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“Wetlands: home and destination”

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Agenda item X

Ramsar COP11 DOC. 14

Overview of the implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme 2009-2015

Introduction

1. A “Communication, Education, and Public Awareness” (CEPA) Programme was first adopted in 1999 at the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP7) through Resolution VII.9 and then superseded by Resolution VIII.31 at COP8. The Parties adopted the current CEPA Programme 2009-2015 through Resolution X.8 at COP10 in 2008; it provides a six-year programme of work that recognizes the importance of communication, education, participation and awareness as central and cross-cutting elements for implementing the Ramsar Convention. In that Resolution and its annexed Programme of Work the change in the acronym to represent “Communication, Education, *Participation* and Awareness” (instead of “Public Awareness”) was introduced to reflect more broadly the processes the Programme of work is intended to cover.
2. This overview of the implementation of the Programme has been provided by the CEPA Oversight Panel and is based partly on the 127 completed COP11 National Reports submitted to the Secretariat in time for analysis. It includes the key CEPA indicators under Strategy 4.1 on supporting and assisting the implementation of the CEPA Programme, but also makes reference to other relevant indicators reflecting CEPA as a cross-cutting area of work within the Convention. In addition, the Programme identifies other ‘responsible bodies and collaborative partners’ as implementers, and this report also reflects upon key elements of CEPA implementation by such bodies, including the Secretariat, the CEPA Oversight Panel, and the Ramsar Regional Centres endorsed by the Convention as Ramsar Regional Initiatives.
3. For ease of statistical comparison, in this report regional comparisons are made among Africa, the Americas, Asia/Oceania, and Europe.

Main achievements since COP10 and priorities for the next triennium

4. In identifying the most successful aspects of implementation during the triennium in Section B of their National Reports, Parties often produced quite long lists making generalizations quite challenging. Using a very simple scoring system, 31% of all ‘successes’

reported were wholly or largely CEPA activities. These were very diverse but included, among others,

- celebrating World Wetlands Day; providing training workshops for site managers;
- establishing successful participatory management processes at Ramsar Sites;
- setting up a site manager network and organizing site manager workshops/meetings for information exchange;
- encouraging greater involvement of national governments, municipalities, local communities, indigenous people, and NGOs in site designation and management;
- improving national level intersectoral coordination;
- increasing awareness of wetlands and Ramsar at national or local level through the use of television and radio to disseminate messages about wetlands and wise use; and
- developing of specific programmes and outings on wetlands for selected schools.

5. Amongst the main achievements from the Secretariat in terms of CEPA implementation have been the use of social media as a tool for improved communication about the Convention and broader engagement of the public through the launching of a Facebook page and a Ramsar YouTube space. The launch of an online photodatabase has raised awareness about the diversity and beauty of wetlands and greatly expanded the images available to the Secretariat for non-commercial publication purposes.
6. Significant efforts have been made in this triennium to better engage and build the capacity of the Ramsar CEPA Focal Points through a number of workshops. Similarly there has been a focus on better engagement of STRP National Focal Points in supporting implementation through the production of a trimestrial STRP newsletter since 2009 and a successful Africa regional meeting for the STRP Focal Points in 2010.
7. The Secretariat invested a considerable amount of time in the development of diverse materials in support of the Convention's 40th anniversary during 2011 and was successful in encouraging and supporting many Parties in the development of international and national celebratory events. World Wetlands Day continues to be a successful annual campaign day for the Convention, and this triennium has seen more efforts at Party level to encourage more WWD actors within countries through improved communication on planning and reporting. The use of the WWD design files for adapting the Secretariat materials for national and local use has increased in this triennium, ensuring that the Ramsar message and Ramsar brand are more broadly disseminated.

Priorities for the next triennium

8. A range of key CEPA priorities for future implementation were identified by the Parties in Section D of the National Reports. The most frequently mentioned included broad public awareness campaigns about wetlands to encourage 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 included improving collaboration and communication intersectorally at both national and local levels. The need for improved efforts in participatory action planning at site level was frequently mentioned, 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.

9. The Secretariat will continue to look for funding to support CEPA National Focal Point workshops for the remaining regions and subregions in order to strengthen their 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 Panel to work with the Ramsar Regional Centres to assist in strengthening their training and capacity building skills.
10. The Secretariat will also consolidate and continue to develop the use of social media tools as well as the regular tools to enhance the reach of our communication about wetlands and the Convention and encourage a better understanding across all sectors 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 within many countries and international environmental organizations.

Implementation assistance to Parties from the Ramsar Secretariat

11. The National Reports contained many requests regarding assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat in technical implementation at the site level and in fundraising to support projects. An important number of Parties noted the need for assistance at national and regional levels in capacity building and training, especially for site managers and on working with local communities, and encouraged Secretariat support for the further development of the existing Ramsar Regional Centres as well as the development of such centres in other subregions. There were also calls for further training support for STRP and CEPA Focal Points in delivering upon their roles and, of particular interest, a call for better alignment between STRP and CEPA processes within the Secretariat and the Parties, including a focus on STRP products so they would become increasingly more effective as training/education tools.

CEPA Programme implementation since COP10

The CEPA Oversight Panel

12. Through Resolution IX.18 (2005) and Standing Committee Decision SC34-12 (2006), the Parties established a CEPA Oversight Panel was established to monitor and report on the implementation of the CEPA Programme. The Panel operates largely through e-mail but has met once during the triennium and will meet again during COP11. The Panel has also reported to Standing Committee meetings 36, 40, 42 and 43 on delivery of the Panel's work plan. All of those reports are available at www.ramsar.org/CEPA-Panel/.
13. During this triennium, the Panel has completed certain tasks and will continue with some unfinished tasks into the next triennium, as follows:
 - The Panel advised the Secretariat on the indicators to be included in the draft National Reporting Form that assess the implementation of the CEPA component of the Strategic Plan.

- It provided input to the Ramsar Advisory Board on the finalization of the Capacity Development Framework document which is targeted primarily at the Ramsar National Focal Points. (This will be provided to Parties as an Information Paper at COP11 if completed in time.)
 - It developed a short advisory document that shows the relationships between Resolutions VII.9 and VIII.31 and Resolution X.8 to assist CEPA Focal Points in the ongoing implementation of the CEPA Programme. This has been incorporated in Wise Use Handbook 6 *Wetland CEPA* (4th edition, 2010) as Appendix 5.
 - It has produced some general guidance on CEPA for site managers that can be easily incorporated into site manager training programmes. This is available at www.ramsar.org/pdf/cepa/CEPA_WetlandSiteManagers.pdf.
 - It has advised the Secretariat on how regular Convention meetings and Ramsar-related meetings can be used to help raise the profile of the Convention and the performance of the Secretariat, e.g. Georgia's offer to host a SC meeting. The report is available at www.ramsar.org/pdf/cepa/RaisingConventionProfile_RamsarMeetings.pdf
14. The CEPA Panel's most important ongoing tasks are: a) reviewing the two Convention Resolutions relevant to participation in management, Resolutions VII.8 and VIII.36, and advising on updating and consolidating them; and b) working with the representatives of the Ramsar Regional Centres to identify and advise on the capacity building needs for RRC staff to optimize their performance, as agreed at SC43 (Decision SC43-7).

CEPA expertise in the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel

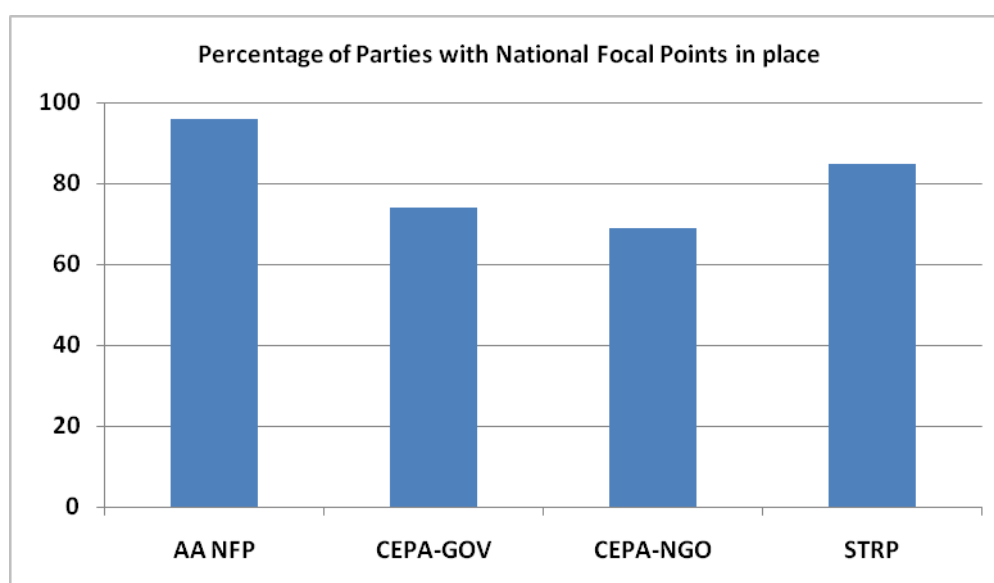
15. The inclusion of CEPA expertise on the STRP for the past two triennia has influenced the work of the STRP in a positive way. This can be most clearly seen in increasing recognition within the STRP of the importance of ensuring that STRP work is more targeted for specific audiences, especially where it is impacting directly on wetland management, and recognition of the importance of identifying the support required from STRP and others for effective implementation of guidance.
16. The CEPA expertise on the STRP has been provided, however, through the appointment of just one CEPA expert, an increased involvement of the Secretariat CEPA staff, and the CEPA Thematic work area approach. It has been obvious that working across the many STRP work areas with just a single expert has been impossible, requiring that only certain areas can be selected for CEPA input. If there is agreement that the CEPA expert role has made an important contribution, then the STRP may need to give priority to exploring other models for increasing the CEPA expertise on the STRP. Since the CEPA expert on STRP is included as a member of the CEPA Panel, this broad learning experience has been two-way, encouraging the STRP and the CEPA Panel to collaborate more fully in the coming triennium.

Designating National Focal Points

17. The Convention has identified the Parties' key contacts at the national level as the Administrative Authority's National Focal Point, CEPA National Focal Points (Government and NGO), and STRP National Focal Point. Their roles have been well articulated, documented, and shared with Parties, and they are vital as contacts for

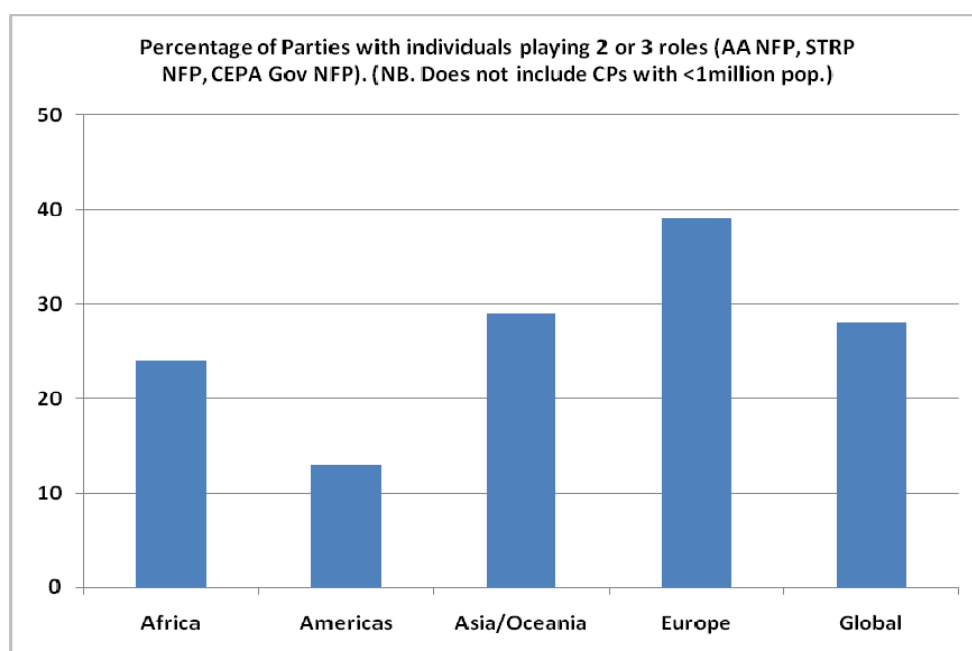
interactions between the Secretariat and each Party as well as within and between Parties. Only 7% of Parties responded negatively to *Indicator 4.3.2* on whether new appointments or changes in Focal Points are sent to the Secretariat; it is noteworthy that the submission of the National Reports seems to be a significant moment for informing the Secretariat of changes and new nominations. Of some concern are the rather frequent changes in contacts: for example, through the National Reports for COP11 108 Focal Points were changed (to give a perspective, there are 538 Focal Points currently in place); in addition, changes occur regularly throughout the triennium. While it is understood that governments do ‘rotate’ staff through departments and ministries, it is important to underline that very regular changes makes continuity of effort within a Party very challenging and hinders the maintenance of a practical working relationship with the relevant Secretariat staff, undoubtedly affecting progress in some instances.

18. The graph below shows the percentage of the various Focal Points who are in place globally. While there was a positive increase in CEPA Focal Points from COP9 to COP10, this has not continued to COP11—though CEPA NGO designations have marginally improved from 67% to 69%, the CEPA Government designations have dropped from 80% to 74%. Overall the CEPA designations lag behind the STRP and NFP designations, perhaps reflecting both the Convention’s focus on scientific and technical issues and the related expertise with the Administrative Authorities.



19. The frequency of changes in the CEPA Focal Points was noted in the report to COP10 and so too was the issue of the multiple Ramsar roles that many of the government CEPA NFPs played within their Administrative Authorities. Following the updating of the Secretariat’s database from the National Reports for COP11, the graph below looks more broadly at role-sharing within Parties across the regions. The global average at 28% is of concern, but of particular concern is the European region, which has 39% of Parties with individuals playing two or three Ramsar roles. The Americas are least affected in this manner. Globally, over half of the dual/triple roles were with the NFP and STRP National Focal Point roles. What does this mean for the Convention? As key contacts at the national level for overseeing implementation (AA’s NFP) and for specific areas of work for the Convention (STRP and CEPA), the need to play multiple roles with a limited amount of time available must compromise the implementation support that is possible.

20. The issue of role-sharing was investigated during a CEPA workshop at the European Regional Meeting in September 2011 and generated interesting discussions among participants. A significant 46% of respondents identified the lack of available and appropriately skilled people as the key explanation for the duplication of roles, while 24% felt it was due to the lack of political will within the country. For Europe the situation is unique in that the European Union countries have non-Ramsar related commitments under the Birds and Habitat Directives and the Water Framework Directive. While delivering on these commitments does bring benefits for wetlands, it also potentially diverts human resources away from direct Ramsar implementation.



Action plans for wetland CEPA

21. *Indicator 4.1.1* in the COP11 National Report on the establishment of CEPA action plans has permitted a more detailed analysis of the situation by asking Parties to report on plans developed at national, subnational, catchment and site level. The overall advance in this triennium is not encouraging, with textual answers suggesting that some Parties have interpreted the question quite broadly and have responded 'yes' to the establishment of CEPA plans at the different levels when the reality is that specific CEPA actions have taken place rather than the development of a CEPA action plan *per se*.
22. The Secretariat has been provided with national CEPA plans from China, France and Norway, and these have been made available on the Convention's CEPA web pages. From the COP11 analysis, at national level only 18% of countries responded positively to this question, and lower responses were noted for subnational and catchment level. At the national level, of the 23 countries that responded 'yes', many have carried out some CEPA planning and/or CEPA interventions but have not produced a CEPA plan *per se*.
23. In the CEPA report to COP10 it was noted that while some reference was made to site level CEPA plans and planning by Parties, this was not specifically investigated. This was rectified in the COP11 reporting format and produced the highest response rate on the

establishment of CEPA plans, with 30% of Parties noting that CEPA activities have been carried out at site level and (from the textual answers) in some cases incorporated directly into wetland management plans, the latter of which is potentially an effective mechanism for increasing the likelihood of implementation of the CEPA interventions. At some of these sites the major CEPA work was carried out by wetland centres at the sites. A further 14% of Parties recorded that plans at site level were 'in progress'. The next section looks more broadly at site level management planning processes and progress, given relevance of general planning for specifically CEPA planning at site level, and highlights where Parties might focus attention in the next triennium.

24. Under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, a Ramsar Regional Initiative, a CEPA workshop was held in 2011 in Singapore that developed a CEPA strategy, and an implementation plan is currently being established. The workshop was attended by two CEPA National Focal Points, flyway partners, and Ramsar Secretariat staff. The CEPA strategy is now an integral part of the overall Flyway Strategy.
25. To assist Parties in CEPA planning, during this triennium four CEPA planning workshops were held for CEPA Focal Points covering Asia, southern Africa, and a number of European countries. Three of the four workshops depended on funding and organizational support from two of the Ramsar Regional Centres (RRC-Central & West Asia and RRC-East Asia). The fourth was hosted by Namibia and financed largely from the Danone Fund for Water. A CEPA planning workshop was also held in Finland for CEPA Focal Points of the NorBalWet Ramsar Regional Initiative, funded largely by the Nordic Council of Ministers, and a follow-up is planned for late 2012. In all cases the host countries (Finland, I.R. Iran, Namibia, and Thailand) provided logistical support and are to be thanked for their considerable contribution to the success of the workshops. The workshops were focused on basic planning principles using a number of stakeholder tools in a hands-on environment. All workshops made use of the tools in the Ramsar Secretariat document *A Guide to Participatory Action Planning and Techniques for Facilitating Groups*, and all of them are reported on the Convention's CEPA web pages. Experience during these workshops has suggested that a review of this guide would be helpful.

Managing Ramsar Sites

26. *Indicators 2.4.1-2.4.6* provided some valuable information on site management planning, investigating, among other things, how many sites have plans, how many of these are being implemented and updated, and how many have cross-sectoral management committees. The data from the COP11 National Reports show that 1,019 Ramsar Sites in the countries completing their National Reports have a management plan. This represents 59% of all the Ramsar Sites in the reporting countries. Of the 1,019 sites *with plans*, 92% are being implemented, and 32% are reported as being revised or updated.
27. Looking specifically at the numbers of Ramsar Sites with a cross-sectoral management committee (*indicator 2.4.6*), the reports show that 23% of all sites from reporting countries have cross-sectoral Ramsar committees, leaving a great deal of room for improvement. To compare this with the previous triennium, it can be observed that 58% of Parties noted having cross-sectoral committees at least at *some* sites, which is an improvement over the 47% reported at COP10. As with National Ramsar Committees discussed later, having cross-sectoral members in place is likely to improve the sharing of pertinent management

information and thus provide broader support for successful implementation of management plans.

28. There is clearly much room for improvement in the proportion of Ramsar Sites with plans, with plans that are being updated and implemented, and in the proportion of sites with cross-sectoral management committees. This situation with regard to site management presents a challenge for Parties in the next triennium to improve on these statistics. It can also be seen as an opportunity: working in the next triennium on site management planning processes presents an occasion for National and CEPA National Focal Points to ensure that these plans include appropriate CEPA planning with CEPA interventions identified to support the broader management interventions. Norway's recently published National CEPA Action plan includes a target to ensure that all management plans for wetlands include an appropriate CEPA perspective.

Communication mechanisms through National Ramsar Committees and other national management structures

29. While *indicator 2.4.6c* looked at cross-sectoral management committees at site level, *indicator 4.1.6* assesses whether Parties have an operational National Ramsar (or Wetland) Committee in place. Recognized as a useful mechanism for the implementation of the Convention, it typically brings together a broad range of relevant stakeholders such as government agencies, scientific institutions, regional and local authorities, local communities, NGOs, and of course the designated Ramsar Focal Points (including the CEPA Focal Points), to meet regularly to share information and discuss implementation problems and solutions. From the analysis of the National Reports, 54% of Parties responded that they have such committees in place, with Asia/Oceania reporting an average of 68%, much higher than the other regions. Overall, is the Convention advancing in this area? Looking at the results from the last three COPs, it would seem not, with the positive responses remaining quite static since COP9; indeed the response 'No' to this question has increased since COP9.
30. In response to regular requests from the Parties to the Secretariat on information about the creation and operation of National Ramsar Committees (NRC), during this triennium a study has been completed by Stetson University College of Law in the USA, working in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat, which examined the experiences of six NRCs in each of the six Ramsar regions. The report looks at their diversity of structure, composition, and decision-making processes, as well as their successes and obstacles in delivering the goals of the Convention. This is a useful resource for those wishing to set up or review an existing NRC. Published in September 2011, it is available in PDF format from the Ramsar website in the Convention's three languages at www.ramsar.org/national-ramsar-committees. It is to be hoped that Parties will find this useful and that COP12 will see an increase in the number of Parties with operational committees and a decrease in the number of those that report 'No'.
31. Apart from National Ramsar Committees there are other means of effective information-sharing and cross-sectoral planning mechanisms. *Indicator 4.1.7* investigated whether such communication mechanisms are in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and a) site managers, b) other MEAs, and c) relevant ministries, departments and agencies. These results are summarized below.

Are other communication mechanisms apart from National Wetland Committees in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and:	Yes %	No %
a) Site managers	56	22
b) Other MEA Focal points	45	21
c) Relevant ministries, departments and agencies	54	13

32. Particularly relevant to the discussion on National Ramsar Committees are the responses to part c) of this indicator, which looks at whether national structures for managing wetlands or more broadly biodiversity conservation already exist, so that a specific Ramsar mechanism may be unnecessary or simply impractical. An average of 54% of Parties noted that they do have communication mechanisms in place for sharing information on Ramsar implementation with relevant ministries, departments and agencies, with no significant differences in responses across the regions.
33. Of most concern, however, are those countries that have *neither* mechanism in place: no National Ramsar Committee and no other communication mechanism that functions across ministries, departments and agencies. The analysis of this shows that 25% of Parties submitting National Reports – 32 countries – have neither mechanism, with Europe the lowest at only 18% and the other regions returning similar results at just under 30%. It is these countries that have the most work to do in the coming triennium to improve the implementation mechanisms at the national level.
34. **Ramsar Site managers** in many countries operate at two levels, as on-site managers and as those with oversight responsibilities for wetland site management and policy. In both cases these managers need regular updates from their national Administrative Authority on Ramsar guidance materials with particular reference to site management. *Indicator 4.1.7(a)* investigated this communication mechanism (see table above), and the results showed that 56% Parties reported the existence of such mechanisms, citing variously e-mails, websites, telephone calls, regular meetings, annual seminars, working groups, etc. Africa was lowest in this regard at 46% and all other regions were at least 10% higher. While a further 20% reported 'partly' or 'planned', a significant 22%, approximately one in five Parties, said 'No', no other communication mechanism exists, with Africa and Europe recording higher figures than the other regions. This an evident weakness in management processes that the Secretariat believes these Parties should improve upon and perhaps all Parties could usefully review.
35. In terms of communication on management issues, it is helpful if a site manager is able to share experiences with others in his/her country and with managers in other countries as well. Some Parties have developed effective in-country site manager networks as a means to keep site managers in touch with one another so that experiences can be shared. In 2011 a group of site managers and others involved in site designations or site management in France created the national *Association Ramsar France*, the objectives of which include sharing experiences among managers of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, promoting the Ramsar label among local operators and the general public, and developing governance



mechanisms for Ramsar Sites. Full details of their activities are available at www.zones-humides.eaufrance.fr/?q=node/2327 and provide a useful model for other countries.

36. A site managers network in New South Wales, Australia, has been in operation since 2003, bringing together site managers in Ramsar Sites that are located on privately owned land or that are community managed to give a voice to such managers; these wetland managers do not have the same resources available to them as government wetland managers do (more information at www.ramsarmanagers.org.au). The network continues to meet twice a year and manages its own website. Canada has noted its intention during this triennium to set up a Ramsar Site Managers Network.

Establishing wetland education centres at Ramsar Sites and other wetlands

37. The CEPA Programme places quite some importance on wetland centres and encourages Parties to support the role of wetland centres as catalysts and key actors for CEPA activities that support Ramsar objectives. It also suggests that Parties should encourage their development as key places for learning and training about wetlands and wetland-related CEPA and to support their participation in Wetland Link International (more on WLI in paragraphs 41-42 below).
38. *Indicator 4.1.2* looked at numbers of wetlands centres that have been established at Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, and it is evident from the textual answers that some Parties reported *only* on centres at Ramsar Sites, while others reported more broadly on centres at *all* wetlands, making a common overview difficult. In addition a few Parties reported the existence of many centres in the text field but without providing any numerical data. Readjusting the figures to include the Parties without numerical data, the overall picture is that globally 66% of Parties have at least some wetland centres; this is a slight improvement over the 57% reported for COP10. Consistent with the COP10 figures, the African region is significantly behind the other regions, recording 66% of Parties without any wetland centres at all and identifying lack of funding as the key barrier to their establishment.
39. A significant number of Parties reported in the text fields that many centres are located at National Parks and that while some of these are Ramsar Sites the centres are built and maintained by the National Park system. There are well over 600 wetland centres among the 84 Parties responding positively to this indicator, but the question of course remains whether appropriate materials are being provided by these centres that support wetland conservation and raise awareness about wetlands and the Ramsar Convention. While it is clear that for a significant proportion of Parties wetland centres provide a very valuable CEPA resource for Ramsar implementation, there is a challenge for Parties and CEPA National Focal Points in particular to support and encourage centres to produce relevant materials and activities supporting wetland wise use, delivering key wetland messages relevant to visitors, and making the Ramsar brand better known.
40. Some recent initiatives by Parties exemplify the importance of wetland centres and how Parties are using them effectively:
 - **Norway** has recently published a CEPA National Action Plan that recognizes the potential of wetland centres to deliver key wetland messages to visitors. Funding has

been secured to give modest financial support to those centres that meet some simple criteria on information delivered and centre design, such centres becoming 'authorized' Ramsar centres. Norway has already used a similar mechanism to authorize 15 National Park centres.

- **Mexico** has placed emphasis on the role of wetland centres by identifying nine key centres in different regions of the country to take the lead not only in delivering key wetland messages to different targets such as local governments and local communities but also in encouraging environmentally responsible behavior from all. Essentially these centres will be responsible for developing and implementing regional CEPA plans.
- Under the **NorBalWet** Ramsar Regional Initiative, wetland centres in the member countries will have a key communication role to play in raising awareness about the Convention, wetlands, and the NorBalWet partnership. A recent workshop for the CEPA Focal Points of member countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Russia (Karelia, Leningrad, Novgorod and Pskov provinces), and Sweden) produced broad plans for communicating within the network. More specific plans include identifying a 'national' wetland centre in each member state to take the lead in developing Ramsar and NorBalWet branding materials within the centre and establishing national networks of centres that can make use of those materials. A report on this workshop is available at www.ramsar.org/CEPA-Workshop-NorBalWet/, and a follow-up workshop is planned in 2012.
- Under the Migratory Birds for People project, 13 wetland centres in 10 countries in Europe, and eventually in a number of African countries, are partners in delivering a project to improve knowledge and understanding about migratory birds. Further details are provided in the next section.
- **China** has made considerable efforts in developing wetland centres in this triennium, and centres now exist in 28 of China's 41 Ramsar Sites.
- In **Switzerland**, the Champ-Pittet wetland centre, in collaboration with WWF, has welcomed staff from other wetland centres in North Africa and Europe on three occasions in this triennium for five-week periods to share experiences in the tools and materials used in centres for raising awareness with different target groups. It is hoped to develop this further with more centres involved as well as two-way exchanges of staff.

Wetland Link International network of wetlands centres

41. The CEPA Resolution and annexed Programme of Work place some focus on the Wetland Link International network of centres, a programme within the Wetlands & Wildfowl Trust (WWT) based in the UK. A Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Secretariat and the WLI network was signed in 2005 to reinforce the working relationship, and this was superseded in 2011 by an MOC with WWT reflecting a broader relationship on wetland conservation including through WLI.

42. WLI currently has over 300 wetland centre members across 71 countries, ranging from small voluntary groups running regular activities at a wetland to state-of-the-art centres that welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. A number of regional and national groups are operational. A round-up of WLI achievements over the triennium includes:
- **WLI Asia** has met twice in this triennium, during Ramsar's COP10 and again in 2010 in Malaysia, and will next meet in 2013 in the Republic of Korea. The WLI Asia website continues to be active and is managed by the Hong Kong Wetland Park. WLI Asia partners have worked on exchange visits during this triennium the next.
 - **WLI Europe** is represented through the Migratory Birds for People project (a partnership including WLI, Wetlands International, Staatsbosbeheer (Netherlands), the Ramsar Secretariat, and, to date, 16 wetland centres), which is focused on linking wetland centres along the internationally important East Atlantic Flyway. Sixteen wetland centres in 11 countries are partners in delivering this project to provide information along the flyway to visitors based upon information shared by the centres on the location of migratory waterbirds using webcams, satellite tracking, films and other information sources, as well as sharing among the centres best practice on how to communicate this to the visiting public. There is also a regular production of an MBP newsletter, two meetings year to keep the partners connected, and a strategic plan has been developed which forms the basis for project planning and fundraising. The key objective of the project is improve public understanding of the international dimension of wetland conservation through the theme of migratory birds.
 - **WLI Russia** meets via skype and has developed pages in Russian on the global website and prepared a draft WLI Russia leaflet. A recent WLI Russia video conference across four locations in Russia included over 30 participants. WLI is also part of the Wetlands International Russian CEPA project, strengthening wetland centre networks and CEPA resources.
 - **WLI Neotropics** is in the planning stage. Work with colleagues in Chile is leading to a staff exchange taking place in June 2012, and planning for a Neotropics wetland education meeting jointly with BirdLife in the region in early 2013.
 - **WLI North America** partners met at the Society of Wetland Scientists meeting in 2009 to plan work and share experience and have worked with WLI International to create a WLI North America brochure, and they have also carried out fundraising to develop the network.
 - **WLI Oceania** met in 2010 at the Hunter Wetland Centre in Western Australia. This brought together wetland centre partners from across Australia and New Zealand, exploring themes on communicating wetland science, wetlands and health, and wetlands and people.
 - **WLI Global** has maintained and developed a standalone WLI website showing details of partners on a Googlemap forum; created more detailed 'virtual wetland centre visits'; and established web pages in Chinese and Russian. WLI Global has

also produced a new WLI brochure for use in wetland centres, distributed to all WLI members. Working with London's South Bank University, a pilot distance-learning course for site-based environmental educators was run, with a cohort of 10 students completing the course in 2011. The course will be further developed in 2012.

- The WLI Global manager has hosted many visits from many countries (some through Ramsar contacts) to the WWT Wetland Centre to showcase this state-of-the-art urban wetland centre near London. The centre continues to be an inspiration for many visitors looking for ideas and support in developing their own wetland education facilities.

Public participation in wetland decision-making

43. As noted earlier, the current CEPA Resolution recognizes the importance of participation as a process in many matters related to implementing the Convention, and this is now reflected in the acronym CEPA. In the National Reports Parties have responded through *Indicator 4.1.3 a and b* on promoting participation with respect to wetland planning and management, and specifically on involving local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management. For COP10 National Reports, these two indicators were combined making trend interpretation difficult.
44. Globally, 70% of Parties responded that they had promoted participation in wetland planning and management, but with Asia significantly lower at 43% and the Americas rather higher than the average at 84%. A significant 20% of Parties globally responded 'partly' to this question. This is indeed a largely positive response, although some caution has to be exercised since 'participation' can be interpreted rather broadly. Appendix 1 of the CEPA Resolution provides information on 'levels' of participation, offering some insight into the diversity of responses received and the difficulty in determining what 'participation' means to each Party. This is not intended as a criticism of the approaches used but rather to point out the diversity in interpretations of 'participation' when considering whether the current level of participation is satisfactory. Some phrases used in the textual answers for this indicator illustrate this interpretation:
 - The public *may be invited to comment* on or provide input to draft proposals;
 - *Public hearings and meetings are held* with wetland users;
 - Management plans have to be developed in *close cooperation* with the stakeholders;
 - The authorities must *inform the general public* in a suitable manner of the opportunities available for participation;
 - The public has been involved during *public hearings*;
 - *Lectures are undertaken* with local communities on conservation of wetlands and waterbirds ;
 - Public *participation is included in public hearings* in the process of the adoption of the management plan;
 - Local *stakeholders are included in the cross-sectoral committee* for the site;
 - Citizens and concerned *stakeholders are invited to participate* in relevant meetings;
 - *Public opinions are solicited* via website and other media.

45. In contrast to *Indicator 4.1.3a*, *Indicator 4.1.3b*, which inquired whether Parties *specifically* involve local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management, resulted in a global average of 56% with an affirmative response, though an additional 22% noted ‘partly’, suggesting overall that there is still some reluctance among Parties at this level of participation at least for **all** Ramsar Sites. The text answers reveal a great diversity of situations and at least for many countries that responded ‘partly’ to these questions it seems that meaningful public participation in site selection and management planning is only taking place at a limited number of sites, or that site selection and management plans are matters for public hearings without necessarily regular subsequent involvement of the public in site management processes. Under European Union regulations there is a statutory requirement for public involvement through public hearings, and all Natura 2000 Sites (many of which are also Ramsar Sites) must develop management plans in *close cooperation* with the stakeholders. While not developed especially for Ramsar, this practice does support the Ramsar objectives and contributes at some level to implementation of the CEPA Programme. One must conclude that participation in wetland management is ‘alive and well’ within the Convention but operating at diverse levels with considerable opportunity for improvement in all regions.

Assessing national and local training needs and the opportunities for wetland site manager training

46. Training and capacity building are an integral part of successful wetland management, and Parties frequently cite the need for training and capacity building in their reports. The current CEPA Programme identifies the need for countries to review the needs and capacities for CEPA and identify the training and capacity-building priorities, and also to consider national and local training needs at a broader level.
47. At the time of writing this report, the Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention has completed the final draft of a capacity building framework to assist Parties in developing a capacity building programme. If finalized in time, this will be provided as an Information Paper at COP11 and will then be broadly disseminated and made available on the Convention’s website.
48. The National Reports investigated whether Parties had carried out an assessment of national and local training needs for implementing the Convention (*Indicator 4.1.4*). The results reveal that only 13% of Parties have done so, while 51% of Parties responded ‘No’. These global results are almost identical to those reported for COP10 and only the Americas seem to have progressed to some extent. With such poor implementation results, it is likely that, while training and broad capacity building is certainly taking place (see following paragraphs), it may not be delivering the training that is most needed.
49. Responses on whether training opportunities specifically for wetland site managers (*Indicator 4.1.5*) had been provided by Parties have shown little improvement since COP10. Globally, 46% of Parties identified varying numbers of training opportunities that had been provided (or this was implied in the text field without numbers being given). Overall, 35% of Parties responded that they had **not** provided wetland site manager training at national and local levels, and this is disappointingly similar to the 33% reported at COP10. The text responses indicated a similar mixture of approaches with single training events, regular events at the national and local level, and collaborative training events with neighboring countries. Many countries, especially those in Europe, have noted that the

training events are often not specifically focused on Ramsar or even wetlands but are more generic training events for National Parks/Protected Areas managers. While this is still helpful, it is likely that it does not adequately cover wetland management issues from a Ramsar perspective. It was also noted that some training courses, while perfectly useful, were not actually targeted at site managers but rather at national park guides, etc. There is clearly a great deal that could be done in the next triennium in this area to plan strategically and deliver training events.

50. The Convention has benefitted at the regional level in this triennium from the four Ramsar Regional Centres (RRCs), located in Panama for the Americas, Uganda for East Africa, and I.R. Iran and the Republic of Korea for Central & West Asia and East Asia respectively. These centres are frequently mentioned in the text responses regarding training and capacity building in the National Reports, especially in Asia and in East African countries. Apart from training workshops, centres have organized/supported STRP expert workshops, network meetings on the Changwon Declaration, translation of key Ramsar documents into non-Ramsar languages, etc. It is to be hoped that all member countries of these Ramsar Regional Initiatives will make every effort to be active board members and assist in strategic planning and fundraising for the centres. Following discussion at Standing Committee with centre representatives, various Party representatives and some members of the Ramsar Secretariat, it has been agreed by SC43 that an independent assessment to review the operation of the Ramsar Regional Centres in Africa and Asia should be carried out and the results included in an Information Paper to COP11. While at the time of writing this is in the planning stages, it remains to be seen whether it can be completed in time for COP11. It was also agreed at SC43 that the CEPA Panel should assist the RRCs in capacity building for centre staff to help optimize their potential for this role.
51. The International Training of Trainers on Wetland Management, a course focusing on the facilitation of multistakeholder processes and curriculum development for wetlands, endorsed by the Ramsar Secretariat, has now run for nine years, and the final course will take place just before COP11. Scheduled annually by Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation in the Netherlands with financial support from the Netherlands government as well as from Nuffic (the Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education), this course has given a strong focus to Ramsar and its guidance materials. Over the nine years it has trained nearly 200 people involved in wetland management. Starting in 2013, this course will become a Training of Trainers on Integrated Water Resources Management and as such it will bridge the gap between professionals working in the wetland and water sectors. The course will involve trainers from Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation and UNESCO IHE, as did the previous course.
52. It should also be recorded that the Convention benefits from the diverse wetland training activities carried out by Ramsar's five International Organization Partners, many of them associated with ongoing wetland management projects and programmes.

Celebrating World Wetlands Day

53. The support within the Ramsar family for World Wetlands Day (*Indicator 4.1.8*) as an annual campaign day continues to increase in volume and diversity. There has been little overall change in the percentage of Parties responding positively that WWD activities have

been carried out since COP10 – it now stands at 90% at COP11. What has changed in this triennium is the number and diversity of events within many countries, a reassuring sign that Parties regard this campaign day as increasingly valuable for awareness-raising about wetlands and the Convention. This is also evident from the frequent mentions of WWD in the textual answers in the National Reports.

54. The Convention's website annually records the reports that are received for WWD: the extent of this has presented some capacity challenges for the Secretariat! It should be noted this does not represent the 'real' number of activities since many go unreported. At COP10 special mention was made of the effective national coordinating mechanism set up by France over the past few years. This continues and is being emulated by other countries. Although there are a great many WWD activities worthy of mention, here are a few that exemplify the breadth of activity:
 - France continues in this triennium with a web-based information and reporting system that each year covers over 300 activities distributed across the whole country.
 - Australia has recently created web areas to encourage reporting on WWD plans across the states, and this is being used to further develop WWD activities throughout the country.
 - Algeria in 2012 reported a very impressive set of activities covering school activities, radio emissions on wetland themes, wetland excursions, tree planting programmes, distribution of CDs on wetlands, exhibitions, round table conferences, and training on wetland bird counting – an impressively diverse set of activities that attracted much media interest.
 - In 2011 the USA launched a wetland global photograph competition in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat and Ramsar's IOPs, introducing an innovative element by inviting all US embassies around the world to hold events on February 2nd for the international community to join in a WWD celebration announcing the competition winners. Such an event was held in Geneva in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat.
55. Since 2002 the Secretariat has been making available the design files of the WWD materials produced by the Secretariat with financial support from the Danone Group, and the number of countries making use of these files continues to grow with many of the WWD materials being translated into national and local languages in some quite innovative ways. For WWD 2012, at the time of writing, WWD actors in 24 Parties produced adaptations with over 45 different materials produced. Over the triennium 45 Parties have adapted the materials. A special area of the WWD web pages records these adaptations (www.ramsar.org/WWD-adaptations/).
56. During this triennium the Secretariat has made specific efforts to work with an international partner for each WWD theme: in 2011 the Secretariat partnered with the UN Forum on Forests, the lead agency for the International Year of Forests; in 2012 the Secretariat has partnered with the UN World Tourism Organization on a wetlands and tourism theme which links to the COP11 theme. For 2013 the Secretariat will be collaborating with the UNESCO which has the lead for the UN International Year of Water Cooperation in the same year. These partnerships broaden the reach of World Wetlands Day and take the Ramsar brand and message into a much wider arena.

Using campaigns, programmes, and projects to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands to people and wildlife and the ecosystem benefits/services provided by wetlands

57. Although worded slightly differently from the indicator on this subject area for COP10, the responses to *Indicator 4.1.9* suggest an increase in positive responses and an impressive diversity of activities across all regions to raise awareness about wetlands. For all regions the proportion of Parties responding positively to this indicator has increased from 53% at COP10 to 82% at the global level for COP11, showing little difference among the regions; the percentage of negative responses has remained stable at 12/13%.
58. In the text fields for this indicator, countries noted making use of other international days (such as World Water Day, World Bird Migratory Day, International Biodiversity Day, etc.) to raise awareness about wetlands – an opportunity to respond to global campaigns and yet draw attention to their own national or local situations. Many countries noted the use of national websites, specific wetland campaigns (such as coral reefs, mangroves) and wetland issues (such as fisheries, wetland restoration), annual bird festivals, specialized networks (e.g., flamingos, peatlands), regular radio and television programmes, and, in 2011, special events in 2011 to celebrate Ramsar's 40th anniversary.
59. While these results are encouraging, it is of course interesting to know whether these are *ad hoc* activities or part of a planned programme of awareness raising. The next section look into this aspect of CEPA in more detail.

CEPA Programme implementation by the Secretariat

60. The Secretariat has the key communications role across the Convention, using diverse tools – largely through the Ramsar website, a number of e-mail lists, the Ramsar STRP Support Service website, the Ramsar Sites Information Service, reporting the outcomes of Standing Committee and STRP meetings, organizing regional meetings, and so on.
61. During this triennium the Secretariat has maintained its usual communications tools as detailed in the following paragraphs. Three new means of communication have been introduced during this period which firmly launch Ramsar into the contemporary world of social media: the launch of a Ramsar YouTube space in 2010; a Ramsar Facebook page in August 2011; and an online photo gallery launched in association with the Ramsar 40th celebrations in 2011.
62. The broad range of communication tools maintained by the Secretariat can be summarized as follows:

E-lists: The Secretariat manages a number of lists to improve communication and information sharing within the Convention and with the public:

- **Ramsar Wetlands Forum:** an open, unmoderated list for news, views and queries on any wetland issue.
- **Ramsar Exchange** (three separate lists in English, French and Spanish): closed lists for Heads of the Administrative Authorities and the National Focal Point, with

announcements of all new Ramsar Sites and Parties, Standing Committee reports, etc.

- **CEPA e-lists** (in English, French and Spanish): open, unmoderated lists that include all the designated CEPA Focal Points as well as many others interested in wetland CEPA. Messages posted are available as an online archive at www.ramsar.org/CEPA-News/.

Websites

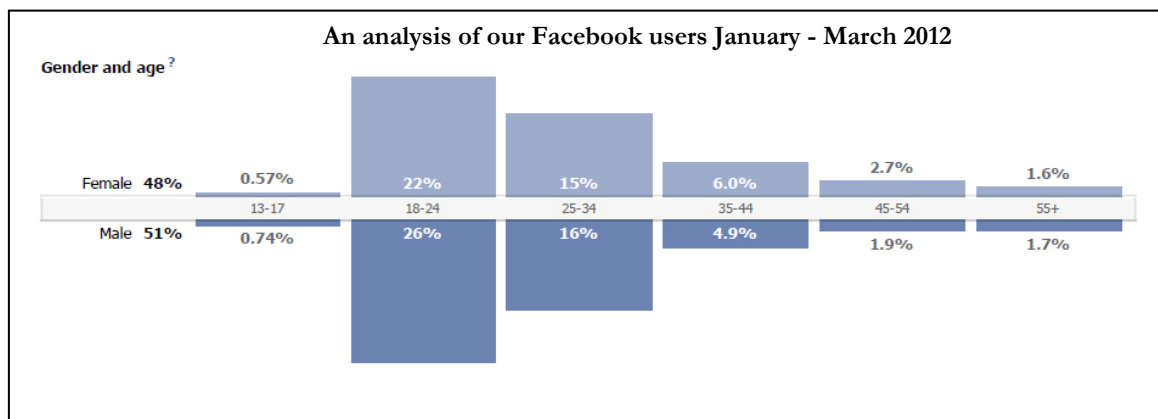
- **Ramsar website:** updated almost daily. This now includes a subdomain (community.ramsar.org) which hosts an **online photo gallery** launched in 2011 as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations (see further information below and view the gallery here <http://community.ramsar.org/>) and currently holds 319 images and is still open for contributions. Photos have been submitted by many Ramsar contacts as well as by Secretariat staff. An Official Rules & Copyright Release Policy controls the use of these images for publication purposes, and this resource is now the main repository of wetland images at the disposal of the Secretariat for non-commercial publication purposes. The photo gallery can be accessed from the Ramsar home page (see image below)
- **STRP Support Service:** hosted on the Wetlands International website, it includes web pages and an Internet-based, closed e-mail list open to all STRP members, including the STRP National Focal Points. This site is being significantly re-developed during 2012, including ‘open’ areas of the site to provide a wider readership about the work and products of the STRP.

Social media tools launched in this triennium:



- A dedicated Ramsar YouTube space was secured in 2010 and is populated with Ramsar-related videos provided by the Secretariat, the Parties, the IOPs and many other NGOs.
- A Ramsar Facebook page was launched in August 2011 and is updated almost daily. With a very small financial investment this now boasts over 21,000 fans.

Engagement rate of ‘fans’ is high through the comments they post on our wall, the stories they create about our page, and their “like” of our publications. This new communication tool is enormously successful in delivering the Ramsar message to a broader audience than is possible through the website. While the Secretariat does not have information on the age groups of visitors to the website or members of the public e-lists, it is informative to look at the statistics below for Facebook: it seems a reasonable conclusion that it has much more impact on the 18-34 year-old age group than the Secretariat’s other communication tools and delivers a young, more dynamic ‘face’ to the Convention. View the Convention’s Facebook official page at www.facebook.com/RamsarConventionOnWetlands.



The online photo gallery and Facebook communication tools were developed and are sustained by the Danone/Evian Officer, a post funded through the Danone/Evian/Ramsar partnership.

Publications during the triennium:

- The 4th Edition of the Ramsar Handbook series (21 volumes) was produced, widely distributed on CD-ROM, and made available on the website in June 2010 at www.ramsar.org/handbooks4/.
- The 5th edition of the Ramsar Manual was thoroughly updated in English in 2011 and made available on the Ramsar website at <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/manual5-2011-e.pdf>. French and Spanish translations will follow as financial constraints permit.
- World Wetlands Day materials are prepared and dispatched each year to over 4,000 contacts including Parties, NGOs, schools, site managers, and other institutions. Reports received from WWD actors are also posted on the website, though more reports have been received that Ramsar staff were able to keep up with. Since 2002 the design files have been made available (see paragraph 55 above).
- The STRP newsletter, the key communication mechanism to engage the STRP National Focal Points in the work of the STRP, continues to be produced three times per year and is sent by email to all STRP members and made available on the Convention's website at www.ramsar.org/STRP/.

The Convention's 40th Anniversary

63. The Secretariat's planning for the 40th anniversary began in December 2009 and early 2010 with several all-staff planning sessions to identify activities and products that would draw global attention to the anniversary and the achievements of the Convention and also encourage Parties to join the Secretariat in a year of celebrations. Products and activities from the Secretariat for the 40th included:

- A 40th anniversary full-colour 36-page booklet in English, French and Spanish takes a brief look at the Convention under three key headings: *How did we get here? What are we doing? Where are we going?*



- A Ramsar ‘pin’ and pen for Ramsar branding to be given to participants at local, national and international events during the year.
 - A widely disseminated 40th anniversary animated logo.
 - Development and dissemination of 12 key messages for Parties, NGOs and other Ramsar supporters about Ramsar and wetlands on a monthly basis from the 2nd February 2011 to January 2012. The messages, with illustrative case studies, were focused on key Ramsar issues at the present time.
 - On 19 May 2011, the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office in Geneva and the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention hosted an official reception at the Natural History Museum of the City of Geneva. Guests including Federal, Cantonal and local authorities, the Geneva international community, regional representatives of Ramsar’s Standing Committee, Ramsar’s International Organization Partners, and friends of the Convention.
 - A video clip competition in partnership with students of the IPAC design school in Geneva produced 25 creative clips about wetlands and Ramsar from which a professional panel of judges selected three winners. The winning clips were shown at the special anniversary event in Geneva and the winners presented with their prizes.
 - An online photomosaic and associated photolibrary were launched and three mosaics were produced during the anniversary year with a modest prize awarded to the photographers of the selected images. The photolibrary continues now as an online photogallery and database.
64. The response from Parties to the calls for support for the anniversary year was very encouraging. While many Parties used World Wetlands Day 2011 as an opportunity to highlight the anniversary, quite a number of countries planned and executed a series of special events and materials throughout the year. This included two international events: a regional celebration for the Americas was held in Mexico, organized and largely funded by the Mexican government with support from the Secretariat; and a global event in the I. R. Iran that was opened by the President of the I.R. Iran and brought together representatives from 50 countries in a two-day event. Full details of the anniversary products and special celebrations at the national, regional and international level are available at www.ramsar.org/40-Anniversary/.

Conclusions

65. The achievements and progress made during the 2009-2012 triennium have been extremely encouraging in a number of key areas of CEPA activities, and they give grounds for confidence that that progress will continue. At the same time, reports from the Parties have indicated a number of important areas, mostly notably those involving the development of CEPA action plans, especially at national level, and at the site level, ensuring that CEPA plans are effectively integrated into site management planning, where the Parties should be encouraged to focus their attention and redouble their efforts, so that more positive results can be reported for COP12 in 2015.