



Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Ramsar COP11

“Wetlands, Tourism, and Recreation”

African Regional Preparatory Meeting

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso 3-8 October 2011

Ouagadougou Commitments

PREAMBLE

Representatives from 40 Ramsar Contracting Parties from the Africa Region and 24 Partners (including IUCN, WWF, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, UN Agencies, Government Agencies, local governments, Ministries, ICLEI, Swiss TPH, ATEN, NGOs, universities, and the private sector) met from 3-8 October, 2011 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) for African input and position for the Ramsar COP11;

RECOGNIZING the necessity to maintain, restore and wisely use the vital functions and values of wetlands for the wellbeing of human societies;

APPRECIATING AND ENCOURAGING the increasing collective responsiveness and commitment of the Ramsar community.

THE RAMSAR AFRICA REGION AND ITS PARTNERS:

EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE to Switzerland for its long term acknowledged, valuable and important support to Africa, and the financial assistance to this meeting;

Thank the Government of Burkina Faso, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Environment Canada for their financial contribution that enabled the organisation of the Ouagadougou meeting;

ACKNOWLEDGE WITH APPRECIATION the precious technical and administrative assistance of IUCN/PACO and WWF-Africa;

EXPRESS THEIR APPRECIATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT to those Contracting Parties that regularly pay their annual contributions on time;

RECALL the spirit of the Changwon Declaration on *human well-being and wetlands*, which is one of the resolutions of the Ramsar COP10 held in



Changwon, Republic of Korea from 28 October - 4 November, 2008 calling for action to ensure human well-being and future security of humankind;

NOTE with appreciation the support from the Republic of Korea to implement the Changwon Declaration, yet the Declaration has remained largely unimplemented in the Africa Region; so the African Contracting Parties PROPOSE that the Africa region add more commitment to IMPLEMENT the Changwon Declaration;

SOLICIT the Ramsar Standing Committee and COP11 to take steps to encourage strategic and operational actions so as to give confidence to partners.

THE RAMSAR AFRICA REGION AND ITS PARTNERS ARE COMMITTED:

1. To promote the conservation and wise-use of listed Ramsar Sites especially where there is the potential for threats and change in ecological character;
2. To pay outstanding arrears in annual contributions by COP11 in June 2012; and to make voluntary contributions especially in the context of the African Parties' decision at COP10 noted in Resolution X.2 (para 23);
3. To accelerate the implementation of the Ramsar *Strategic Plan 2009-2015* in Africa, through a pragmatic approach based primarily on visible and explicit changes to policies and practices which can set examples for African and other states, and knowledge about which can be disseminated via the media, including but not restricted to promoting of inventories, national wetland policies, establishment of National Ramsar Committees, promotion of relevant legislation, development of management plans, and the designation of new Ramsar Sites;
4. To promote and make appropriate arrangements for financial resources to fund the conservation and wise-use of wetlands;
5. To develop capacity of stakeholders at all levels through training modules, specific school and academic programs for young people, education programmes for legislators and/or advocacy related to wetland wise-use, making use, *inter alia*, of the Wings Over Wetlands Flyways Training Kit;
6. To take into account all wetland values in relation to the ecosystem benefits/services provided by them to the local communities, in the context of Ramsar Sites so as to make these Sites beacons of sustainable development; and further to develop a new criterion related to the selection of Ramsar Sites on the basis of internationally important ecosystem services;



7. To develop a strategic partnerships between the Contracting Parties, and where possible non-Contracting Parties to share experiences and exchange best practices in managing wetlands at both national and transboundary level and to use these experiences to encourage such non-Contracting Parties to accede to the Convention;
8. To fully integrate Resolutions from the Ramsar COP11 into relevant national policies and strategies concerning wetlands and implement these;
9. To bring national experiences with respect to tourism and recreation in wetlands to COP11 so as to ensure that this African experience is fully taken into account in COP11 outcomes on this issue; and
10. To implement the Changwon Declaration to the fullest extent possible.

THE RAMSAR AFRICA REGION AND ITS PARTNERS RECOMMEND:

1. Maintaining and strengthening the financial and operational capacity of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund and other relevant grant funds for wetlands, and encourage voluntary contributions to this end;
2. Encouraging Contracting Parties, international organisations and other donors to follow the example of Switzerland and establish funds for the implementation of the Convention in Africa, both now and in the period 2012-2015;
3. Encouraging the formal accession of States that are not yet Contracting Parties to join the Convention using appropriate sub-regional contacts and other mechanisms to this end, noting in particular the important role of regional representatives to the Standing Committee to this end;
4. Urging Contracting Parties to designate further Ramsar Sites by COP12 in 2015;
5. Encouraging the Standing Committee, in the planning of future sessions of the Conference of Parties, to hold, resources permitting, a Ministerial segment or similar mechanism, with a view to greater involvement by political leaders in the implementation of the Convention at the state level, and to encourage all other means of engaging with political leaders;
6. Better synergy of action between the Ramsar Convention, the Rio Conventions (the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Combating



Desertification), the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, and other relevant multi-lateral environmental agreements in the context of the joint management of wetlands and relevant policies;

7. The adoption of strategic environmental assessment as a planning tool before any interventions are made in wetlands and with a focus on conservation, sustainable use of water resources, biodiversity, ecosystem goods and services, especially in those areas more vulnerable to changing and variable climate;
8. To bring the outcomes of this pre-COP meeting in Ouagadougou to the main regional economic communities in Africa and urge them to use their meetings and other opportunities to consider these recommendations so as both to promote the implementation and development of Convention activities in the states, to prepare for COP 11, and so as to engage with the political and economic leadership of these communities;
9. To strengthen and promote the existing African regional initiatives and to establish new regional initiatives so as to facilitate regional coordination and capacity building;
10. Encourage African countries to organize side events during COP11 in June 2012 and co-ordinate their planning to that end;
11. Invite the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a communication strategy including the promotion of media communications, and the establishment of a media platform on the Convention's web-site so to ensure the visibility of the Ramsar Convention at the international level, and to strongly encourage national Administrative Authorities to engage with the media providing them with regular communications on wetland conservation and wise-use issues;
12. That COP11 adopts the 2012 revision of the Ramsar Information Sheet and the 2012 revision the *Strategic Framework for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*;
13. Encouraging those Ramsar Contracting Parties who are currently not yet Contracting Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA) and/or the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and which are present at this African Regional meeting, to undertake to liaise with the AEWA Secretariat in order that their country should accede to CMS and AEWA, and to encourage the Ramsar Secretariat to continue to work in collaboration with both CMS and AEWA Secretariats towards jointly promoting the accession of common non-Contracting Parties to Ramsar, CMS and AEWA;



14. Urge the African representatives within the Ramsar Standing Committee to redouble their efforts so as to ensure effective and regular communication with the sub-regions they are representing, and to that end the African representatives are requested to consult the relevant countries before each Standing Committee meetings and to report after each meeting in order to provide opportunities for African Contracting Parties to provide their inputs to Ramsar processes; and
15. Encourage Contracting Parties to raise with their national governments and administrations the need to strengthen national government appreciation of the important role of local and sub-national governmental structures in the management and wise use of wetlands.
16. Encourage Contracting Parties to make an emphasis on the economic valuation of wetlands as a priority for national governments for the implementation of the Convention.