



## 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

*“Wetlands: home and destination”*

Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012

### Agenda item XI

### Ramsar COP11 DOC. 7

## Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention at the global level

### Preamble

1. This is the progress report regarding the implementation of the Convention from the closing of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP10) on Tuesday, 4 November 2008, to 15 May 2012. In addition to the analysis made by the regional teams, the Communication team, the Partnership Coordinator and the financial officer of the Ramsar Secretariat, the report provides my personal views in my capacity as current Secretary General.
2. The global overview is based on the analysis of the implementation of the Convention at national and regional levels, taking into account the national reports for the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) but also available information from various sources, including reports from Regional Initiatives, Ramsar partners, and ongoing global processes. The structure of this report is based on the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.
3. At COP11, this global report will be introduced and discussed in plenary in the afternoon of Saturday, 7 July; implementation at regional level will be discussed during the Regional Meetings on 5 and 6 July.
4. Three other reports for this meeting of the Conference of the Parties provide additional perspectives about the progress made in the implementation of the Convention:
  - The report of the Chairperson of the Standing Committee
  - The report of the Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
  - The report of the Secretary General under Article 8.2 on the status of the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

## **Section A: Main achievements since COP10, key challenges and Priorities for 2013-2015**

### **A.1 Significant progress**

5. From November 2008 to May 2012, the Convention's growth shows the following progress:
  - From 158 Contracting Parties to 160;
  - From 1,758 Ramsar Sites to 2,006, with nearly 50% of Ramsar Sites in Europe and only 326 in Africa;
  - From 161.3 million hectares of Ramsar Sites to 192.8 million hectares;
  - Increasing worldwide recognition of the role of wetlands in conservation and sustainable development with a particular emphasis on the role of wetlands as water providers and contributing to:
    - o adaptation and mitigation of climate change
    - o water security and food security
    - o energy supply
    - o water quality and human health
    - o cities and urbanization
    - o sustainable tourism.
6. Significant progress has also been observed in the Ramsar contribution to global processes, through the work of Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs): preparations for Rio+20, UN-Water, the Environmental Management Group (EMG), the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Global Partnership for Oceans led by the World Bank, the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), the UN Environmental and Social Sustainability Report, and the PlanetWorkshops on sustainable development and environment, a network of organizations created by journalists that includes governments, parliaments, the business sector, NGOs, indigenous people and local communities, scientists and students.
7. The Ramsar Secretariat has also initiated collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact, which is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. This collaboration is carried out with regard to the core environmental principles of the UN Global Compact, with a focus on two of the most critical – and related – environmental issues of this century: climate change and water sustainability.

### **Update on the contribution of the Partnership Coordinator**

8. At COP10 in 2008, the Parties approved a new senior post of Partnership Coordinator for the Secretariat. The Coordinator came on board in February 2011, with a delay in the process due to budgetary issues. Thus, the time for review of progress in this position is

reduced. Much of her work has involved building stronger relationships, extending the donor base, presenting projects and programmes to prospective donors, revising agreements and raising both the visibility of the Convention and the recognition of its work and needs among the donor community, and initiating a fundraising campaign and direct appeals to donors and donor stewardship.

9. Currently, there are four very important donor leads with which key interaction and discussions have taken place. An important accomplishment has been the agreement with IUCN-US to be able to accept donations on the conservation of wetlands under the special US Internal Revenue system programme. This agreement opens an important door for IUCN to accept gifts from US citizens, companies or foundations for Ramsar Convention programmes and projects.
10. Details of the progress made are provided in the Strategic Framework for Partnerships (DOC. 18), including three annexes that clarify the progress made.

## A.2 Key challenges

### A.2.1 Overall implementation of the Convention

11. Global, national, and local challenges with regard to the implementation of the Convention are chiefly political, socio-economic and organizational. The fact that most Ramsar Administrative Authorities are not the most powerful organizations in their countries is a real challenge. Ramsar focal points frequently have low capacity, and it is difficult to coordinate a wide range of groups of stakeholders with conflicting interests. Although the Convention is more than 40 years old, it is still critical to take collective actions to enhance the recognition of the contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.
12. The most significant achievements that are needed to encourage the implementation of the Ramsar Convention and to make its work relevant to global, national and local challenges are related to the following subject areas.
  - Management of wetland ecosystems as an integral part of landscape planning, including urban planning.
  - Identifying and addressing the root causes of wetland degradations, especially unsustainable land use planning systems.
  - Finding reliable information, especially economic information, which is generally lacking, and using it to enhance the commitment of decision makers. The dependence of water supply and water resources quality and sustainability on healthy wetland ecosystems is generally not addressed with good, quantitative economic and financial information to support decision making about water infrastructure and water allocation decisions. Reliable economic information pertaining to wetland values is a critical foundation work for us if we are to go forward with development of this whole area of policy and science related to the economics of water-related wetland ecosystem services.

- Addressing the need for concrete examples of the actual economic and social values of wetlands, so that the management of wetland ecosystem services can be successful in the overall landscape by identifying where high priority management areas are, specifying what services should be managed, and taking action on how they should be managed by stakeholders.
- Enhancing the implementation of the Convention at local level: it is critical to recognize the important role that local governments, regions, and cities can play in land use planning, including urban development and water and wetland management. Some states, regions or cities are translating national policies into action. In the absence of national policies, some local governments and cities are even taking the lead in developing local policies that may provide models for future national efforts. However, these local policies need technical support to suitably integrate wetland issues into their development plans
- Acknowledging and taking into account the fact that many wetlands, including Ramsar Sites, are under the direct or indirect influence of local governments and cities, and in fact, all wetlands are under the direct influence of local stakeholders. Taking that into account, Contracting Parties and Ramsar partners are encouraged to work with local government as well as with international organizations supporting local actions. Global efforts that support integrated approaches to environmental protection and sustainability at local level include cooperation with international organizations such as UN-HABITAT and ICLEI ('International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives') - Local Governments for Sustainability. ICLEI is an association of over 1,220 local government members who are committed to sustainable development. Their members come from 70 different countries and represent more than 569,885,000 people.

### **A.2.2 Organizational and management challenges**

13. The toughest question before us is how to find the right balance between the growing demand and expectations from the Contracting Parties and the predetermined and unchanging capacity of the Secretariat that has to provide assistance and respond to all Contracting Parties' requests.
14. In addition, the difficult economic trends are decreasing opportunities for voluntary financial assistance. In this regard, covering the cost of the participation in COP11 of Contracting Parties from the DAC List is a real challenge. Unless the Contracting Parties accept to include in the core budget the financial implications of holding meetings of the Conference of the Parties, there will be no guarantee for developing countries to host or perhaps even to attend the future meetings of the COP. Voluntary financial support is no longer a feasible option for the traditional donors who used to provide funding to sponsor delegates from Contracting Parties that are unable to cover the cost of their delegates. Without financial support, many Contracting Parties are unable to participate in COP deliberations, and it is now clear that the only practical and viable option is to include the cost of the meetings of the Conference into the core budget, as is already the case for other conventions.

15. The capacity of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities to ensure effective coordination of the implementation of the Convention at national and local levels needs to be improved in most Contracting Parties. The Ramsar Secretariat reiterates its strong hope to see the Administrative Authorities becoming more effective, playing the role of catalysts, facilitators who persuade stakeholders, build teams, push, or carry national teams to new levels of collective achievements. It is important to know if our Administrative Authorities are working alone or building partnerships at local, national and regional levels to take responsibility for making their own COP recommendations happen.
16. The implementation of the Convention at national and local levels is facing the dilemma caused by the hard choice to make between short-term benefits and long-term sustainability. The end result is a deteriorating situation with the promise of short-term economic gains guiding ill-advised development and investment decisions and consequently undermining long-term sustainability. There still remains the need to better appreciate all different wetland types, to understand the cultural and socio-economic interconnections within the river basins, and to find sustainable solutions together with all Ramsar stakeholders. The difficulty to cooperate with relevant sectors of domestic administration and societies at large is still an obstacle to tackle. This concerns collaboration with the water management sector in the first place, but also many other parts of the public and private sectors. Other difficulties are the lack of political interest with no recognition of the vital values of wetlands, persistent lack of constructive economic incentives, and non-integration of wetlands in national and local land use planning.

### **A.2.3 Scientific and technical challenges**

17. COP11 will have to discuss the future scientific needs of the Convention and better define the STRP's role as well as the best way to make the STRP better equipped to provide meaningful and substantial assistance to Contracting Parties and their key stakeholders at national and local levels. In addition to the STRP, it is important to explore other options to assist Contracting Parties on scientific matters. In this regard, Ramsar Parties are expected to define the working relationships they wish to have with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). It is important to make sure that the IPBES will not be ill-equipped to collaborate with the MEAs in future. Delegates from countries are expected to internally coordinate their messaging and positions at national levels before they attend the various meetings of MEA bodies and IPBES so as to establish consistent national positions each time.
18. Our collaboration with UNESCO brings to light the need for increased cooperation and exchange with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme, and notably its work on Ecohydrology. UNESCO is producing many results and knowledge which our experts need to take into account to enhance scientific guidance to Contracting parties.

### **A.2.4 Technology challenges**

19. Aside from the Ramsar website, the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) and online searchable Ramsar Sites Database is the only Convention investment in information technology and data and information management. Through a long-standing agreement with the Convention, the RSIS is maintained and developed by Wetlands International for the Convention through a contractual arrangement with the Secretariat. The RSIS ensures

high visibility and access to all who need it on the Ramsar “jewels in the crown” of now more than 2,000 Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), and it provides links through its “Tools for Parties” facility to a range of information products which can support Parties’ further identification and designation of Ramsar Sites and the application of designation Criteria.

20. But it has become increasingly clear that the current Ramsar Sites Database is no longer “fit for purpose”. It operates in outdated software which is no longer commercially available or nor supported, so the risk of the database failing is increasingly high. Also the Database does not and cannot hold all information (e.g., species information) provided by Parties in their Ramsar Site Information Sheets (RIS); and it cannot deliver a number of functionalities identified by the Secretariat as necessary, such as maintaining time-series records of a Ramsar Site once its RIS has been updated.
21. It is now essential that the Database is redeveloped in modern software and the Secretariat is working with Wetlands International to plan and prepare for this, with an implementation plan being prepared that will be communicated to the Parties in due course. Such redevelopment is needed whatever that format of RIS that is used in the future. However, the RIS – 2012 revision (provided to Parties in COP11 DR8) has been designed to be fully database-compatible, and the adoption of this format (along with the planned online RIS submission option) will lead to significant increases in the flexibility of how Parties can draft and submit site designations and updates, improve the overall efficiency of Ramsar Site data and information management, ensure the accuracy of data-holdings reflecting the data directly supplied by Contracting Parties, and much improve the time- and cost-effectiveness of the Secretariat’s role in handling Site designations.

#### **A.2.5 Emerging challenges**

22. More decisions by Contracting Parties will emerge from Rio+20 and Ramsar COP11, and the Secretariat will have to find ways to increase and enhance its assistance to provide the necessary operations to cope with new challenges emerging from those decisions.
23. Ongoing climate change increases environmental stress and the frequency of disasters, such as droughts, floods, storms and earth slides.

#### **A.2.6 Regional challenges**

##### **Africa**

24. Implementing the Convention in a global context weakened by a persisting economic shock will be one of the major challenges that the Africa team will face during the next triennium. African Contracting Parties are putting effort into achieve the right balance between conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Africa Region is also taking actions to address the need to reinforce partnerships between the Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, the IOPs, and other partners.

##### **Asia**

25. There are low capacity and insufficient staffs, inadequate recognition of wetland values, leading to a failure to integrate wetlands in national priorities. At site level, local

stakeholders may have a low commitment to wetland conservation which can lead to conflicts with the site management team. Inappropriate development schemes, e.g., dams and other water control structures, are often undertaken with negative impacts on the downstream areas. Insufficient legislation and inadequate enforcement of existing legislation, together with insufficient funding, are hindering wetland conservation and wise use. Insufficient coordination and lack of clear government policy for wetland conservation are other important challenges.

26. Contracting Parties from both Central and West Asia have reported that the lack of the use of Russian and Arabic (respectively) is hampering their implementation of the Convention. As a result, the Secretariat found funds from various sources, including from the Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia, to translate the Ramsar Handbooks and Manual into Russian and Arabic. However, this problem of language will be a long-term one unless funds are found for the Secretariat to have more translation and interpretation support. The language problem may be one reason why so few National Reports were returned from Central Asia (16%) and West Asia (33%).

### **Europe**

27. The current financial and administrative context is bringing about the most challenging trends, impeding the implementation capacity of many European countries. Increasing pressures on wetlands stemming from rapidly spreading urbanisation and land use for tourism, infrastructures and exploitation of natural resources (water, oil, gas, peat and others) must be addressed. The financial crisis that started at the time of COP10 (2008) continues. Many European countries, including some of the wealthiest ones, have now to fight relative poverty with large-scale unemployment and economic standstill. This is a time to think differently, and to elaborate innovative models for sustainable ways of dealing with our human environment, taking into account in a coordinated way its natural, social and economic resources.

### **Neotropics and North America**

28. Many difficulties and obstacles remain – the threats to wetlands in the Western Hemisphere from urban development, infrastructure, extractive industries and unsustainable tourism activities, mainly in marine and coastal wetlands, from the coast of Mexico to South America and particularly in Central America and the Caribbean, will persist. Development over wetlands and the lack of successful land use planning are key challenges to address.

### **Oceania**

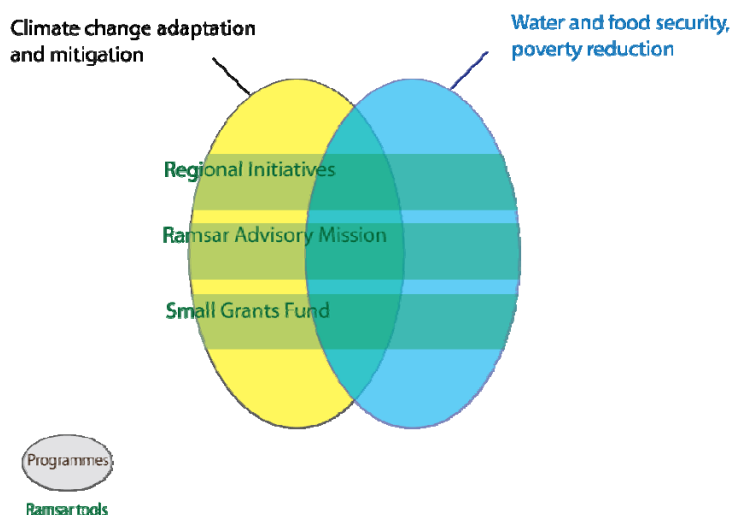
29. The main challenge for the Convention in Oceania is the low membership; it's the only subregion where the number of non-Contracting Parties (10) is higher than the number of Ramsar Contracting Parties (7). The greatest impediment is the difficulties of traveling over the subregion and reaching small island countries in the Pacific. The main difficulties facing Oceania Contracting Parties can be divided into two types. For Pacific island countries, their greatest challenge relates to having inadequate human and financial resources for implementing the Convention, whilst for Australia, it lies in trying to manage the limited water supply in the river basins to satisfy both human and environmental needs at a time when rainfall can be highly variable and unpredictable. There is still inadequate

recognition of wetland values, such that the need for wetland conservation and wise use is not being fully integrated into the development planning and strategies of central and local governments.

### A.3 Priorities actions at global level

#### Strategic planning, including a programmatic approach

30. Following 40 years of Ramsar's implementation, it is clear that there are many opportunities that are yet to be tapped. It is time to enhance partnerships with selected organizations and agree to work towards one concrete goal with each relevant organization. Ramsar needs to work together with distinctive donors and organizations dealing with water issues on the basis of a common vision, core values, goal and common strategy. In such a partnership, every actor may play a different role using its own strengths and networks, but the end result of our collective involvement can reach a greater impact in society. Using a programmatic approach, we can expect to work on common goals and address shared challenges through cooperation that leads to enhanced mutual benefits and added value. The Ramsar Secretariat is suggesting to identify and support national and regional priorities where wetland management can bring a real added value in relation to addressing the complexities around water supply, food security and poverty reduction, biodiversity conservation and wise use, climate change adaptation and mitigation.
31. To enhance these vital roles and encourage Ramsar Contracting Parties to integrate wetland management into their national and local planning, including overall landscape management and urban development, the Secretariat is proposing to work on a vision following the 40th Anniversary of the Convention in order to ensure that vital services provided to human societies by wetlands through water are recognized, maintained, restored and sustainably used by governments (global, national, and local), communities, industry, business, agriculture, etc. This vision is expected to shape the drafting of the future strategic plans by the Conference of the Parties.
32. The Secretariat suggests the need to fully recognize the core values of wetlands as key natural infrastructures for human livelihoods and sustainable development. To that end, it is suggested to adopt a programmatic approach that recognizes and supports national priorities such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, poverty reduction, together with water and food security, using Ramsar tools, as illustrated in Figure 1.
33. On the basis of selected key objectives and the priority areas for the future of the Convention, it is recommended to build up and strengthen partnerships with pertinent organizations to



**Figure 1: The programmatic approach, using existing Ramsar tools, including existing guidelines**



better assist Contracting Parties in policy development, mobilization of resources, implementation of programmes, and result-based monitoring and evaluation of concrete and measurable beneficial impacts on human societies.

34. This is the role of the Strategic Framework for Partnership that the Secretariat is putting forward for the consideration of Contracting Parties. This framework implies diversification of funding sources to assure sustainability of the cooperation that is needed to achieve wetland conservation and wise use as a means to contribute to sustainable development. The programmatic approach we are proposing will start with only two to three programmes, but these must be multi-level: local, national, regional, and global, with multiple actors: government agencies, donors, including the private sector and NGOs. A key requirement of the programmatic approach we are proposing is the promotion of ownership by all partners. Mutual support for reaching mutual benefits will guide the partnerships.
35. The first concrete area for such partnerships is the proposal on mangrove conservation, restoration and wise use. We are hopeful that the MAVA Foundation and other partners will join the Ramsar Secretariat in this joint endeavour over the next five years.

#### **The Convention's Programme for 2013-2015 on Communication, Education, and Public Awareness and Participation**

36. Thirteen years of continued actions on communication have led the Ramsar Convention to recognize the importance of communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) as central and cross-cutting elements for implementing the Convention. To respond to this need, a range of key CEPA priorities for future implementation have been identified by the Parties in Section D of the National Reports. Contracting Parties are committed to encouraging support for wetland conservation and wise use as well as specific awareness-raising efforts at Ramsar Sites targeted particularly at local communities and resource users, but also including NGOs, the private sector, and local governments. Other priorities include improving collaboration and communication intersectorally at both national and local levels. The need for improved efforts in participatory action planning at site level is also recognized, as was capacity building and training at the site level for site managers and local communities and carrying out training needs assessment. Less frequently mentioned by the Parties was their need to develop national CEPA action plans and place greater emphasis on World Wetlands Day planning and activities.
37. The Secretariat is committed to continuing to look for funding to support CEPA National Focal Point workshops to strengthen the Parties' capacity for CEPA planning and to work with all the Parties in engaging with CEPA National Focal Points to encourage improved implementation. Efforts will be made through the Secretariat and the CEPA Oversight Panel to work with the Ramsar Regional Centres to assist them in strengthening their training and capacity building skills.
38. The Secretariat will also consolidate and continue to develop the use of social media tools as well as the regular tools of the website and e-mail lists to enhance the reach of our communication about wetlands and the Convention and encourage a better understanding of the ecosystem services that wetlands deliver to sustain human society. Their role in the water cycle, in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and in biodiversity conservation

remains poorly understood in many countries and international environmental organizations.

### **Future of the scientific and technical aspects of the Convention**

39. In the discussions of COP11 for the adoption of the future work of the STRP, it will be useful to clarify not only the mandate and expected outputs from the STRP, but also the complementary tasks that are needed to make the best use of the STRP's work. In this regard, other organizations in collaboration with the STRP could be requested to take care of some of the other tasks in a more appropriate way. Other Convention bodies such as the Secretariat, the CEPA Oversight Panel, and the Regional Centres operating under the framework of the Convention could contribute to enhancing the use of the STRP's outputs with the advice and support of the STRP to be provided as and when needed.
40. In addition, COP11 will have to clarify a range of aspects of how the Panel should work most effectively in the future to meet the evolving needs of the Convention and its Contracting Parties, including what types of work the STRP should and should not undertake and what types of work are more appropriately undertaken by other Convention mechanisms and bodies. In particular, COP11 will examine the recommendations of the informal working group that undertook a review of these matters, including drafting a Draft Resolution for COP11.
41. The Secretariat recognizes the importance of the work of the STRP as a key mechanism for supporting and guiding the delivery of wetland conservation and wise use on the ground and that the mechanisms and strategies for achieving these objectives should evolve over time. The Secretariat also welcomes the work of the informal working group to ensure that the STRP's objectives and strategies for their delivery are as targeted and as effective as possible in a rapidly changing world. This is why the Secretariat and the Chairperson of the STRP established this group and invited those interested in contributing to the work of this group to contact the Secretariat.

### **Ramsar Advisory Missions**

42. There is an urgent need to mobilize funding and human resources to respond to requests from Contracting Parties that are trying to prevent adverse impacts on wetlands, and to maintain and restore key wetland values for livelihoods and long-term development. Despite the high importance of the RAM for concrete actions on the ground, there is no provision in the core budget to support this action. The RAMs play an important role not only in providing high quality technical and objective advice to the Parties, but also help to raise awareness about the Convention at all levels and give more visibility and recognition to the Convention at the international level. The Ramsar Advisory Mission process is the most powerful and cost-effective tool to assist Contracting Parties and support their commitment to take concrete action to care for wetlands and promote their wise use.

### **Ramsar Secretariat's capacity**

43. The Secretariat expects COP11 to take helpful decisions through the adoption of Draft Resolution DR2 on financial and budgetary matters and appeals to all Contracting Parties to pay their contributions on time. The Secretariat exhorts and encourages all Contracting Parties in arrears to make a renewed effort to settle them as soon as possible.

44. The Secretariat wishes to remind the Contracting Parties that with increasing membership of the Convention, and recognition of the Convention's key role in securing the future sustainability of wetlands, the capacity of the Secretariat has become increasingly overstretched, putting at risk its ability to deliver the services expected by the Parties and partners in an efficient and timely manner.
45. Following his review of current staffing and capacities, as well as the gaps in current capacity and the skills needed to deliver the work of a convention secretariat in the modern world, the Secretary General has identified the following needs, including additional staff skills and expertise to undertake various aspects of the Secretariat's mandate and work plans. These cover:
- Legal Officer: in view of the increasing need for professional legal advice to the Convention on matters such as ongoing partnerships and contractual matters, the creation of a "Legal Officer" post is proposed. It is anticipated that this post would not be a full-time staff post, and it has been indicated at 20% on a retainer basis.
  - IT Officer: This is a proposed new position that could be obtained from a secondment option. The position is intended to take into account increasing needs, including databases, and further Web developments. The establishment of an information technology junior professional officer post is proposed to effectively develop and maintain the smooth running of the Secretariat and Convention in an increasingly technological world.
  - Communication capacity: following our experience with Facebook, it is time to have a social media officer to better take advantage of new tools for communication such as social media campaigns and day-to-day activities to enhance online advocacy, writing editorials, community-outreach efforts, promotions of successful projects, etc. This position will manage the Ramsar presence in social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, and other similar community sites, posting on relevant blogs, and supervise any use of new device for communication.
  - The Secretary General plans to review the current communication team, taking into account existing positions and opportunities to strengthen that area of our work.
46. Options for additional staffing other than core budget allocations might include:
- secondment to be provided by Contracting Parties;
  - additional voluntary financial contribution by Contracting Parties;
  - financial assistance through partnerships with the business sector, as has been a successful experience with the DANONE/Evian partnership. We are grateful to have Virginie Pirens with us, working full time for the Ramsar Secretariat with financial support from DANONE/Evian.

### **Overall growth of the Convention**

47. As an overall assessment, the Convention has continued to grow steadily since its inception, with some measures of growth such as Ramsar Site designations and their area

indicating more rapid growth in the past ten years than earlier. Despite this growth, and the increasing workloads that implies in providing maintenance of service to the increasing number of Parties and other convention processes, the resources of the Convention (core budget) and capacity of the Secretariat have not kept pace. The rate of increase in the core Convention budget has been progressively slowing over the past ten years, as has the growth in Secretariat staffing. In comparison with other multilateral environmental agreements, the Ramsar Convention has fewer Secretariat staff per Contracting Party and a much smaller budget per Contracting Party.

## Section B: Implementation activities

48. As for the previous COP, a relational database has been created to store and analyze the information provided by the Parties in their National Reports for COP11. For COP11, the database includes 82 indicators related to the implementation status of the actions included in the Convention's Strategic Plan 2009-2015, as reflected in the National Reports form, adopted by Decision 41-29 of the Standing Committee. The Regional Overviews prepared by the Senior Regional Advisors (COP11 DOCs. 9-12) evaluate in detail the implementation of the Convention by Contracting Parties and the Secretariat's activities from the end of 2008 to April 2012 in relation to the 26 strategies identified in the COP11 National Report format, cross-referenced to the Operational Objectives in the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.
49. This report summarizes the findings, highlights key challenges, and suggests priority actions to address these challenges.

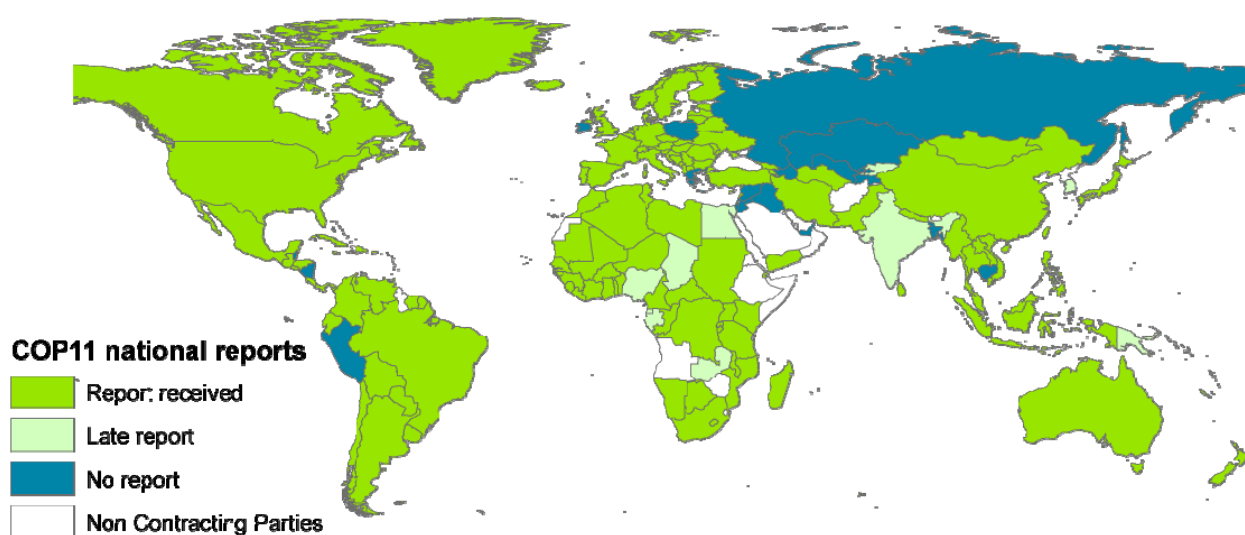


Figure 2: National reports received for COP11

50. For COP11, 127 reports were received on time and included in the statistical analyses, 11 reports were received after the deadline, 22 reports are still missing, for a return rate of 86%. The Secretariat appreciates the excellent return rate for Africa (100%) with no missing reports, 87% from Europe, and 86% from the Americas. There is a low return rate (62%) for Asia, however, with only 20 reports received and 12 missing.

51. In addition, specific data were received for 144 Ramsar Sites in five countries (optional section 4 of the National Report form). This is very useful information that would be good to have for all Ramsar Sites if we want to create a comprehensive overview: it would give complementary information in addition to the information stored in Ramsar Information Sheets (which are supposed to be updated every six years, though few Parties fulfil this commitment fully).
52. As shown in Figure 3, 90 Contracting Parties have fully met their reporting obligation since COP8, 8 Contracting parties provided less than half of the required reports. Annual reports of the Regional Initiatives and the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) database are the other sources of data used in this report.

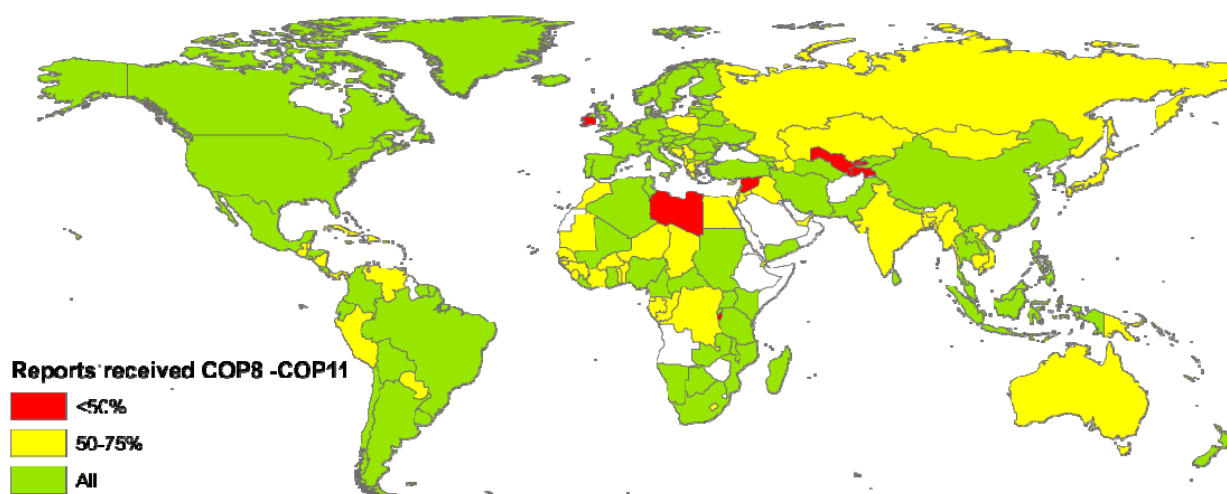


Figure 3: Rate of National Reports received for the four last COPs

### Key messages

- It is helpful to recognize the importance of accurate information for tracking the progress made, the difficulties encountered, and where the Convention can be improved.
- The Ramsar Secretariat encourages Contracting Parties to submit their reports, with accurate and consistent information.
- It is also useful to keep a consistent national reporting system through time (i.e., it is important to have a consistent strategic framework through time if we want to monitor quantitatively or semi-quantitatively the progress made from one COP to another).
- Other data are also important: accurate information in Regional Initiative annual reports and progress and final reports of the Small Grants Fund, for example

## Goal 1: Wise use of wetlands

### Assessment and monitoring extent and condition of wetland resources

53. Wetland inventories are crucial tools, upon which any wetland policy should be based. The appropriate formulation and effective implementation of a National Wetland Policy are achievable only if all wetland types of a country are well-known, i.e., if comprehensive wetland inventories are available. They should not only give an overview of existing wetlands in a given country, but should also describe the ecosystem services provided by each wetland, and they should be presented in a way that allows decision makers to understand the vital roles of wetlands, hence enabling them to answer questions such as “if this wetland disappears, what do we lose?”
54. Since COP10, however, there has been only a slight increase in the percentage of Parties reporting that they have a comprehensive national wetland inventory in place, updated and made available to all stakeholders (from 38% to 43%, i.e., an increase of 5% over the last triennium, in response to indicator 1.1.1); and only 21 % of the Parties (indicator 1.4.1) reported that an assessment has been conducted of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar Sites.

### Key messages

55. The Secretariat strongly encourages countries to keep up their efforts in developing national inventories that include a description of ecosystem services provided for each wetland. Key findings have to be in simple language, with a clear link with national and local priorities understandable and usable by decision makers.
56. National wetland inventories are key prerequisites for understanding and recognizing the values of wetlands as well as for assessing the loss and any trends with regard to the contribution of wetlands for livelihoods and as a means to address key challenges such as climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Secretariat encourages all Contracting Parties to undertake or review their national wetland inventories so as to be acquainted with the vital roles of wetlands as significant natural infrastructures for water security supporting life. The celebration of the Convention’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is a good opportunity to consider making positive adjustment regarding the recognition of wetland values for sustainable development.

### Development, review, and implementation of national or supranational policies, to ensure that the wise use principle of the Convention is being effectively applied

57. Since COP10, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of Parties reporting that they have a National Wetland Policy in place (from 44% to 51%, i.e. +7%, indicator 1.3.1), but half of the countries still do not have such an instrument. Moreover, it is not sufficient just to formulate a National Wetland Policy; wetlands should be included in the countries’ priorities, for example through amendments to existing legislation to reflect Ramsar commitments (only one third of the Parties reported having done so), or through inclusion of wetlands in all relevant policies (the parentheses in Figure 4 indicate the percentage of Parties that have included wetlands in a particular policy, according to indicators 1.3.3a to g): poverty reduction (only 36%), water resources management (64 %), national forest

programmes (54%), national strategy for sustainable development (57%), national policies on agriculture (41%), national biodiversity strategy and action plans (a good rate of 83 %). Applying such principles is crucial to maintaining healthy wetlands and their services. As shown on Figures 4 and 5, Contracting Parties applying more of these Ramsar principles tend to have wetlands in better condition. This is just a trend and encourages more in-depth analyses, e.g., through the continued development of indicators of effectiveness.

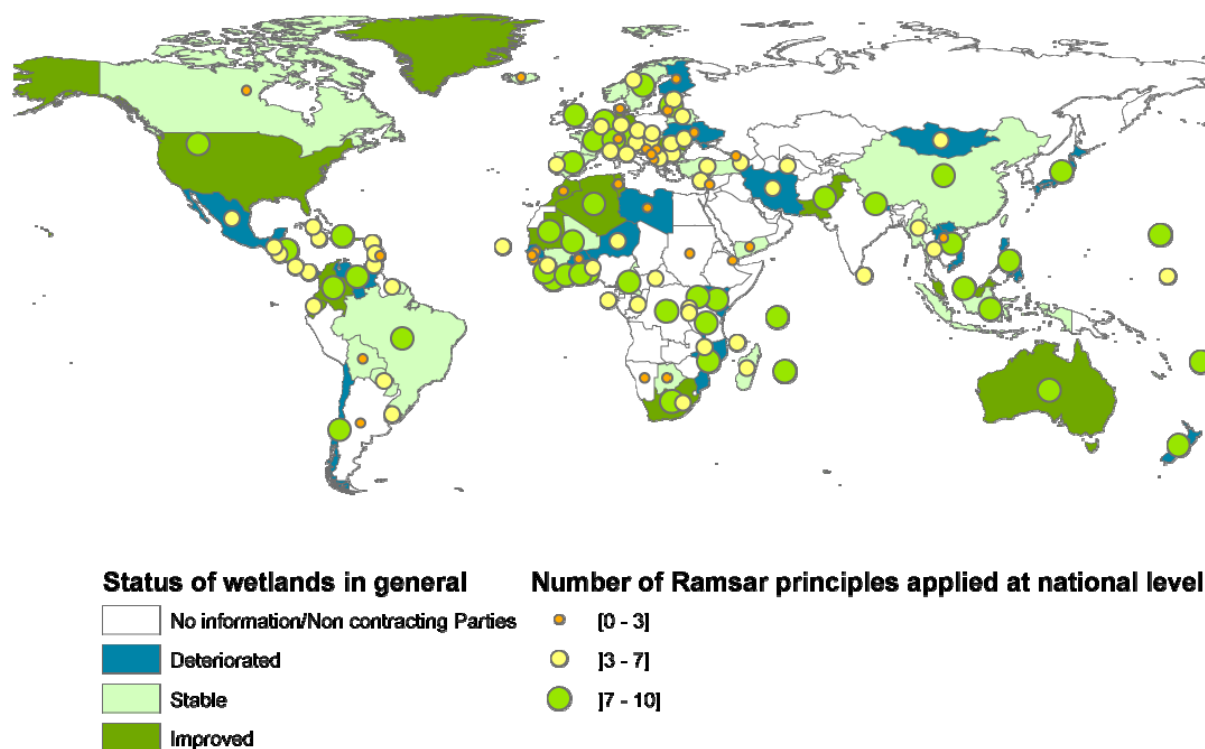
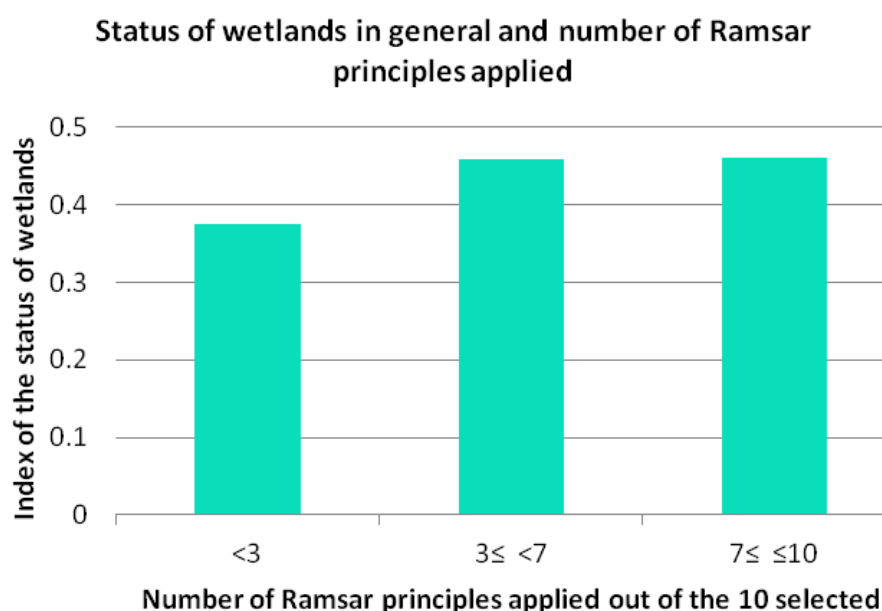


Figure 4: Ten Ramsar principles used for this study: existence of a National Wetland Policy; wetlands issues included in other key national plans (water, resource management, coastal and marine resource management, forestry, poverty reduction, agriculture, sustainable development, biodiversity strategy); Ramsar commitments reflected in legislation; operational National Wetland Committee.



**Figure 5: The index of the status of wetlands is based on indicator 1.1.3b and varies from 0 (deteriorated) to 1 (improved). The 10 Ramsar principles used are the same as the ones used on the previous map (Figure 4).**

### Key messages

58. Without an appropriate wetland inventory it is not possible to adopt policies that integrate wetlands in local and national policies, national legislative frameworks, and national priorities. The Secretariat and its partners will continue to provide assistance to the Parties so that they can simultaneously develop policies and carry out wetland inventories. These issues need to be constantly present at all levels of dialogue in formulating sectoral policies and programmes.
59. Through National Wetland Policies, it is possible to value wetlands as natural infrastructures that provide a variety of critical ecosystem services, with a very concrete and measurable impact on human societies. To work towards achieving the wise use of all wetlands, incorporating wetlands into the countries' priorities (inclusion in existing legislation and key policies) should be the goal of Contracting Parties for the next triennium. Contracting Parties are all encouraged to apply as many Ramsar principles as possible and as much as they can. This could enhance the recognition of the Convention as a relevant framework for successful actions on water, biodiversity, food security, and climate change challenges.



## Use of Ramsar guidance

60. The guidance on water-related issues (41%) is more used than guidance on coastal wetlands and restoration. Patterns are very similar, however, if we take into account “yes” and “partly” answers together: 71% of the countries fully or partly take into account all three types of Ramsar guidance when managing their wetlands (Figure 6).
61. The guidance on restoration is the one with more “no” answers (28%).

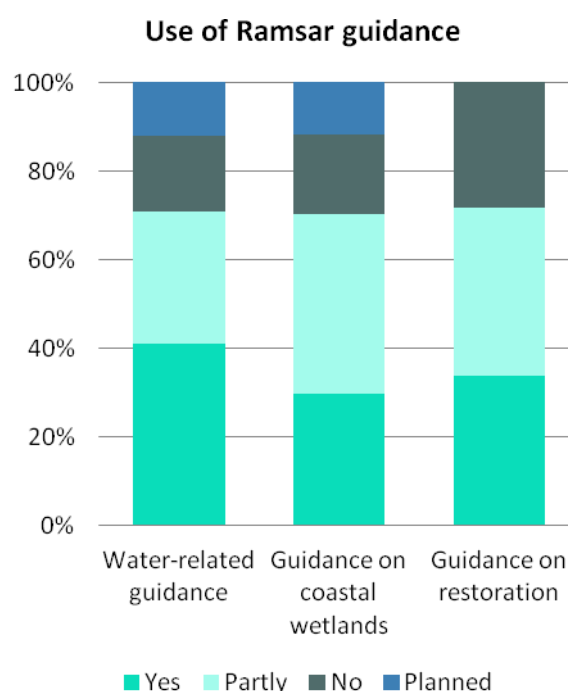
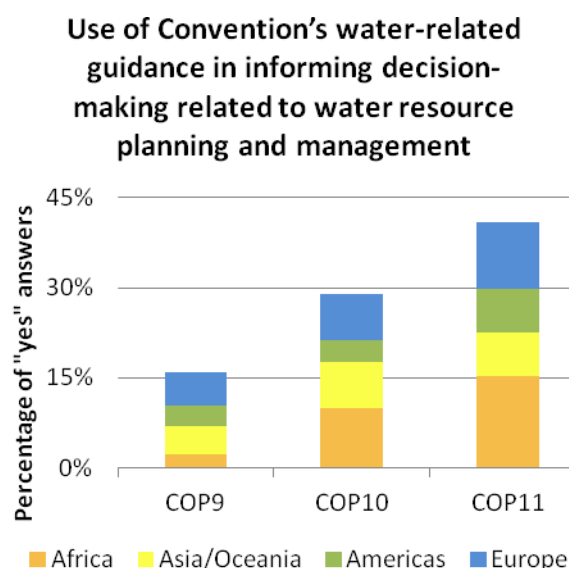


Figure 6: based on indicators 1.7.1, 1.7.4, 1.8.3.

Figure 7: based on indicators 1.7.1 and corresponding indicators from previous COPs

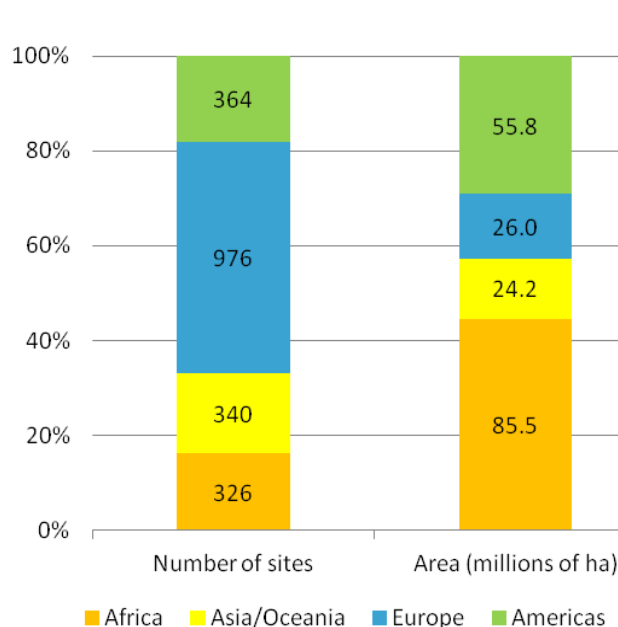
62. Ramsar guidance on water-related issues has been increasingly used since COP9, especially in Africa (Figure 7). But only 41% of the Contracting Parties which sent a National Report use this guidance and 30% use it partly.

## Goal 2. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

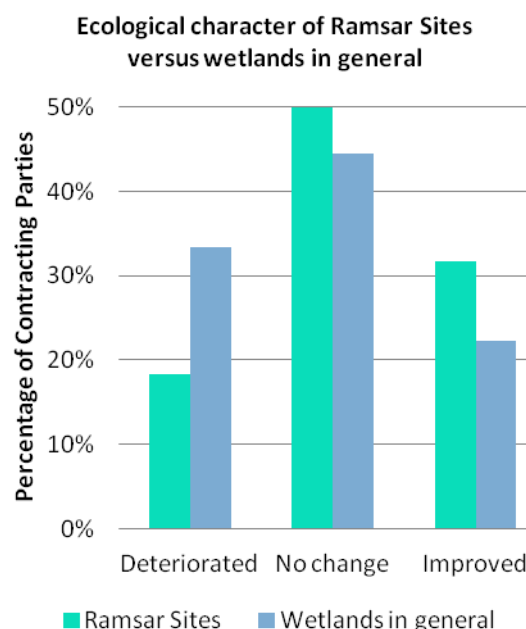
### Ramsar site designation and status

63. At global level, all Parties together have designated 248 additional sites covering 31.5 millions of hectares since COP10, which brings the total number of sites to 2,006 covering 192.5 million hectares. This is still well below the target they set for 2,500 designated sites, covering 250 million hectares, by the year 2015.
64. As shown on Figure 8, almost half of the sites are in Europe, though representing only 14% of the total area. 45% of the total area is in Africa, although Africa has the smallest number of Ramsar Sites (326). According to the data provided in the National Reports (see Figure 9), Ramsar Sites are in better condition than wetlands in general: fewer countries

reported deterioration in the condition of Ramsar Sites than in the condition of wetlands in general, and more countries reported an improvement or a stability in the condition of Ramsar Sites than in wetlands in general.



**Figure 8: Number of Ramsar Sites and area as of 15 May**



**Figure 9: based on indicator 1.1.3a and b  
Number of Ramsar Sites and area as of 15 May 2012**

### Key message

65. Ramsar Sites remain useful and successful tools for recognizing the values of wetlands. Additional designations, based on national designation strategies, are therefore highly encouraged.

### Ramsar Site management

66. Ramsar Site designation is a first step towards effective site management. However, this by itself is not enough to guarantee the wise use of wetlands and all Ramsar Sites should have effective management planning in place and being implemented. While there are an increasing number of sites with management plans, only 59% have a management plan in place, from which 92% are being implemented and 32% are being revised or updated (Figure 11). Only 37 Parties reported that they have plans for all their Ramsar Sites and 45 Parties have plans for fewer than half of their sites (Figure 10). Africa is the region needing the highest support during the next triennium in terms of management planning, with only 39% of the sites having a management plan (Figure 12)

Percentage of Ramsar Sites with a management plan in place

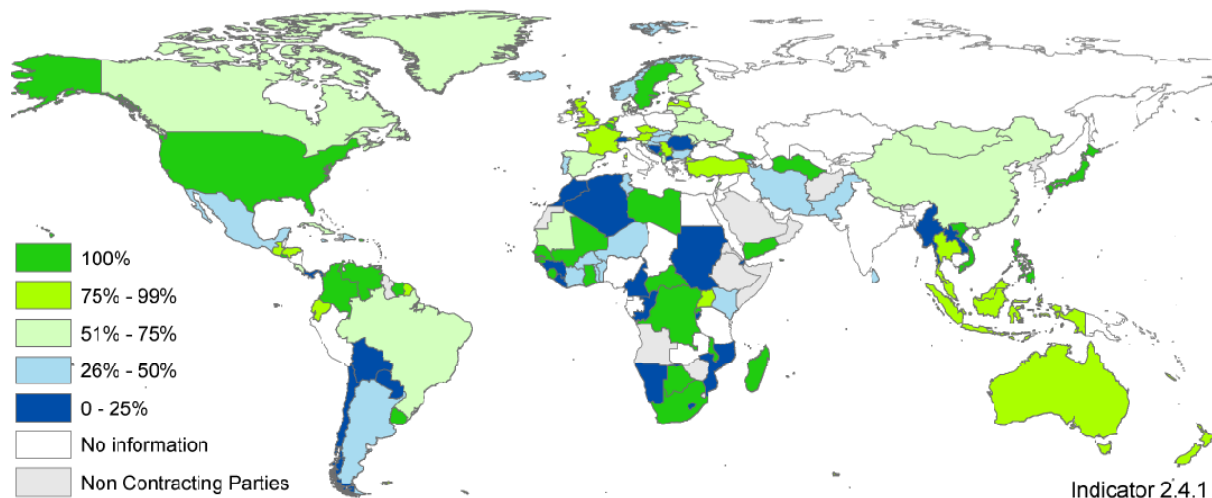


Figure 10

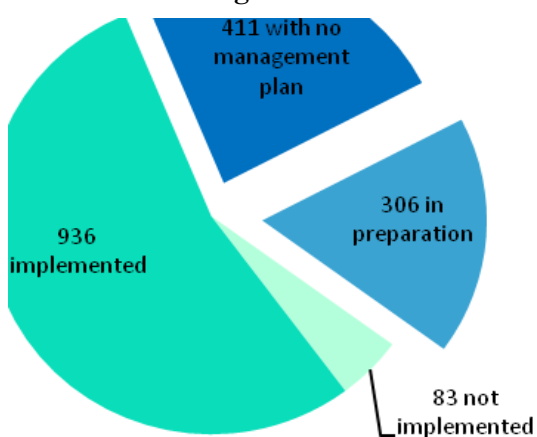


Figure 11: Number of Ramsar Sites with a management plan for Contracting Parties answering to indicators 2.4.1- 2.4.3

Percentage of Ramsar Sites with a management plan in place

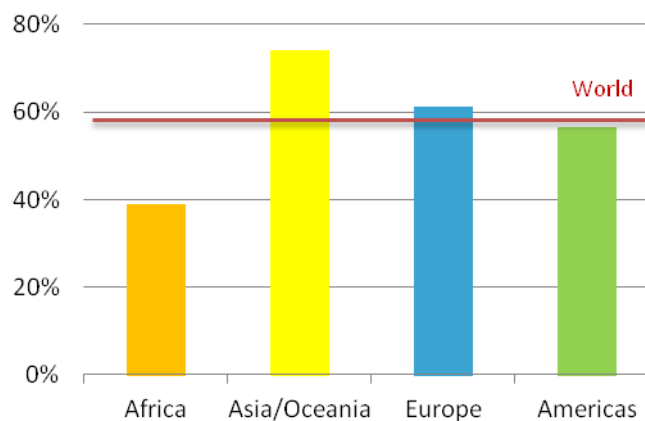


Fig 12: based on indicator 2.4.1

## Key messages

- Ramsar Site designation should be completed with the adoption and the implementation of management plans, mobilizing resources for implementing such management plans.
- Each Ramsar Site should have a committed agency for the coordination of its management.
- All key stakeholders should be involved in the management of Ramsar Sites.
- Communication, education and public participation should be part of the work on Ramsar Sites; the benefits generated by Ramsar Site management have to be widely shared and publicised.
- Ramsar Advisory Missions are effective tools for recognizing problems, seeking solutions and implementing recommendations. Ramsar Advisory Missions deserve a special attention in fundraising efforts.

## Goal 3. International Cooperation

### Partnerships

67. The main purpose of our partnerships at global level is to link Ramsar with global debates on key challenges for sustainable development, and contribute in seeking solutions as well as in implementing policies where wetlands have an added value. In this regard, the following actions have been taken or are underway with relevant organizations.
68. A comprehensive review of existing arrangements for international cooperation has been done. Memoranda of understanding and cooperation with other conventions and international organizations are under review. A new *modus operandi* for the Biodiversity Liaison Group has been adopted and co-signed by the heads of secretariats of six biodiversity-related conventions, including the Ramsar Secretary General. Increased cooperation with UNESCO is underway with its five programme sectors. New MOUs have been signed with the World Bank, the UN World Tourism Organization (WTO), the Secretariat of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the secretariat of the CMS Convention, the Organization of American States (OAS), the five Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs), the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), the Society of Wetland Scientists, Ducks Unlimited (USA), Stetson University College of Law (Florida, USA), the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, and with the private sector, including the Danone Group and Star Alliance. A new joint Work Plan with the CBD has been concluded, and it has been submitted to the consideration of COP11.
69. Working closely with all of those organizations is critical for the recognition of wetlands as natural infrastructures that provide water to human societies. The Secretary General has been able to represent the Convention in major international fora to explain Ramsar's views to high-level representatives around the world. This includes global debates on Rio+20, Green Economy, international environmental governance, water and food security, climate change, urban development, biodiversity, environmental and social safeguards, Planet Workshop, and the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO). The Secretariat is pleased to report fruitful collaboration with the following organizations and processes:

- **World Bank:** Collaboration is underway through the newly established Global Partnership for Oceans, an inclusive partnership of public, private and civil society organizations and governments the membership of which will grow over time. Each partner will contribute according to its comparative advantage in terms of expertise in implementation, knowledge and research, and/or finance.
- **UNEP:** We are working together with many other organizations through the Environment Management Group (EMG) on the Green Economy, biodiversity, land use, and environmental and social sustainability. Collaboration continues in the process for establishing IPBES (Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services); collaboration with UNEP also includes the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA)
- **UN-Water & UNESCO:** Progress has been made in preparing the 4th edition of the United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR4), “Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk”. This was recently launched at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Marseille by Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director General, and Michel Jarraud, UN-Water Chair. The WWDR is a comprehensive review of the world’s freshwater resources, and this 4th edition demonstrates, among other messages, that water is crucial to all aspects of development and that a coordinated approach to managing and allocating water is necessary. The Ramsar Secretariat and the STRP Chairperson were fully involved in the preparation of this report; because of our limited capacity, however, Ramsar could not take the lead on relevant thematic areas such as the role of ecosystems. We are nonetheless pleased to see that the WWDR4 describes the major changes, uncertainties, and risks taking place in the world and their links to water resources. It describes the status and the trends related to water supplies, uses, management, institutions and financing; highlights regional hotspots, and addresses issues such as gender equality, water-related disasters, health and the role of ecosystems. The Ramsar Secretariat also participated in the preparation of the UN-Water and UNEP pre-publication results of the UN-Water Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resource Management that will be launched on 19 June at Rio+20. The report is the most comprehensive global survey to date on the application of integrated approaches to water resources development, management, and use. The proposal of two targets as inputs to the Rio+20 Conference will be discussed in particular.
- **World Health Organization:** A new Ramsar Technical Report, published jointly with the World Health Organization (WHO), focuses on providing advice to wetland managers and decision-makers on the range of often complex issues concerning wetlands and human health and well-being. The benefits of wetland ecosystems for human health can be approached in at least three interrelated ways: by recognizing the human needs that are met by water in its setting; by recognizing the health products that come from wetland ecosystems; and by recognizing the economic value of wetlands in a full sense to sustainably improve people’s socio-economic conditions. The information in the report should help to facilitate dialogue between wetlands and human health professionals in their respective efforts to maintain and improve wetland ecological character and people’s health. The report

was authored by Professors Pierre Horwitz, STRP Wetlands and Human Health lead member, Max Finlayson, STRP climate change lead member, and Philip Weinstein of the University of South Australia. Significant inputs were received from Drs Robert Bos and Martin Birley from the World Health Organization (WHO), Prof Chris Skelly, and a number of other invited experts, STRP members (notably Rebecca D'Cruz and Ritesh Kumar), and observers as contributing authors.

- **UNECE:** In our efforts to link Ramsar with the implementation of water policies, we are pleased to report the joint work undertaken with the UNECE Water Convention for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwater bodies as a first concrete example for cooperation between Ramsar experts and water management experts at international level.

## Regional Initiatives

70. Resolution X.6 adopted Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention, which serves as a reference for assessing the operation of Regional Initiatives and their success. In line with these guidelines, the Secretariat is analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of existing Regional Initiatives so as to identify gaps and provide the right assistance needed to fill those gaps.
71. The guidelines stipulate that Regional Initiatives need to become firmly established in their geographical regions, and they must establish their own governance and advisory mechanisms, involving all relevant Contracting Parties and other appropriate stakeholders, in order to provide guidance and insight.
72. The following table summarizes our analysis: green symbolizes optimal situation, orange signifies that there is a gap to fill to improve the situation through Secretariat's assistance or/and Contracting parties' action.

Regional initiatives	Effective Coordinating body/Operational Structure A: Active & functional operational structure in place B: RI Hosted by other institution C: No effective structure	Financial Rules & Procedures A: Bank account in name of initiative B: Bank account in name of a host institution C: No mechanism	Financially self-sustaining (no funds from Ramsar during the triennium) Yes No	Need for Assistance from Ramsar Secretariat 1.Low 2.Optimal 3.High	Annual reports received during the triennium
American Mangroves	A	C	No, but alternative funds from CP	2	3
Black Sea Coast <i>BSW</i>	B	C	No	3 should evolve to 2	3

Caribbean <i>CariWet</i>	A	C	No, but alternative funds from CP and donors	3 should evolve to 2	3
Carpathians <i>CWI</i>	B	B (and through projects)	No, project dependent	1 should evolve to 2	3
Central and West Asia <i>RRC-CWA</i>	B	B (and through projects)	No	2	2
East-Asian Australasian Flyway <i>EAAF</i>	B	B (and through projects)	Yes	2	3
Eastern Africa <i>RAMCEA</i>	A	A	No, but has an alternative funding system in addition to Ramsar financial assistance	2	3
Eastern Asia <i>RRC-EA</i>	B	B (and through projects)	Yes	2	3
High Andean <i>HAA</i>	A	C	No; but alternative funds from CP and donors	2	3
La Plata River Basin	A	C	No; but alternative funds from CP	1 should evolve to 2	3
Mediterranean <i>MedWet</i>	A	A (and through projects)	Yes	2	3-
Niger river basin <i>NigerWet</i>	A	B	No, but there is a fundraising plan in 2012	2	2
Nordic-Baltic region <i>NorBalWet</i>	B	B (and through projects)	Yes, project dependent	2	3
West African Coast <i>WacoWet</i>	B	B	No, fundraising plan in 2012	1	3
Western Hemisphere <i>CREHO</i>	A	A	No, but alternative funds from CP	3 should evolve to 2	2

73. Too few Regional Initiatives are financially self sustaining and have an effective operational structure. Only six of them reported fundraising activities. For 6 Initiatives, investment of the Secretariat is too important (cf Annex of Resolution X.6: “The Ramsar Secretariat has no capacity to develop, coordinate or run regional initiatives”). The Standing Committee has been quite clear about the purpose and kinds of support that can be offered:

Decision SC40-28: The Standing Committee urged all Parties directly concerned in the activities of regional centers for training and capacity building and in regional networks for improved implementation of the Convention to provide such centers and initiatives with their substantial support, political, in kind and financial, where possible, and to the maximum extent possible. Such support is crucial to allow such centers and networks to develop, to establish themselves and to become rapidly self-sustainable, in order to provide lasting, structural and operational support to the Parties in the regions concerned. The Secretariat is requested to advise such centers and networks, to the extent of its capacities, on how best to raise additional funds for their operations.

74. Regional Initiatives were defined as being operational means whose aim is to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern.
75. The analyses of the annual reports received for the period 2009-2011 give an overview of the number and type of activities completed during the triennium. The quality of the reports and the level of details vary a great deal between initiatives and some of them appeared more stable, active and dynamic than others which reported very few activities.
76. As shown on Figures 13 and 14, the profile of activities is also very different from one Regional Initiative to another. We do not think there is a unique ideal profile; however, the profile should include several categories of planning and coordination activities, such as regional meetings of partners, as well as implementation activities on the ground, such as regional technical or ground projects or regional training workshops. This balance does not exist for several initiatives.

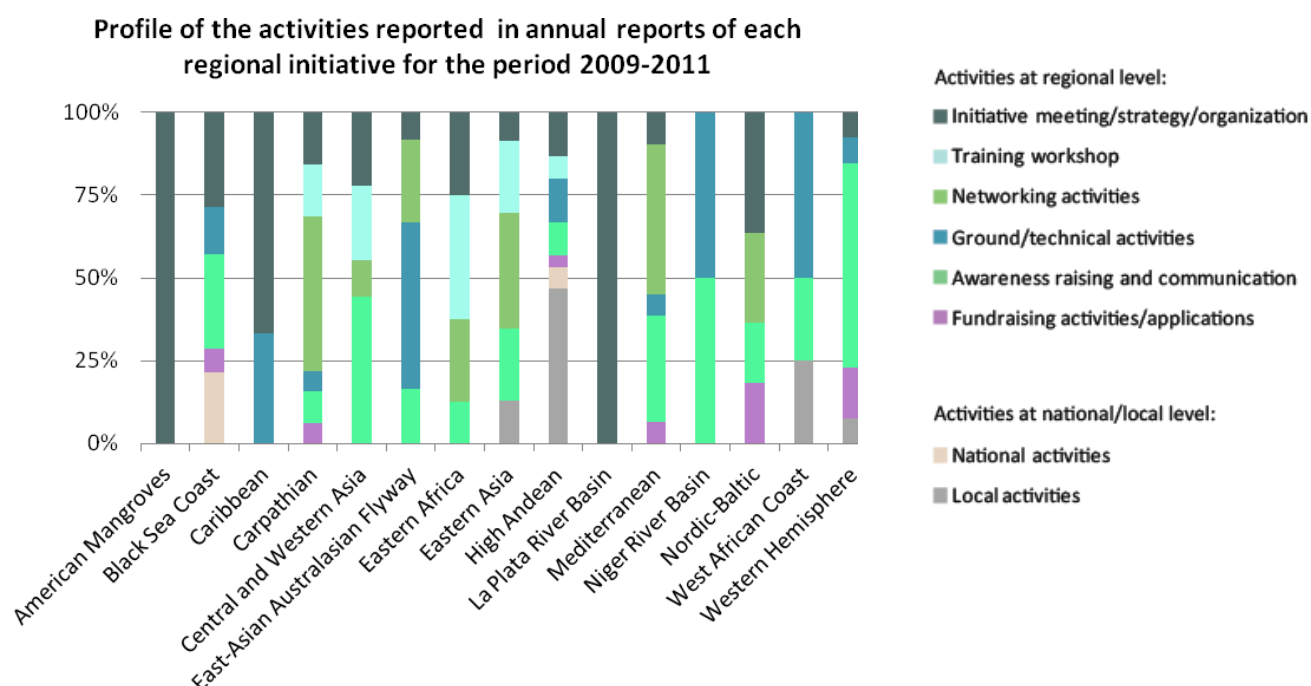


Figure 13: Chart based on the annual report received from each Regional Initiative for 2009, 2010, 2011



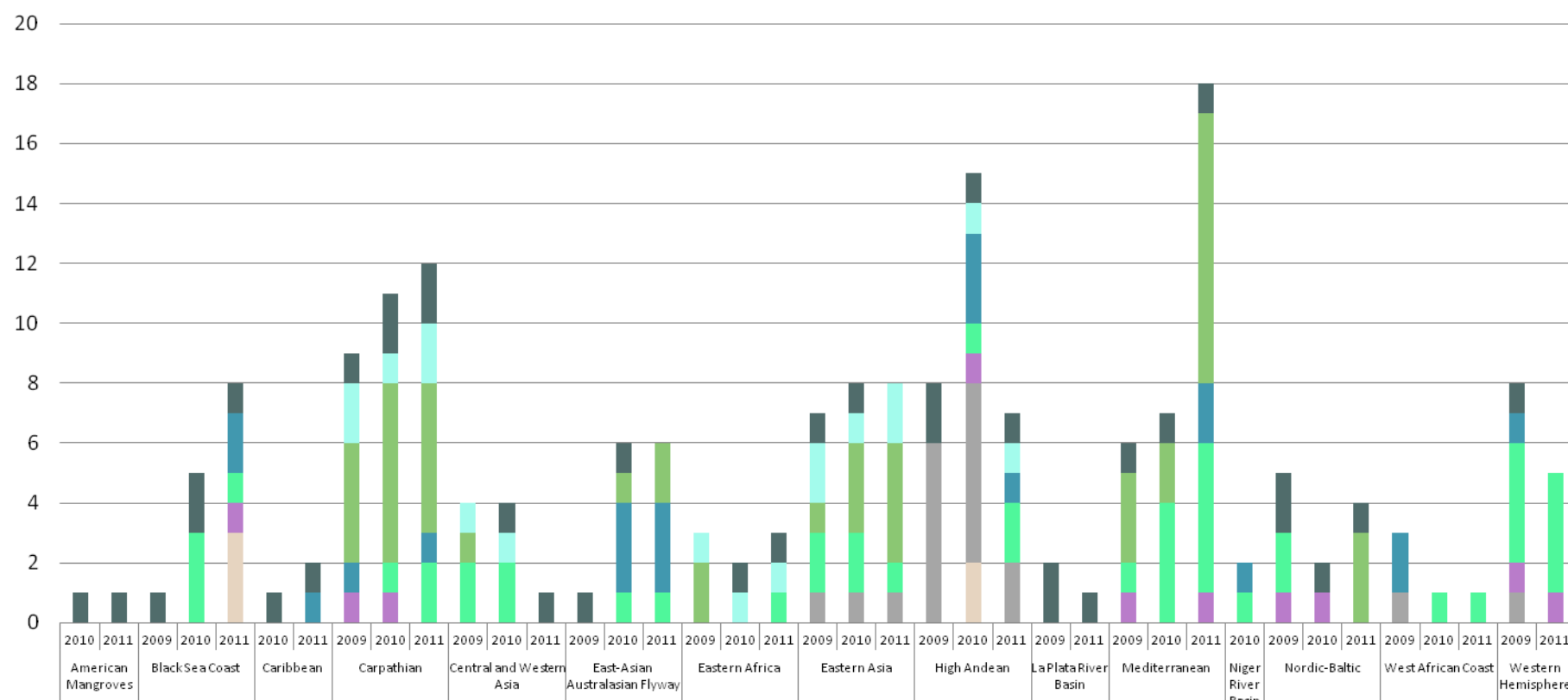


Figure 14: Chart based on the annual report received from each regional initiative for 2009, 2010, 2011. The vertical axis represents the number of delivered activities. The legend is the same as for Figure 13 above.

## Key messages

77. The Secretariat intends to continue analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each Regional Initiative so as to adjust our assistance more precisely. In this regard, to enhance fundraising success, we suggest increasing our collaboration to jointly prepare long-term objectives to work in the direction of tangible achievements. We can prepare proposals together that are linked to a programmatic approach, with long-term objectives that match national and regional priorities as well as donors' main concerns.
78. For effective fundraising there is a clear need to get all Regional Initiatives assuming their own full governance: without a clear operational structure, recognized and supported by the host country and the participating countries, with a financial mechanism in place, there is no way to obtain financial support from the donor community, especially because almost all existing opportunities for Regional Initiatives are decentralized at regional and national levels. The Secretariat cannot continue to manage travel arrangements, hotel bookings, and all payments on behalf of the Initiatives. All Regional Initiatives have to ensure that they have the capacity and mandate to receive funds, use reliable financial rules and procedures, and produce financial reports in line with the required financial management.
79. The Secretariat encourages all Regional Initiatives to maintain active and regular contacts and exchanges with the Secretariat, and to include in their work plans, based on communication with the Secretariat and their governance bodies, the undertaking of an independent evaluation of their operations, outcomes, strengths and weaknesses that makes reference to the Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands, and to share the results of those evaluations with the Secretariat and the Standing Committee.
80. The Secretariat also recognizes the importance for Regional Initiatives to establish their operational governance structures in a transparent way, based on written terms describing their roles and responsibilities, and to ensure that all members are adequately represented in such structures; the Secretariat reaffirms its commitment to act as a facilitator and advisor to assist coordinating bodies of all Initiatives to sign a hosting agreement with their host organizations or countries in order to clarify the respective responsibilities in accordance with both the Operational Guidelines and paragraph 12 of the annex to Resolution X.6, which states that "the coordination body will be responsible to all members that constitute a regional initiative (Contracting Parties and other members), not only to the host country".
81. The Secretariat is pleased to affirm our determination to enhance our support to all Regional Initiatives that are taking steps to find alternative funding. This kind of action is taken by the Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the High Andean Wetlands. This Regional Initiative is strongly supported by the Ramsar Secretariat in its efforts to finalize the formulation of a joint project on environmental services to be submitted to GEF5 in 2012. The Secretariat's support goes beyond technical input and includes an MOU signed in 2010 between the Ramsar Secretariat and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS) through its Department of Sustainable Development. This MOU is the basis for undertaking joint activities, starting with the proposed project under the Ramsar High Andean Regional Initiative, in

collaboration with UNEP as GEF implementing agency and the GEF Secretariat. Through this collaborative arrangement, the Ramsar Regional Initiative has the institutional status to receive the formal endorsement of participating countries and hopefully to benefit from GEF financial assistance. The Ramsar Secretariat hopes that this partnership will yield successful results and look forward to being able to replicate the same approach with other Regional Initiatives.

#### GOAL 4. Institutional capacity and effectiveness

##### Participation of stakeholders at national level

82. Implementing the Changwon Declaration at national level requires exploring options to take into account possible involvement of the following sectors: water resources; environment and biodiversity, including climate change issues, forestry, agriculture, wildlife and fisheries, protected areas, animal husbandry; finances, land use planning, including urbanization, local governments; health, tourism, energy, and extractive industries. This implies involving government with the different relevant ministries and agencies, parliament, local authorities, local communities, Ramsar Site managers, NGOs, private companies, scientists, donors, etc. As shown on figure 15, the rate of dissemination of the Changwon Declaration is very low: only 21% of the countries brought it to the attention of the head of state, 21% to the attention of Parliament, 28% private sector, 37% civil society.

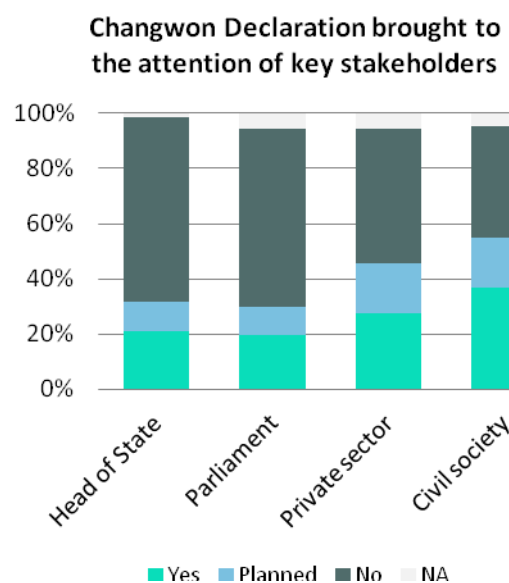


Figure 15: based on indicators 1.5.2a to d

83. The most important aspects of the implementation of the Changwon Declaration are related to the way we present the spirit of the Convention. The Ramsar Secretariat will continue to seize all opportunities, including our involvement in global processes and national debates, to highlight the vital roles of wetland ecosystems in the provision of basic needs – water, food, energy – with climate change adaptation and mitigation as a way to contribute to sustainable livelihoods.
84. The number of operational National Wetland Committees has increased since COP10 (Figure 16), particularly for Europe. This is an encouraging trend but only a bit more than half of the countries have such a committee, and this is not sufficient. For good coordination of wetlands management at the national level, such structures are crucial.
85. In addition, as shown in Figure 17, for around half of the countries other communication mechanisms are in place to share Ramsar guidelines and other information between the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and Ramsar Site managers and the national focal points of other MEAs, relevant ministries, department and agencies. The same pattern is observed for all regions except for the Americas, where only 28 % of the countries have other communication mechanisms to share Ramsar information with the national focal points of other MEAs.

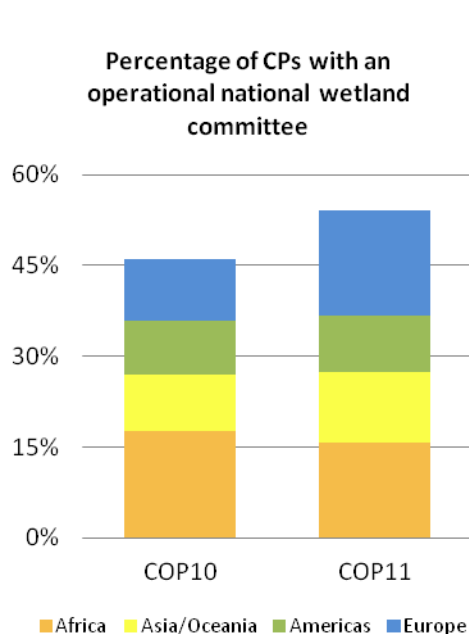


Figure 16: based on COP11 indicator 4.1.6

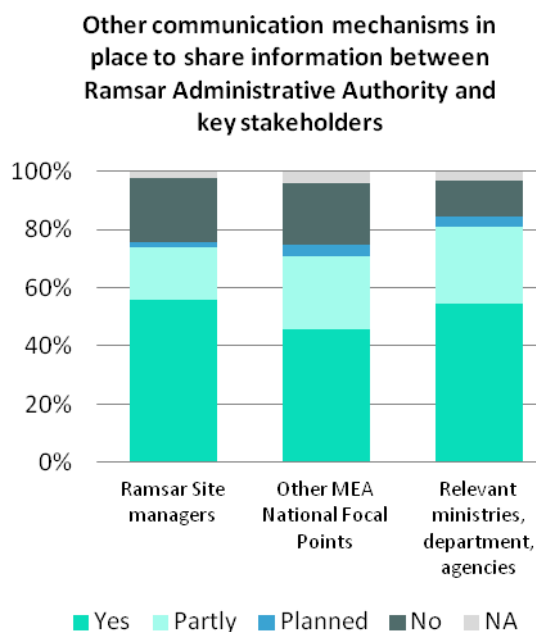


Figure 17: based on indicators 4.1.7a to c

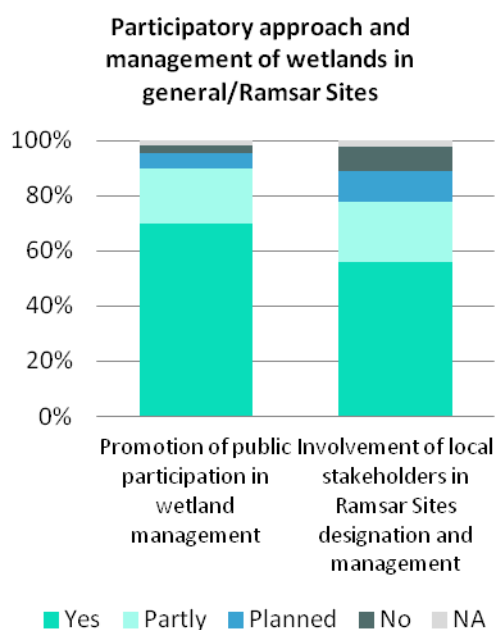


Figure 18: based on indicators 4.1.3a and b

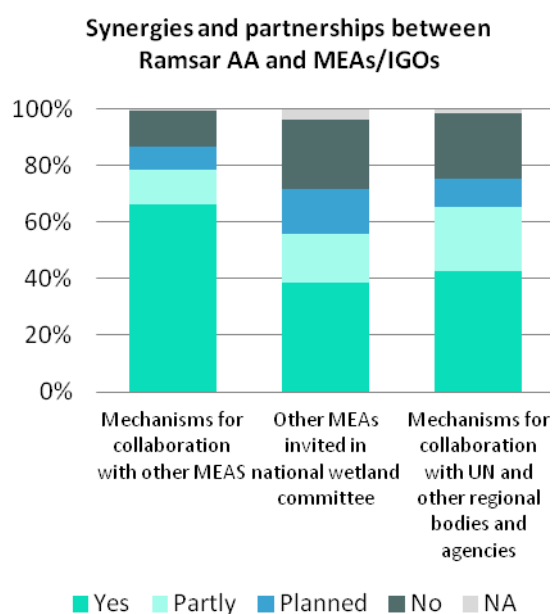


Figure 19: based on indicators 3.1.1 to 3.1.3

86. Some 66% of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities have mechanisms in place to collaborate with the national focal points of other MEAs, whereas only 46 % have communication mechanisms in place to share information with them. There is a clear need of clarification of the mechanisms for collaboration with national focal points of other MEAs at the national level.

### Encouraging success stories

87. Although it is not realistic to expect and insist upon the full involvement of all stakeholders, some Ramsar Administrative Authorities are committed to teaming up with as many stakeholders as possible. In this regard, in France the establishment of a National Wetland Group in 2009 and the creation of the Ramsar Association in 2011 are stimulating examples of innovative structures for the coordination of the implementation of the Convention at national and local levels. The Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing is overseeing the National Wetland Group, while the Ramsar Association, led by a member of parliament, is involving all stakeholders at local level to properly manage Ramsar Sites. All Ramsar Sites have been analyzed in terms of management plans, and an agency has been appointed at local level to coordinate and ensure collective participation of local stakeholders to manage the sites.
88. It is also worthwhile reporting the participation of 26 African Ramsar National Focal Points in the regional workshop for Africa on “Updating National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans”. This was an opportunity for the Ramsar Convention and the CBD to bring together their strengths and jointly implement the new Biodiversity Strategic Plan. A very important outcome is the full involvement of Ramsar National Focal Points in the review of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.
89. In addition, the Ramsar National Focal Points received a two-day training course on Multilateral Environmental Agreements’ negotiations. The workshop was organized to enhance the capacity of Ramsar NFPs to prepare for effective negotiation during Ramsar COP11 in Bucharest.
90. Likewise it was encouraging for the Ramsar Senior Regional Advisor for Asia & Oceania to be invited to participate in the ‘Subregional Workshop for West Asia and North Africa on capacity-building for implementation of the programme of work on protected areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity’, organized by CBD and the Ministry of Environment and Water of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This was an important workshop for learning more about the work of the CBD Programme of Works on Protected Areas (PoW-PA), and how the Ramsar Convention can cooperate more closely with them in future. CBD Contracting Parties are now in the process of drafting their national action plans for protected areas, and this was a significant opportunity for our Ramsar NFPs to contact the CBD FPs and ensure that Ramsar objectives are included in these plans. This is especially since after CBD COP11, there will be funding through GEF and the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) for the implementation of the action plans.
91. Following 14 years of active and fruitful collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Secretariat is pleased to report the major achievements. The Secretariat has concluded with the CBD Secretariat the elaboration of the 5<sup>th</sup> CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan (JWP) that covers the time period (2011-2020) of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and operates in the context of the Ramsar Convention’s lead implementation role for wetlands for CBD (through CBD decision III/21) and the CBD-Ramsar Memorandum of Cooperation (1996, renewed in 2011).
92. It is important to note that unlike the previous Joint Work Plans that were restricted to matters concerning inland waters, the goal of 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Work Plan is the conservation, sustainable and wise use of biodiversity especially in wetlands, helping to assure the full

achievement of the Vision, Mission and Goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the Mission and Strategies of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015. For the first time the JWP clearly recognizes that wetlands occur in all biomes and are potentially influenced by all sectors' activities, and that the appropriate management of land and water, using the CBD's ecosystem approach, is required to achieve the goal of the Convention: consequently, the JWP will work through all relevant thematic programmes and cross-cutting issues of the CBD and support implementation of all relevant Resolutions made under the Ramsar Convention.

93. Another key innovation is the recognition of the fact that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) has placed greater and more explicit emphasis on water and water-related ecosystem services, as recognized further as a key subject relevant to most programmes of work of the CBD and Aichi Biodiversity Targets in CBD decision X/28, and that the Ramsar Convention text emphasizes the critical role that wetlands play as suppliers of water. Thus, water has emerged as a key area of mutual interest of both conventions.
94. Finally, the ongoing collaboration between the two conventions can be seen to be setting a good example in building synergies between conventions to deliver effectively the objectives of both conventions (CBD Decision X/20; Ramsar Resolutions X.11 and [COP11 DR6]), leading to the conclusion that we must build upon this success so that the Ramsar Convention can continue to act as the lead partner for wetlands in implementing the CBD.

### Goal 5. Membership

95. Overall the Ramsar Convention still has only 160 Contracting Parties despite the fact that it is the first global environmental convention. This is really low compared to the 194 members of the United Nations. Ramsar has still a lot of work to do to achieve universal membership. We need to bring on board seven countries from Africa (Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe); 11 from Asia as of 16 May 2012 (Afghanistan, Bhutan\*, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, East Timor, Kuwait\*, Maldives, Oman\*, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore. (\* = preparations are presently being made for accession to the Convention); 10 from Oceania (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati\*, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tonga\*, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu\*); 3 from Europe (Andorra, Holy See, and San Marino); 6 from the Americas (Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines).

### Conclusions

96. The Secretariat reiterates its thanks and appreciation to all Ramsar Contracting Parties and partners. Special thanks go to those Contracting Parties and donors that are providing voluntary financial assistance to support the implementation of the Convention.
97. The Secretariat remains committed to concentrate its efforts to enhance the relevance of the Convention for sustainable development, including constructive land use and efficient water management, biodiversity conservation and wise use, climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Secretariat is collaborating with many organizations to ensure

complementary and supportive joint actions that integrate wetland issues into local, national and international priorities.

98. Water is a successful “entry point” to use when explaining the significance of wetland values for life on Earth.
- Ecosystem use is increasingly seen as a “win-win situation” which generates substantial ecological, social and economic benefits.
  - A key aspect of the wetlands-water link is the urgent need for good information, especially economic information, which is generally lacking. The dependence of water supply and water resources quality and sustainability on healthy wetland ecosystems is generally not addressed with good quantitative economic and financial information to support decision making about water infrastructure and water allocation decisions.
  - There is sometimes improved attention paid to the other side of the relationship now with wider awareness of environmental flows issues, i.e., the dependence of wetland ecosystems on water (“no water, no wetlands” as it is phrased in our water guidance documents), but often we fail to generate or seek out adequate information to underpin the “no wetlands, no water” side.
  - Reliable economic information pertaining to wetland values is a critical foundation work for us if we are to go forward with development of this whole area of policy and science related to the economics of water-related wetland ecosystem services.
  - With concrete examples of the actual economic and social values of wetlands, the management of wetland ecosystem services can be successful in the overall landscape by identifying where high priority management areas are, specifying what services should be managed, and taking action on how they should be managed by precise stakeholders.
99. There is a need for increasing partnership at local, national and international levels. The Secretariat believes that the Contracting Parties will better achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands if they encourage and support effective partnership at local, national and international levels with key players. In this regard, at least three kinds of partnerships are highly recommended:
- a) encouraging collective action through urban planning;
  - b) encouraging cross-sectoral actions at river basin level; and
  - c) developing and supporting the networks established by other organizations working on water, biodiversity, climate change issues, and food security.