society, including local communities, influential individuals, and private companies.
2. The Contracting Parties recognize that unsustainable business activities and the increasing poverty in various parts of the world are some of the root causes of environmental degradation, but that the increasing role played by globalization and economic growth is sometimes a source of great opportunities as well.
3. The key expectations of partnership development between the Ramsar Convention and the private sector are:
 - to reach a common vision about wetlands;
 - to adopt a shared strategy and a common code of conduct;
 - to jointly carry out positive activities;
 - to benefit mutually from the outcomes of joint activities.

Criteria for identifying a potential private partner with the Ramsar Convention:

4. The fundamental criterion is the commitment by the company to strengthen, and in no way to undermine, the integrity and reputation of the Ramsar Convention and its ability to carry out its mission in accordance with the decisions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.
5. The second criterion is the awareness by the business entering in partnership with Ramsar of the mission of the Convention and the recognition of environmental sustainability as one of the key conditions that sustain life and human health.
6. The third criterion is the commitment to develop and adopt new strategies that include environmental conservation, especially wetland conservation and wise use, amongst the main concerns of the company.

Specific principles

7. It is imperative for the Secretariat to obtain a thorough understanding of the company, to assess the appropriateness of possible collaborative efforts, and to understand the potential mutual benefits and possible negative aspects. Care must be taken to assess the potential partner's activities throughout the world and throughout the breadth of its business strategies, and not only in the immediate area of the proposed relationship, in order to avoid any possible embarrassment to the Convention.
8. The assessment of a partnership initiative should take into account immediate, short-term, and long-term mutual benefits as well as any potential negative aspects.
9. Any potential negative aspects of a partnership initiative must be carefully assessed, keeping in mind the possible immediate, underlying and root causes of misunderstandings that could damage the integrity of the Convention.
10. Care should be taken to avoid partnerships that require exclusivity and prohibit other partnerships of a similar nature.
11. Any suggestion about a possible Ramsar partnership with the business sector must first be discussed and assessed within the Secretariat, and then with the Standing Committee's Management Working Group. Following a preliminary assessment of any suggested initiative with the business sector, the Secretariat is responsible for undertaking the necessary consultations in order to seek the approval of the Standing Committee for further development of the new partnership relationship.
12. In any initiative with the business sector, the Secretariat should also consult with all applicable Contracting Parties to ensure that the relevant Administrative Authorities are kept fully informed.
13. Technical cooperation and capacity building programmes should be given due consideration in any planned collaborative activities with the business sector.
14. A monitoring and evaluation framework should be part of signed agreements to facilitate periodic assessment of the effectiveness of the partnership and prompt recommendations

to improve the outcomes, and a mechanism should be designed to do that – all partnership agreements should include a budget line to provide the necessary resources to carry out that process.

15. Private companies that enter into partnerships with the Ramsar Convention should align their efforts with the Ramsar Convention's policies and assist relevant Contracting Parties in pursuing the implementation of the Convention, as resources permit.
16. Care should be taken, in developing any partnership with a business company, that both the senior officers of the company and their operational units throughout the company are fully aware of and supportive of the relationship. The Ramsar representatives must arrive at a clear understanding of the cultures of the organizations and what makes them willing to be committed to support wetland conservation and wise use
17. Care must be taken at the outset of any such partnership that there is full agreement on its objectives, on the potential mutual benefits for both parties, and on any areas of potential friction and conflict that must be avoided.
18. The partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector could take any of several forms; for example,
 - a) informal provision of information on wetland issues to improve understanding of the trends of wetlands in a given geographic or professional area;
 - b) formal provision of information on positive and negative impacts on wetlands in a given geographic area;
 - c) long-term respective commitment through contractual arrangements to achieve common goals and shared benefits.
19. It is important to maintain a positive attitude of frank and transparent collaboration that enables the Convention and its partners to be most effective and agree on constructive convictions, outlooks, ideas, and actions. The key approach is to build trust and add confidence in working together to identify and take actions that meet shared needs.
20. When conflict or friction cannot be avoided, however, it is necessary to take the interests of the Convention as the highest priority in dealing with outside parties, in spite of possible loss of immediate or short-term benefits.
21. Since companies interested in collaboration with the Ramsar Convention might be very large, with interests and activities over a large area or throughout the world, care must be taken to monitor and evaluate, not only the ongoing partnership relationship with certain elements within the company, but also unrelated activities of the company elsewhere in the world, in order to avoid potential embarrassment to the Convention through that association.
22. Reports on the activities and progress of all such partnerships between the Convention and the business sector should be provided to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties, according to a standard summary format. All resources received from the partners for the Convention's use should be accounted for.

23. Only business companies with which formal partnerships that correspond to the above principles have been agreed may make direct reference to the Ramsar Convention and use its logo. Other partnerships with commercial enterprises must not do so, and the Secretariat will have a watchful eye that this condition is fulfilled. Conversely, partners operating under a formal Ramsar partnership should state this in all their relevant communication and outreach activities and include the Ramsar logo in publications and other activities, whenever feasible.
24. On the other hand, the Secretariat encourages non-commercial uses of the Ramsar name and/or logo by wetland site managers, government authorities, non-governmental organizations, the press and other media without prior permission, because it is understood to be in the Convention's interests to expand the awareness of its name and objectives to the widest extent possible, and to make it as easy as possible for people to do so. The sole restriction made upon use of the Ramsar name and logo on the products of non-commercial entities is that the name and/or logo must not be positioned in such a way as to suggest that the Convention or the Secretariat has participated in or endorsed the product. (For example, publications about Ramsar sites are free to use the Ramsar logo as long as it is used in such a way as to make it clear that they are not Ramsar publications.)