

**“Wetlands: water, life, and culture”
8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002**

Ramsar COP8 DOC. 5

Agenda item IX

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

About this report

1. This report covers developments in the Convention from the closing of Ramsar COP7 on 18 May 1999 to 30 September 2002.
2. As the title indicates, the report contains an analysis of the implementation of the Convention at the global level. The Bureau is also producing an analysis for each of the six Ramsar regions, which will be available only in the official language(s) spoken in each region. This global report will be introduced and discussed in plenary on the morning of Tuesday, 19 November. The regional reports should serve as the basis for discussion at the regional meetings scheduled for the whole morning of Wednesday, 20 November.
3. The purpose of the global and regional reports is to review the implementation of the Convention in the last triennium with the intention to derive, as much as possible, conclusions, recommendations and insights for the course of action in the next triennium. For this reason, the reports are not structured following the format of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 but rather based on the **21 thematic areas included in the draft Strategic Plan 2003-2008**.
4. The Secretary General has attempted to make a realistic analysis of the situation of the Convention, not with the intention of putting blame upon anyone but as a way to assist the COP to take similarly realistic, yet, hopefully, forward-looking decisions for the future. Painting “rosy pictures” would be the best way of deceiving the Parties and the Ramsar network at large. Following this approach the Secretary General is presenting in the following pages some CHALLENGES for the future for the further implementation of the Convention.
5. This report includes: a) information derived from the analyses of the National Reports; and b) information on the main activities of the Ramsar Bureau under each thematic area. The reports of the subsidiary bodies, namely the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), are contained in separate documents.

National Reports

6. A total of 119 Contracting Parties submitted their National Reports in preparation for COP8. They are all available (in the language of submission only) in the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/cop8_nr_natl_rpt_index.htm. Only six Parties had not submitted

their National Reports at the time of preparing this document, and eight Parties which had recently joined the Convention were not expected to submit a National Report. Annex I contains the list of Parties.

7. COP7 Resolution VII.27 included the following operative paragraph relating to the National Reporting process leading up to COP8: The Conference of the Parties
 - “13. REQUESTS the Standing Committee, at its 24th meeting, to review the National Report format used for COP7 and to introduce appropriate changes with a view to making the Ramsar COP8 format available in early 2000, so that Contracting Parties wishing to apply this framework can establish and maintain at the earliest opportunity an ongoing record of implementation for national planning and reporting purposes;”
8. At its 24th meeting in December 1999 the Standing Committee considered this request and subsequently adopted the “National planning tool – National Report format for the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties”. The document was transmitted to Parties, in hard copy and in diskette, with a diplomatic note dated 20 March 2000, stating *inter alia*: “Consistent with the above operative paragraph from Resolution VII.27, the format is being distributed well in advance of the next COP to allow Contracting Parties the opportunity to use the National Report format **immediately** as an ongoing national planning tool for implementation of the Convention. The background section of the attached document describes this process in more detail, and provides early advice regarding the timing and means for submitting National Reports.”
9. Discussions on the National Report format at the regional meetings in preparation for COP8 indicated that many Parties found that the operational structure of the electronic version is a good tool for the following reasons:
 - a) it sets the standard for reporting, allows for consistent comparisons and analyses to be made between countries, and facilitates producing valuable information that can be shared globally;
 - b) it enables the Convention to compare and to draw an overview of the achievements, the challenges and the way forward at national, regional and global levels;
 - c) it gives the opportunity to involve all relevant institutions, including the members of the Ramsar/Wetland Committees where they exist;
 - d) it provides a framework for collective action and a feedback to decision-makers; and
 - e) overall, the use of this operational structure promotes participation from different players at national level when it is considered as a planning and monitoring tool for wetland conservation and wise use.
10. It was also found, however, that the following negative aspects of the format have to be considered in order to improve its efficiency:
 - a) it takes time to explain the whole format before it is understood and endorsed at higher levels;
 - b) there are many other things that are not easy to report within this operational structure;
 - c) the format is too restrictive in certain areas where the answers are not exactly yes or no, and in places it is ambiguous and repetitive;

- d) more room should be provided for additional comments;
 - e) federal countries, in particular, are required to devote large financial and human resources in order to fill out the report, and it requires extensive consultation processes with a great number of government entities at the different levels, as well as with non-governmental organizations, private sector partners, and others; and
 - f) overall, the new format brings up new challenges and stronger requirements from Parties.
11. The Bureau greatly appreciates the efforts made by Parties to submit their National Reports, and considers that the fact that 119 Parties have submitted their reports (out of a total of 125 that were expected to do so) constitutes a very good indicator of the success of the Convention.

Analysis of the National Reports

12. A relational database has been created to store and analyze the information provided by the Parties in their National Reports for COP8. The database includes 135 indicators related to the implementation status of the actions included in the Convention Work Plan 2000-2002, as reflected in the National Reports format. Nearly 70 of these indicators are classified as “main indicators” and have been used in the preparation of this report and the regional implementation reports.
13. The answers given by the Parties to each question were used to assign a standard “implementation status code” to each indicator in order to allow the calculation of regional and global statistics. In addition, 25 “numeric indicators” were defined to store the information related to wetlands/Ramsar sites in each Party (wetland committees, management plans, educational centres, potential Ramsar sites, zoning, strict protection measures, etc). Finally, the full text of the answers is also kept in the database for future reference.
14. In some cases it has been difficult to interpret the answers given by the Parties. For this reason the results of the National Reports analysis have to be seen – for the country-level implementation indicators – as the “Bureau interpretation” of the information provided by the Parties. In the case of the numeric indicators they should be considered as “minimum numbers”, because detailed answers covering all the wetlands/Ramsar sites are not always provided.
15. The underlying thinking in the design of the “COP8 National Reports Database” and the indicators is the definition of a “baseline” that will allow in the future – for the first time – an assessment of the progress in Convention’s implementation during periods longer than three years. Following COP8, if the COP does not decide otherwise, the Bureau will begin the design of the new “COP9 National Report Format and related database” (see Challenge 1, item f below). Later, the information in the “COP8 National Reports Database” will be transferred to the new system and standardized according to the revised list of implementation indicators in light of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and its application in the next triennium.

General observations from the Bureau

16. As stated above, the Bureau considers that Contracting Parties' reporting under Ramsar has, once again, been very successful on the occasion of COP8. Nevertheless, the Bureau is concerned about the following aspects:
- a) the National Report format was not sufficiently used as a planning tool to guide implementation of the Work Plan 2000-2002 that Parties adopted by consensus at COP7. It seems that implementation was done using other planning instruments in some cases and in many others on an opportunistic or ad hoc basis. This may raise once more the question of the political will and national capacity, in human resources and finances, for an effective implementation of the treaty;
 - b) as stated at one of the regional meetings, because the format has changed quite a bit over the years, countries may be reluctant to use it as a basis for planning. Once it is in circulation for a few years, it may be more readily integrated into the planning process;
 - c) as a result of the above, it seems that many Parties have compiled their National Reports to comply with the requirement of the Convention, but have not made use of the requirement as a tool for planning and monitoring. In this way, reporting continues to be perceived as a burden more than as a tool for action;
 - d) in spite of the emphasis placed on the need to prepare the National Reports through a process of wide and transparent participation of all stakeholders, it seems that few Parties were able to do so for this triennium. In a number of cases the Bureau has received complaints indicating that stakeholders have seen the National Report of their country when it has been posted in the Ramsar Web site, claiming that they were not invited to participate in its preparation. These complaints came mostly from NGOs; other stakeholders, such as other government agencies, local communities and the private sector may have the same feeling, but it would be rare that they would share them with the Bureau;
 - e) the Bureau finds that in some cases the National Report do not reflect the true and full picture of all the positive actions that have taken place in the country concerned, many of which the Bureau is aware of, at least partially. In other cases, the Bureau considers that the report presents an excessively positive picture of the situation, not addressing some important problems related to national capacity and/or specific issues concerning wetlands in general or Ramsar sites in particular.

CHALLENGE 1

17. The Convention has made progress with this last round of reporting. It will be important to build upon this progress and not become discouraged by the effort that it has required, and/or by the shortcomings found with the use of the new National Report format.

The COP may wish to consider:

- a) as recommended by one of the regional meetings, requesting the STRP to prepare a series of key indicators in relation to the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan in the next triennium, to be used as part of the National Report format. These indicators should be adopted by the Standing Committee at its annual meeting in

2004, so that Parties may use them to complement their National Reports when they are finalised in preparation for COP9 in 2005 (see also item f) below);

- b) establishing a system of peer review, possibly on regional or subregional basis, by which a panel of Contracting Party representatives would scrutinise the National Reports of other Parties and express their views and recommendations. A similar system is already in place in the Convention to Combat Desertification and in the Development Assistance Committee of OECD (in relation to the performance of each donor country vis-à-vis development assistance);
- c) assigning to the Ramsar Bureau a more pro-active role in relation to the preparation of the National Reports by Parties, including:
 - i) assisting Parties by providing analytical examples of successfully completed reports;
 - ii) providing guidelines for the completion of the report, including recommendations, arranging for consultancy services, and organizing training workshops at national or subregional levels;
 - iii) assisting federal countries to develop more practical ways to deal with their specific situation;
 - iv) engaging more actively in providing critical feedback on a first draft of the National Report.
- d) insisting that reporting should not be considered by Parties as a formality and a burden required by the Convention, but as a planning and monitoring exercise that should begin immediately after the closure of each COP;
- e) encouraging further consideration and trial by Parties of “joint reporting” in relation to other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), building on the experience and outcomes of UNEP’s current pilot projects on streamlining national reporting to MEAs; and
- f) instructing the Ramsar Bureau to prepare a revised National Report format for consideration and approval at the first meeting of the Standing Committee after COP8 (now proposed for 26-28 February 2003). The revised format should, *inter alia*:
 - i) include coded-type questions, similar to some extent to the CBD reporting format, with the option to include detailed and/or specific answers in text (for explanations) and numeric fields (for some particular questions like management plans, etc);
 - ii) include the following elements:
 - a national report format template document;
 - the design by the Bureau of a new database system to store the information, when received from Parties. If report and database design are made at the same time and with the same criteria, the analysis would be much easier;

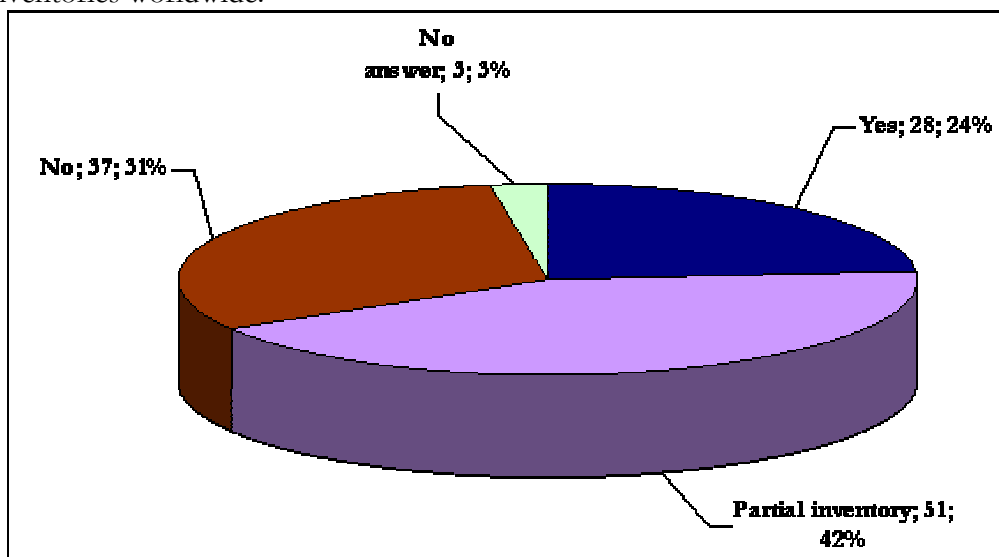
- iii) allow the assessment of progress in implementation during periods longer than three years (for example, for COP9 it would be possible to assess the implementation progress since COP7 for most indicators);
- iv) foresee the production of “Country Fact Sheets” consisting of a subset of key “indicators” or “items”, offering a “condensed” overview of the implementation process. This approach could be expanded to the regional and global analysis;
- v) foresee the production of “Thematic Reports” – for instance, according to the Operational Objectives of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

Areas of activity in the draft Strategic Plan 2003-2008

18. The following section reviews the implementation of the Convention by Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Bureau activities in the last triennium in relation with the 21 areas of activity identified in the draft Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

Activity area 1. Inventory and assessment

19. Twenty-eight Parties have indicated that they have comprehensive wetland inventory with national coverage (24%), and 51 that they have partial inventories, raising the percentage of Parties with full and partial cover to 66%. If this is a true reflection of inventory status (it was noted that Parties appeared to have misinterpreted what was meant by ‘comprehensive’ in their COP7 National Reports), this indicates significant progress since the *Global Review of Wetland Resources and Priorities for Wetland Inventory (GRoWI)* was prepared for the Convention in 1999. It is proposed that a full update on this work (GRoWI2) should be prepared for COP9, which would further clarify the status of national wetland inventories worldwide.



Action 6.1.2. Comprehensive inventory with national coverage

Number and percent of Contracting Parties

Based on information provided in COP8 National Reports

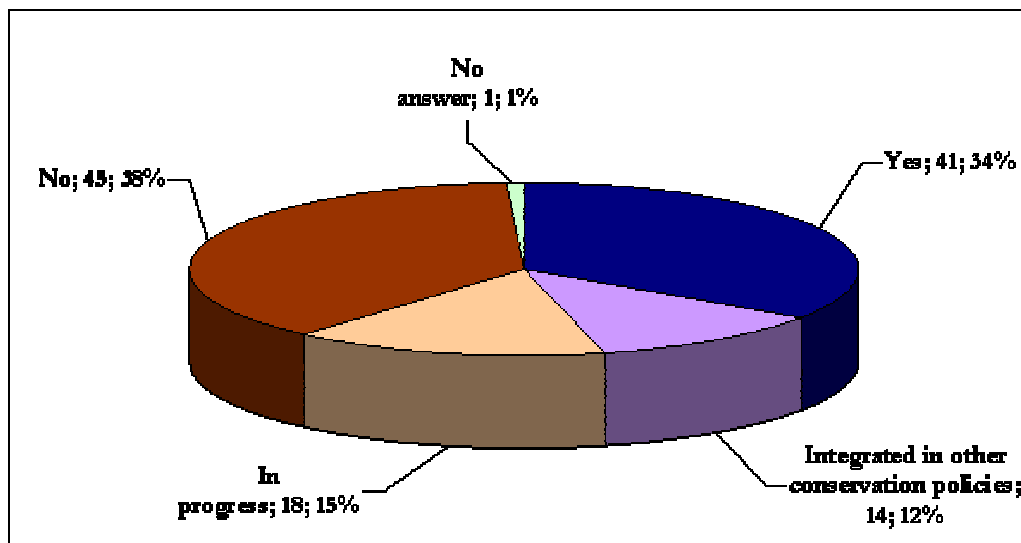
20. Concerning the status of national wetland databases, 33 Parties have indicated that they have one, and 34 Parties that they have databases with partial coverage or considering only certain wetland types; in total 56% of Parties have reported progress in this area.
21. It is difficult to interpret these figures in relation to national wetland inventory (see above) since they imply that some Parties have a national wetland database without having undertaken a national wetland inventory which has collected such data. It may be that some Parties reporting having a database may not have undertaken a comprehensive inventory.
22. Only recently the Convention has begun work in the area of assessment of water quality and quantity in relation to the maintenance of ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands, and no indicators in this area could be derived from the analysis of the National Reports.
23. The Bureau responded enthusiastically to the initiative to launch the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), which has been developed as a response, primarily, to the information needs of the Conventions on Biodiversity, Desertification, and Wetlands. The Bureau has been actively engaged in the Board, Executive Committee, and Finance Subcommittee of the MA, and, together with the STRP, has substantially contributed to the technical design of the MA. For further information on the MA, see document COP8 DOC. 8.
24. The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) established a MedWet Inventory Working Group led by the Institute of Nature Conservation (ICN) in Portugal, and a MedWet Database Technical Unit was established at the Greek Biotope and Wetland Centre (EKBY) in Greece. Progress has been made with the further development of the MedWet Inventory System, and the MedWet Committee has urged all partners involved to work towards the goal of a compatible inventory of all Mediterranean wetlands by the year 2010. (A side event on this issue is scheduled during COP8 on 21 November.)
25. The other regional initiative in this area is the Asian Wetland Inventory (AWI) led by Wetlands International in cooperation with a range of partners, and with funding provided by Japan, the Netherlands and other donors. A manual for the AWI has been published (www.wetlands.org/awi/index.htm) and inventory work is being initiated in several Asian countries.
26. **Bureau activity.** The Ramsar Bureau has been forging working relations with a number of institutions dealing with water issues, such as the World Water Council, the Global Water Partnership, the International Water Management Institute, and the Subcommittee on Water Resources of the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, and Bureau staff have been present at a number of the recent global events dealing with water issues. On the occasion of WSSD, the Bureau took the lead in drafting a policy paper jointly presented with the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Switzerland, the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape, and WWF International. The paper, entitled *Sustainable management of water resources: the need for a holistic ecosystem approach*, was presented at a side event in Johannesburg chaired by the Swiss Secretary of State Mr Phillip Roch. (See document COP8 DOC. 32.)

CHALLENGE 2

27. Complete and scientifically-based wetland inventories continue to be a *sine qua non* requirement for the effective implementation of the Convention. Yet only 28 Parties have indicated that they have inventories with national coverage. Thus the COP may wish to devote particular attention to draft resolution COP8 – DR 6 on a *Ramsar framework for wetland inventory*, with a view to: a) consider reinforcing the language in the draft to convey more fully the true importance of this matter; and b) identify more specific ways and means to provide technical and financial assistance to countries that will not be in a position to act in this area if they do not receive such assistance.
28. The Convention is dealing more and more with the key and inescapable question of water quantity and quality to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands. This in turn requires engagement in dialogue and active working relations with agencies and institutions responsible for water resources management, at national, regional and international levels. In support of this, COP8 will be considering adoption of guidelines for water allocations and management for maintain the ecological functions of wetlands (COP8 – DR 1).
29. These developments raise at least three challenges:
- a) Issues related to assessment of water quality and quantity should be more clearly incorporated under this activity area of the draft Strategic Plan, including issues related to the implementation, if adopted, of draft Resolution COP8 – DR 1 on *Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands*;
 - b) Is the Ramsar Administrative Authority in each Party sufficiently equipped for dealing with the water dimension of wetlands? If not, could it develop this capacity, or should the responsibility for Ramsar implementation be transferred to agencies dealing with water resources management, in order to engage them in taking a more holistic approach to water management issues?
 - c) The Ramsar Bureau is ill-equipped to deal with the water dimension of Ramsar issues, both technically and in terms of staff time, and has identified the urgent need for a Bureau technical officer to deal with water issues. The COP may wish to address this matter and take decisions accordingly.

Activity area 2. Policies and legislation, including impact assessment and valuation

30. In relation to the status of national wetland policy or similar instruments, 41 Parties (35%) have indicated that they have such an instrument, 14 that wetland policy is integrated into other sectoral policies, and 18 that they are developing one. In total, 61% of all Parties have taken or initiated action.



Action 2.1.2. National Wetland Policies in place.

Number and percent of Contracting Parties

Based on information provided in COP8 National Reports

31. Under this activity area the following indicators were also taken into account:
- Ramsar obligations considered in national environmental policies and plans: 105 CPs have indicated that they are doing so and another 10 Parties reported that Ramsar obligations are considered to some extent.
 - Status of the review of laws and institutions related to wetlands: 39 Parties indicated that they have done so (32%), 11 that they have done so partially, and 18 that they are in the process of doing so.
 - Review of all government plans and policies which may impact wetlands: 35 Parties indicated that they are doing so (30%), 13 that they are doing so partially, and 7 that they are in the process of undertaking such reviews.
 - Review of national institutions related to wetlands to ensure that resources are available to implement the Convention: 53 Parties indicated that they have done so (45%), 4 that they have done so partially, and 2 that they are in the process of doing so.
 - Environmental impact assessment (EIA) required for any action which can potentially affect any wetland: 75 Parties (63%) indicated that they are doing so, and 33 that they are doing so only in some cases. In total, 91% of all CPs reported some action.
 - Economic valuation of wetlands required as part of EIA: 37 Parties (31%) indicated that they are doing so, 32 that they are doing so partially, and 4 that they are in the process of undertaking this action. In total, 61% of all CPs are taking action.

CHALLENGE 3

32. Little progress has been made by Parties since COP7 in the development of National Wetland Policies or equivalent instruments, in spite of the fact that at COP7 the Parties adopted a Resolution and specific guidelines on this matter. In addition, the series of indicators derived from the National Reports for this activity area may be providing a distorted picture of general progress.
33. The COP may wish to:
- a) address again the question of the need to develop national wetland policies or similar instruments as the basis for coherent action on wetland issues; and
 - b) request a review of the national report format to ensure that a true picture of progress could be derived from the analysis in this area.
34. In addition, it has become more and more evident that the ability to undertake economic valuations of wetland values and functions in relation to their wise use is becoming a pressing issue. Yet the methodologies and expertise to do so effectively and with expediency are lacking in most countries. The COP may wish to address this important matter.

Activity area 3. Integration of wetland wise use into sustainable development

35. Some of the main indicators related to this area are:
- a) Review of resource materials related to wetland management policies and practices made: 25 Parties indicated that they have done so (21%), and 11 that they have done so partially or are in the process of doing so.
 - b) Implementation of integrated management approaches (river basins/coastal zones): 37 Parties (31%) indicated that they are doing so nationwide, and 64 that they have integrated management approaches only for part of their territory. In total, 85% of all CPs are taking action.
36. This activity area is clearly related to the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which are analysed in detailed in document COP8 DOC. 7, which contains a report of the Secretary General on the relevance of the WSSD to the Convention. In addition, a workshop on “Environmental Governance and Sustainable Development: the Contribution of the Ramsar Convention” will be held within the framework of the Global Biodiversity Forum immediately before the COP. The recommendations of the workshop will be made available to the COP.
37. **Bureau activity.** The Bureau initiated a series of activities on the sustainable trade of wetland products funded by various donors, including DGIS (The Netherlands), through the Partners for Wise Use of Wetlands Programme, and DFID (UK) in Indonesia. The Bureau’s action includes cooperation in the launching of sustainable trade projects in Botswana, Ecuador, and Indonesia, based on the successful experience of the so-called “Bolsa Amazonia” in Brazil (www.bolsaamazonia.com/). An exhibit and a side event are being organized by the Bureau at COP8.

38. To better implement these activities, the Bureau has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in particular in relation to its BIOTRADE Initiative (http://ramsar.org/key_unctad_moc.htm).
39. The Bureau has been active in contributing to initiatives for conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal wetlands. These include participation in two International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) meetings, contributions for the UN Secretary General's report on progress on implementation of Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, and participation in the Oceans preparatory meeting for WSSD.
40. The Bureau has also worked closely with UNEP on coral reef issues and provided inputs to the initiative on marine conservation and sustainable development corridor: Galapagos-Gorgona-Coibas-Cocos Island in Latin America, promoted by a number of international organizations and the Governments of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Panama.
41. In addition, the Bureau is actively contributing to the work of the CBD's Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group, which is preparing Draft Guidelines on Marine Protected Areas to be submitted for the approval of SBSTTA8 meeting in March 2003. The Bureau is also assisting the Seagrass Beds initiative promoted by WCMC-UNEP, and is supporting the publication of its major project, and assisting the World Heritage Convention on Filling Critical Gaps and Promoting Multi-Site Approaches to New Nominations of Tropical Coastal, Marine and Small Island Ecosystems.
42. A joint publication with the MAB Programme and the World Heritage Convention on coral reef Ramsar sites, Biosphere Reserves, and World Heritage sites of the world is almost ready, and support is being provided to the ITTO/UNFF initiative on technology transfer to support sustainable use of mangroves in the Wider Caribbean and the Central East Pacific.

CHALLENGE 4

43. The issues raised under Challenge 2 above also apply to this Activity area, which includes Operational Objectives related to the significance of wetlands for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defense, food security, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and scientific research.
44. Given that more than 50 percent of the world's population now lives in coastal areas and depends heavily on oceans and coastal resources for survival, and that overfishing, pollution, degradation of habitats, and natural disasters increasingly undermine the ability of coastal populations to meet basic health, economic and social needs, the Convention should pay much more attention to its "coastal and marine" dimension. Activity area 3 of the Strategic Plan should be expanded, or the addition of a new activity area should be considered, with more specific actions on coastal and marine wetlands, incorporating, *inter alia*, the provisions of draft resolution COP8 – DR 4, if adopted, on *Wetland issues in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)*.
45. **The COP may wish to consider how to incorporate the results of WSSD in this particular activity area of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008, without prejudice of the other areas in the Plan where this should also be done.**

Activity area 4. **Restoration and rehabilitation**

46. The main indicator derived from the National Reports relates to assessment to identify priority wetlands for restoration or rehabilitation: 24 Parties indicated that they have done so (20%), 56 that they have done so partially, and 5 that they are in the process of doing so.
47. Within the development of technical tools in the context of MedWet, a book on the restoration of Mediterranean Wetlands was published by the Greek Biotope Wetlands Centre with the support of the Greek Ministry of Environment. The book covers all the technical aspects of wetland restoration and provides useful examples (www.medwet.org). Under the initiative of Dr Bill Streever, STRP observer representing the Society of Wetland Scientists, a Web site on wetland restoration has been created and incorporated into the Ramsar Web site (http://ramsar.org/strp_rest_index.htm).

CHALLENGE 5

48. COP8 will consider a renewed effort to prioritize the question of wetland restoration and rehabilitation through draft resolution COP8 – DR 16, *Principles and guidelines for wetland restoration*. A workshop on “Wetland Restoration and Mitigation” will be held within the framework of the Global Biodiversity Forum immediately prior to COP8.
49. The COP may wish to consider whether there are other further incentives that should be made available to ensure more action in this field, including the question of providing additional assistance to countries which may need it in order to be able to undertake meaningful action.

Activity area 5. **Invasive alien species**

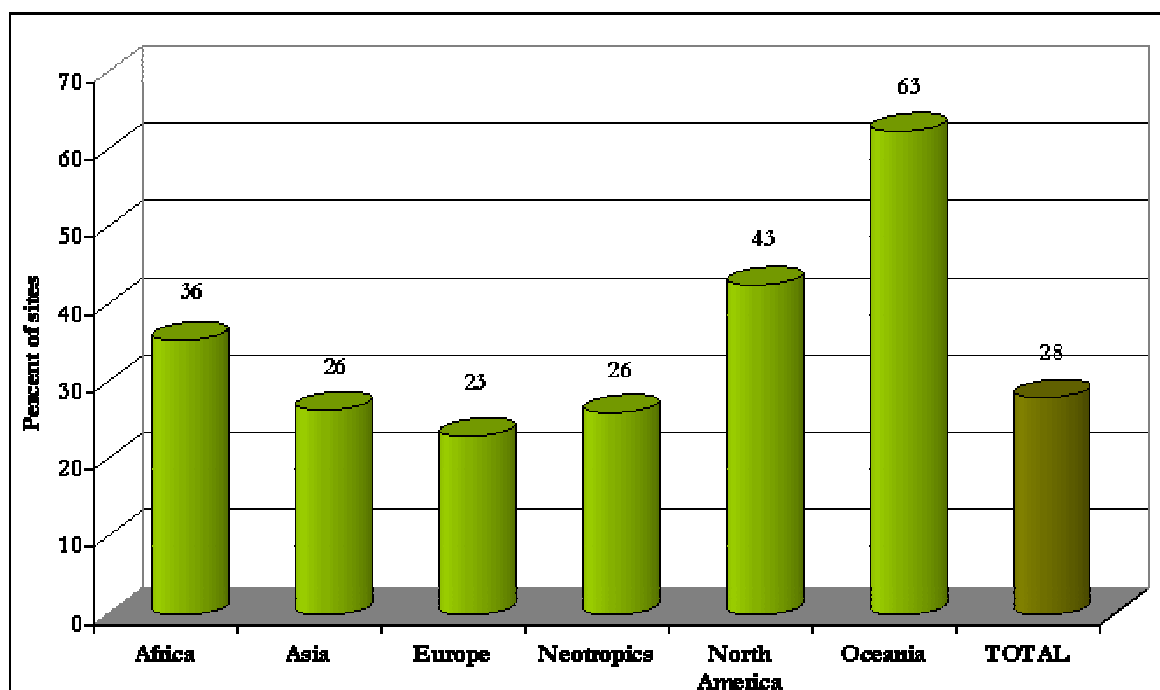
50. The Strategic Plan 1997-2002 did not give enough attention to this matter, so the only indicator about implementation in this area refers to the availability of resource information on wetland management in relation to invasive species. The draft of the new Strategic Plan contemplates three specific actions on invasive species. Parties may wish to consider whether they are sufficient to address this important issues.
51. **Bureau activity.** In cooperation with IUCN and with funding from the MacArthur Foundation and others, the Bureau has initiated work in Africa to support wetland managers with information and guidance on aquatic invasive species. A workshop was held in West Africa, with others planned, and information materials are being prepared. The Bureau has worked jointly with the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) and others in CBD's preparation of guidance on invasive species, and through the 3rd CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan it is contributing to GISP's current work for CBD preparing assessments of inland waters invasive species and invasive species in islands.

Activity area 6. **Local communities, indigenous people, and cultural values**

52. This was an area of significant concentration at COP7, the general theme of which was “People and wetlands – The vital link”. The COP adopted specific guidelines to involve

local communities and indigenous people in wetland management. The main indicators derived from the National Reports are the following:

- a) Promotion of local stakeholder management of wetlands: 98 Parties reported that they are doing so, and 6 Parties that they are doing so only in some cases or in some of the sites. Taking both groups into account, this represents 87% of the total.
- b) Government support to site managers [and local communities] in monitoring the ecological character of Ramsar sites: 92 Parties reported that they are doing so, and 4 that they are partially doing so. This represent 81% of the total.
- c) Wetland site management committees in place: 78 Parties declared having them, and 5 Parties partially have them or are in the process of establishing them (73% of the total).
- d) Government support for the application of traditional knowledge and management practices: 77 Parties indicated that they are doing so, and 7 that they are doing so to some extent (71% of the total).
- e) Number of wetland site management committees including local stakeholders: the graphic shows the following situation:



Action 2.7.3. Wetland site management committees at Ramsar sites including local stakeholders.

Based on information provided in COP8 National Reports

53. **Bureau activity:** The Participatory Management Clearinghouse, a joint service of IUCN, the Ramsar Bureau, and WWF, managed by the IUCN Social Policy Group and funded by Swedish Sida, has made progress in assembling abstracts and references for published materials sorted into the following categories: Collaborative Management, Indigenous

Peoples Management, and Community-based Management, cross-referenced by regional emphases and cross-cutting themes. The Web site is at <http://iucn.org/themes/pmns/>.

Activity area 7. Private sector involvement

54. The indicators derived from the National Reports analysis are the following:
- a) Efforts made to encourage private sector support for wetland conservation: 78 Parties indicated that they have made these efforts and 9 that they have made them partially.
 - b) Efforts to encourage private sector involvement in monitoring ecological character: 50 Parties indicated that they have undertaken this action, and 7 that they have done so partially. It should be noted that some Parties include in the “private sector” NGOs and other non-for-profit bodies, while others include only the business sector.
55. **Bureau activity.** The Bureau has continued receiving support from the Danone Group (France) for activities related to communications and exchanges of knowledge and expertise. The Group support include the cash prize for the Ramsar Award, the so-called Evian Special Prize, which will be presented to winners during the opening of COP8. It should be noted that one of the winners this year is a private sector company: Banrock Wines in Australia.
56. The Bureau has been trying to use the very positive experience with the Danone Group to engage other businesses in the work of the Convention. A leaflet describing the project activities in the past five years will be distributed at registration during the COP. Already in Chile, Minera Escondida, one of the major mining companies in the country, has provided funds to Ramsar to support a project to draft a wetland management strategy for high-andean mountain wetlands.

CHALLENGE 6

57. In spite of the fact that the indicators cited in this section are positive, the Bureau considers that the work of the Convention with the private sector, both by Parties and by the Bureau, should become much more systematic.
58. The COP and interested Parties may wish to pay attention to and take more specific decisions on the establishment of an international private-sector “Friends of Wetlands” forum, as called for in Action 7.1.3 of the draft Strategic Plan, and to other possible initiatives in this direction.

Activity area 8. Incentives

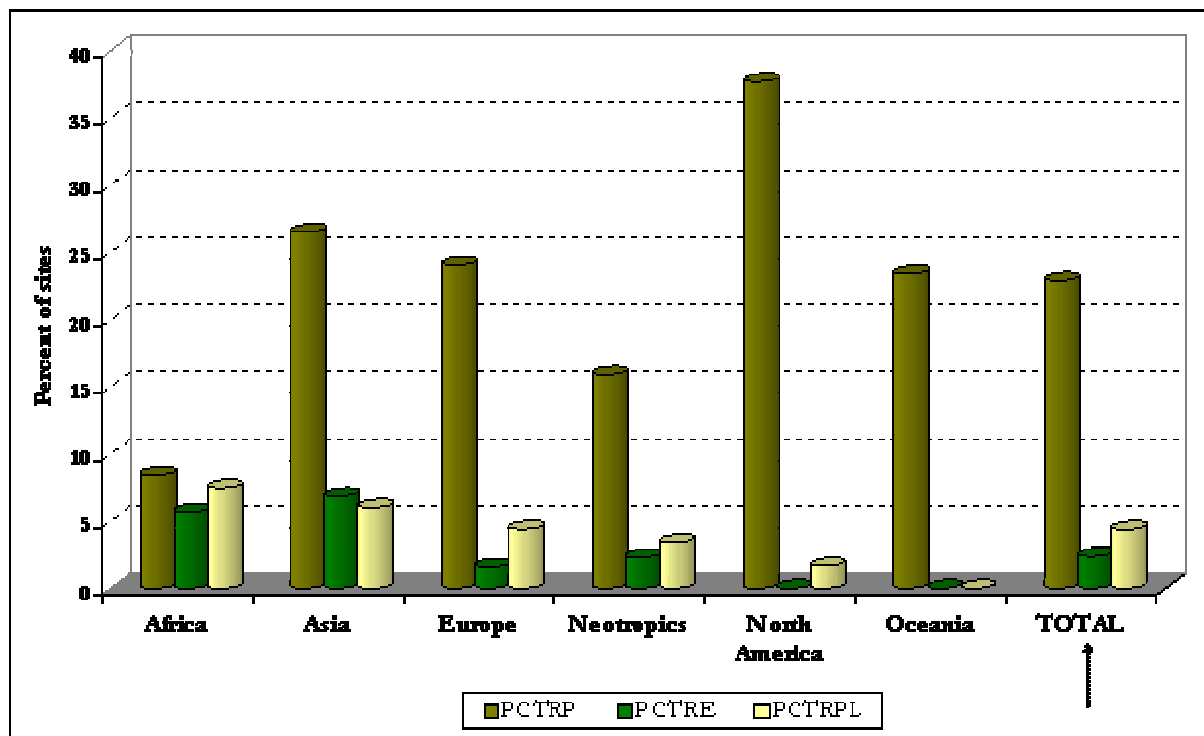
59. The only indicator related to this activity area relates to the status of review of incentive measures: only 25 Parties indicated that they have done so, 7 that they have done so only partially, and 11 that they are in the process of doing so (a total of 36% of Parties).
60. **Bureau activity.** Unfortunately, the STRP working group on incentives was not able to make significant progress in the last triennium. Consequently, the Bureau decided to establish an ad hoc working group on incentives to work through e-mail exchanges, organized by the Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation, with the intention of bringing more elements for consideration at COP8.

CHALLENGE 7

61. The COP will consider draft Resolution COP8 – DR 23 on *Incentive measures as tools for achieving the wise use of wetlands*, which reiterates the request to the STRP to progress the issue of incentives and report to COP9. The STRP work on incentives in the last triennium could make no progress because of lack of resources. Interested Parties, partners and collaborators may wish to consider the possibility of being more specific in relation to the last paragraph of the draft Resolution, which “URGES Contracting Parties and others to provide financial and expert support to the work of the STRP in this area.”

Activity area 9. Communication, education, and public awareness

62. There are nine main indicators related to this area derived from the analysis of the National Reports. The most significant ones are:
- a) Actions to identify needs in relation to communication, education and public awareness (CEPA): 67 Parties reported actions.
 - b) Designation of National CEPA Focal Points: 86 Parties have designated their governmental focal point and 69 Parties have designated their NGO Focal Point (at 30 September 2002).
 - c) Establishment of a national task force to review the status of wetland CEPA: 26 Parties have done so, and 25 were in the process of establishing one or have undertaken some action in this respect.
 - d) The country has encouraged the establishment of educational centres at wetland sites: 68 parties (57%) have done so, and 14 have reported plans to establish centres in the future.
 - e) Wetland issues incorporated into educational curricula: 18 Parties reported having done so, and 58 having done so partially or being in the process of doing so.
63. There is much evidence from the National Reports of significant wetland CEPA activity within many Contracting Parties. It should be noted that three countries, Australia, Germany, and Hungary, have completed a National CEPA Action Plan and submitted a copy to the Bureau. A small number of other Parties have indicated that work is under way on developing an action plan.
64. There are some encouraging statistics about the existence of visitor/education centres located at Ramsar sites and other wetlands. Parties reported a total of 483 wetland centres in place, 260 of them linked to Ramsar sites. The analysis also indicates that 46 new centres are being established, 27 of them linked to Ramsar sites, and a further 135 centres are planned, 50 of them linked to Ramsar sites. Since wetland centres have been identified by the CEPA Programme as focal points for global, national and local CEPA efforts, this represents a significant resource just waiting to be tapped more effectively.



Action 3.2.3. Educational centres at Ramsar sites.

PCTRP: Percent of Ramsar sites with education centres in place

PCTRE: Percent of Ramsar sites with educational centres being established

PCTRPL: Percent of Ramsar sites with educational centres being planned

Based on information provided in COP8 National Reports

65. The Wetland Link International programme, which was given considerable prominence in both the COP7 and (draft) COP8 CEPA Resolutions, has the experience to develop an effective wetland centre network for sharing of materials and expertise and is working towards this end. Australia has recently launched a national wetland centre network that will sit within the global WLI network. Other countries are considering similar national networks.
66. The National Reports indicate that at least 477/1143 (42%) of Ramsar sites have Internet access – another potential communication channel that could be effectively tapped, provided that the required resources are available.
67. The CEPA mini-Web site within Ramsar's main Web site was launched in 2001, as were CEPA e-lists in English, French and Spanish. There are now 239 members of the English list, 71 on the Spanish list, and 54 on the French list.
68. The Bureau has produced additional guidance presenting a variety of concepts, advice and practical tools aimed at assisting with a review or action planning exercise for wetland CEPA activities. The additional guidance has been distributed to all CPs in the three official languages and is available on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/outreach_reviewsactionplansI.htm.
69. A Powerpoint presentation specifically on Ramsar and CEPA has been developed and made available on request.

70. An Ad-Hoc Group of CEPA focal points, International Organization Partners and other CEPA experts have assisted the Bureau in developing the draft resolution COP8 – DR 31 on *The Convention's Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003-2008*, now sponsored by Bolivia, India, Spain, and Tanzania. This draft CEPA Resolution calls for STRP to establish a CEPA Working Group to ensure that CEPA issues are more effectively dealt with in all the Convention's work.
71. In developing the draft CEPA Resolution for COP8, representatives from the CBD and UNESCO's MAB have been involved, and it is hoped that this will be the start of a more effective collaboration between the three evolving CEPA programmes.
72. The Ramsar Bureau has taken the lead in organizing a "Workshop on wetland-related communication, education and public awareness (CEPA)" within the Global Biodiversity Forum being held immediately before the COP. The workshop is addressed mainly to the CEPA focal points so far designated by the Parties. Funding is being provided by the Conselleria de Medio Ambiente, Generalitat de Valencia (Ministry of the Environment of the Valencia Government), mainly to sponsor CEPA focal points from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
73. In spite of encouraging developments, it should be noted that in the analysis of National Reports only 63% of Parties had nominated a Government CEPA Focal point and 50% had nominated NGO Focal Points, as called for in the COP7 CEPA resolution, and only 20% of Parties had reported the existence of a specific CEPA Task Force, an essential first step in carrying out a review of CEPA activities and developing an action plan.
74. While there is much evidence of significant wetland CEPA activity within many Parties, it seems that there is not much indication of a strategic approach to such activities. The Parties adopted the Outreach/CEPA Programme at COP7 in an effort to rectify this. While some Parties have made considerable efforts in nominating CEPA Focal Points with the appropriate expertise and have made other significant steps towards implementing the Programme, it would be fair to say that this is true of a minority of Parties. Many Parties seem not yet fully to recognize CEPA as underpinning the effective delivery of all aspects of the Convention's work. It is hoped that the new STRP CEPA Working Group, if established, will assist in this area.
75. A major constraint in realising the full potential of wetland education centres as CEPA vehicles is the lack of resourcing – WLI has not yet received financial support from Parties or Ramsar partners for the further development of the network. There is a great potential for the twinning of centres between developing and developed countries as well as for the elaboration of training modules for developing new centres and appropriate centre materials, but the financial support for this is still lacking.
76. While the Bureau's Outreach mini-Web site and CEPA e-lists were successfully launched in 2001, without further resourcing the full development of these tools, particularly in French and Spanish, is severely constrained. The assistance of an intern funded by the regional government of Catalonia, Spain, from September to November this year to develop the Spanish Web pages will certainly help in the short term but a long-term solution is needed.

77. In the area of communications, the Bureau activities have concentrated primarily upon two areas – the Web site and the promotion of World Wetlands Day (WWD) on 2 February. A special effort is being made to keep an active, well-structured and always up-to-date Web site, which is repeatedly being praised as a model. Statistics about its use over the past year indicate that during most months (excluding those months when holidays are commonly taken), between 2000 and 2400 users visit the Ramsar Web site per day, over 70,000 per month. Whilst there, they remain on the site for an extraordinary average of between 15 and 18 minutes, and between 7000 and 8500 Web pages are viewed per day, or 185,000-260,000 pages per month.
78. In relation to World Wetlands Day, the impact of WWD has grown steadily and the materials produced by the Bureau have been considered to be excellent, in content and presentation, with the Communications Unit working hard to encourage and show interest in efforts taking place all over the world to celebrate the occasion. Reports and photos of WWD activities that have been submitted by organizers from over 70 countries have been published or summarized on the Ramsar Web site for the past six years (http://ramsar.org/wwd2002_index.htm).
79. The newly established MedWet Coordination Unit in Athens employs one full-time Communications Officer, who is working for the better dissemination of the MedWet tools in the region. The MedWet Web site has been fully re-designed and is regularly updated, while printed material is in preparation and events are being scheduled.

CHALLENGE 8

80. The Convention Outreach Programme 1999-2002 that the Parties adopted in Costa Rica represented an ambitious start for the Convention's work in this area. Progress has been made but it is far from being sufficient. The Bureau is drastically under-resourced to assist Parties in this area of work, and the Voluntary Fund for the Convention's Outreach Programme established by Resolution VII.28 has not received any contributions (with the exception of some internal transfers from other projects administered by the Bureau). The COP may wish to pay preferential attention to draft Resolution COP8 – DR 31 and to the recommendations that will emanate from the Workshop being held on 15-17 November.

Activity area 10. Designation of Ramsar sites

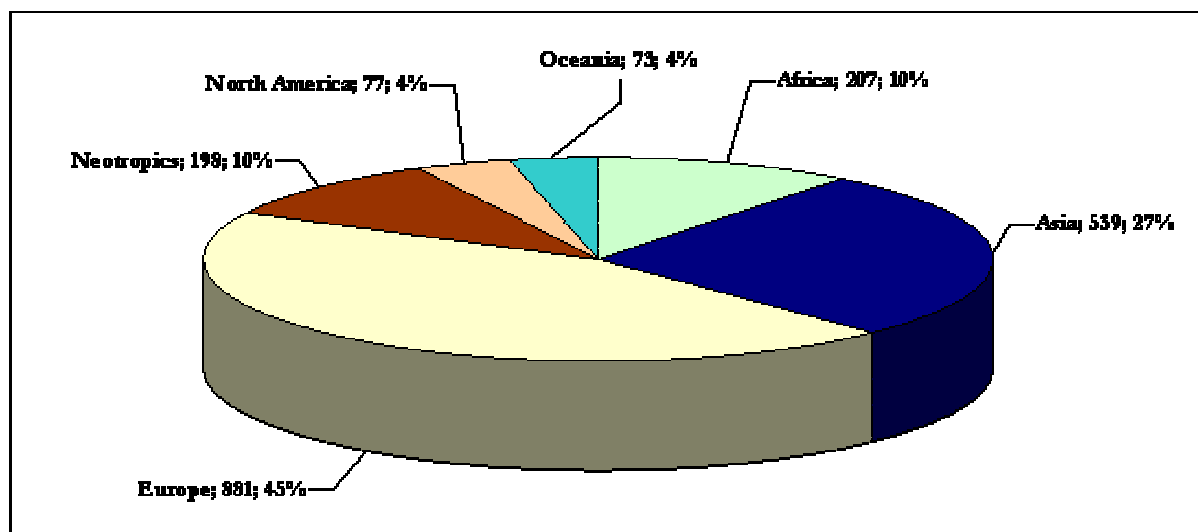
81. At COP7 in May 1999, more than 350 new designations for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) were pledged by 56 Parties, pursuant to Article 2.1 of the Convention. At the same time, COP7 invited Parties and the Ramsar network at large to achieve the target of 2000 Ramsar sites by COP9 in the year 2005.
82. In another significant development, COP7 adopted the *Strategic Framework and Guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, intended to give more coherence to Ramsar site designations, in order to “develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the ecological and hydrological functions they perform.”
83. Since COP7, Parties have designated 208 Ramsar sites, only a bit more than half the number pledged at COP7 (two large pledges of 90 and 50 sites respectively have not

materialised). However, on 5 June 2002, World Environment Day, the Ramsar List reached the symbolic mark of 100 million hectares of Ramsar sites on the planet. At 30 September 2002, there are 1198 Ramsar sites, covering 103,332,813 hectares.

84. Special recognition is due to the Living Waters Programme of WWF International which has provided support to a number of developing countries to designate Ramsar sites that are larger than half million hectares. The target of the Programme is to contribute to ensuring that 250 million hectares of high priority freshwater ecosystems worldwide are protected and sustainably managed by 2010.
85. Designations by Ramsar regions since COP7 have been as follows:

	Number of sites	Parties	Hectares
Africa	35	14	13,387,192
Asia	53	13	3,000,829
Europe	76	13	584,576
Neotropics	34	13	14,725,359
North America	2	2	70,665
Oceania	8	1	159,712
TOTALS	208	56	31,928,333

86. It constitutes a matter of concern that 32 Parties that have joined the Convention at least four years ago, and in some cases more than 20 years ago, have not made any new designations after their accession, thus having included in the Ramsar List so far, in most cases, only the obligatory site after all these years of being Parties to the Convention. (Small states that may not have more than one site to designate are not counted.)
87. Other main indicators concerning Ramsar sites derived from the analysis of National Reports are as follows:
- Use of a systematic approach to identifying sites at national level: 73 Parties have indicated that they are doing so, and 5 Parties partially doing so.
 - Special attention paid to identifying suitable sites of under-represented wetland types: 85 Parties have reported having done so. (Factually, under-represented wetlands type occur in 149 sites designated by 44 Parties since COP7.)
 - Designation of sites not having any other protected area status: 54 Parties have reported having done so.
 - All suitable shared wetlands designated as Ramsar sites: 17 Parties have reported having done so, and 34 Parties have nominated some wetlands or have reported activities towards future designations.
 - Directory of potential Ramsar sites with national coverage: 74 Parties have indicated that they have produced such a Directory, and 21 Parties indicated that they have done partial directories. The following chart illustrates these data:



Action 6.1.1. Directory of potential Ramsar sites.

Number of potential Ramsar sites (Total number of potential sites reported: 1,975)

Based on information provided in COP8 National Reports

88. In relation to the Ramsar Criteria for Ramsar site designation, in particular in relation to socio-economic and cultural values and functions of wetlands, the issue was raised in at least two of the regional meetings held in preparation of COP8. As a result, the matter was discussed at the Standing Committee and a discussion paper for the COP was requested by the Committee (see document COP8 DOC. 31). The paper will be presented in Technical Session 3.
89. The Ramsar Bureau maintains the official List of Wetlands of International Importance, with the basic information on each Ramsar site (http://ramsar.org/key_sitelist.htm), and the Annotated List, which in addition includes a short description of each site, so far in English only in both Web and print versions (http://ramsar.org/profile_index.htm).
90. The Ramsar Sites Database is an information system comprising a computer database and a Web site (<http://www.wetlands.org/RDB/Directory.html>) managed by Wetlands International under contract with the Ramsar Bureau. The database holds the official information provided by Parties for each Ramsar site through the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands. The Web site holds the Ramsar Sites Directory, containing concisely written descriptions of each Ramsar site in a standard format, also taken from the RIS. The Web site also links Directory entries to simplified country and site location maps, and also provides graphical and tabulated summaries of information on Ramsar sites, presented at global and regional levels.
91. Over the past three years the Database has been developed to become a more powerful tool which enables flexible analyses to be carried out on request. The primary development has been the “live” Web-based presentation of the Database content in the Sites Directory. The Directory has been published on a three year cycle. The 7th edition will be released at COP8 on CD in web-based format and is also introduced through a booklet: *Ramsar Sites: Directory and Overview - A guide to the Ramsar Convention's Wetlands of International Importance*.
92. In addition, the Ramsar Wetland Data Gateway is a joint project of Columbia University's Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), the Ramsar

Bureau, and Wetlands International. When fully implemented, the Gateway will provide access to a wide range of spatial and tabular data sources associated with Ramsar sites. The current iteration of the Gateway has two principal modes of operation: 1) a query interface for retrieving records from the Ramsar Sites Database, and 2) a mapping interface, for viewing Ramsar sites in the context of population density and land cover, and for viewing satellite images depicting the site and the surrounding areas. The Gateway also showcases applications of remote sensing technologies to wetlands management. The goal is to provide a tool that will meet the needs of Contracting Parties, wetland managers, and the conservation community, as well as providing a valuable tool for research and education on wetlands of international importance. The Gateway can be visited at <http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/ramsardg>.

CHALLENGE 9

93. Progress has been made during the triennium with Ramsar site designations, in particular in relation to sites which are larger than half a million hectares. Nevertheless, the COP may wish to address the following issues:
- a) COP7 has adopted the target of 2000 sites in the List by COP9 in 2005, and Parties have indicated that they have identified 1975 wetlands as potential Ramsar sites. If they were all designated by COP9, the Ramsar List may contain more than 3000 sites. Thus, the COP may wish to review the target upwards;
 - b) the fact that 32 Parties have not made any new designations since their accession to the Convention, in some cases more than 20 years ago;
 - c) the need for a more thorough review of the application of the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List, since, in spite of the fact that 73 Parties have indicated that they have applied a systematic approach to Ramsar site designations, the information available to the Ramsar Bureau does not corroborate such a high level of progress. This issue is addressed, *inter alia*, in draft Resolution COP8 – DR 10 on *Implementation of the Strategic Framework and Vision for the Ramsar List*.

Activity Area 11. Management planning and monitoring of Ramsar sites

94. The main indicators derived from the analysis of the National Reports are as follows:
- a) Measures to maintain ecological character of Ramsar sites documented: 76 Parties indicated that they have taken them, and 14 other Parties specified that measures exist, but not for all sites.
 - b) All Ramsar sites with management plans in place: only 24 Parties (20%) have reported having achieved this target.
 - c) Zoning measures being used to regulate activities in those wetlands where it is warranted: 86 Parties reported having done so.
 - d) Strict protection measures being used to regulate activities in those wetlands where it is warranted: 78 Parties reported having done so, and 8 reported having done so partially or being in the process of doing so.

- e) Regular internal reviews to identify factors potentially altering the ecological character of Ramsar sites: 64 Parties indicated that they are doing so, and 14 that they are doing so partially.
 - f) Application of the recommendations of Ramsar Advisory Missions to sites in the Montreux Record: of the 24 Parties which have received a RAM prior to COP7, 16 have reported actions to implement the recommendations.
95. In relation to the indicator 94.e in the preceding paragraph, the Bureau's experience indicates that Parties are not fulfilling in a systematic manner the requirement of Article 3.2 of the Convention: "Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay to the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8 [the Ramsar Bureau]."
96. As reflected in the reports of the Secretary General to the Standing Committee during the past three years, the Bureau has been receiving a number of complaints and information about change in ecological character in Ramsar sites from NGOs and other stakeholders, but practically never from the Ramsar Administrative Authorities in the concerned Parties. As a matter of routine the Bureau has transmitted this information to the relevant authorities.
97. Other issues concerning changes in the Ramsar List are covered in document COP8 DOC. 6, *Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 (b), (c), and (d) concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance*.
98. It has been difficult to extract from the information provided by Parties the figures regarding the exact number of Ramsar sites which have management plans in place and those that are being fully implemented. The Bureau concludes that at least 553 sites should have management plans and that 397 would be fully implemented.

CHALLENGE 10

99. Management planning at Ramsar sites is becoming a major concern, since, if the designation of sites for the List is not followed with the appropriate measures to safeguard the ecological character of the sites, including through wise use, then the designation becomes meaningless, or even counterproductive, for the whole purpose of having established the Ramsar List.
100. COP8 will be considering for adoption the *New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands* (COP8 – DR 14), which should represent a significant advance in the guidance provided to Parties in this area. However, especially in developing countries, good management plans should be, in most cases, nothing less than a sustainable development plan for the area in which the Ramsar site is located. This requires effective policies in many areas, such as water supply and sanitation and land use, and also considerable resources, from the national budget, as direct foreign investment (DFI), and/or as development assistance.

101. This issue is also linked to the question of the Convention's response to the WSSD outcomes (see Activity area 3 above). The COP may wish to address this matter and to make recommendations on, among other things, new strategic alliances that the Convention may need to forge with institutions such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the regional development banks.
102. The issue of better implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention (see paragraphs 95-96 above) is addressed in more detail in information document COP8 DOC. 20, and is dealt with in draft resolutions COP8 – DR 7 on *Gaps in and harmonization of Ramsar guidance on wetland ecological character, inventory, assessment, and monitoring*, and COP8 – DR 8 on *Assessing and reporting the status and trends of wetlands, and the implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention*. Their adoption and full implementation, together with the implementation of the actions foreseen in the draft Strategic Plan in section 11.2, should redress the situation described in paragraphs 95 and 96 above.

Activity Area 12. Management of shared water resources, wetlands and wetland species

103. The main indicators derived from the analysis of the National Reports are as follows:
- a) Implementation of integrated management approaches (river basins/coastal zones): 37 Parties (31%) have reported having done so, and 64 having done so partially.
 - b) Cooperative management of shared wetlands: 33 Parties (31%) reported doing so, and 3 partially doing so.
 - c) Data on waterbird bird populations and other taxa gathered regularly: 88 Parties (74%) have reported doing so, and 5 doing it partially.
104. **Bureau activity.** The Ramsar and CBD secretariats have launched the River Basin Initiative (RBI) with the aim of establishing a global network to share information and link and support activities and projects that demonstrate the principles and practice of integrated water resources management with an ecosystem approach, including wetland and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. An internet Portal (www.riverbasin.org) is maintained under agreement with the two Secretariats by the NGO Global Environment Centre (GEC) in Malaysia. Unfortunately, the further development of the RBI has been hampered by lack of human resources to deal with it properly at the Ramsar Bureau and the CBD Secretariat.
105. The Bureau has been forging a close cooperation with river basin authorities in Africa and is also registered as an initial partner of the EU Water Initiative launched on the occasion of the WSSD.
106. Through the work of MedWet, three important activities have been initiated involving countries sharing wetlands: a) the Prespa Park comprising Ramsar sites in Albania, Greece, and The FYR of Macedonia; b) the Dojran lake, shared between Greece and The FYR of Macedonia; and c) the Neretva river /Hutovo Blato shared between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

CHALLENGE 11

107. Forging close working relations between the Convention and river basin authorities at national and regional levels could be the most effective way to make progress in this activity area. The COP may consider giving instructions to the Bureau in this direction and suggest possible solutions to the question of the necessary resources for doing so, including in relation to the River Basin Initiative.

Activity Area 13. Collaboration with other institutions

108. The main indicators derived from the analysis of the National Reports are as follows:

- a) Mechanism at national level to coordinate/integrate implementation of international/ regional conventions/treaties: 69 Parties (58%) indicated that they have such a mechanism.
- b) Review of the Joint Work Plan Ramsar/CBD to establish priority areas of cooperation: 35 Parties (29%) reported having done so.

109. ***Bureau activities.*** The Bureau has continued its quest initiated several years ago to forge close working links with other relevant global and regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other agencies. Framework memoranda of understanding or cooperation have been signed so far with:

- IUCN - The World Conservation Union (1991)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (1996)
- Wetlands International (1997)
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) (1997)
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (1998)
- Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, World Heritage Convention) (1999)
- BirdLife International (1999)
- The Society of Wetland Scientists (1999)
- EUROSITE, the network of European natural heritage management bodies (1999)
- Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) (2000)
- The Nature Conservancy (2000)
- Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Columbia University (USA), and Wetlands International (2000)
- The Global Biodiversity Forum, IUCN-The World Conservation Union (2000)
- International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (2001)
- The Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) (2001)
- International Association for Impact Assessment (2001)
- Ducks Unlimited (USA, Canada, and Mexico) (2001)

- UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme (2002)
 - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2002)
 - South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) (2002)
110. The MOU with CBD is the most advanced in terms of implementation, which has been carried out through the First, Second and Third Joint Work Plans. (See document COP8 DOC. 19 with the text of the current JWP 2002-2006.)
111. Progress has also been made with the implementation of several other MOUs, in particular with World Heritage, MAB, the Cartagena and Barcelona Conventions, and the four International Organization Partners (BirdLife, IUCN, WI, and WWF). The implementation of some other MOUs has made little progress or has not yet started.
112. The Bureau also participates in the Environmental Management Group (EMG), established by the UN General Assembly at its fifty-third session in 2000, and chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP. The EMG focuses on environment and human settlement issues, in the context of the linkages between environment and development. The most important goal of the EMG is to achieve effective coordination and joint action at the UN system-wide level and the secretariats of MEAs in key areas of environment and human settlements.
113. In addition, the Bureau was fully engaged in the UNEP process related to International Environmental Governance (Decision 21/21 of its Governing Council), especially concerning the component related to synergies among MEAs. The Bureau has also been an active player in the United Nations University activities related to synergies.
114. In the opinion of the Secretary General, countries have not yet made the political choice of forging true and effective synergies among MEAs. This was evident in the results of the UNEP process on International Environmental Governance which, in this area, after strong efforts by the UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions and the Secretariats of practically all Conventions to bring forward a number of concrete proposals, ended up with a decision of the Global Environmental Forum (of Ministers) which is no more than a general call in favor of synergies, without taking up any of the concrete proposals made during the process of discussions.
115. The Bureau's experience also shows that synergies, if they work, require considerable dedication of staff time and resources. In the opinion of the Secretary General, however, this has been and should continue to be a good investment for the Convention: it has considerably increased Ramsar's visibility and credibility, and little by little it is generating results that are benefiting Contracting Parties, in particular those which are developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
116. The Bureau is also persuaded that its efforts to forge these linkages at the international level are not being followed with the same determination at the country level, where it would seem that the collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and the focal points of other MEAs is not yet fully developed, and in many cases has not even started.

CHALLENGE 12

117. There is a need to develop further the political will to forge effective synergies among MEAs, including the need for delegations at the COPs of the different MEAs and other global events to come with the same instructions from their capitals in this direction. Ramsar COP8 may wish to address this matter and pass appropriate recommendations to the Parties.

Activity Area 14. Sharing of expertise and information

118. The main indicators derived from the analysis of the National Reports are as follows:
- a) Activities (exchange of information, technical assistance and expertise) with regard to South-South cooperation: 44 Parties have indicated that they have undertaken these activities, and 5 that they have partially done so.
 - b) Ramsar sites twinned with those in other CPs: 36 Parties have indicated the existence of twinning arrangements involving 61 Ramsar sites, and 6 other Parties have reported the intention to develop this type of arrangement.
119. **Bureau activity.** The Bureau contribution in this area has been primarily through the Ramsar Forum, the electronic mailing list through which some 620 wetland experts and practitioners exchange information and seek assistance on issues of their interest. The Ramsar Web site is also actively used with this aim.

Activity Area 15. Financing the conservation and wise use of wetlands

120. Some main indicators derived from the analysis of National Reports are as follows:
- a) Project proposals submitted to funding agencies which were intended to assist Ramsar implementation: 75 Parties (63%) reported having done so.
 - b) CP government represented in governing bodies or scientific advisory bodies of multilateral donors or the GEF: 41 Parties provided an affirmative answer.
121. Given the way that the questions were established and the answers received, it has not been possible to derive other meaningful indicators.
122. **Bureau activity.** Following COP7 decisions on this matter, the post of Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation was established at the Ramsar Bureau by the Standing Committee, and Mr Alain Lambert joined the Bureau in September 2000. The Senior Advisor has undertaken the following actions:
- a) has contacted all 16 OECD/DAC development cooperation agencies (some of them several times) to introduce the Convention to them and start a process of dialogue on possible funding for wetland projects;
 - b) prepared *Guidelines on project identification, preparation and drafting*, which were translated into the three Ramsar working languages and distributed to all developing countries and countries in transition;
 - c) provided advice and supported several IUCN wetland projects for submission to the EU environment budget line;

- d) provided advice and revised a number of wetland projects from Ramsar CPs and helped to identify funding sources;
- e) prepared the draft of the Ramsar Trust Fund proposal, circulated it broadly and consulted with several partners and experts on how best to create the Fund. The end result of this process is the proposal to establish a Ramsar Endowment Fund contained in draft resolution COP8 – DR 29 and its associated information document COP8 DOC. 17;
- f) visited the European Commission in Brussels several times and prepared with the Regional Coordinator for Africa a 3-million-Euro project proposal that was submitted to EuropAid (EC), related to the strengthening of the Convention's activities in 15 African countries (the proposal is still under consideration);
- g) established a close relationship with the EU Environment Directorate General and in particular with the Life Third Countries financial instrument and with the European Aid Coordination Office;
- h) approached the GEF insistently asking for Ramsar to be able to participate in the GEF Council meetings in an observer capacity, and sought the support of Ramsar CPs which are GEF Council members for that purpose. A resolution was eventually voted at the Council asking that Ramsar be invited to the meetings when wetland projects are under discussion and review;
- i) visited some major US environmental NGOs that work internationally, such as WCS, Conservation International, and The Nature Conservancy, to seek their support and advice on how best to raise funds for the Ramsar SGF in the US. He approached some US foundations for the same purpose. The general conclusion was that it would be very difficult to fundraise in the US for a fund managed by an organization with headquarters in Europe;
- j) approached and discussed support to the Convention with the World Bank, but for the time being this avenue does not look promising, although the Bank is providing loans for a considerable number of wetland projects;
- k) the GEF Secretariat was also approached to seek support for the SGF, but this type of support does not fall within the GEF's purview;
- l) visited the Netherlands development cooperation agency and there was agreement on a renewed and strengthened collaboration, including more financial support to wetland projects in developing countries;
- m) prepared a policy paper on "Financing Global Sustainability" published by the Indian TERI Research Institute and the Brazilian PoemaTropic magazine, and was invited to participate as speaker in a workshop at the UN Financing for Development Conference in Mexico in February 2002;
- n) worked as team leader with the EU on a major rural development project in the northeast of Brazil (Euro 10 million) and managed to have Euro 1 million exclusively dedicated to wetland conservation, including preparation of management plans for two Ramsar sites (project under review);
- o) held discussions with the Swiss development assistance agency, which promised to consider stronger financial support to the SGF or to the Ramsar Endowment Fund;
- p) is preparing a workshop for CIS countries, to be funded by the German Environment Ministry on the setting up of environmental funds for wetland management;
- q) has started to explore the issue of sustainable trade of wetland products, making initial contact with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), the European Commission, UNCTAD's BIOTRADE Initiative, and others;

- r) has acted as lead person for the identification of counterpart funding sources for a UNDP/GEF wetland project in Iran, in which the Bureau has acted as international service provider;
- s) is working as lead expert with the UNDP/GEF and IUCN in the Comoros Island on the setting up of an environmental fund for the management of coastal zone wetlands; and
- t) has taken the lead in creating the Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA) whose members are GTZ, the World Bank, WWF-International, WWF-US, the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Nature Conservancy, Wetlands International, the Rain Forest Trust Fund, and several other important international NGOs. The objective of the CFA is to be a tool at the disposal of MEAs to identify sustainable financial mechanisms for nature conservation.
123. This exhaustive list of activities is provided because of the expectations raised at COP7 regarding this post at the Bureau, and also to indicate that funding for the Convention activities in general and wetland projects in the field continues to be elusive.
124. The GEF continues to be an important avenue for Ramsar Parties to obtain funding for wetland projects, provided that they are also Parties to CBD in particular and/or to the Conventions on Desertification and Climate Change. Information provided by the GEF Secretariat indicates that through its coastal, marine and freshwater programme the Facility has funded 60 projects in some 42 countries and several multi-country projects, for a total value of almost one billion US dollars, with the GEF contributing 263 million. Information on GEF funding under its international waters portfolio was not available at the time of writing.
125. Contributions to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund during the period 1999-2002 were as follows (in Swiss francs):

DONORS to Small Grants Fund

	<u>YEAR</u>	SFR
AUSTRIA – Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment & Water Management	1999, 2000, 2001, 2002	64,206
BELGIUM – Wallonne Region	1999	57,500
DENMARK EHCSP, European Habitat Conservation Stamp Program	1999, 2000 1999	 9,146 15,303
GERMANY, Federal Ministry for the Environment Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	2001	45,216
ICELAND	2000	100
IRELAND	2000	4,854
JAPAN	1999, 2000, 2001	279,678
MONACO	1999	883
SWEDEN, SIDA	2000 & 2002	269,696
UNITED KINGDOM – DEFRA Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	1999, 2000, 2001	123,743
USA – Department of State and Department of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service	1999, 2000, 2001, 2002	 498,878

WWF International	1999	12,000
TOTAL INCOME	1999-2002	1,121,507

126. These contributions served to fund 30 small projects (maximum SR 40,000) in 27 countries during the period 1999-2001. In addition, the following governments and institutions have funded directly eight projects originally submitted to the SGF: Belgium - Wallonne Region, Japan, Switzerland – DEZA, United States, Wetlands International (with DGIS/The Netherlands), and WWF International (Living Waters Programme).
127. During the triennium, 113 projects which met technical criteria remained unfunded because of lack of resources.
128. Other issues related to the SGF and its future funding are addressed in document COP8 DOC. 17 and in draft Resolution COP8 – DR 29.
129. The United States of America continued to provide funding for the Wetlands for the Future Initiative, which began in 1995. During the period 1999-2002, the US has contributed SFR 1,966,176 (around US\$ 1.3 million). Seventy small projects dealing with training and capacity building have been funded in Latin America and the Caribbean. A brochure on this Initiative will be distributed at the COP.
130. The Swiss Grant for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use in Africa has also continued. Contributions received from the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscapes during the period 1999-2002 amounted to SFR 577,188, allowing the Bureau to fund 24 small projects in Africa.

CHALLENGE 13

131. The absence of a financial mechanism for the Convention continues to be a significant challenge. If the COP agrees to establish the Ramsar Endowment Fund (see COP8 – DR 29) and the Convention is successful in the next few years in raising sufficient funds for it, this could be a partial solution to that problem. Yet the proposed Endowment Fund is destined to support only the Small Grants Fund (at present providing a maximum of 40,000 Swiss francs per project), which, useful as it is, does not constitute a solution for financing the management plans that are required for the effective conservation and sustainable use of many Ramsar sites and other wetlands.
132. The option of the GEF becoming a financial mechanism for Ramsar seems out of the question for the time being. Thus, access to the GEF funding will require: a) working through the focal points for CBD, Climate Change, and Desertification in the recipient countries; and b) the political decision that wetland projects constitute a priority for submission to the GEF.
133. In the meantime, the Bureau should continue to develop the initiatives that it has undertaken and to develop further its working relations with the development assistance agencies. But in order to do that, the Convention should be portrayed as an instrument for poverty eradication, in line with the priorities established by WSSD, and act accordingly.

Activity Area 16. Financing of the Convention

134. Parties have paid their dues on a regular basis, with a few exceptions. The record of payments in the last three years has been as follows (in Swiss francs):

Year	Total invoiced	Total paid	Arrears
1999	2,979,673	2,812,634	167,039
2000	3,202,332	3,066,010	136,322
2001	3,154,510	2,754,192	400,318

135. In paragraph 16 of Resolution VII.28, COP7 requested the “Standing Committee to prepare a proposal for Ramsar COP8 on measures that could be taken in the case of Contracting Parties that are in arrears of two or more years at the time of the ordinary meeting of the COP”. The Standing Committee considered this matter but could not agreed on a proposal to bring to COP8, as requested by the resolution.
136. Within the framework of the so-call Evian Project–Caring for Water Resources and Water Quality, the French Danone Corporate Group and the French Fund for the Global Environment (FFEM) contributed SFR 1,485,000 during the first phase of the project (1998-2000). During 2001-2002 the Danone Group alone has contributed SFR 465,000. The project included, primarily, the “Evian Encounters” for high level officials in charge of Ramsar in Latin America, French-speaking Africa, English-speaking Africa, and Arab-speaking countries; exchanges of know-how; and a significant component to support the Bureau communication activities, in particular in relation to World Wetlands Day. Recognition is due to the French government agency Conservatoire de l’espace littoral et des rivages lacustres, which has greatly contributed to the design, administration and implementation of the project.
137. The Bureau also received considerable support for the series of 11 regional and subregional meetings that were held in preparation for COP8, as follows:

DONORS to Regional Meetings	Amount SFR
Argentina, Secretaría de Desarrollo Sustentable y Política Ambiental	87,023
Australia provided direct funding for the Regional Meeting in Oceania	
Austria, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment & Water Mgmt	14,899
Belgium, Wallonne Region	10,931
Canada - Wildlife Conservation Branch	15,572
Denmark, DANCEE	29,250
France, Ministère Amenagement Territoire	33,138
Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	99,678
Netherlands, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Mgmt & Fisheries	17,222
Norway - Directorate for Nature Management	38,606
Spain, Ministry of the Environment	43,551

Sweden, SIDA	166,168
Switzerland, DEZA, Agency for Development and Cooperation	20,000
Switzerland, Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape	40,000
Switzerland, MAVA Foundation	50,000
USA - Department of State	248,475
TOTAL	914,513

138. Recognition is also due to the Parties and institutions which hosted the regional and subregional meetings, also making very significant contributions: Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Ecuador, Honduras, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Slovenia, Thailand, Zambia and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

139. In relation to COP8, the Bureau has received from the host country, Spain, a contribution of SFR 721,000 to cover the Bureau's expenses and the secondment of a technical officer to assist in the preparations, for the period September 2001-December 2002. The secondment may be extended for another year to assist in COP8 follow-up. The Government of Valencia has made a contribution of Euro 93,000 to support the Workshop on Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) being organized by the Bureau, and the Swiss government has made a contribution of SFR 50,000 for COP-related expenses.

140. For sponsored delegates at COP8, at 30 September 2002, the Bureau has received the following contributions and pledges (in Swiss francs):

		Amount Received	
		SFR	
Austria, Fed. Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, Env & Water Mgmt			13,797
Belgium, Ministere de la Region Wallonne			18,000
Finland, Ministry of the Environment			14,704
Germany, Ministry for Umwelt, Naturschutz			50,726
Hungary, Dept for Int'l Relations			17,099
Hungary, Min for Euro Relations			33,378
Japan, Mission			100,000
Netherlands, Min. of Agriculture, Nature Mgmt & Fisheries			23,480
Spain, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente			100,000
Sweden, SIDA			34,910
UK, DEFRA			24,000
UK, DEFRA			56,513
USA - Dep't of State			158,520
	TOTAL RECEIVED		645,126
PLEDGED		Amount Pledged	
		Currency	CHF
Denmark, Min. of Env.DANCEE		DKK 150,000	29,350
France, Min. of Environment		□ 22,500	33,085
UNESCO		US\$ 20,000	29,900
Netherlands, Min. of Agriculture, Nature Mgmt & Fisheries		□ 4,000	6,000

Switzerland, Direction du Développement et de la Coopération	\$40,000	60,000	
	TOTAL PLEDGED		158,335
	GRAND TOTAL		803,461

141. In addition, the Bureau has received during the period 1999-2002 income in the form of contractual arrangements and voluntary contributions for a series of other activities and projects. (See document COP8 DOC. 12 *Information document on the status of projects managed by the Ramsar Bureau in the period 1 January 1999-31 August 2002*).
142. In summary, as reflected in the Audited Accounts for fiscal years 1999, 2000 and 2001, the income received by the Bureau has been as follows (in Swiss francs):

Year	Contracting Party Dues and Other Core Income	Voluntary contributions/ Contractual arrangements	TOTAL
1999	3,621,116	3,218,279	6,839,395
2000	3,679,817	1,945,650	5,625,468
2001	3,530,922	2,205,874	5,736,796

143. These figures do not include the Euros 160,000 contributed in cash in and *in situ*, in 2001, by the Greek Government for expenses connected with the Coordination Unit of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet). By decision of the Standing Committee, the Unit has been established in Athens under the authority of the Secretary General, in fully equipped premises also provided free of charge by the Greek Government. The government is also funding two seconded staff members.

Activity Area 17. Institutional mechanisms of the Convention

144. In general terms, the institutional mechanisms of the Convention are working efficiently: In relation to the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, some Parties are of the opinion that the duration of the COP should be reduced and its *modus operandi* streamlined. In the opinion of the Secretary General, it will be difficult to reduce the duration of a COP that meets only once every three years and has to deal with more and more complex issues at each meeting, and with an increasing number of Contracting Parties and partners. In order to address this question, it is proposed that a Committee of COP8 should be established to analyse these matters and make recommendations for the future, as appropriate.
145. The 11 regional and subregional meetings held in preparation for COP8 were useful in clarifying and reviewing the main issues confronting the Convention. They also served as a training opportunity for officials in the Ramsar Administrative Authorities who had taken up the responsibility only a short while ago and were not very familiar with the operations of the treaty.
146. No issues have been identified in relation to the composition and *modus operandi* of the Standing Committee. Its performance is reported by the Chair of the Committee in

document COP8 DOC. 3. The issue remains, however, to what extent the Parties acting as regional representatives in the Committee are in a position to canvass the views of the Parties that they represent on the issues addressed by the Committee. In many instances, Regional Representatives may have reacted to issues according to their own national positions, priorities and needs, which may not necessarily have been those of their regions. However, this may be a difficult problem to resolve, since wide and transparent consultations at the regional level would require considerable political will on both parties, the representative and the represented, and perhaps considerable resources. Some regional representatives have attempted to create a dynamic of exchanges and consultation within their regions, with mixed results.

147. The operation of the STRP has been a concern of the Panel and of the Standing Committee. The Bureau has also been affected by these shortcomings, since the professional staff, and in particular the Deputy Secretary General, have had to devote an excessive amount of time to support the work of some the STRP Working Groups in order to ensure the quality of the proposals going to the Standing Committee and eventually to the COP. These issues are addressed in the draft Resolution COP8 – DR. 28 (and its corrigendum): *Modus operandi of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)*, and in its associated information document COP8 DOC. 14.
148. As far as the Ramsar Bureau is concerned, after its re-organization in the previous triennium to make the best use of the financial and human resources at its disposal, it has operated smoothly during the triennium under review, always trying to improve efficiency and output. The current staff chart of the Bureau can be consulted in document COP8 – DR 27, the draft resolution on *Financial and budgetary matters*.
149. The Secretary General wishes to recognize the high level of commitment and professional qualities of all members of staff, who have served the Convention much beyond the strict requirements of their assignments.
150. However, the Bureau may have reached its limits in its ability to serve effectively a Convention that has grown considerably in visibility and engagement in terms of: a) the new issues to deal with, such as water management, river basin management, coastal zone management, and invasive species to name only a few; b) the number of Parties to serve (92 at the time of COP6 in 1996, 133 at present); c) the number of Ramsar sites to keep under scrutiny (789 sites at COP6, 1198 at present); and d) the greatly increased number of partners and collaborators that the secretariat is interacting with, all of whom have expectations about collaboration with the Convention, incarnated to a large extent by the Bureau.
151. An important development in the triennium has been the installation of the Coordination Unit of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) in Athens, Greece, as a fully fleshed, outposted office of the Ramsar Bureau, with 4.6 staff members. It is as a result of this development in the Mediterranean basin that COP8 has now in front of it the draft resolution COP8 – DR 30 on *Regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention*, dealing for the first time with the issue of the expansion of the Convention's presence to the regions.

CHALLENGE 14

152. The capacity of the Ramsar Bureau to continue serving a Convention in constant expansion should constitute a matter of reflection and concern for the COP. While the true implementation of a treaty, to be really effective, has to occur at the level of each Contracting Party, it is commonly accepted that an effective secretariat represents a significant contribution to the success of an MEA. Thus, the COP may wish to entrust the Standing Committee with undertaking a thorough review of the abilities of the Bureau as it is at present to continue serving the growing Convention, with a view to bringing specific proposals to COP9.

Activity Area 18. Institutional capacity of Contracting Parties

153. The main indicators derived from the analysis of the National Reports are as follows:
- a) Review of national institutions related to wetlands to ensure that resources are available to implement the Convention: 53 Parties have indicated having done so, and 6 have done so partially or are in the process of doing so.
 - b) Establishment of a National Ramsar Committee or similar body: 69 Parties reported having a Ramsar Committee, 13 reported having a body that performs similar functions, and 13 reported that steps are being taken to establish a Committee. In total, 80% of Parties have acted or are acting on this matter.
 - c) Funds allocated to conservation and wise use of wetlands: 93 parties (78%) have responded positively to this question.

CHALLENGE 15

154. It has often been stated that National Ramsar Committees involving all relevant stakeholders and working effectively constitute one of the most effective mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention. The Ramsar Bureau had the intention to undertake a critical analysis of the relevance and efficiency of the existing Committees, so as to bring the COP8 more insights about lessons learnt in this area. This will not be possible. The COP may wish to request that such a critical analysis be undertaken and disseminated as soon as possible during the next triennium.

Activity Area 19. International Organization Partners and others

155. In their National Reports, 51 Parties have indicated that they include representatives of Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs) in the National Ramsar Committees or similar bodies. It has not been possible to derive from the reports other indicators concerning the specific assistance provided by the IOPs to Parties at the field level, which the Ramsar Bureau understands to be substantial.
156. The contribution of the IOPs – BirdLife International, IUCN–The World Conservation Union, Wetlands International, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – has continued to represent an extremely important asset for the Convention. They have made contributions in all areas of the Convention's work: policy and legislation, Ramsar site designations, participation in Ramsar Advisory Missions and contributions to their costs, contributions to the STRP's work, development and implementation of field projects,

launching of new initiatives, financing of projects submitted to the Ramsar SGF, and active participation in the Ramsar Regional Meetings.

CHALLENGE 15

157. In spite of the effective working relations between the Bureau and the four IOPs, and the assistance that they are proving to Parties in the field, consideration should be given to:
- a) establishing more detailed annual joint work plans between the Bureau and each IOP, including areas in which the five partners could be working together; and
 - b) identifying other international organizations that the Standing Committee could recommend for IOP status to Ramsar COP9.

Activity Area 20. Training

158. The main indicators derived from the analysis of the National Reports are as follows:
- a) Analysis of training needs for implementing wise use guidelines: 31 Parties have reported having done so, and 10 Parties have done so partially or are in the process of doing so.
 - b) Review of training opportunities: 30 Parties reported having done so, 9 Parties reported having done so partially, and 4 Parties are in the process of doing so.
 - c) Development of training activities and modules: 42 Parties reported having done so and 3 Parties are in the process of doing so.
 - d) Training provided to wetland managers through personal exchanges for on-job training: 59 Parties have done so.
159. In response to the need for improving Parties' access to training opportunities and training materials, Wetlands International, jointly with the Dutch Wetland Advisory and Training Centre (RIZA), is developing a "Ramsar Training Service" for the Convention. Initiation has begun in late 2002 and it is anticipated that this will be fully operational in 2003.

Activity Area 21. Membership of the Convention

160. Nineteen new Parties have joined the Convention since COP7 in May 1999, as follows: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Benin, Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Republic of Moldova, Saint Lucia, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, and Uzbekistan. At 30 September 2002, there were 133 Contracting Parties to the Convention.
161. Concerning COP7 Resolution VII.30, which "CALLS UPON Bosnia & Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to submit to the Depositary a notification of succession to the Ramsar Convention as the other successor states have done", on 3 July 2001 the Director-General of UNESCO received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a notification that his country accepted the Ramsar

Convention as a successor State to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia “and undertakes faithfully to perform and carry out the stipulations therein contained as from April 27, 1992, the date upon which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia assumed responsibility for its international relations”. Yugoslavia confirmed the status of its four existing Ramsar sites. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 24 September 2001 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the Director-General of UNESCO that the country “considers itself, as a legal successor State of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, bound by the Convention on Wetlands”, with effect from 1 March 1992, the date upon which Bosnia and Herzegovina assumed responsibility for its international relations. In accordance with Article 2 of the Convention, the new Contracting Party named as its obligatory first Wetland of International Importance a Nature Park and Birdlife Important Bird Area called “Hutovo Blato”. Consequently, the issue raised in resolution VII.30 should be considered resolved.

162. In the case of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee, recognized by Resolution VII.22 “as a forum for collaboration on wetland issues in the Mediterranean and as advisor to the Convention in this region”, with the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Cyprus, all 25 Mediterranean states members of MedWet/Com are now Ramsar Contracting Parties. At the beginning of MedWet there were 14.
163. In the Neotropics, Trinidad and Tobago, in its capacity as the Caribbean Representative in the Standing Committee, hosted the “Ramsar/SPAW Caribbean Training Workshop” in December 2000, with funding provided by the Wetlands for the Future Initiative. The objective of the workshop was two-fold: a) to analyse the obligations and advantages of being Parties to both the Ramsar Convention and to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention, in line with the Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the two secretariats; and b) to provide training on the implementation of the key Resolutions adopted by Ramsar COP7. The workshop was designed for Parties to the Ramsar Convention and to the SPAW Protocol, as well as the other Caribbean countries that are not yet Parties to either instrument. All 10 of the non-contracting parties to Ramsar sent representatives and in some cases this was the first formal communication between the Bureau and these countries.
164. In addition, and in fulfilment of a recommendation of the last Ramsar Pan-American Meeting to encourage accession to the Convention of Caribbean Island States which are not yet Parties, a Ramsar Mission to Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines took place in September 2002, with the participation of a representative from the Bahamas, Trinidad & Tobago, the United States of America, and the Ramsar Bureau, respectively. The mission received a positive reception in the four countries.
165. Another regional meeting involving mostly non-contracting parties was held at the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) training centre in Apia, Western Samoa, on 6-8 May 2002, with funding provided by Australia. In addition to the three Ramsar Parties from Oceania, the meeting was attended by 10 non-contracting parties and three dependent territories from the region. A number of these countries have indicated that they have made progress in their preparations to adhere to the Convention and some of them may finalize the procedure before COP8.

GENERAL CONCLUDING REMARKS¹

“Mainstreaming” wetlands and biodiversity

166. Although there are some indications of improvements in getting wider understanding and recognition of the critical role of biodiversity values and functions in maintaining human well-being through environmental security (food and water security, disaster prevention, etc.), improving awareness of the link between wetlands and poverty eradication and sustainability in general is still a major struggle.
167. At national and at intergovernmental level, there remains significant lack of understanding amongst other sectors (trade, energy, agriculture and fisheries, spatial planning, finance, development, etc.) that ‘biodiversity’ (and it is not always recognized that that term covers ecosystems such as wetlands, and genetic levels as well as species) is the essential basis for the world’s, and hence people’s environmental security.
168. Biodiversity is too often regarded as a separate sectoral interest to be taken into account at best only as of secondary importance, and biodiversity conservation regarded as an impediment or hindrance to trade and economic development.
169. This wide lack of cross-sectoral recognition of, and acceptance of responsibility for, biodiversity and environment stewardship is apparent from local through national government to intergovernmental convention and agency scales.
170. However, although not being publicly stated and recognized, it is perhaps a measure that biodiversity conservation is relevant, significant, and regarded as threatening to the interests of other sectors that the contentious issues at WSSD (and also recently in other fora such as CBD’s COP6) will concern matters such as trade and governance, and that such sectors seem to be engaging increasingly in environmental conventions and other debates, albeit generally negatively in seeking to prevent environment and biodiversity conservation decisions from interfering with short-term economic gain.
171. There continues to be a pressing and urgent need to increase hugely the public and governmental awareness and recognition of the full range of goods and services supplied by ecosystems, and to much improve the grasp of their value (including full inclusion of this in economic valuation). The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment’s approach and products are ground-breaking here. Its conceptual framework simply and clearly establishes the vital link between ecosystems and human well being, and its guidance on ecosystem assessment, scenarios and response options, once available, should be made essential in the education and training of all sectors of government and private enterprise.

Securing wetland conservation and wise use through broader-scale planning and management

172. River basin and water resource management practices need to recognize more fully that healthy aquatic ecosystems are essential for maintaining the global hydrological cycle upon which people depend for their water, food, and health.

¹ To a large extent, this section has been taken from the contribution prepared by the Deputy Secretary General in response to the request to all staff members to prepare inputs for the Report of the Secretary General.

173. It is widely recognized that access to water is critical to human well-being. This is already becoming one of the most pressing and challenging issues worldwide, with predictions that during the 21st century that an alarmingly increasing proportion of the world's human population will live in regions where water demand exceeds supply. The increasing demands for water for human consumption, agricultural irrigation, and energy production will be further exacerbated by the consequences of global climate change and persistent drought in some regions.
174. Yet, as witnessed by the 2nd World Water Forum in 2000, there remains a critical gap in recognition and management responses by those government ministries and institutions responsible for water management and use concerning the vital role that aquatic ecosystems play in capturing, purifying, and making water available for human uses.
175. Too often, water management decisions treat aquatic biodiversity as solely sectoral wildlife conservation matters, to be taken into consideration in water allocations only *after* other sectors' demands are met – if there is any water left. Yet over-abstraction of water, and grandiose schemes for redirection of water supplies, lead to ever increasing damage to the healthy functioning of aquatic ecosystems, their ability to process water and recharge aquifers, and their capacity to provide their goods and services such as food and fibre upon which many local communities and indigenous peoples depend. Too often excessive water use brings economic gain to wealthy sectors of society at the expense of those, including women, the poor and minority groups, most vulnerable to poverty.
176. There are encouraging signs in some places that water resource management authorities, including those dealing with the even more intransigent matter of transboundary rivers, are increasingly recognizing the essential need to conserve aquatic ecosystems, and dialogue initiatives are growing. But much still needs to be done to gain consistent understanding of the vital link between aquatic biodiversity and water, and of the fact that maintaining the functions of these ecosystems is fundamental to the success of any sustainable development. The same goes for wetlands in relation to coastal and marine zone management.

Improving information and assessment of the values and functions of wetlands

177. In support of 'mainstreaming' wetlands in the above issues, the Convention's CEPA process can make a significant contribution. There is also a need to develop further the methodologies (and encourage their wide use) for assessing values and functions for wetlands, and ensuring that these incorporate socio-economic and cultural valuation, including in assessing impact of policies, plans and specific developments.

Can real synergies between Conventions and agreements work to the benefit of countries?

178. Working together on issues of common ground between MEAs established for different purposes and through different mechanisms seems incredibly logical and sensible as a way of streamlining the requirements of delivery by Parties. Ramsar has been in the forefront of this approach, and our experience to date is that although the principle is now well established, actually making this happen is proving hard and very time-consuming. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that developing synergies, joint work plans,

etc., is an added task for overstretched secretariats, and that real implementation is proving hard to achieve because of very different institutional mechanisms and schedules of, for example, scientific and technical bodies. Furthermore there seems lack of understanding in some secretariats of what real collaboration means to achieve implementation.

179. Initiatives in this area often have to operate in a political and policy vacuum, and high level governmental and intergovernmental political commitment is urgently needed to provide their focus. Progress is slow, and it is impeded by both resistance to collaborative efforts and confusion about how to take words practically into actions.
180. Furthermore, much synergy development to date has been at the global scale, for example between secretariats and advisory bodies of MEAs, and there is an urgent need to take this down into national-scale collaboration and synergy.
181. A genuine will to collaborate on matters of common interest amongst UN bodies and agencies, importantly including those involved in trade and development as well as the environmental bodies, is also much needed. Governments have the opportunity and responsibility to give a strong political message to the world about the *modus operandi* they expect of the UN and other intergovernmental organizations, but interest in doing this seems very weak.
182. The Environmental Management Group (EMG) has promising potential to take the lead in focusing on the most pressing and fundamental issues facing environment and sustainable development. It has, however, yet to start developing this potential, and to date has tended to focus on relatively minor, sectoral issues and been constrained by debate between UN agencies and bodies about responsibilities and relevance.

Strengthening Convention processes

Administrative Authority capacity

183. The capacity of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities remains weak in many parts of the world. In some countries (often those that have been Parties for a long time), the Convention is delivered through narrowly sectoral protected areas or nature conservation parts of government, and those responsible do not always grasp the need to work more broadly in mainstreaming wetlands within their governments. Resourcing and power of environment ministries is generally poor in comparison to other government sectors, in both developed and developing countries. The Regional meetings have also revealed an alarming lack of knowledge and understanding of the Convention and its processes by those with day-to-day responsibility for the Convention. This seems often to be because of frequent staff changes in ministries, combined with a lack of briefing when responsibilities are handed over.

Wise use versus Ramsar site designations

184. In many countries it seems that Administrative Authorities focus largely or entirely on designation of Ramsar sites as the delivery of the Convention. Whilst this should remain a key and powerful delivery mechanism, and one that helps greatly in raising awareness of the importance of wetlands, there is a sense that the fundamental 'first pillar' of the Convention – the wise use of all wetlands – is not well understood and receives relatively

little attention. Revisiting the “Wise Use concept” and linking it more clearly to securing environmental security and poverty alleviation would seem an increasingly urgent issue.

Understanding the health of wetlands

185. There is still very little coherent idea of what is happening to wetlands in different parts of the world – or even where they are. From the National Reports analysis, it does appear that more countries now have, or are undertaking, comprehensive wetland inventory. However, there is a continuing lack of assessment (or at least readily available assessments) of the status and trends in the health of wetlands, and the Convention lacks a coherent mechanism for collecting and reporting such information which is vital as a basis for establishing policies and priorities for wetland conservation and wise use.
186. Those mechanisms that do exist, concerning Ramsar sites, are being little implemented. Few Parties make Article 3.2 reports, and many seem to lack an in-country mechanism for identifying changes of ecological character on Ramsar sites and having these reported to the Administrative Authority. The Objective (4.1) of the Strategic Framework (Resolution VII.11) concerning the use of the Ramsar site network for monitoring status and trends seems to have been very little noticed, and there is no mechanism established for reporting and consolidating such information. Nor is it possible to deduce status and trends in the biotic health of Ramsar sites from information provided in Ramsar Information Sheets (which is, in any case, often extremely out of date). It is to be hoped that adoption of the COP8 Resolution on status and trends and Article 3.2 will lead to improvements in such status and trends reporting and analysis.

Budget, Bureau and STRP capacity

187. The reality gap seems to be widening between the size, complexity and expectations for delivery and support to countries for delivery of the Convention, on the one hand, and the resources our Parties are prepared to or able to provide, on the other. This is becoming unsustainable.
188. The gap is also widening between Ramsar and UN environment-related Conventions in terms of substantial budget increases for the latter, and minimal increases in Ramsar.
189. Within the Bureau, staff members are acutely aware of the increasing level of overload in all parts of the work required from them, and it remains remarkable that so much of such high quality is delivered by so few. However, this is only achieved by many people working long unpaid hours, extra days and many weekends, with the possibility that stress and frustration levels may increase significantly. This goes for the regional teams, communications, global scientific and technical work, and administrative support as well.
190. The Bureau seems to be a victim of its own success and high level of commitment – it continues to deliver, so the governance is resistant to recognizing that this is often in spite of the levels of staffing and resources, rather than because they are sufficient. With increasing numbers of Parties, and increasing success at getting essential recognition of Ramsar in the wider environmental system (including the complex and time-consuming task of working to improve synergies between Conventions), there is a serious risk of diminishing quality of service to the Parties.

191. It seems highly unlikely, given the long history of a small Convention budget, the recent budget debates, and the impoverished state of the particular parts of environment ministries responsible for Ramsar, that this situation will change in the near future – without a radical change in attitude and thinking. Nevertheless, a critical and imaginative look at what the appropriate Bureau structure should be in order to deliver what Parties instruct would be very valuable in opening out this debate, and it is critical that the COP recognize and understand this as a real and pressing issue for the Convention. There may, however, be some ways of achieving a more realistic capacity despite the current level of core resourcing.
192. The lack of Regional Coordination capacity for Oceania will become critical with the anticipated accessions from Pacific Island States, and the current supporting role of a consultant funded by Australia might offer a model for some future strengthening of Convention capacity on the ground. A future direction for the Convention might be to establish regionally-based country support staff in other parts of the world.
193. The other important weakness is in technical expert capacity, where almost all such matters are currently delivered by the Deputy Secretary General. The establishment of a ‘STRP Support Service’ (draft resolution COP8 – DR 28 bis) will assist in this respect. Nevertheless, despite the increase proposed to COP8 for overall STRP resourcing, the Panel will still be significantly under-resourced for all the work likely to be expected of it, notably for the drafting by experts of guidelines and reports that could be requested by COP8. Also, there is a case for seeking to establish technical thematic posts in the Bureau – the urgent need for a Water Officer provides an example. Secondments from specific countries might be an approach here, and the huge value of Spain having seconding a technical officer for COP8 technical matters provides an excellent example.
194. In conclusion, the Ramsar Convention constitutes, with all its limitations, a success story in the field of international environmental law and governance. The Parties should consider how to build upon this success, by adapting the Convention’s mechanisms to respond more effectively to current demands, and to provide more readily the necessary means for implementation.

ANNEX 1

CONTRACTING PARTIES WHOSE NATIONAL REPORTS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT

As of 18 July 2002

Africa (32): Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia

Asia (21): Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam

Europe (40): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The FYR of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Yugoslavia

Neotropics (20): Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela

North America (3): Canada, Mexico and United States of America

Oceania (3): Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea

CONTRACTING PARTIES WHICH ARE RECENT ACCESSIONS AND THEREFORE NOT EXPECTED TO SUBMIT NATIONAL REPORTS

Africa (1): Burundi

Asia (3): Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

Europe (2): Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cyprus

Neotropics (2): Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia

CONTRACTING PARTIES WHICH HAD NOT SUBMITTED THEIR NATIONAL REPORTS

Africa (2): Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Tunisia

Europe (2): Luxembourg and Malta

Neotropics (2): Belize and Paraguay