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“Wetlands: home and destination”

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Regional overview of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in Oceania

National Reports upon which this overview is based can be consulted at
http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-natl-rpts-national-reports-2012/main/ramsar/1-31-121%5E25327_4000_0__.

Background to the Oceania Region and the Regional Overview

1. **Contracting Parties in Oceania** (7): Australia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea*, Palau*, Samoa (* indicates those Contracting Parties whose National Report was submitted too late to be included in the quantitative analysis).
2. **Countries not yet Contracting Parties as of March 2012** (10): Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati*, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tonga*, Tuvalu, Vanuatu* (* indicates those countries that are making preparations for accession to the Ramsar Convention)
3. The overview below gives examples of how the Contracting Parties in the Oceania region have been implementing the Convention since the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (2008) and is based on analysis of the five (71%) National Reports submitted by the time of the analysis, December 2010. Information was also collected from the results of regional meetings, communications with the Parties, and other sources.

Main achievements since COP10 and priorities for 2013-2015

A/B. What steps have been taken to successfully implement the Convention

Wise use of wetlands

Wetland inventory and assessment

4. Wetland surveys were conducted in Papua New Guinea (2009) which identified some 7-10 priority wetland sites, while in the Marshall Islands surveys identified important wetlands in Ailinglaplap Atoll, Arno Atoll, Jabat Island, Lib Island, Mejit Island, Mili Atoll and Wotje Atoll.

Policy, legislation and institutions

5. The Australian government has been developing its ‘National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands – implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia’ which will be in the form of a series of

modules on topics relating to the implementation of the Convention, including: nominating Ramsar wetlands, developing ecological character descriptions (ECDs), requirements for mapping Ramsar wetlands, and management planning.

6. In Oceania, much of the land is owned by the local communities and there is often a long history of using traditional practices for the conservation of the land and resources, particularly in coastal areas. Whilst there was a period in the recent past when much of the knowledge about these traditional practices was becoming lost, there is now an interest again to promote such practices and to strengthen them so that they can be integrated into international conservation efforts. One example is the National Conservation Strategy in the Marshall Islands, called 'Reimmanlok' ('Looking to the Future', 2008), which provides the process for establishing and managing conservation areas that are "fully owned, led and endorsed by local communities based on local needs, values and cultural heritage". With Ramsar's focus on the wise use of wetlands and their resources, there is interest in seeing how such traditional practices can be integrated into the designation and management of Ramsar Sites.
7. Papua New Guinea has been reviewing its current laws and has begun drafting a 'National Protected Area Strategy' and a 'National Action Plan for Wetlands Conservation', which is part of its response to implementation of the Regional Wetlands Action Plan for Pacific Islands 2011-2013.

Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services

8. After COP10 (2008), New Zealand carried out an assessment of the Resolutions that were adopted at the COP and the implications that these had for implementation of government policy in the country. The assessment is available as a report at www.doc.govt.nz and lays the foundation for the implementation of the Convention in the country.

Science-based management of wetlands

9. New Zealand is developing a national Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting System which is intended to provide consistent, comprehensive information about biodiversity across public conservation land and waters. The data will be regularly updated and shared so as to promote better decision making for conservation, and will allow the development of national and local conservation priorities – including those for wetlands – by local government, communities, tangata whenua, research agencies and others.

Integrated Water Resource Management

10. Australia's Water Act (2008) contained a number of objectives, including to promote the use and management of the Murray-Darling Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes for the interest of the country. The Act also established the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and charged it with preparing a strategic plan to ensure the sustainable use of the Murray-Darling Basin's water resources to protect and restore key ecosystems, natural habitats and species that are reliant on the Murray-Darling Basin's water resources. The Basin Plan is still undergoing development and contains a drafting process that provides several opportunities for stakeholder input before the final plan is passed by the parliament. The Water Act also established an office (the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder) to manage the country's environmental water holdings to protect or restore environmental assets, including wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention.

11. A 'Water for the Future' initiative was also established with funds to improve the efficiency and productivity of water use and management including a) taking action on climate change, b) using water wisely, c) ensuring secure water supplies and d) supporting healthy rivers.
12. In the second half of 2010, the Murray-Darling Basin received significant rainfall that supplemented the water that was returned to the basin through the schemes mentioned above. Floods occurred throughout the Basin and this led to large-scale bird breeding events. In future, it is expected that the proposed schemes will be able to return more water back into the Basin and that the health of the wetlands across the Murray-Darling Basin will improve.
13. In 2008, the Australian government launched the 'Caring for our Country' environmental management initiative which, amongst other tasks, will work to protect coastal and inland wetlands, including Ramsar Sites. It will include the following programmes:
 - 'Reef Rescue', which will support farmers across the Great Barrier Reef's catchment to reduce the amount of nutrients, sediments and chemicals being discharged into the Reef lagoon; and
 - 'Landcare', a voluntary partnership for conservation between government and landholder, business, and community groups in water catchments and other areas.

Wetland restoration

14. As a result of concerns over the condition of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) due to declining water levels and the resultant exposure of acid sulfate soils, the Australian government initiated a CLLMM Recovery Project which managed to stabilize the conditions at the site. The heavy rainfall since the second half of 2010 across the Murray-Darling Basin has further helped to restore the ecological character of the site.
15. Over the past triennium, the New Zealand government has been implementing the Arawai Kākāriki wetland restoration programme, which has been restoring the ecological integrity of three of NZ's foremost freshwater/wetland systems, including the Awarua Wetland and the Whangamarino Ramsar Sites, making use of strong community involvement.
16. The government of Samoa has begun rehabilitation efforts around the Lake Lanotoo National Park Ramsar Site through its Integrated Water Resources Management Project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). One of the key objectives of the rehabilitation effort is to address the problem of invasive flora and fauna within the Ramsar Site.

Private sector

17. Private sector activities have a major influence on the health of wetlands worldwide. In Papua New Guinea, the Ramsar Administrative Authority (AA) is trying to reduce the impacts from mining activities on downstream areas by working with the oil and gas industries (e.g., Oil Search, Sasol, Niugini Energy LTD, PNG Sustainable Development Company) to change their working practices so as to minimize their impacts. One example is the production of a 'Exxon Mobile Biodiversity Strategy'.
18. Over the past triennium, the New Zealand AA has established a four-year partnership with the Air New Zealand Environment Trust to restore the values of wetlands at Okarito Lagoon and Lake Wahapo on the west coast of New Zealand.

Wetlands of International Importance

Ramsar Site designation

19. Over the last triennium, New Zealand has been revising its Standard Operating Procedure for Ramsar Site nomination which will streamline the future designation of Ramsar Sites and put in place a framework for reporting on changes in the ecological character. In the Marshall Islands, preparations have been taking place for the designation of Namdrik Atoll as the country's second Ramsar Site.

Ramsar Site ecological character

20. Australia has initiated a pilot project to develop a 'Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar Sites' so that the status of the country's 64 Ramsar Sites will be reviewed at least every three years, permitting emerging threats to be identified quickly and appropriate management actions taken in response. The government has also published a 'National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands' and is pursuing ongoing work to complete ecological character descriptions for all 64 Australian Ramsar Sites. A number of these have already been posted on the Ramsar Site Information service (RSIS).

Ramsar Site status

21. The 'National guidance on notifying change in ecological character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands (Article 3.2)' was published in 2009 to define roles and responsibilities and to describe the process for notifying change in the ecological character of Australian Ramsar Sites under Article 3.2 of the Convention. These guidelines form one of the modules of the 'National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands – Implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia'.

Management of other internationally important wetlands

22. There are many internationally important wetlands in the Oceania region and some have been conserved under different international designations than as Ramsar Sites. In the past three years, for example, the Marshall Islands has inscribed Bikini Atoll as the country's first World Heritage site, and Alinginae Atoll is applying to be inscribed as the second.

International cooperation

Integration of work with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)

23. With countries in the process of revising and updating their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) after CBD COP10 (2010), this is a good opportunity for our Ramsar AAs to ensure that targets for wetlands are included into the revised NBSAPs. This has been done for the revised 'Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030', which includes a number of targets related to wetlands, such as those focused on building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate, including the designation and restoration of areas for biodiversity conservation and reducing the impacts of invasive species on threatened species and ecological communities. Under the current Fiji NBSAP, wetlands is a specific thematic area.

Institutional capacity and effectiveness

National Wetland Committee

24. Fiji has developed a National Wetland Steering Committee to assist the Ramsar AA with implementation of the Convention and to facilitate intergration of wetlands issues into the government national policies.

World Wetland Day (WWD)

25. All the Oceania Contracting Parties have organized World Wetland Day (WWD) activities over the past triennium to highlight the diversity and importance of wetlands, targeting at a wide range of audiences, e.g., students, local communities, government officials from the national to the local level (including traditional leaders), and NGOs. In Palau, the activities were funded by a variety of sources, including local businesses. Activities included visits to Ramsar Sites, visits to schools and communities, and radio broadcasts.

Ramsar 40th Anniversary

26. To celebrate Ramsar's 40th anniversary, New Zealand launched the "Target 40" campaign in which organizations and communities were challenged to fix a target using the number 40 (e.g., 40 protected hectares, 40 wetland activities, etc.) and to try to reach or exceed that target in their efforts. In Australia, a school wetland education package was produced as part of the activities for the 40th Anniversary celebrations.

Membership

27. Partners to the Ramsar Convention in Oceania are providing assistance to a number of Pacific island countries to help with their accessions to the Ramsar Convention. These countries include Kiribati, Tongas and Vanuatu. Some of them have already identified their first Ramsar Site(s) and final endorsement for accession is now needed from the higher-levels in government.

C. What have been the greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention?

28. 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 is 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.

Insufficient human resources

29. Pacific island Contracting Parties report that their departments are usually understaffed, and, of those staff that are present, they are often not sufficiently trained and are already overloaded with other work. There is also a high staff turnover, with staff members of higher potential moving on for further studies or to international organizations or the private sector for work. This means that the staff members present have to prioritize their heavy workloads, which in turn means that wetlands may be given a lower priority than higher profile issues like climate change and biodiversity. Being of lower priority may have the knock-on effect that the governments provide less funding for wetland site conservation, management and training. Having insufficient funding also means that it is more difficult, or almost impossible, to travel to the remote areas and islands in the country to conduct surveys, monitoring and research, which can be added to the fact that Pacific island countries already lack capacity because qualified staff frequently move overseas or find work outside of the government. As a result, there is often a lack of up-to-date information on the country's wetland distribution, status, and importance.

Lack of awareness of wetland benefits

30. Across the Pacific island countries, 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. At the site level, this lack of awareness can develop into conflicts between local communities and Ramsar Site managers, such as illegal activities, e.g. tree felling, in the buffer zone of the Upper Navua Ramsar Site which may encroach into the site itself. In New Zealand, there have not been any Ramsar Site nominations over the previous triennium due to a lack of understanding by wetland managers and agencies about the values of Ramsar designation and of the steps required to complete the nomination process. As a result, the Ramsar AA in the country is about to publish a step-by-step guide to site nomination.

Climatic variability

31. Unlike the Pacific island countries, Australia's main challenge has been in trying to balance the conflicting demands of supplying an adequate supply of water from river basins for human needs whilst at the same time ensuring that there is sufficient to maintain a healthy environment. The difficulty of this task has been exacerbated by the country's highly variable and unpredictable rainfall, as well as not having sufficient data to understand how much variability the environment can withstand (e.g., drought in a wetland) before the site has reached its limit of acceptable change. There is a feeling that much of the Convention's processes and guidance are established on more stationary or predictable hydrological systems from the northern hemisphere, which may not readily translate to the Australian context and therefore present an additional challenge in implementing the Convention.

D. What are the priorities for future implementation of the Convention?

Raise greater awareness of wetland benefits

32. The most common response in the National Reports for COP11, especially from the Pacific island countries, was to continue to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and their conservation to all levels of society, from central government to traditional leaders and local communities, in order to gather stronger support for the safeguarding of wetlands in the country.

Improve coordination for wetland conservation and wise use

33. Oceania Contracting Parties also recognized the importance of improving coordination amongst government ministries, agencies and NGOs on issues relating to wetland conservation and wise use, and of mainstreaming the Ramsar message into the policies, plans and strategies of the different stakeholders groups. This is especially importance for policies concerning wetlands and water management, as well as on the potential role of wetlands in climate change adaptation and mitigation. To assist in the coordination, both New Zealand and Palau explained that they are considering establishing National Wetland Committees in the coming triennium.

Balance development and conservation

34. Many of the Oceania Contracting Parties are facing the problem of trying to balance the pressures for development and the needs of environmental conservation. In Papua New Guinea, where the activities of extractive industries (e.g., oil, gas, timber, and minerals) pose a considerable threat to wetlands and the environment in general, the government and NGOs are working to develop memoranda of understanding with those businesses to promote best

practices and minimize any adverse impacts. In the Murray-Darling Basin of Australia, the main focus of work will continue to be finding a balance to the conflicting demands for water so as to maintain an adequate supply of water to wetlands whilst optimizing economic and social benefits.

Improve understanding of the status of wetlands

35. To assist in the conservation of wetland at the site level, Palau mentioned that it will be updating the information on the country's wetlands, whilst Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea reported that they will be establishing a national framework for identifying and nominating priority wetlands as Ramsar Sites. Australia, furthermore, is in the process of developing wetland management planning guidelines, including a web-based toolkit that provides information on wetland management in Australia. New Zealand will be establishing a process for prioritizing wetlands in need of restoration.

Monitoring the status of Ramsar Sites

36. Fiji mentioned as a priority monitoring the status of Ramsar Sites in view of potential threats, whilst Australia has a pilot project to develop a rolling review of the country's Ramsar Sites which it is planned will be updated every three years. New Zealand will be reviewing its monitoring systems to ensure that they are adequate to detect changes in ecological character.

E. Does the Contracting Party have any proposals concerning adjustment to the 2009-2015 Strategic Plan?

37. Australia was the only Contracting Party from Oceania to provide a response to this question. The general points were that:
- as far as possible, the Ramsar Strategic Plan should be aligned with those of other MEAs, particularly the revised CBD Strategic Plan, as this will improve harmonization, ease the burden of reporting, and not increase the work of Contracting Parties; and
 - given the breadth of the Strategic Plan and Contracting Parties' limited resources, it would be useful to provide better guidance on prioritizing actions under the Strategic Plan.
38. More specifically, Australia questioned the merit of growing the list of internationally important wetlands (KRA 2.1.iii), as it raises questions about quantity rather than quality and about the capacity of Contracting Parties to appropriately manage wetlands. An overly large list may devalue the objectives of the Convention and other mechanisms could be used to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

F. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat?

39. While some Oceania Contracting Parties were satisfied with the assistance they had received from the Secretariat, e.g., advice on draft guidance and feedback on ecological character descriptions and Ramsar Information Sheets and techniques for dealing with oil spills, others considered that more support could be given to the region, especially to Pacific island countries. This would include:
- identifying funds to support the development of national wetland inventories;
 - establishing a guide for the process of designating Ramsar Sites;

- providing training on the management and wise use of wetlands; and
- producing awareness materials such as posters, brochures, pamphlets and audio visual equipment.

40. Australia suggested that, as requests to the Secretariat for assistance will likely increase in future, the process for seeking such assistance should be formalized, particularly those of a technical nature involving the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). This is especially true in view of the fact that a review will be conducted of the work of the STRP. Australia also considered that the Ramsar website should be reviewed with a view to enhancing its accessibility and performance. There remain opportunities to improve the functionality of the Ramsar website.

G. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention's IOPs?

41. The most common request for assistance from the Convention's International Organization Partners was for them to provide more technical and funding support for implementation of different aspects of the Convention, e.g., mapping and inventory; identifying key wetland sites; site management, research, habitat restoration; working with local communities that live adjacent to Ramsar Sites; and capacity building. Papua New Guinea even suggested strengthening the collaboration with IOPs through the development of MOUs and TORs for specific wetland activities.

H. How can implementation of the Ramsar Convention be better linked with implementation of other MEAs, especially those in the 'Biodiversity cluster'?

42. On the international level, the Ramsar Convention has Memoranda of Cooperation and sometimes Joint Work Plans with many other MEAs, and the secretariats of those MEAs work closely to look for opportunities for collaboration where possible. Such opportunities would lead to improving the coordination and effectiveness of global conservation efforts, and to reducing duplication of work. At the national level, such collaboration in implementation is especially important not only to conserve biodiversity on the ground (or in the water) but also to allow governments to work more efficiently and effectively because they are already short-staffed.

43. Solutions for improving collaboration include having the focal points of the related MEAs within the same coordinating ministry, as is the case in Australia and New Zealand. Another is to invite the different MEA focal points to sit on relevant national committees, e.g., for wetlands or for biodiversity, as in the case in the Marshall Island's Coastal Management Advisory Committee. A third solution would be to harmonize the national strategic and implementation plans (e.g., NBSAPs) for all MEAs so as to achieve closer on-the-ground implementation. Oceania Contracting Parties then hope that this will eventually lead to the harmonization of national reporting to the MEAs and so reduce the administrative burden.

I. How can Ramsar implementation be better linked with the implementation of water policy/strategy and other strategies in the country?

44. The close linkage between wetlands and water has been highlighted by the Ramsar Convention before (Resolution VI.23, 1996) and at COP10, Resolution X.3 *The Changwon Declaration* even called for the Ramsar family to reach out to the other water-related sectors with whom we

have not worked very closely before, in order to raise their awareness and involve them in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Despite this, there are still hurdles to raising greater awareness about the link. For example, many international processes still do not refer to 'wetlands', but instead use the term 'water related ecosystems' when talking about water-related issues.

45. In some countries, there is still a low level of awareness within the government about Ramsar, wetlands, and their importance. Without this, it is not possible to take the first step to making the link between wetlands and water. It was suggested that the Secretariat could do more to support national implementation to help governments make this first step.
46. For countries where awareness is higher, the link can be made by establishing broad-based National Ramsar/Wetland Committees that have membership from the related sectors, e.g., water resources, as well as agriculture, land use, development, etc., which can hold regular meetings and maintain frequent communication. Another way is for the Ramsar AA in the country to incorporate the goals of the Ramsar Convention into relevant national policy. In the case of Australia, this was done with the 'Water Act' and 'National Water Initiative' and, as a result, wetland conservation and wise use can now be implemented by a range of different stakeholders who may not have worked in the field of wetlands before.

J. Does the Party have any other general comments on the implementation of the Convention?

47. The main response was from New Zealand to the effect that a way needs to be found to help strengthen communication between Contracting Parties in the region, and between the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat. However, they did say they appreciated the regular STRP newsletters and the annual Asia-Oceania summary of the Convention activities.

Goal 1. The wise use of wetlands

STRATEGY 1.1: Wetland inventory and assessment.

National Wetland Inventory

48. Only Australia and New Zealand reported having National Wetland Inventories at this time, and they also reported that the information contained in them is accessible to all stakeholders. In Australia, data on the condition of the country's wetlands is being collected at various levels. On the river basin level, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority is implementing a long-term Sustainable Rivers Audit to assess the condition and health of the Murray-Darling Basin's 23 river valleys. Then at the state level, a number of state governments are investing in research to allow them to better monitor the condition of their wetlands. Finally at the site level, a Rolling Review of the status of the country's 64 Ramsar Sites is being implemented, and it is intended that all sites will be reviewed at least once every three years to allow emerging threats to be identified and management actions to be taken in response.

Condition of Ramsar Sites and wetlands generally over the previous triennium

49. Globally, a larger percentage of Contracting Parties reported that the condition of their Ramsar Sites had improved (30%) than had deteriorated (17%) over the past triennium. However, for the condition of wetlands in general in the country, the response was for a greater percentage to have deteriorated (28%) than improved (19%). Obviously, there are many reasons for such a

trend and in the same way there will be many reasons for exceptions. In the Oceania region, there was considerable variation in responses to this question.

	Australia	Fiji	Marshall Islands	New Zealand	Samoa
Ramsar Sites	Status improved	Status improved	No change	No change	Status improved
Wetlands generally	Status improved	Status deteriorated	No change	Status deteriorated	Status improved

50. Improvements to the condition of Ramsar Sites are often due to funds being found to restore the condition of the sites because of their international recognition after listing. For example in New Zealand, the Arawai Kākāriki wetland restoration programme successfully involved the restoration of two of the country's six Ramsar Sites through the control of invasive and exotic species, and targeted conservation management of threatened species. However, improvement to the condition of a site may also be due to natural reasons. For example in Australia, the country suffered a prolonged drought from 1997 to 2009 which had a severe impact on both the Ramsar-listed and non-listed wetlands. However, above average rainfall in 2010 and 2011 allowed many of the previously dried wetlands to be refilled, which stimulated some recovery of the vegetation as well as the animal populations.
51. Whilst the condition of Ramsar Sites may generally be improving, wetlands in general continue to face a range of threats, notably from a lack of awareness, dedicated legislation and/or enforcement to control the impacts from encroaching development in the catchment area which may cause a decline in water quality, alter the hydrological regimes, bring about a loss of habitat, increase disturbance, etc. Whilst these threats and their consequences need to be addressed, the responses from Contracting Parties also highlight the value in designating priority wetlands as Ramsar Sites as a tool for the long-term conservation of these important sites.

STRATEGY 1.3: Policy, legislation and institutions.

National Wetland Policy

52. Only Australia, Fiji and New Zealand reported having some form of National Wetland Policy in place. In Australia, there is a policy at the national level (Commonwealth Wetland Policy, 1997) and most states also have their own policies. In New Zealand, there are two statutory national policy statements that cover wetlands, one for freshwater wetlands and the other for coastal wetlands. These policies are supported by more detailed regulatory rules and non-statutory guidance for implementation. In Samoa, wetland policy is covered under the country's National Biodiversity Policy.
53. None of the above Oceania Contracting Parties reported their wetland policies including WSSD targets and actions. In the case of Australia, this was because their wetland policy predated the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Incorporation of water issues into other national strategies and planning processes

54. Oceania Contracting Parties generally stated that wetland and water issues had been incorporated into other national strategies and planning processes, including water resource management and water efficiency plans; coastal and marine resource management plans; national forest programmes; national strategies for sustainable development; national policies

or measures on agriculture; and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans. The only exception was in Australia and New Zealand where water issues were not applicable in the country's poverty eradication strategies.

Environment impact assessments and wetlands

55. All the Oceania Contracting Parties reported some form of environmental legislation in place to assess the impact of development activities that may have adverse impacts on the environment, including wetlands. In Australia, the responsibility for enacting the relevant legislation can lie at the local, state or national level depending on the scale of the individual project and the importance of the wetland that may be impacted. Australia also gave details of its strategic assessment process, which happens early in the planning cycle and examines the potential impacts of actions which might stem from one or more policy, programme or plan, e.g., for regional-scale development plans and policies, water extraction/use policies, etc.

Inclusion of Ramsar commitments in existing legislation

56. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) is Australia's central piece of environmental legislation, and after an independent review of that legislation in 2009 legislative amendments are now being made to the Act which include reforms relevant to Ramsar wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems. In New Zealand, amendments to legislation relating to wetlands have taken Ramsar commitments into account, though that has not been the primary driver. The other Oceania Contracting Parties reported that amendments are either in progress or planned.

STRATEGY 1.4: Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services.

Assessment of wetland ecosystem benefits/services

57. Australia and New Zealand were the only Parties to report having conducted assessments of wetland ecosystem benefits/services. In Australia, this was done by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for the ecosystem services provided by the Basin's wetlands and wetland resources. The research identified 31 discrete ecosystem services provided by the wetlands across the categories of provisioning, cultural, supporting and regulating services. In New Zealand, studies have been undertaken by scientists and local 'iwi' groups to identify the market and non-market values of the ecosystem services provided by the Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.
58. Australia, New Zealand, Samoa and to some extent the Marshall Islands as well were the only Parties to report implementing of wetland programmes/projects that contribute to poverty alleviation/food or water.

Consideration of the cultural value of wetlands

59. The cultural value of wetlands is being addressed in different ways across Oceania. The Marshall Islands has developed the 'Reimaanlok Strategy' which addresses the use of traditional knowledge and practices for the conservation of marine resources and some land resources. Although this strategy does not directly address wetlands, it can be adapted and used to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the country. In Australia, although the National Water Initiative (2004) requires recognition of indigenous people's needs in relation to water access and management, a review in 2009 found that 'water to meet Indigenous social, spiritual and customary objectives is rarely clearly specified in water plans'. In New Zealand, the cultural value of wetlands is embedded in the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), signed between the indigenous people and the British Crown at the time of colonization,

which ensures the full involvement of indigenous people in the processes at all levels of government.

Consideration of the socio-economic value of wetlands in management planning

60. There is still a strong sense of traditional culture in Oceania and, as a result, the socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands have been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, e.g., in the management plan for Jaluit Atoll Ramsar Site as well as that for the proposed Namdrik Atoll Ramsar Site, Marshall Islands. In Australia, the cultural value of wetlands is included in the management plans of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands where relevant. An example is for the Kakadu Ramsar Site where the management plan, Ramsar Information Sheet and Ecological Character Description all recognize the importance of the cultural values of the wetlands. In New Zealand, the management of all wetlands under the Resource Management Act requires consideration of economic, social and cultural wellbeing.

STRATEGY 1.5: Recognition of the role of the Convention

Contribution of the National Focal Point of other MEAs to implementation of the Ramsar Convention

61. Whilst most of the Oceania Contracting Parties state that the NFP for other MEAs are contributing to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention (Australia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa), the actual extent probably varies between the MEAs. For example in Australia, the strongest relationships are with the NFPs for the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Changwon Declaration

62. The *Changwon Declaration on human-well being and wetlands* (Resolution X.3, 2008) contained key messages about the role of wetland conservation and wise use in contributing towards six areas of sustainable development, i.e., water, climate change, people's livelihoods, human health, land use change, and biodiversity. The Declaration was also a call to the Ramsar community to reach out to workers in those sectors and include them in the Convention's work on wetland. In terms of disseminating the Declaration, only Australia and New Zealand reported having done so, and then it was mainly to other government departments and to civil society. Australia had also used the information in the Declaration to inform the government's preparation for COP15 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. None of the Oceania Contracting Parties had translated the Declaration into the local languages. For Australia and New Zealand, this was not necessary as the Declaration was already in English.

STRATEGY 1.6: Science-based management of wetlands

63. Oceania Contracting Parties reported that they had conducted research to inform wetland policies and plans on agriculture-wetland interactions (3 Parties); climate change (2) and valuation of ecosystem services (2). In addition, Australia also reported that it has undertaken other projects relevant to wetland sustainability, e.g., on understanding, managing and conserving the country's biodiversity and ecosystems.
64. For wetland management plans, they have not only been based on scientific research but also on local and traditional knowledge.

STRATEGY 1.7: Integrated Water Resources Management

65. Oceania Contracting Parties reported that the Convention's water-related guidance has been helpful (3 Parties) or partly helpful (2) in informing decision-making related to water resource planning and management. New Zealand further added that the Convention's guidance has been used in the development of non-statutory guidance on water management. In Australia, however, the Convention's water-related guidance has not necessarily directly informed water resource planning and management, but the decision-making processes in the country are generally consistent with it.
66. All the five Oceania Contracting Parties reporting said that their countries' water governance and management consider wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management at the river basin scale. Australia added that this was through arrangements at the river basin level (e.g., the Water Act for wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin) and at the regional level, through various state legislation (e.g., in Queensland and Victoria) that considers wetlands as environmental assets in the water resource planning process.
67. Whilst Australia said that CEPA expertise and tools had been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management, the other four reporting Contracting Parties said that this had only been done partially. In Australia, regional natural resource management organizations receive funding from the government and assist in developing promotional materials and running workshops and information sessions for the public. In New Zealand, a national Land and Water Forum of stakeholders has been created to help increase participation and collaboration in water management, and to provide advice to the government's reform of water management.
68. Regarding the Convention's guidance on wetlands and coastal zone management, Australia and Samoa reported that it has been applied to their country's ICZM planning and decision-making, whilst it has been used partly by the Marshall Islands and New Zealand, and planned by Fiji. In Australia, the guidance has been adopted in the country's 'National Cooperative Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management: Framework and Implementation Plan' (2006).
69. Australia and Samoa reported that they have established policies and guidelines for enhancing the role of wetlands in mitigation and/or adaptation to climate change, but New Zealand stated that whilst this approach may be useful in some wetlands, the focus should be on looking at integrated solutions rather than on wetlands *per se*.
70. All the Contracting Parties reporting, except the Marshall Islands, said that they have formulated plans or projects to sustain and enhance the role of wetlands and water in supporting and maintaining viable farming systems.

STRATEGY 1.8: Wetland restoration

71. Although only Australia, Fiji and Samoa said that they have identified the country's priority wetlands for restoration, all the Contracting Parties reporting (except Fiji) reported that they have been implementing wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects. Furthermore, only Australia replied that it has used the Ramsar guidance (Annex to Resolution VIII.16) or equivalent guidance on wetland restoration in designing and implementing wetland

restoration projects. The other Contracting Parties reported that they have partly used the guidance.

STRATEGY 1.9: Invasive alien species

72. All the Contracting Parties reporting, except Fiji, said that they have national inventories of invasive alien species but these are general lists and not specifically for species that currently, or potentially, impact on the ecological character of wetlands. A number of Contracting Parties (3) have national lists, databases and action plans of invasive weeds and pest animals to inform surveillance and management to reduce the threat to agriculture and/or the environment (including wetlands).

STRATEGY 1.10: Private sector

73. Australia, Fiji and New Zealand have activities in place that encourage the private sector to apply the Ramsar wise use principle and guidance in their activities and investments concerning Ramsar Sites and wetlands in general. In Fiji, a private company (Rivers Fiji) is assisting the government to manage the Upper Nauva Ramsar Site by organizing river rafting tours which also help to raise awareness of the site. A percentage of the income from these tours is returned to benefit the local community. In Australia, the activities of the private sector (private landowners or NGOs) take place both in collaboration with government and independently. A survey in 2007-2008 estimated that about 10% of Australia's agricultural businesses have wetlands (including Ramsar Sites) on their holdings. Of these businesses, 45% are protecting wetlands for conservation purposes, and this account for around 35% of the total estimated area of wetlands nationally. In New Zealand, there has been extensive involvement by the private sector (individual landowners, businesses and community groups) in reducing the impacts on wetlands and restoring degraded wetlands.
74. Australia, Fiji and New Zealand have also made awareness-raising materials available to consumers so that they can make wetland-friendly consumer choices. Examples include the website of Rivers Fiji where there is a page that introduces the Ramsar Convention, the importance of the Upper Navua Conservation Area and how Rivers Fiji helped to make the area Fiji's first Ramsar Site (<http://www.riversfiji.com/ecotourism/ramsar>). In Australia, the Banrock Station Ramsar Site is an operational winery and every bottle produced includes the message 'Good Earth-Fine Wine'. A percentage of the sale from each bottle of wine contributes to wetland conservation globally. Then in New Zealand, a whitebaiter's guide to whitebait encourages fishermen to keep their catch small and release the less common species.

STRATEGY 1.11: Incentive measures

75. Three Oceania Contracting Parties (Australia, New Zealand and Samoa) have taken actions to implement incentive measures that encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands. In Australia, a variety of mechanisms have been established, including tax concessions, to encourage landowners to enter into conservation covenants to protect (wetland) areas of high conservation value on private land. In New Zealand, an example of such a measure is the direct funding for private landholders to fence wetlands off from livestock. This reduces sediment and nutrient inputs to the wetlands by reducing livestock access to riparian margins of rivers and creeks.

76. Australia and New Zealand also reported they have taken action to remove perverse incentives that impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. In the case of Australia, such perverse incentives were tackled through the development of the National Water Initiative, Water for the Future, and the Water Act 2007; in New Zealand, subsidies were removed for land development that may impact on wetlands.

GOAL 2. Wetlands of International Importance

STRATEGY 2.1: Ramsar Site designation

77. The Marshall Islands was the only Oceania Contracting Party to state that it has used the *Strategic Framework* to establish a national strategy and priorities for the further designation of Ramsar Sites. Namdrik Atoll is currently being reviewed for listing as the country's second Ramsar Site, and they hope to have Mili Atoll and Wotje Atoll designated in future. Both Australia and New Zealand reported that they are preparing national guidelines for the nomination of Ramsar Sites which aim to make the process for nomination more systematic and transparent for site managers, governments and the community.
78. At the time of reporting, Australia had 28 Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) due to be updated, and a number of RISs are in the process of being updated in conjunction with the development of Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs). For New Zealand, updated RIS for all their six Ramsar sites will be submitted in 2012.
79. For new Ramsar Sites, both Australia and the Marshall Island have one site each that is currently being reviewed for designation. In the coming triennium, the Marshall Islands aims to designate the Mili Atoll (2013) and Wotje Atoll (2014) as Ramsar Sites, and New Zealand intends to designate an additional two sites in the next triennium.

STRATEGY 2.2: Ramsar Site information

80. Whilst Fiji and the Marshall Islands said that the Ramsar Sites Information Service has been useful in identifying further Ramsar Sites for designation, Australia and New Zealand replied that the RSIS has not been useful. New Zealand went on to say that its considerations are based more on the application of a number of national tools for identification of important wetland sites, such as the Freshwater Ecosystems of New Zealand (FENZ) geo-database. This provides a greater level of detail than is possible from the RSIS.

STRATEGY 2.3: Management planning – new Ramsar Sites

81. Only Australia replied to say that the site it is preparing for Ramsar Site designation (Piccaninnie Ponds Karst Wetland) has had a management planning processes established. The low level of response from the other Oceania Contracting Parties was due to the fact that they are not in the process of designating Ramsar Sites at this time.

STRATEGY 2.4: Ramsar Site ecological character

82. Please refer to the table below for the number of Ramsar Site with management plans.

	Australia	Fiji	Marshall Island	New Zealand	Samoa
Number of Ramsar Sites (RS)?	64	1	1	6	1
How many RS have a management plan? ⁽¹⁾	57	1	1	5	0
For RS with a management plan, for how many is the plan being implemented?	57	1	1	5	0
How many RS have a management plan in preparation?	7	0	2	0	1
For RS with a management plan, for how many is the plan being revised or updated?	17	1	1	2	0
How many sites have a cross-sectoral management committee	n.a. ⁽²⁾	1	2	3	0
For how many sites has an ecological character description been prepared?	64 ⁽³⁾	1	2	1	0

- ⁽¹⁾ For the management plans that have either been prepared or are in the process of being prepared, maintenance of the site's ecological character is set as one of the management objectives.
- ⁽²⁾ Ramsar Sites in Australia have a range of management structures and so it is not possible to answer this question. For example, Kakadu National Park is jointly managed by the Director of National Parks and the Board of Management, which is composed of ten Traditional Owners representing the geographic spread of Aboriginal people within the Kakadu region, plus representatives from the government and experts in nature conservation and tourism. Some other Ramsar Sites may be managed by the government without a committee.
- ⁽³⁾ The Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs) for 37 sites have been finalized and those for a further 27 sites are currently in the process of being endorsed by relevant land managers/ government agencies. Once complete, the ECDs will be available from the Australian Wetlands Database (www.environment.gov.au/wetlands).

STRATEGY 2.5: Ramsar Site management effectiveness

83. Australia, Fiji and the Marshall Islands reported that assessments of the management effectiveness of their Ramsar Sites have been carried out, whilst New Zealand reported that this has been done for some of its sites. Australia mentioned that the management plans for its Ramsar Sites are reviewed every seven years, and a technical audit of the plan is conducted to inform the development of the next plan.

STRATEGY 2.6: Ramsar Site status

84. Australia, Fiji and the Marshall Islands have mechanisms in place for the Administrative Authority to be informed of negative human-induced changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites, pursuant to Article 3.2. In Fiji, this mechanism is by the site management reporting to the Wetlands Steering Committee, which then communicates to the government agencies for their response. Australia has its 'National Guidelines for Notifying Change in Ecological Character of Australian Ramsar Sites (Article 3.2)', endorsed in 2009, which describe the process and arrangements for the Administrative Authority to be informed of changes in ecological character. The Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar Sites that is being piloted will also provide information on the status of Ramsar Sites, thus allowing management actions to be taken in response to emerging threats. In New Zealand, a project

was initiated in 2010 to describe the ecological character of the country's Ramsar Sites and will also establish arrangements for reporting on negative changes in ecological character.

85. For Ramsar Sites that are being affected by negative human-induced change or likely change, Australia and Fiji have already reported those cases to the Secretariat, and New Zealand provided updates in their National Report. Currently, none of the Oceania Contracting Parties have Ramsar Sites listed on the Montreux Record.

STRATEGY 2.7: Management of other internationally important wetlands

86. Whilst one of the pillars of the Ramsar Convention is the List of Wetlands of International Importance, another is for Contracting Parties to promote the wise use of wetlands in their territory as far as possible (Article 3.1). This is especially important for those wetlands that have not yet been listed as Ramsar Sites but have been identified through domestic application of the Strategic Framework or other similar process (Ramsar Strategic Plan 2008-2015, Strategy 2.7). Australia mentioned that it has been maintaining the ecological character of these other wetlands by designating them as Ramsar Sites (e.g., Piccaninnie Ponds Karst Wetland), whilst Fiji said that it has been able to do so for some of its important wetlands. For New Zealand, the ecological character of these other internationally important wetlands has not yet been assessed, as these sites have not been specifically identified. However, this will be done in the coming triennium.

GOAL 3. International cooperation

STRATEGY 3.1: Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs

87. All of the Oceania Contracting Parties reporting said that they had mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other MEAs. In Australia, New Zealand and Samoa, this has been made possible by the fact that the MEA focal points are all mainly in the same government agency. Another mechanism is by inviting the focal points from the MEAs to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee in countries where such committees exist.
88. Only the Marshall Islands and Samoa reported that they had mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of UN and other global and regional bodies and agencies (e.g., UNEP, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNECE, ITTO). For Australia and New Zealand, such a mechanism was only partially in place due to these focal points being located within a number of other government agencies.

STRATEGY 3.2: Regional initiatives

89. Both the Marshall Islands and Australia have been involved in the activities of the Regional Initiatives established under the framework of the Ramsar Convention. In the case of Australia, financial and logistical support has been provided for the setting up and operation of the East Asia-Australasian Flyway Partnership in the early 2000s, and the Marshall Islands has participated in the 2nd and 3rd Changwon Declaration Network Meetings organized by the Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia. Oceania Contracting Parties reported having been involved in other initiatives in the region, such as the development of the Regional Wetland Action Plan (Fiji, Marshall Islands and Samoa), which was partially funded by the Australian government. Another initiative was the collaboration between Australia and the Secretariat of the Pacific

Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) on a project to streamline reporting by Pacific island countries to the biodiversity-related MEAs.

STRATEGY 3.3: International assistance

90. Australia was the only country to report that it had provided funding support for wetland conservation and management in other countries from its development assistance agency, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Examples of such project include AusAID's collaboration with SPREP to streamline reporting to MEA's, and implementing the 'Wetland Policy, Guidelines and Capacity Building' project in China that aims to improve institutional coordination mechanisms for wetland management. All such projects have environmental safeguards and assessments included in the proposals.
91. In the past triennium, Oceania Contracting Parties have not been successful in receiving support for projects from the Ramsar Small Grant Fund but there are ongoing SGF project in Samoa (from 2004) and Fiji (from 2007).

STRATEGY 3.4: Sharing information and expertise

92. Australia and New Zealand reported a range of national and international networking and twinning activities that have been carried out by the government, academics and NGOs to help share knowledge and provide training on wetlands issues. Examples at the government level include:
 - Australia funding projects in China on water management (see para. 107) and sharing integrated water resource management expertise with the Indian Ministry of Water;
 - the twinning of Boondall Wetlands (Moreton Bay Ramsar Site, Australia) and Yatsu Higata Tidalflat Ramsar Site (Japan) to raise greater awareness of migratory shorebirds and wetlands;
 - the Ramsar AA in New Zealand regularly participating in the Australian government's Wetlands and Waterbird Taskforce, to exchange information wetland management and research.

At the non-governmental level, examples of networking include:

- international academic exchanges between wetland managers and scientists at wetland symposia;
 - the work by the Australasian Wader Studies Group on training and information gathering on migratory waterbirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway; and
 - the work of the Australian Wetland Alliance (AWA), which is an association of non-government organizations working with wetlands and which operates nationally and internationally.
93. All the Oceania Contracting Parties reporting said that they have made information about the wetlands and Ramsar Sites in the country publicly available. The common way in which this has been done was by having dedicated websites or web-pages, set up by the central or state government, where the information is loaded so that it can be easily accessed by any interested persons. Printed information on wetlands is still popular and still being produced. For example, New Zealand is in the process of preparing a booklet on 40 wetlands sites to visit, which will include general information on the country's wetlands.

STRATEGY 3.5: Shared wetlands, river basins and migratory species.

94. Australia was the only Contracting Party reporting to mention that it has effective cooperative management mechanisms in place for shared wetland systems. The Australian government has identified 56 natural resource management (NRM) regions which are based on catchments or bioregions and have an important role in wetland conservation in the country. In addition to these NRM regional organizations, there are a number of cooperative management arrangements for shared river basins, such as the Murray-Darling Basin Authority which has responsibility for planning the integrated management of the water resources of the Murray-Darling Basin.
95. Australia, Fiji and New Zealand reported participating in regional networks or initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species, with both Australia and New Zealand being members of the East Asian-Australasia Flyway Partnership, one of the Regional Initiatives under the framework of the Ramsar Convention. In addition, Australia mentions having separate bilateral agreements in place for the conservation of migratory birds with Japan (JAMBA), China (CAMBA), and the Republic of Korea (ROKAMBA).

GOAL 4. Institutional capacity and effectiveness**STRATEGY 4.1: CEPA**

96. Most of the Oceania Contracting Parties reported having developed Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Action Plans from the national down to the site/local level (table below).

	Australia	Fiji	Marshall Island	New Zealand	Samoa
National level	✓	✓	Planned	x	In progress
Subnational level	x	✓	Planned	✓	Planned
Catchment/basin level	✓	✓	Planned	x	✓
Local/site level	✓	✓	Planned	✓	✓
Number of wetland centres	30	1	0	3	2

97. Oceania Contracting Parties have established centres at their wetlands and Ramsar Sites to promote greater awareness of the importance of the sites and of wetlands in general. Whilst some centres may be large and well equipped, others are small but can play an equally important role in promoting wetland CEPA. The most important function of these centres is that they provide school students, special interest groups, and all sectors of the community with the opportunity to participate in practical, fun and hands-on activities that will show how the wetlands work, the wildlife that live in a wetland, the area's culture and history, its importance, and how visitors can help in its conservation. Depending on the funding available, centres may also offer a variety of facilities to visitors, including wildlife viewing areas, walking tracks, interpretive signs, boardwalks, classrooms, libraries, and an area where food and drinks are available.
98. All the Oceania Contracting Parties reporting said that they promoted public participation in decision-making with respect to wetland planning and management. Examples included the following:

- If a proposed development project in Australia has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance (including Ramsar wetlands), then there are opportunities for the public to comment on the proposal.
 - When preparing the plan for the sustainable management of the water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority had to allow a minimum 16 weeks' public consultation period on a draft of the Basin Plan.
99. Most of the Oceania Contracting Parties reporting (4) said that they specifically involved local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management. In New Zealand, local communities are usually the proponents for designating new Ramsar Sites whilst in Australia, site designation can only take place after the government has held adequate and appropriate consultations with key stakeholders and has reached agreement with the relevant landowners and stakeholders about the designation and management of the wetland. The local community, especially the traditional owners of the site, are often involved in the decision-making process for the subsequent management of the site, such as through being members of the site management committee/board.
100. Oceania Contracting Parties generally reported having only made partly or not at all an assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention over the past triennium. However, training was still provided in Australia (7 opportunities), Fiji (4), New Zealand (4) and Samoa (1). Examples of training courses in Australia include:
- Non-profit making organizations, e.g., WetlandCare Australia, providing training for site managers in best management practices;
 - Tertiary institutions offering courses in river and wetland management;
 - The Sydney Olympic Park Authority providing an ongoing program of Wetland Education and Training (WET); and
 - A range of training being provided by and to community organizations.
101. Australia, Fiji and the Marshall islands reported having operational National Ramsar/Wetlands Committees (or equivalent). New Zealand and Samoa reported that they are either considering forming or planning to form such a committee in the coming triennium.
102. Apart from having some form of wetland committee, Oceania Contracting Parties all mentioned that they had other mechanisms in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Ramsar AA and a) Ramsar Site managers, b) other MEA national focal points, and c) relevant ministries, departments and agencies (see Strategy 3.1).
103. All the Oceania Contracting Parties stated that WWD activities have been carried out in their countries since COP10, with the activities being organized by the national, state and territory governments as well as by community organizations. They reported that they also carried out other campaigns, programmes, and projects to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands and the ecosystem benefits/services that they provided. These activities include:
- producing online resources on wetlands for teachers and students, as well as wetland-based school curriculum programs to promote the understanding and care of wetlands;

- organizing symposia and meetings on wetlands for a range of stakeholders, e.g., academics, site managers, etc.;
- working with local communities living near wetlands to encourage behavioural changes for the benefit of the local environment;
- producing printed material, e.g., on 'Wetlands and the Ramsar Convention', Ramsar Sites, etc.;
- holding a campaign (in New Zealand) in 2011 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Convention with activities organized each month and the publication of a booklet on 40 wetlands to visit in the country.

STRATEGY 4.2: Convention financial capacity

104. All but one of the Oceania Contracting Parties that reported said that their Ramsar contributions have been paid in full for the past triennium. For the one Party that replied that its contributions have not been paid in full, this was explained as being because of coordination issues between the AA and the government body responsible for the payment.
105. Apart from annual contributions, Australia and Fiji said that they have also provided additional financial support through voluntary contributions to non-core funded Convention activities. For Fiji, this money was for Ramsar implementation activities, whilst for Australia, the support was for activities such as a) the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform, b) the workshop in Noumea, New Caledonia, that drafted the Regional Wetland Action Plan (August 2010), and c) the 5th Oceania Regional Meeting (March 2012). The Secretariat would like to express its gratitude to Australia for these generous donations to the work of the Convention.

STRATEGY 4.3: Convention bodies effectiveness

106. Three of the Parties that reported said that they had used their previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring their implementation of the Convention, and three Parties also reported that they have updated the Secretariat on new appointments and changes in Administrative Authority focal points and daily contacts.

STRATEGY 4.4: Working with IOPs and others

107. Three of the Oceania Contracting Parties that reported said that they have received assistance from one or more of the Convention's International Organization Partners in their implementation of the Convention. For example, in Australia Wetlands International-Oceania was contracted to provide a number of wetland-related projects, such as the AusAID-funded project to develop wetland management and monitoring guidelines for Ramsar wetlands in China. In Samoa, Wetlands International-Oceania provided technical assistance for a freshwater fish survey in 2009 for some national wetland sites, including the Ramsar Site. IUCN-Oceania also provided financial assistance for the preparation of the management plan for one of the Tigitogiga Watershed areas.

Annex 1

5th Oceania Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971)

Koror, Palau, 26-30 March 2012

Meeting Summary

1. Wetlands in the Oceania region are extremely diverse, with high biodiversity conservation values, and they play a critical role in sustaining people's livelihoods and national economies.
2. Tourism is a major contributor to most Pacific Island economies. The planning and management of tourism activities in wetlands should seek to minimize damage to the habitats and maintain the ecosystem services provided by the wetlands, especially to local and downstream communities.
3. The major drivers of change in wetlands in the region are unsustainable development, invasive species and increasingly, climate change. Concrete actions have to be identified at the national and regional level to effectively mitigate these threats.
4. With growing evidence across the Pacific that climate change is resulting in reduced fresh water quality and quantity, the need to protect and manage our inland wetlands and their catchment areas as a natural water infrastructure is perhaps more urgent now than ever.
5. Coastal wetlands, such as mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs provide key services to address the effects of climate change by protecting coasts from erosion, adapting to sea-level rise through sediment accretion, acting as buffer zones to reduce impacts from storms and floods and providing important nursery and rearing habitats for fish. Their wise use is vital.
6. Sustainable financing for wetland conservation is a major challenge in the region. Efforts will be made to document examples of sustainable financing mechanisms, e.g. the Palau 'Green Fund', and to explore new and innovative financing mechanisms. Other common challenges across the region include the lack of manpower and high turnover of staff, lack of expertise and experience, and the lack of institutional and legislative frameworks to support wetland conservation action.
7. Oceania delegates recognize the critical partnership role that the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands provides in achieving the Aichi Targets of the Conventions of Biological Diversity - specifically Targets 11 and 14, and the goals of other Conventions, in particular the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species. Wetlands are critical actors in combating and mitigating impacts from Climate Change, and critical habitats to ensure the survivability of important global species; the Ramsar Secretariat, the secretariats of the CBD, UNFCCC, CMS and other key conventions are encouraged to strengthen dialogues to leverage or scale up additional resources to further advance wetlands' wise use in Oceania through robust partnerships.

8. Efforts need to be stepped-up at the national and regional levels to better link the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); actions should be based on national priorities, guided by a practical process and should as far as possible, involve all key stakeholders. A suitable mechanism should be identified to facilitate synergies at the regional level.
9. A mechanism should be developed to facilitate communication and collaboration between Ramsar Parties in the Pacific between the triennial Pre-COP meetings to ensure sustained implementation of the priorities and actions agreed.
10. The 'Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands 2011-2013' provides a framework for strategic and targeted action for wetlands, and an opportunity for all stakeholders to work together for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
11. Participants agreed on the following priority projects, to be undertaken in the next 1-2 years under the RWAP (a proposal on each will be available at COP11):
 - a) Update the Oceania Wetlands Directory (1993) to include among others, information on economic valuation, and traditional knowledge. Activities will include training and capacity building in database development and design, monitoring protocols, and ecological surveys.
 - b) Plan and implement capacity building actions, focusing on project management, compliance and enforcement training, and local communities. Resources will be needed to facilitate the training, and for follow-up work.
12. The role of communications at all levels - nationally, regionally and internationally is very important to ensure that successful implementation of wetlands conservation is fully understood by participants. There is also a commitment to continue strengthened communications on wetlands conservation at all levels. This has led to the agreement for a "Pacific Voyage to Romania" campaign to raise the Pacific voice at the international stage specifically the COP through a range of communications activities.
13. The meeting recommends that this summary be transmitted to all the Oceania Ramsar Contracting Parties and National Focal Points (STRP and CEPA) to advise their preparations for the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, 6th to 13th July 2012, Bucharest, Romania. To ensure continuity and facilitate effective follow-up, we recommend that the participants at this meeting be included in their COP11 national delegations.
14. The participants extend their heartfelt thanks to the government of the Republic of Palau through the Bureau of Agriculture for hosting this meeting, and for the warm hospitality and fellowship that we have enjoyed throughout our stay. We also acknowledge the generous funding assistance of the governments of Australia and France, the additional support provided through the SPREP-UNEP-EC MEAs Project "Capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries" and the support of SPREP and the Ramsar Secretariat.

Annex 2

General overview of answers to selected indicators

★ “yes” ○ “in progress”, “partly”, or “planned”, × “no”

Goal 1: Wise Use of Wetlands

- 1.1.1 Does the country have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory?
 1.3.1 Is a National Wetland Policy (ore equivalent instrument) in place?
 1.3.5 Are EIA made for those development projects that may affect wetlands?
 1.6.2 Have all wetland management plans been based on sound scientific research?
 1.8.2 Have wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes been implemented?
 1.11.1 Have actions been taken to encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands?

Goal 2: Wetlands of International Importance

- 2.1.1 Have a national strategy and priorities been established for further wetland designation?
 2.2.1 Are the Ramsar Sites (RS) Information Service and its tools being used in national identification of new sites?
 2.3.1 Have the management planning processes been established for sites on designation process?
 2.4.5 Do the RS management plans establish the maintenance of the ecological character as a management objective?
 2.5.1 Have any assessments on the effectiveness of the site management been carried out?
 2.6.1 Are arrangements in place for reporting the change of ecological character of the RS?

Contracting Party	Goal 1: Wise Use of Wetlands						Goal 2: Wetlands of International Importance					
	1.1.1	1.3.1	1.3.5	1.6.2	1.8.2	1.11.1	2.1.1	2.2.1	2.3.1	2.4.5	2.5.1	2.6.1
Oceania												
Australia	○	★	×	○	★	★	×	×	★	★	★	★
Fiji	○	★	★	★	○	×	○	★	×	★	★	★
Marshall Islands	○	○	○	○	★	○	★	★	×	★	★	★
New Zealand	★	★	★	○	★	★	○	×		○	○	○
Samoa	○	○	★	○	★	★	○	○	○	★	×	○

Annex 3

General overview of answers to selected indicators

★ “yes” ○ “in progress”, “partly”, or “planned”, × “no”

Goal 3: International Cooperation

3.1.1 Are mechanisms in place for collaboration between the Ramsar AA and the focal points of other MEAs?

3.1.3 Are mechanisms in place for collaboration between the Ramsar AA and focal points of UN and other global agencies?

3.4.1 Have networks for wetlands sharing common features been established, nationally or internationally, for knowledge sharing and training?

3.4.2 Has the wetland related information of your country been made publicly available?

3.5.1 Have all transboundary/shared wetland systems been identified?

3.5.2 Is effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems?

Goal 4: Implementation Capacity

4.1.1a Has an Action Plan for wetland CEPA been established at the national level?

4.1.1b Has an Action Plan for wetland CEPA been established at the sub-national level?

4.1.3a Does the CP promote public participation in decision-making with respect to wetland planning and management?

4.1.6 Do you have an operational National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee?

4.3.1 Has the CP used its previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring its implementation of the Convention?

4.4.1 Has your country received assistance from the Convention's IOPs on the implementation?

Contracting Party	Goal 3: International Cooperation						Goal 4: Implementation Capacity					
	3.1.1	3.1.3	3.4.1	3.4.2	3.5.1	3.5.2	4.1.1 ^a	4.1.1b	4.1.3a	4.1.6	4.3.1	4.4.1
Australia	★	○	★	★		★	★	×	★	★	×	★
Fiji	★	○	★	★	×	○	★	★	★	★	★	★
Marshall Islands	★	★	○	★	×	○	○	○	★	★	×	×
New Zealand	★	○	★	★			×	★	★	×	★	×
Samoa	★	★	○	★	×	×	○	○	○	○	★	★

Annex 4

Summary statistics

The table provides a general overview of the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Oceania region during the period between COP8 to COP11, using data submitted in the National Reports. Insufficient National Reports were received on time before COP9 to make an analysis of the progress implementation at that stage.

The table also shows whether particular actions are more (or less) widely addressed in the Oceania region, compared to the global average, based on the percentages of the Contracting Parties having answered positively. (Abbreviations: ★ = Significant progress; ○ = some progress; × = regression)

Strategy	Indicator	Affirmative countries				Progress since COP10
		Oceania COP8	Oceania COP10	Oceania COP11	Global y COP11	
1.1	Inventory and Assessment: country has a comprehensive national wetland inventory (1.1.1.)	0%	50%	20%	43%	×
1.3	Policy and legislation: National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) in place (1.3.1)	67%	50%	60%	51%	○
1.8	Wetland restoration and rehabilitation: wetland restoration/ rehabilitation programmes or projects implemented (1.8.2)	0%	50%	80%	69%	★
2.1	Ramsar site designation: strategy and priorities established for further designation of Ramsar sites, using the Strategic Framework (2.1.1)	67%	25%	20%	42%	×
2.6	Condition of Ramsar sites: all cases of change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat (Article 3.2) (2.6.1)	67%	50%	60%	62%	○
3.1	Collaboration: mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar AA and the focal points of other MEAs (3.1.1)	33%	100%	100%	66%	○
3.4	Sharing expertise and experience: networks established for knowledge sharing and training (3.4.1)	67%	75%	60%	39%	×
4.1	National Wetland Committee National Ramsar/Wetlands cross-sectoral Committee (or equivalent body) operational (4.1.6)	100%	25%	60%	54%	○

Annex 5**Number of Oceania Ramsar Sites for which site information is not up to date**

Country	Number of sites	Country	Number of sites
Australia	39	Palau	0
Fiji	1	Papua New Guinea	2
Marshall Islands	1	Samoa	1
New Zealand	6		