

"Wetlands: water, life, and culture"

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to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

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Regional overview of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in Europe

The National Reports upon which this overview is based can be consulted on the Ramsar Web site, on http://ramsar.org/cop8_nr_natl_rpt_index.htm

Contracting Parties in Europe (44): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia.

Contracting Parties whose National Reports are included in this analysis (40): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, 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 Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia.

Contracting Parties yet to submit National Reports (2): Luxembourg, Malta.

Contracting Parties that joined the Convention recently and were therefore not expected to submit a National Report for the triennium 2000-2002 (2): Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus.

1. Main achievements since COP7 and priorities for 2003-2005

The following points are based on the analysis of the information provided in the National Reports for COP8 summarized in detail in section 2. The conclusions and recommendations of the 4th European regional meeting on the Ramsar Convention in October 2001, Bled, Slovenia, are also taken into account.

1.1 Main achievements since COP7

The COP8 National Reports indicate that, during the 2000-2002 triennium, there has been significant effort within the European region in the following areas of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, with more than half of the Contracting Parties having taken significant action:

- A1 Many countries have made considerable progress with the elaboration and implementation of National Wetland Policies or the integration of wetland concerns

into other national policy instruments. Ramsar obligations are now considered in related national policy instruments in nearly all Contracting Parties.

- A2 Wetland restoration and rehabilitation as an element of national planning has received increased attention through Resolution VII.17 since COP7. This has triggered national assessments to identify priority wetlands in need of restoration or rehabilitation in many countries and provided vital resource information at national scale.
- A3 Problems of wetland management in relation to invasive alien species started to be addressed only during this triennium. However, many Contracting Parties have already compiled resource information and are well equipped to develop guidance and promote protocols and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive alien species.
- A4 The active participation and involvement of local stakeholders in wetland site management has progressed significantly during this triennium. The recognition and application of traditional knowledge and cultural aspects of wetlands is increasingly incorporated in management approaches in many countries, often through the establishment of site management committees. There is significant progress, despite the fact that many efforts are still required at many sites.
- A5 Since the adoption of Ramsar's Outreach Programme at COP7 through Resolution VII.9, new actions to promote communication, education and public awareness were launched in many countries. They begin now to receive international focus in a structured and coordinated manner. New education and visitors centres, often linked to nature discovery trails, were established at many wetland sites.
- A6 Wetland issues were incorporated in curricula at many national levels of education in most countries. It is now rare throughout Europe that the term "wetland" is not understood by pupils and the lay person.
- A7 Most of the European Ramsar site managers now have Internet access and the facilities to communicate rapidly and effectively with national authorities and foreign experts.
- A8 With the adoption of a Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List, through Resolution VII.11, a systematic approach started to be applied to identify priority sites and under-represented wetland types in many countries. Slowly, but steadily, this is implemented by the inclusion of karst wetlands, peatlands, wet grasslands and river floodplains in the Ramsar List.
- A9 The first twinnings of Ramsar sites with sites in other countries occurred during this triennium. Increasingly, transboundary wetlands and Ramsar sites are managed through coordinated bi(tri)lateral approaches. Resolution VII.18 triggered the integration of wetland conservation into river basin management planning procedures along several European rivers. Ramsar experts are working increasingly with European river and regional seas commissions.

- A10 The Convention reaches complete coverage in Europe with the accession of Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus and the Republic of Moldova during the triennium; leaving only Andorra (which has indicated its interest to join), the Holy See and San Marino. Increasingly, the coverage of the Convention is also extended to, and Ramsar sites are designated, in dependent territories of European states.

1.2 Priorities for 2003-2005

Comparison of the information provided in the National Reports with the proposed Operational Objectives of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and the conclusions of the European regional meeting suggest the following priorities for the 2003-2005 triennium.

- P1 The inventory of wetlands is an essential and strategic foundation for wetland conservation. Despite notable progress since COP7, very few comprehensive National Wetland Inventories exist in European countries. The establishment of national wetland databases, compatible with the Ramsar Sites Database to ease transfer of information, is equally a high priority.
- P2 The designation of Ramsar sites should be seen as the start of a process, not the end point. site management needs to be considered within wider contexts. Most biodiversity lies outside protected areas. Wetland assessment and monitoring received too little attention so far, despite the requirements of Article 3.2. Regular reviews to identify potential changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites should be installed, including the undertaking of Environmental Impact Assessments in all cases where wetlands are likely affected by development projects. Economic valuation of wetlands needs to become a widespread planning tool.
- P3 Water resource management is a major cross-cutting issue for wetland conservation. Wetlands need better recognition of their significance for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defense, provision of natural resources and products, cultural heritage, and scientific research.
- P4 The relationship between the European Union legal framework and Ramsar obligations needs to be explored in more detail. Incentives for unwise wetland use are still a reality. Perverse economic incentives need to be redressed. The encouragement of the private sector to give increased recognition to wetland attributes, values and functions needs to be continued and expanded. The agricultural sector needs to be addressed more at national and international level about water management conflicts, diffuse pollution sources, and the decline of traditional low-intensity agricultural systems. It is crucial to connect large-scale issues with local ones.
- P5 The adoption of Ramsar's first Outreach Programme at COP7 triggered a number of activities that need to be expanded and coordinated. Communication, education and public awareness needs international focus. Resources need to be provided under the Outreach Programme 2003-2005 to those countries that could not yet afford to undertake national CEPA programmes.
- P6 Maintaining the Ramsar Sites Database and constantly updating it with the best available information is a priority, so that the database can serve as a tool for

monitoring the condition of Ramsar sites. The Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Missions are other available tools to address specific problems. The Ramsar Bureau should be informed without delay of changes affecting Ramsar sites, as required by Article 3.2.

- P7 The Convention's existing regional arrangement for the Mediterranean (MedWet) needs continued support. Other subregional arrangements should be promoted, e.g. for the Baltic, Black Sea, North Sea or European Arctic, the Danube, Oder or other river basins. Such activities should include the inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including the cooperative monitoring of shared species and other assets.
- P8 Contracting Parties should ensure that environmental safeguards and assessments are an integrated component of all development projects that affect wetlands, including domestic, multilateral and foreign investments.
- P9 Contracting Parties need to ensure that the meetings of the Contracting Parties, the new Standing Committee, the new Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and the Bureau operate at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness, providing them with the necessary resources to implement the new Strategic Plan. National Ramsar Committees or similar bodies should be established in those countries where they do not yet exist. Dormant committees need to be reactivated and receive focus.
- P10 Training needs and opportunities started to be identified during the current triennium. This has now to be completed. Successful training activities, including exchanges of personnel and on-the-job training at Ramsar sites, need to be expanded and to receive increased international focus. Besides Contracting Parties, Ramsar's International Organization Partners and other institutions should play an important role in this.

2. Implementation activities undertaken since COP7

The National Report format and planning tool for the triennium 2000-2002 is based on the Strategic Plan 1997-2002. This overview follows, however, the new structure of the proposed Strategic Plan 2003-2008, indicating how the "Actions" reported on in the National Reports for COP8 relate to the "Operational Objectives" of the new Strategic Plan.

2.1 Inventory and assessment

A. Wetland inventory

(Operational Objective 1.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

National wetland inventories are progressing slowly since COP7 and are still far from being complete and comprehensive in most countries. Increasingly, wetland inventory data are integrated into national databases. Only very few countries have already established databases that are compatible with the Ramsar Sites Database and are transferring data available at national level to the Ramsar Database. Most of the European countries have directories of important wetland sites that should serve as shadow lists for future Ramsar site designations.

Comprehensive wetland inventories with national coverage

Analysis: Out of 40 European countries (for which National Reports were available for analysis), 11 (28%) indicated that they have undertaken a comprehensive wetland inventory at national scale, although this was often not substantiated. A further 18 countries (45%) provided probably more realistic answers, indicating that inventories of important sites only, specific wetland types, or in specific areas, were done or are under way. Many countries indicated also that further needs existed to fully integrate inventory data stemming from different sources, and that inventory data still need to be made widely accessible, e.g. through the Internet (*Action 6.1.2*).

Comment: Some progress was detectable during the last triennium with several specific new inventory projects started. However, the National Reports show clearly that much needs still to be done to have comprehensive and comparable national wetland inventories easily accessible at our disposal. At continent scale, the soon-to-be-published pilot study towards a Pan-European wetland inventory by Wetlands International could help stimulate and coordinate further efforts at national level (cf. www.wetlands.org/inventory&/pewi/appeal.htm).

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 6** (submitted to COP8) provides “A Framework for wetland inventory” to elaborate standardized and comprehensive national wetland inventories that are comparable at international scale.

National wetland databases compatible with the Ramsar Database

Analysis: 12 European countries (30%) indicated that they have established a national wetland database compatible with the Ramsar Sites Database and developed a protocol to facilitate exchange and interaction. A further 11 countries (28%) indicated that they are working on establishing such a database (*Action 5.4.4*).

Comment: The establishment of accessible wetland databases that are compatible with the Ramsar Sites Database started only during this triennium. Increasingly, wetland inventory data are directly fed into such electronic databases. In parallel, the Ramsar Sites Database was improved and is regularly updated by Wetlands International. These actions pave the way for facilitated exchanges of data and interaction between national databases and the Ramsar Sites Database, a priority task for the coming triennium.

Recommendation: Increasingly, data from national wetland databases should be transferred to and included into the Ramsar Database. **Draft Resolution 13** (submitted to COP8) provides the tool for “Enhancing the information on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)”, in order to assess and monitor the condition of wetland resources.

National directories of potential Ramsar sites

Analysis: 32 European countries (80%) indicated that they had elaborated a directory of sites qualifying as Ramsar sites. A further 4 countries (10%) indicated that such a directory was in preparation or information about potential Ramsar sites otherwise available (*Action 6.1.1*).

Comment: The National Reports show that most of the Contracting Parties already have substantial information at their disposal to designate additional sites and under-represented wetland types for inclusion in the Ramsar List. Unfortunately, this was followed only in a few countries by actual site designations.

Recommendation: Resolution VII.11, providing a “Strategic framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance” (cf. **Ramsar Handbook 7**), was not much implemented during the past triennium. It merits to be more widely used during the forthcoming triennium (cf. also section 2.10 below).

B. Wetland assessment

(Operational Objective 1.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Wetland assessment and monitoring is not receiving sufficient attention so far, despite the requirement of Article 3.2 of the Convention to report at the earliest possible time on potential ecological change at Ramsar sites. The National Report format addressed this issue only marginally, and the succinct responses are probably not very representative of the real situation. However, these issues figure more prominently in the new Strategic Plan and are addressed in Draft Resolutions 7 and 8 submitted to COP8.

Regular reviews to identify potential changes in ecological character of Ramsar sites

Analysis: 23 countries (58%) indicated that they undertake regular internal reviews to identify factors potentially altering the ecological character of Ramsar sites. A further 10 countries (25%) indicated that reviews only occur on an irregular basis, that only some of their Ramsar sites profit from regular national reviews, or that a system of regular reviews is only in preparation (*Action 5.1.2*).

Comment: Most of the positive answers about regular reviews were surprisingly succinct. It is interpreted that the national Ramsar authorities believe in these cases that an informal combination of public monitoring and private surveillance (by individuals and NGOs) at local level provide sufficient alert about potential ecological change. Several countries explained constraints in terms of available resources to undertake regular preventive reviews. In some cases even partial reviews identified potential or ongoing ecological change and helped to prepare remedial actions. However, it is also feared that in other cases ecological change is occurring unnoticed (cf. also section 2.11B below).

Recommendation: Article 3.2 of the Convention addresses the need for early information about ecological change, a subject that has not yet received sufficient attention. **Draft Resolution 7** on existing gaps in guidance on ecological character and monitoring and **Draft Resolution 8** on assessing and reporting the status and trends of wetlands (submitted to COP8) are proposing to elaborate more specific guidance on these themes and invite Contracting Parties to formally report on potential ecological change at Ramsar sites and other wetlands.

2.2 Policies and legislation, including impact assessment and valuation

A. Policy instruments for wetland wise use

(Operational Objective 2.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Progress in the elaboration of National Wetland Policies, or the integration of wetland concerns into national biodiversity policies, water policies, environmental action plans, river basin management plans, and similar overarching instruments, was significant during this triennium. While in many countries such policies are now in place, they are under preparation in others. Very few countries still experience difficulties in elaborating such policies, in some cases because of a lack of resources.

Analysis: Out of 40 European countries (for which National Reports were available for analysis), 15 indicated that they have in place a National Wetland Policy, and 9 indicated that their national wetland policy forms part of the national nature conservation policy, biodiversity policy, or water management plan (together 60%). A further 5 countries (13%) indicated that a national wetland policy is in preparation, in most cases as part of the national conservation or biodiversity policy. Additional countries indicated that wetlands will be covered in forthcoming policy instruments. The lack of capacities and resources is preventing some countries in transition to work on a national policy for the time being. To the specific question whether Ramsar obligations were considered in related policy instruments, such as national biodiversity strategies, environmental action plans, water policies or river basin management plans, 39 countries (98%) responded affirmatively - a very encouraging result (*Action 2.1.2*).

Comment: Considerable progress was made with the development of national wetland policies in European countries during this triennium. Whereas at the time of COP7 less than half of the Contracting Parties had such policies in place or in preparation, this is now the case for four-fifths of the countries.

Recommendation: Countries that experience difficulties in elaborating a National Wetland Policy, or a similar overarching governmental policy instrument to implement the provisions of the Ramsar Convention, are encouraged to seek specific support from the Ramsar Bureau.

B. Development, review and amendment of policies, legislation, institutions and practices

(Operational Objective 2.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Review of legislation, institutions, and governmental plans at national scale is progressing significantly, mainly thanks to similar processes carried out for other conventions (notably the Convention on Biological Diversity) and the European Union (covering now 15 member states plus 11 accession states). However, many of the newly independent states (of former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union) are lagging behind in this process, essentially due to a lack of capacity and resources. Economic valuation of wetlands is progressing steadily, but much still needs to be done. While environmental impact assessments are required by law in *quasi* all countries, they are still only undertaken in a limited number of cases where development projects are likely to change the ecological character of Ramsar sites or other wetlands.

Review of laws, institutions and governmental plans related to wetlands

Analysis: 17 countries (43%) indicated that they have completed a review of law and institutions relating to wetlands. A further 9 countries (23%) indicated that such a review was under way (*Action 2.1.1*). On a similar question (*Action 2.5.4*), 14 countries (35%) responded that they have undertaken a review of all governmental plans, programmes and policies which may impact negatively on wetlands, and a further 10 countries (25%) indicated that this was in progress. Finally, a related question (*Action 4.1.1*) focused on the national institutions responsible for wetland conservation and the designated Ramsar Administrative Authorities. To this, 21 countries (53%) responded that these institutions have the necessary resources to support the increasing demands being placed upon them by the growing expectations of the Convention.

Comment: Reviewing national policies, institutions and development plans is an efficient, strategic exercise. While the National Reports for COP7 indicated that only very few (mainly western European) countries had completed such exercises by then, substantial progress was achieved during this triennium. Now, about two thirds of the countries have completed their reviews or are undertaking them. European Union legislation and integration procedures, covering 26 member and accession states, are providing a favorable context to undertake such reviews. This creates substantial synergies. Their potential for future actions should be stressed. A matter of concern is, however, that nearly half of the countries (mainly eastern European) are indicating that they still have neither the capacities nor the resources to undertake strategic reviews nor to implement fully the expectations of the Convention.

Recommendation: The lack of resources to implement fully the obligations of the Convention and to plan ahead strategically should be clearly addressed by the Contracting Parties in order to find means (cf. **Draft Resolution 29** on the Ramsar Small Grants Fund and the establishment of a Ramsar Endowment Fund submitted to COP8) and financial partners.

Environmental impact assessments and economic wetland evaluations

Analysis: 19 European countries (48%) indicated that EIAs are required for all cases where a wetland area (whether a Ramsar site or not) may be adversely impacted due to a development proposal, and a further 18 (45%) indicated that this was required at least in some cases (*Action 2.5.3*). However, only 19 (48%) indicated that an EIA was carried out in all cases where a change in the ecological character of a Ramsar site was likely as a result of proposed developments, and 14 (35%) indicated that this was done at least in some cases (*Action 2.5.2*). 21 (53%) indicated that economic valuations of the full range of services, benefits and functions of wetlands are prepared as part of impact assessments and to support planning decisions in all or some cases (*Action 2.4.1*).

Comment: Economic valuation of wetlands is progressing. The National Reports for COP7 indicated that economic wetland valuation was undertaken in about one third of the countries (essentially western European). This is now the case in more than half of them (in eastern and western Europe). No progress can however be detected in the field of EIAs. In 1998, almost all countries reported already that EIAs were required for activities likely to have a significant effect on wetlands. It is therefore difficult to understand why, more than three years later, every Ramsar site where proposed developments are likely to

affect its ecological character still does not benefit from an EIA according to the state of the art? In some cases, a lack of political will to implement existing legislation was detectable.

Recommendation: The issue requires further attention and is addressed in **Draft Resolution 9** (submitted to COP8) providing guidelines for incorporating biodiversity-related issues into environmental impact assessment legislation and in strategic environmental assessment procedures.

2.3. Integration of wetland wise use into sustainable development

A. Methodologies for wetland conservation and wise use

(Operational Objective 3.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

The development and dissemination of methodologies to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands is still at early stage. The issue was not strategically addressed in the National Report format. Consequently, only little and piecemeal information was provided by Contracting Parties.

Additional guidance on wise use to provide advice on specific issues

Analysis: 11 countries (28%) indicated that they have reviewed their resource materials relating to wetland management policies and practices. A further 6 countries (15%) indicated that such reviews are progressing (*Action 2.3.2*). Succinct answers on available resource materials were received from 13 countries relating to oil spill prevention and clean-up and to agricultural runoff, from 9 countries relating to urban and industrial discharges, and from 17 countries relating to other relevant aspects such as highway design, aquaculture, etc.

Comment: While promoting and improving the availability of such resource materials was a priority under the Convention's Outreach Programme 2000-2002 (Resolution VII.9), actions to translate the wise use principle into specific guidance and management advice are still few and far between.

Recommendation: The need to make available and disseminate additional guidance to provide advice on specific issues is reiterated in **Draft Resolution 31** (submitted to COP8) detailing the Convention's Outreach Programme 2003-2005.

B. Peatlands

(Operational Objective 3.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Ensuring the conservation and wise use of peatlands as a demonstration of the ecosystem-based approach under the Convention is a new focus in the proposed Strategic Plan 2003-2008, introduced through Recommendation 7.1. 23 countries (58%) responded that they are giving special attention to the designation of peatlands as under-represented types of Ramsar sites (*Action 6.2.3*), cf. section 2.10 below. **Draft Resolution 17** (submitted to COP8) provides guidelines for global action on peatlands.

C. Recognition of wetland values and functions

(Operational Objective 3.3 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Recognition of the significance of wetlands for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defence, food security, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and scientific research is a new focus in the proposed Strategic Plan 2003-2008. The issue was not specifically addressed in the National Report format. Most of these vital issues will be addressed during COP8 at different places.

D. Integration of wetland policies into broader planning and management from local to national scales

(Operational Objective 3.4 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Using experience gained from local case studies to develop policies and guidance at regional and national level is a new activity started during this triennium. It was only partially addressed in the National Report format. However, the opportunity exists now to ensure that new water management policies and spatial planning strategies (notably of the European Union) are taking wetland ecosystems and their management concerns into account in a more integrated way.

Analysis: 17 European countries (43%) indicated that they are implementing integrated river basin and coastal zone management approaches with wetlands being given special consideration. A further 16 (40%) indicated that this is happening in part of their country, or through specific pilot projects only, at this stage (*Action 2.2.2*).

Comment: Making wetland management and conservation an integrated part of planning activities and decision-making processes at national and sub-national levels, particularly concerning territorial management, groundwater management, river basin management, coastal and marine zone planning is increasingly becoming a major issue. COP7 adopted guidelines for integrating wetland conservation into river basin management (cf. **Ramsar Handbook 4**) and Contracting Parties began to implement them in several cases. The European Union Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) is providing a general policy context for these concerns, directly applicable in 26 member and accession states, and of interest to other European countries as well.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 1** on allocation of water to wetlands, **DR 4** on integrated coastal zone management, and **DR 14** on management planning (submitted to COP8) are providing further guidance and tools to implement these objectives.

2.4 Restoration and rehabilitation

(Operational Objective 4 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Resolution VII.17 addressed wetland restoration as an element of national planning and triggered nationwide assessments to identify wetlands in need of restoration in a substantial number of countries over the past triennium. More needs to be done to identify all those wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be cost-effective and yield long-term benefits. Then it will become urgent to find the resources needed to implement the necessary measures to recover these sites.

Analysis: 11 European countries (28%) indicated that they have completed an assessment to identify priority wetlands in need of restoration or rehabilitation. A further 19 (48%) indicated that such an assessment is under way. 29 countries (73%) indicated that resource information for restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands was available at national scale, while 7 (18%) indicated that this was not the case (*Actions 2.6.1 and 2.6.2*).

Comment: Wetland restoration and rehabilitation was already addressed in the National Reports for COP7, where many countries indicated that they are undertaking activities in this field. Since then, Resolution VII.17, on restoration as an element of national planning for wetland conservation and wise use, has triggered the assessment activities mentioned above. More needs to be done. Some countries indicated that a lack of sufficient resources is hindering more wetland restoration projects from being undertaken.

Recommendation: Wetland restoration and rehabilitation remains a priority for which more resources need to be made available. **Draft Resolution 16** (submitted to COP8), providing principles and guidelines for wetland restoration, will hopefully have a catalytic role in this context.

2.5 Invasive alien species

(Operational Objective 5 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Only recently, awareness about this issue is growing in Europe: 23 countries (58%) indicated that they have resource information on wetland management in relation to invasive species, while 11 (28%) indicated that they do not (*Action 2.3.1*). **Draft Resolution 18** (submitted to COP8) provides guidance for protocols and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive alien species in wetland systems.

2.6 Local communities, indigenous people, and cultural values

(Operational Objective 6 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

The active participation of local stakeholders in Ramsar and wetland site management is crucial for its success and sustainability. Substantial progress is reported during this triennium. However, it is a matter of concern that some countries are still lacking resources or capacities in this context. An analysis of existing management committees indicates clearly that only a few Ramsar and other wetland sites are already profiting from such structures, and that many efforts are still required in this field. This holds equally for the recognition and application of traditional knowledge and management practices and other cultural aspects of wetlands.

Active and informed participation of local communities in wetland wise use

Analysis: 34 countries (85%) indicated that they are actively promoting the involvement of local communities in the management of wetlands. 31 (78%) indicated that they actively encourage or support site managers and local communities in monitoring the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands (*Actions 2.7.1 and 2.7.2*).

Comment: Wise use and management of Ramsar and other wetland sites is a cornerstone of the Convention. The active participation of local stakeholders in these activities is crucial

for the success and sustainability of any wetland management. Significant progress was reported during this triennium, since in the National Reports submitted to COP7 only about 30% of the countries responded positively. However, it is disturbing to read that a minority of countries report about institutional conflicts, lack of resources, lack of information or lack of capacities preventing them from doing so. The Ramsar Bureau is offering them priority advice and support to remedy this situation rapidly. Anything below 100% of the Contracting Parties actively engaged in this matter cannot suffice.

Recommendation: **Ramsar Handbook 5** acknowledges the active and informed participation of local communities, stakeholders and decision-makers as a prerequisite for sustainable site management. **Draft Resolution 7** (submitted to COP8) provides further guidance on wetland ecological character, inventory, assessment and monitoring.

Wetland management committees with stakeholder representation

Analysis: 31 European countries (78%) indicated that wetland site management committees are in place on their territory. The table below provides the detailed answers for how many sites such committees are in place, how many of them are Ramsar sites, and how many of the committees include representatives of local stakeholders and women's groups. The table shows minimum numbers, as sometimes the report did not cover all sites adequately (*Action 2.7.3*).

Contracting Parties	Number of wetland management committees	Number of Ramsar sites	Number of management committees at Ramsar sites (RS)	Committees at RS with local stakeholder representation	Committees at RS with women's representation
Albania	0	1	0	0	0
Armenia	0	2	0	0	0
Austria	yes	11	?	?	?
Belarus	0	3	0	0	0
Belgium	yes	6	most RS	1	0
Bulgaria	6	5	3	3	0
Croatia	1	4	1	1	0
Czech Republic	no answer	10	?	?	?
Denmark	50	38	20	20	0
Estonia	3	10	most RS	3	3
Finland	yes	11	?	?	?
France	yes	18	?	?	?
Georgia	0	2	0	0	0
Germany	24	31	14	7	0
Greece	1	7	?	?	?
Hungary	2	21	2	2	1
Iceland	2	3	2	2	0
Ireland	?	45	5	5	0
Italy	yes	46	?	?	?
Latvia	6	3	3	3	0
Liechtenstein	1	1	1	1	0
Lithuania	1	5	1	1	0
Monaco	0	1	0	0	0
Netherlands	1	24	1	1	0
Norway	1	23	1	1	0

Poland	4	8	4	4	0
Portugal	in prep.	12	?	?	?
Rep. Moldova	no answer	1	?	?	?
Romania	2	2	2	2	0
Russian Fed.	yes	35	?	?	?
Slovakia	5	12	4	4	0
Slovenia	1	2	1	1	1
Spain	10	38	10	10	0
Sweden	yes	51	?	?	?
Switzerland	yes	8	8	8	0
TFYR Macedonia	0	1	0	0	0
Turkey	yes	9	?	?	?
Ukraine	10	22	10	10	0
United Kingdom	76	167	76	70	0
Yugoslavia	5	4	2	2	2

Comment: The analysis above shows that, although a substantial number of management committees are operating at European Ramsar sites and other wetlands, many more still need to be established to cover even the most important and complex sites.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 14** (submitted to COP8) provides new guidelines for management planning, also addressing the need for local management committees. **DR 15** sets up the “San José Record” of well-managed Ramsar sites. The above-listed criteria will certainly be taken into account when listing the first sites.

Apply traditional knowledge and management practice

Analysis: 27 European countries (68%) indicated that they made special efforts to recognize and see traditional knowledge and management practices applied in the conservation and wise use of wetlands (*Action 2.7.4*).

Comment: This issue is increasingly being taken into account since COP7. The motto of COP8, “Wetlands: water, life and culture”, places it into a broader context by focusing on different cultural aspects as tools for wetland management and conservation. We are most likely at the beginning of the development of a major new approach to wetland management. The Convention should address this seriously, as it is likely to create many synergies and new arguments for wetland conservation.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 19** (submitted to COP8) provides guiding principles for identifying cultural aspects of wetlands and incorporating them into the efficient management of sites.

2.7 Private sector involvement

(Operational Objective 7 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Many Contracting Parties report briefly on their efforts of involving the private sector at different levels in wetland conservation and management. Others detail the problems they have encountered in doing so. Unfortunately, the issue does not figure on the agenda of COP8. More guidance on how to implement this Operational Objective is clearly needed.

Analysis: Out of 40 European countries (for which National Reports were available for analysis), 27 (68%) indicated that they encouraged the private sector to give increased recognition to wetland attributes, functions and values when carrying out projects affecting wetlands, at least in some cases. Only 14 countries (35%) encouraged the private sector to work in partnership with site managers to monitor the ecological character of wetlands (*Actions 2.8.1 and 2.8.3*).

Comment: A number of countries (eastern and western) detail the difficulties they encounter in involving the private sector in wetland management. Entering into an active dialogue with the private sector, on how to implement the concept of environmental engagement and active commitment for sustainable development (established during the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio 1992), seems still to pose problems to a number of Ramsar Administrative Authorities, either because they lack guidance on how to go about it or because they cannot identify counterparts available in the private sector. The formulation of the questions in the National Report format was not very helpful to provide substantial answers either. Furthermore, the issue seems no longer to be the flavour of the day.

Recommendation: Even if the issue is not tabled at COP8, the preparation of more detailed guidance on how to involve the private sector in wetland conservation and management would be helpful.

2.8 Incentives

(Operational Objective 8 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Only 14 countries (35%) report about reviews of their incentive measures to encourage conservation and wise use of wetlands, following Resolution VII.15 (*Action 2.8.2*). Little progress was made during this triennium. **Draft Resolution 23** (submitted to COP8) is intended to redress the balance by reiterating the importance of incentive measures as tools for achieving the wise use of wetlands.

2.9 Communication, education, and public awareness

(Operational Objective 9 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Since the adoption of a Ramsar Outreach Programme (through Resolution VII.9), actions to promote communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) to support the implementation of the Convention were multiplied throughout this triennium and are starting to receive international focus. CEPA activities are vital for the Convention, and they need to be pursued and extended. Means need to be found to undertake CEPA programmes also in those countries that may not yet be able to afford to do so. Urgently, governmental and non-governmental focal points need to be designated in those countries that have not yet done so. Draft Resolution 31 provides an outline for the Outreach Programme for the years 2003-2005.

Implementing the Convention's Outreach Programme

Analysis: 28 European countries (70%) indicated that they identified education and public awareness needs and established priorities for resource development. Although the question in the National Report format was addressing "regional" (in the sense of "supra-

national”) needs, most of the countries specified their needs at national level. Only 14 (35%) reported on the development of CEPA resource materials. Again, while the National Report was asking about assistance for the development of international resource materials, only few of the national materials developed were actually made available to the Ramsar Bureau for international use. However, 21 (53%) detailed their specific support to international programmes that encourage transfer of information, knowledge and skills between wetland educators. Unfortunately, only 17 (43%) did encourage partnerships between governments, NGOs and others capable of developing national CEPA programmes. Still, 26 (65%) reported on the existence of 253 educational centres at wetlands, including 170 centres at European Ramsar sites. The UK heads the list with 55 education centres at Ramsar sites, plus more elsewhere. Austria has education centres at 82% of its Ramsar sites, or 9 out of 11. At European level, 15 more centres are currently established at 11 Ramsar sites and other wetlands; 54 more centres are planned. 25 (63%) report on their work with museums, etc., to develop exhibits and programmes that support wetland CEPA. 27 (68%) report on wetland modules included in educational curricula at national level. Only Switzerland and Spain made financial contributions to increase the Bureau’s capacity for implementing the Outreach Programme. 24 (60%) report about steps undertaken to provide Internet access to Ramsar site managers (*Actions 3.1.2 to 3.3.4*).

Comment: Already for the triennium leading to COP7, many different CEPA activities were reported. Since the adoption of Resolution VII.9, actions to promote communication, education and public awareness to support the implementation of the Convention should be coordinated at international level under Ramsar’s Outreach Programme, which is now up and running. To this end, strategic and international aspects of national CEPA programmes merit increased attention. CEPA actions are vital for implementing the Convention. They remain a priority in the new Strategic Plan and for the coming triennium. Those countries which may not yet be able to afford to invest in CEPA activities at national level should seriously consider how to become able to do so in future. Governmental and non-governmental CEPA focal points should urgently be designated in Albania, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia, to coordinate and make the results of Ramsar’s Outreach Programme available for national activities.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 31** (submitted to COP8) is introducing the Convention’s Communications, Education and Public Awareness Programme for 2003-2005.

2.10 Designation of Ramsar sites

A. Application of the Strategic Framework

(Operational Objective 10.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

At COP7 a Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List was adopted. Its application through designation of under-represented wetland types as Ramsar sites has made some progress through the triennium, however much less than expected from the announcements made by Contracting Parties at COP7 or in National Reports. Increased focus on the implementation of the Strategic Framework is therefore needed.

Increasing the area of under-represented wetland types of the Ramsar List

Analysis: 26 European countries (65%) indicated that they had taken a systematic approach to identifying their future Ramsar sites as promoted in Resolution VII.11. 29 (73%) reported that they had given specific attention to identifying under-represented wetland types for designation. Only 16 countries (40%) paid particular attention to designating new sites that did not yet enjoy special conservation status at national level, as a first step towards developing measures for their conservation and wise use. (*Actions 6.2.1 to 6.2.4*).

Comment: The statistics of the general answers provided in the National Reports do not provide a clear picture of the reality. Even if many countries have taken a systematic approach to identifying sites for designation for the Ramsar List, this has not yet been followed by concrete acts in most cases. Resolution VII.12 lists pledges of 20 European Contracting Parties about the designation of 272 new Ramsar sites in the National Reports for or during COP7. As of September 2002, however, only 70 new sites have been designated by them. While it can be stated that many of these sites were indeed selected according to the criteria outlined in Resolution VII.11, much still needs to be done.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 10** (submitted to COP8) reiterates the need to implement the Strategic Framework and Vision for the Ramsar List.

B. Maintenance and use of the Ramsar Sites Database

(Operational Objective 10.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Unfortunately, most of the Contracting Parties are hardly implementing Resolution VI.13 requesting them to provide the Bureau with maps and updated Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) at least every six years for monitoring purposes (*Actions 5.3.1 to 5.3.3*). The fact that good quality maps exist only for 27% of the European Ramsar sites, and that updated RISs are available only for 49% of them, is a matter of concern. Does this lack of information reflect the state of conservation and management of these sites? **Draft Resolution 13** (submitted to COP8) addresses the issue of the urgent need to enhance the information on Wetlands of International Importance.

2.11 Management planning and monitoring of Ramsar sites

A. Maintenance of the ecological character of all Ramsar sites

(Operational Objective 11.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Development and implementation of management plans at all Ramsar sites has been a central objective of the Convention's Strategic Plan for many years. Little, but noticeable, progress was made during this triennium, just about achieving the target of 50% of all Ramsar sites to benefit from management plans in place or in preparation by the time of COP8. More, sustained efforts and allocation of additional resources are still needed to achieve the strategic objective.

Implementing management plans, including local communities and other stakeholders

Analysis: 36 countries (90%) report that the measures required to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar sites have been documented, at least for some of the sites (*Action 5.1.1*). Albania, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Romania, and Switzerland report that *all* Ramsar sites in their country have a management plan in place (although not always fully implemented) (*Action 5.2.3*). Together, the Contracting Parties report on 249 European Ramsar sites (35%) with management plans that are implemented fully. For another 187 sites (27%), management plans are in preparation or have been prepared but are not yet applied (cf. table below, providing minimum numbers as not all sites were adequately covered). 34 countries (85%) are using zoning and 31 countries (78%) strict protection measures to regulate the activities allowed in different part of the wetlands, for those sites where it is warranted (*Actions 5.2.4 and 5.2.5*).

Contracting Parties	Number of Ramsar sites (1999/2002)	Ramsar sites with management plans being implemented (1999/2002)	Ramsar sites with management plans (being) prepared (1999/2002)	Ramsar sites without management plans (1999/2002)
Albania	1 / 1	0 / 0	1 / 1	0 / 0
Armenia	2 / 2	0 / 0	1 / 1	1 / 1
Austria	9 / 11	4 / 8	5 / 2	0 / 1
Belarus	- / 3	- / 1	- / 0	- / 2
Belgium	6 / 6	4 / 4	0 / 1	2 / 1
Bulgaria	5 / 5	0 / 0	5 / 5	0 / 0
Croatia	4 / 4	? / 0	? / 1	? / 3
Czech Republic	10 / 10	6 / ?	3 / ?	1 / 1
Denmark	38 / 38	4 / 6	6 / ?	28 / ?
Estonia	10 / 10	1 / 3	9 / 4	0 / 0
Finland	11 / 11	0 / 2	4 / 1	7 / ?
France	18 / 18	0 / 18	0 / 0	18 / 0
Georgia	2 / 2	0 / 0	1 / 2	1 / 0
Germany	31 / 31	10 / 12	16 / 7	5 / 3
Greece	10 / 10	8 / 8	0 / 2	2 / 0
Hungary	20 / 21	6 / 18	13 / 2	1 / 1
Iceland	3 / 3	0 / 0	0 / 2	3 / 1
Ireland	45 / 45	0 / 0	31 / 43	14 / 2
Italy	46 / 46	3 / ?	8 / ?	? / ?
Latvia	3 / 3	1 / ?	2 / 3	0 / 0
Liechtenstein	1 / 1	0 / 1	1 / 0	0 / 0
Lithuania	5 / 5	1 / 1	1 / 4	3 / 0
Monaco	1 / 1	0 / ?	0 / ?	0 / ?
Netherlands	24 / 24	18 / 24	0 / 0	? / 0
Norway	23 / 23	7 / 7	7 / 2	? / ?
Poland	8 / 8	1 / 5	5 / 3	2 / 0
Portugal	10 / 12	2 / 2	4 / 3	? / 7
Rep. Moldova	- / 1	- / ?	- / ?	- / ?
Romania	1 / 2	1 / 1	0 / 1	0 / 0
Russian Fed.	35 / 35	0 / 7	6 / 28	29 / 0
Slovakia	12 / 12	0 / 0	7 / 10	5 / 2
Slovenia	1 / 2	0 / 0	1 / 2	0 / 0
Spain	38 / 38	11 / 16	6 / 6	21 / 16
Sweden	30 / 51	16 / ?	0 / ?	14 / 4
Switzerland	8 / 8	8 / 8	0 / 0	0 / 0
TFYR Macedonia	1 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 0

Turkey	9 / 9	1 / ?	4 / 0	4 / 7
Ukraine	22 / 22	0 / ?	7 / ?	15 / 8
United Kingdom	131 / 167	57 / 116	32 / 42	? / 24
Yugoslavia	4 / 4	? / 1	? / 2	0 / 1

“ ? ” indicates that no, insufficient, or conflicting information was provided in the National Reports for COP7 and COP8 respectively.

Comment: Management planning and its implementation is considered a crucial method to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands. The status of management plans for Ramsar sites was already addressed and tabulated in the regional implementation overview at COP7 (DOC. 9 and 10). Significant progress with implementing management plans was achieved during this triennium in Estonia, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, the Russian Federation, Spain, and the UK. Still, there is a long way to go, until each European Ramsar site benefits from the implementation of a management plan.

Recommendation: **Draft Recommendation 14** (submitted to COP8) proposes extended and updated guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands.

B. Monitoring the condition of Ramsar sites, including application of Article 3.2 and Montreux Record

(Operational Objective 11.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Monitoring the conditions of Ramsar sites is not yet a regular activity everywhere (cf. above chapter 2.1B). Changes affecting Ramsar sites are only notified to the Bureau on rare occasions, though this is an obligation under Article 3.2. During the reporting triennium, six sites could be removed from the Montreux Record, and one new site was listed. Procedures to remove three more sites are advanced, and efforts to remove seven other sites are under way. No progress was reported, however, on 15 sites (52%) during this period.

The Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAM)

Twenty-nine European Ramsar sites are currently listed in the Montreux Record. During this triennium, six sites were removed from the Montreux Record: artificial lake Kerkiní, Evros delta, lake Mikri Prespa (Greece), Laguna di Orbetello, Palude della Diacca Botrona, and Torre Guaceto (Italy). This was possible thanks to the work of a group of Greek experts, pointing out solutions for the Greek sites, and two earlier Ramsar Advisory Missions to Greece, and thanks to the recommendations elaborated by a RAM to the three Italian Ramsar sites in November 1998.

During this triennium, substantial progress was made in preparing for the removal of three sites from the Montreux Record: Novozamecky a Brehynsky rybník (Czech Republic), Ringkøbing Fjord (RAM in August 1996) (Denmark), and Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer und Dollart (RAM in September 1990) (Germany). The specific questionnaire for removal of the Montreux Record (as annexed to Resolution VI.1) was submitted for the Czech and German sites and circulated to STRP for comment. Currently, the Contracting Parties are dealing with remaining issues pointed out by STRP and the Bureau. Preparations for the removal of another seven sites were reported during this triennium: De Ijzerbroeken te

Diksnuide en Lo-Renige, Schorren van de Beneden Schelde (RAM in February 1988) (Belgium), Stagno di Cagliari, Stagno di Molentargius (Italy), Jezioro Siedmiu Wysp, Slonsk reserve (Poland), and the Dee Estuary (RAMs in February 1993 and November 1994) (UK). A Ramsar Advisory Mission, jointly with IUCN and World Heritage, was undertaken to Srebarna (Bulgaria). This was the second RAM (after one in April 1992 and a visit in October 1998), and its recommendations should allow for the removal of the site in the near future.

The Ouse Washes (UK) were put on the Montreux Record in 2000; a subsequent Ramsar Advisory Mission took place in November 2001; its recommendations are currently finalized. A Ramsar Advisory Mission is in preparation for Doñana (Spain). National Reports made reference to remedial actions at the following six Montreux Record sites: Durankulak lake (Bulgaria), Litovelské Pomoravi, Trebonska rybniky (Czech Republic), Slonsk Reserve, Jezioro Siedmiu Wysp (Poland), las Tablas de Daimiel (RAM in MArch 1988) (Spain). No reports on specific remedial actions have been received for the following 11 sites: Donau-March-Auen (Austria), Kopacki Rit (Croatia), Amvrakikos gulf, Axios Loudias Aliakmon delta, Kotychi lagoons, lake Vistonis Porto Lagos lake Ismaris and adjoining lagoons, lakes Volvi and Koronia, Messolonghi lagoons (RAMs in November 1988 and May 1989) (Greece), Karkinitiski and Dzharylgatska bays, Tendrivska bay, and Yagorlytska bay (Ukraine) (*Action 5.1.3*).

It should be noted that Ramsar Advisory Missions were also undertaken to the Ebro delta (Spain, September 2000), Sumava peatlands (Czech Republic, June 2001), and Mühlenberger Loch (Germany, September 2001), although these sites were not previously listed on the Montreux Record.

Ramsar Bureau site visits

Ramsar Bureau visits in response to invitations by local and/or national authorities were undertaken to the Ramsar sites Wetlands of Central Kolkheti (Georgia) in December 2000 and to the Nestos delta and Adjoining Lagoons in July 2002 to discuss problems of ecological change as a consequence of important development projects. Additional visits were undertaken to the wetland complexes of Schinias (Greece) in May 2001 and of Akrotiri peninsula (UK Sovereign Base Area on Cyprus) in June 2002, two sites qualifying for Ramsar designation and experiencing similar development problems.

Article 3.2

In addition to the sites reported above, the Bureau was made aware of negative ecological change occurring at 152 additional Ramsar sites during this triennium, notably: lakes Sevan and Arpi (Armenia), Karavasta and Narta lagoons, the latter not yet designated as a Ramsar site (Albania), Rotmoos, Stauseen am Unteren Inn, Neusiedler See-Seewinkel, Pürgschachener Moor, Rheindelta, Hörfeld Moor (Austria), Sporovsky Biological Reserve, Mid-Prityat State Landscape Zakaznik, plus two potential Ramsar Sites: Elnia, Osveiski (Belarus), Zwin, Vlaamse Banken (Belgium), lake Shabla (Bulgaria), Crna Mlaka, Lonjsko Polje & Mokro Polje, Delta Neretve (Croatia), Mokradý dolního, Poodří (Czech Republic), all 11 Greenland Ramsar sites (Denmark), Alma-Pedja Nature Reserve, Hiiumaa Islets and Käina Bay, Endla Nature Reserve, Matsalu State Nature Reserve, Soomaa National Park, Vilsandi National Park (Estonia), Vanhankaupunginlahti and Laajalahti Bays (Finland), Galenbecker See, Rheinauen zwischen Eltville und Bingen, Unterer Niederrhein

(Germany), Béda-Karapanca, Gemenc, Kis-Balaton, Pacsmag, Szaporca, plus Hortobagy, Martely, Pusztaszer affected by the Tizsa river pollution originating in Romania (Hungary), Myvatn-Laxa region, Thjörðsarver (Iceland), Laguna di Orbetello (Italy), lake Kanieris (Latvia), Ruggeller Riet (Liechtenstein), Is-Simar (Malta), Waddenzee (Netherlands), Akersvika, Froan, Ilene & Pesterödkilen, Oerlandet, Tautra & Svaet (Norway), lake Karas, lake Luknajno, Slowinski National Park (Poland), lower Prut lakes (Republic of Moldova), Danube delta (Romania), Aiguamolls de l'Empordá, Rías de Ortigueira y Ladriga (Spain), Hornborgasjön (Sweden), Bolle di Magadino (Switzerland), lake Manyas (Turkey), Kyliiske mouth, Dniester Turunchuk crossriver area, Shatsk lakes (Ukraine), Alde-Ore estuary, Alt estuary, Arun valley, Avon valley, Benfleet and Southend marshes, Bertha's beach, Blackwater estuary, Breydon water, Broadland and Bure marshes, Carlingford lough, Chesil beach and the Fleet, Chichester and Langstone Harbours, Chippenham fen, Colne estuary, Cors Caron, Cors Fochno & Dyfi, Corsydd Môn a Llyn, Crymlin bog, Dengie, Derwent Ings, Dorset heathlands, Duddon estuary, Duich moss, Eastwaite water, Exe estuary, Fairy water bogs, Foulness, Garron plateau, Gibraltar point, Hamford water, Hickling broad and Horsey mere, Humber flats, Hungry Bay Mangrove Swamp, Isles of Scilly, Leighton Moss, Lindisfarne, Lower Derwent valley, Llyn Tegid, Loch Druidibeg, Loch Leven, Lough Foyle, Lough Neagh & Lough Beg, Loch of Kinnordy, Loch of Strathbeg, Medway estuary and marshes, Midland meres and mosses, New Forest, Old Hall marshes, Paget Marsh, Pagham harbour, Pettigoe plateau, Pevensey levels, Poole harbour, Portsmouth harbour, Redgrave & South Lopham fens, Ribble and Alt estuaries, Rostherne mere, Rutland water, Sea Lion island, Severn estuary, Silver Flowe, Slieve Beagh, Solent & Southampton water, Somerset levels and moors, Spittal pond, Stodmarsh, Stour and Orwell estuaries, Teesmouth and Cleveland coast, Thames estuary and marshes, Thanet coast and Sandwich bay, the Swale, Thursley and Ockley bog, Warwick pond, Woodwalton fen, Upper Lough Erne, Ythan estuary and Meikle loch (UK), Ludas lake (Yugoslavia). In many cases, information about ecological change was provided to the Bureau through non-governmental sources, despite the fact that Article 3.2 stipulates that Contracting Parties should pass such information without delay to the Bureau.

Comment: The Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Missions continue to prove to be efficient means to help identifying problems and preparing solutions for different sites. Recommendations elaborated through RAMs often take time to be fully implemented, several years or more. This is a sign of the complex nature of the problems to be solved, rather than a sign of inefficient mission procedures. It is disturbing, however, that over half of the listed Montreux Record sites did not receive sufficient attention during the triennium to launch a process to find solutions. Furthermore, it is obvious that there are many more Ramsar sites in Europe that would qualify to be included on the Montreux Record, as shown by the regular correspondence the Bureau receives from concerned scientists, local experts and non-governmental organizations. The fact that Contracting Parties started asking for Ramsar Bureau visits or formal RAMs, even without prior listing the site on the Montreux Record, is proof of this situation.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 7** on gaps in guidance on wetland ecological character and **Draft Resolution 8** on reporting change in ecological character under Article 3.2 of the Convention (submitted to COP8) propose ways forward to address these issues more clearly and to use Ramsar methodological tools in an efficient way.

2.12 Management of shared water resources, wetlands and wetland species

A. Inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins (Operational Objective 12.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Twenty-seven countries (68%) reported that they consider it a matter of priority to designate transfrontier wetland sites (*Action 6.2.5*). On World Wetlands Day 2000, the Prime Ministers of Albania, Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia declared a trilateral park for the Prespa lakes area. In August 2001, Austria, the Czech and Slovak Republic created a trilateral Ramsar platform for the Morava-Dyje floodplain Ramsar sites, nominating at the same time four NGOs active in the region for many years for the Ramsar Award 2002 (which was attributed to them by the Standing Committee in spring 2002). During the 4th European regional meeting on the Ramsar Convention in 2001, a preliminary list of 38 transboundary wetland areas was published, where at least one Ramsar site had already been designated, to encourage Contracting Parties to consider complementary designations as a next step. This Operational Objective of the new Strategic Plan should receive increased attention, as it is one way of addressing more adequately the obligations listed in Article 5 of the Convention.

B. Cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species (Operational Objective 12.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Thirty-three countries (83%) indicate that they regularly gather waterbird population data (*Action 6.1.4*). Unfortunately, no specific question was asked about cooperative monitoring or migratory corridor (e.g. fish) and flyway-scale (birds) management cooperation at international level. This should receive increased attention in view of the obligations listed in Article 5 of the Convention.

C. Support and promotion of regional arrangements under the Convention (Operational Objective 12.3 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

The National Report format did not make any reference to arrangements such as the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com). Similar regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention are now proposed in **Draft Resolution 30** (submitted to COP8).

2.13 Collaboration with other multilateral environmental agreements and institutions (Operational Objective 13 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Collaboration with other multilateral environmental agreements and institutions is only at an early stage. Mainly only those few countries where other agreements are administered within the same department, or by the same people who also deal with Ramsar, report on concrete activities. Concrete ways how to establish coordination and execute joint activities, in order to create synergies and added value, rather than only additional work, still need to be developed and disseminated as case studies with lessons to be learnt.

Analysis: 21 European countries (53%) report that they have mechanisms (such as an inter-ministerial committee) at the national level with the charter of coordinating and integrating the implementation of international and regional conventions and treaties. However, from the explanations provided, it seems that in most cases existing coordination committees

are not really inter-ministerial, but set up within the Environment Ministry only (*Action 7.2.1*). 15 countries (38%) report that they have completed a review of the Joint Work Plan between Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and established areas of priority for cooperative implementation of these two conventions. In most of these cases, this was facilitated by the fact that both conventions are administered by the same department, sometimes the same persons (*Action 7.2.3*).

Comment: Progress with strengthening and formalizing linkages between Ramsar and other environmental conventions was slow during this triennium. No specific reports on inter-ministerial cooperation were received. The advantages of such cooperation are outlined in **Ramsar Handbook 9**. Working as partners with other multilateral environment agreements and agencies is Operational Objective 13 of the new Strategic Plan. However, the theme is not addressed by any draft resolution submitted for COP8.

Recommendation: The advantages and synergies from working in partnership with other environmental agreements should be illustrated through case studies, in order to elaborate more tangible proposals on how to go about it.

2.14 Sharing of expertise and information

(Operational Objective 14 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Sharing expertise and information through CEPA and training activities is increasingly recognized as an effective means to assure the wise use of wetlands through international cooperation. Some important projects were undertaken in Europe during the triennium, and they could now serve for the creation of more permanent networks of Ramsar sites.

Analysis: 21 countries (53%) detailed their support to international programmes that encourage transfer of information, knowledge and skills between wetland educators (*Action 3.1.4* reported in section 2.9 above). 21 countries report on 34 twinning arrangements between transfrontier wetlands and Ramsar sites with similar characteristics in other countries (*Action 7.1.2*).

Comment: Developing twinning and networks of transboundary wetlands and wetlands sharing common features is an important mechanism for sharing knowledge and providing training opportunities. This was demonstrated during the triennium through Ramsar site networks established under the Ramsar-Evian project along the East Atlantic, among delta areas in closed seas, and along crane migration flyways in NE Asia. In September 2002, the managers of five delta parks in Mediterranean and Black Sea countries created a network of delta Ramsar sites ("Delta chiama Delta"). These are but the most poignant examples of the increased attention given by Contracting Parties to sharing experience and know-how among Ramsar sites.

Recommendation: **Draft Resolution 10** (submitted to COP8) on Improving implementation of the Strategic Framework and Vision for the List of Wetlands of International Importance is providing a focus and frame for activities.

2.15 Financing the conservation and wise use of wetlands

A. Promoting international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands

(Operational Objective 15.1 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Some countries report on successful projects providing international assistance for wetland conservation. The donors most often mentioned are the European Union and the GEF. However, regular international support, at multilateral and bilateral level, and the capacities to prepare project proposals with a real chance of success, still need to be developed in a structured and formal way.

Analysis: 20 countries (50%) indicated that they submitted project proposals to funding agencies (i.e. European Union financial instruments and the Global Environment Facility for the Danube-Black Sea region) which were intended to assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention (*Action 7.2.2*). 16 (40%) indicated that their government is represented on the governing bodies or scientific advisory bodies of multilateral donors, including the GEF (*Action 7.3.2*).

Comment: The answers show that more efforts need to go into the formalization of linkages between Ramsar and funding agencies and into planned project development in view of regular submission of funding proposals, also jointly with partner organizations. While Operational Objective 7 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 was incorporating a multitude of aspects (sometimes confusing for Contracting Parties), Operational Objective 15 of the new Strategic Plan is more result-oriented: financing the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Recommendation: No specific resolution addressing the need for international assistance to support wetland wise use and conservation is foreseen for COP8. **Draft Resolution 29** (submitted to COP8) on the evaluation of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund and the establishment of a Ramsar Endowment Fund tries to provide the Convention with increased own resources to address this need.

B. Environmental safeguards and assessments as part of all development projects (including foreign and domestic investments) affecting wetlands

(Operational Objective 15.2 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Although the need to ensure that environmental safeguards are an integral component of all development projects that affect wetlands is not new (e.g. OECD guidelines for tropical and subtropical wetlands published in 1996), the issue was not directly addressed in this triennium. It is important that countries represented in governing bodies of multilateral donors do pay attention to this need (cf. section 2.15A above). Contracting Parties reported briefly on Environmental Impact Assessments required for actions potentially affecting wetlands (cf. section 2.2B above). Unfortunately, indications that Ramsar obligations are taken into account in international development cooperation projects, and that Ramsar national authorities are consulted in the project screening phase (*Action 7.4.2*), were few and far between.

2.16 Financing of the Convention

(Operational Objective 16 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Austria, Belgium (Wallon Region), Denmark, Sweden (SIDA), and the UK provided regular voluntary contributions to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund throughout the triennium (*Action 8.4.1*). Others indicated that they provided project support for wetland conservation, either through the Ramsar Bureau (Switzerland) or on a bilateral basis. Voluntary contributions to the Outreach programme are reported in section 2.9 above.

2.17 Institutional mechanisms of the Convention

(Operational Objective 17 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

To ensure that the Convention is operating with a high level of effectiveness, the nomination of national focal points for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and for the Outreach Programme on wetland communication, education and public awareness (CEPA; governmental and non-governmental focal points) is crucial. As of September 2002, only 36 Contracting Parties (82% of a total of 44) have nominated STRP focal points, 27 (61%) governmental CEPA focal points, and 23 (52%) non-governmental CEPA focal points (*Action 8.1.10*), cf. section 2.9 above.

2.18 Institutional and financial capacity of Contracting Parties

(Operational Objective 18 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Steady progress in the development of the capacity of Contracting Parties to achieve wetland conservation and wise use was made during the triennium, even if the National Report format does not allow one to draw a definite picture. The need to do more is recognized by nearly half of the Contracting Parties, especially in the field of enhanced contact and cooperation between institutions, agencies and organizations. Establishing National Ramsar Committees should remain a priority for several countries without one so far. In others, existing National Committees need to become properly functioning again.

Analysis: Only 21 (53%) Contracting Parties indicated that their institutions have the necessary resources to support the increasing demands being placed upon them by the growing expectations of the Convention (*Action 4.1.1*, cf. section 2.2B above). 22 countries (55%) have established a National Ramsar Committee according to Recommendation 5.13. 7 additional countries (15%) report on preparations to establish such a Committee, or on existing Biodiversity Committees that cover, at least partly, Ramsar issues (cf. also section 2.13 above) (*Action 4.1.2*). 33 (83%) indicated that they allocate governmental funds for wetland conservation and wise use activities. Many of them provided details on mechanisms of determining priorities and coordinating the expenditure of these funds (*Action 7.4.1*).

Comment: Despite the fact that many countries do not consider that they have sufficient resources to respond to the expectations of the Convention, they report on specific projects financed during the triennium and progress with the establishment of National Ramsar Committees. The remaining countries without a Ramsar Committee are encouraged to consider establishing one in the near future.

2.19 Working with International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others

(Operational Objective 19 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Nineteen countries (48%) indicated that IOPs or similar bodies are part of their National Ramsar Committee (*Action 8.3.1*). Otherwise, the National Report format did not ask specific questions about cooperation with the Convention's International Organization Partners and other bodies.

2.20 Training

(Operational Objective 20 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

SUMMARY

Fewer than half of the Contracting Parties reported on their training needs analysis and on many different training programmes at national and international scale, often involving on-site training at Ramsar sites. This was generally felt to be a very efficient means to increase individual and institutional capacities. However, the absence of such activities in more than half of the countries throughout this triennium shows that the efforts need to continue and the activities to be expanded. Unfortunately, no specific resolution is addressing this issue at COP8.

Analysis: 12 countries (30%) indicated that they completed a training needs analysis or are in the process of doing so (*Action 4.2.1*). 17 (43%) reported that they reviewed the training opportunities for the conservation and wise use of wetlands in their country or are in the process of doing so. 15 (38%) answered that this led to the development of new training activities, for which they provided details. However, none of them has forwarded information on training opportunities to the Ramsar Bureau for inclusion in the Directory of Wetland Manager Training Opportunities (*Actions 4.2.2 and 4.2.3*).

Comment: Identifying training needs of institutions and individuals, particularly in countries in transition, and implementing appropriate responses, remain vital elements to reinforce the capacities for wetland conservation and wise use. Many efficient training programmes took place during this triennium, often combined with international exchanges and on-site training at Ramsar sites (*Action 4.2.4*). However, the number of countries that responded affirmatively to the above questions is still rather low, and has not progressed much since COP7.

2.21 Membership of the Convention

(Operational Objective 21 of the new Strategic Plan 2003-2008)

Securing universal membership of the Convention is a task nearly completed in the European region (*Action 1.1.1*). All European countries are Contracting Parties, except Andorra, which is considering joining the Convention, the Holy See, and San Marino. The Russian Federation reported on actions to recruit newly independent central Asian states that were formerly covered by the Soviet Union's membership. The UK extended its ratification to cover the Channel Islands and the British Indian Ocean Territory and actively supported delegates from British Overseas Territories to participate in Ramsar meetings. Croatia, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Ukraine encouraged neighbouring countries and countries with which they have special relationships to join the Convention. This resulted in the accession of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Benin, Bosnia & Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, Tanzania, and Uzbekistan during the triennium.

Annex

Summary statistics of implementation reported in National Reports

This table provides a general overview of the Actions from the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, analysed in sections 2.1 to 2.20 above. The table excludes some of the Actions addressed above where, due to the nature or the scarcity of the responses in the National Reports, an unequivocal analysis was not possible. The table also excludes proposed Operational Objectives of the new Strategic Plan that were not adequately covered in the current format of the National Report.

The table shows the Actions that are more (or less) widely addressed in the European region compared to the global average, based on the percentages of Contracting Parties having answered positively for each Action. It also provides an indication if no, some or significant progress was achieved during the triennium since COP7 for each Action at European level: indicated by none, one or two asterisks. The situation in individual countries does not necessarily reflect such a simplified European average. Combining these indications, the main achievements since COP7 and European priorities for 2003-2005 were deducted, as detailed above in section 1.

Op. Obj. Strat. Plan 2003-2008	Actions of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002	Affirmative countries in EUROPE	Affirmative countries GLOBALLY	Significant progress since COP7
1.1	Wetland Inventory			
	6.1.2 Comprehensive wetland inventories with national coverage	28 %	24%	*
	5.4.4 National wetland databases	30 %	28%	*
	6.1.1 National directories of potential Ramsar sites	80 %	62%	*
1.2	Wetland Assessment			
	5.1.2 Regular reviews to identify potential changes in ecological character of Ramsar sites	58 %	54%	
2.1	Policy Instruments for Wetland Wise Use			
	2.1.2 National wetland policies and similar instruments	73 %	62%	**
2.2	Development, Review and Amendment of Policies, Legislation, Institutions and Practices			
	2.1.1 Completed review of laws and institutions	43 %	33%	*
	2.5.4 Review of governmental plans and policies	35 %	29%	*
	4.1.1 National institutions with sufficient resources	53 %	45%	*
	2.5.3 EIA required for actions potentially affecting wetlands	48%	63 %	*
	2.5.2 EIA carried out in all cases affecting Ramsar sites	48 %	39%	
	2.4.1 Economic wetland valuations required as part of EIA	28%	31 %	
3.1	Methodologies for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use			
	2.3.2 Review of resource materials for wetland	28 %	21%	

	management policies and practices			
3.4	Integration of Wetland Policies into Broader Planning and Management from Local to National Scales 2.2.2 Integrated river basin and coastal zone management	43%	31%	*
4	Restoration and Rehabilitation 2.6.1 Completed identification of wetlands in need for restoration or rehabilitation	28 %	20%	*
	2.6.2 Resource information for wetland restoration and rehabilitation available	73 %	55%	*
5	Invasive Alien Species 2.3.1 Resource information on wetland management in relation to invasive species available	58 %	51%	*
6	Local Communities, Indigenous People, and Cultural Values 2.7.1 Promoting involvement of local communities in wetland management	85%	87 %	*
	2.7.2 Active support to wetland managers and local communities for wetland monitoring	78%	81 %	*
	2.7.3 Existence of wetland site management committees	78 %	73%	*
	2.7.4 Support for the application of traditional knowledge and management practices	68%	70 %	
7	Private Sector Involvement 2.8.1 Encouragement of private sector to give increased recognition to wetland attributes, functions and values	68%	73 %	
	2.8.3 Encouragement of private sector to work in partnership with site managers to monitor wetland sites	35%	42 %	
8	Incentives 2.8.2 Incentives measures to encourage wise use and conservation of wetlands	38 %	36%	
9	Communication, Education, and Public Awareness 3.1.3 Assist in the development of international CEPA resource materials	35%	38 %	
	3.1.4 Support international programmes for transfer of information, knowledge and skills among wetland education centres and educators	53%	53%	
	3.2.1 National Task Forces constituted to review CEPA needs, capacities and opportunities	18%	22 %	
	3.2.3 Educational centres established at wetland sites	73 %	57%	**
	3.2.5 Wetland issues incorporated into curricula at many levels of education	68 %	64%	*
	3.3.4 Internet access provided to Ramsar site managers	60 %	49%	*

10.1	Application of the Strategic Framework for the Designation of Ramsar sites	65 %	61%	*
	6.2.1 Systematic approach to identify future Ramsar sites			
	6.2.3 Special attention to identify under-represented wetland types	73 %	70%	*
	6.2.4 Designation of Ramsar sites without previous conservation status	40%	47 %	
11.1	Maintenance of the Ecological Character of All Ramsar sites	90 %	77%	*
	5.1.1 Measures to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar sites are documented			
	5.2.4 Zoning measures used to regulate activities in different parts of the wetlands	75 %	67%	
	5.2.5 Strict protection measures used to regulate activities in different parts of the wetlands	70 %	66%	
13	Cooperation with Other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Institutions	53%	58 %	*
	7.2.1 Mechanism at national level to coordinate implementation of international conventions			
	7.2.3 Review of the Ramsar-CBD Joint Work Plan to establish priority areas of cooperation	38 %	31%	*
14	Sharing of Expertise and Information	53 %	30%	*
	7.1.2 Ramsar sites twinned with sites in other countries			
15.1	Promoting International Assistance to Support the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands	50 %	63 %	
	7.2.2 Project proposals submitted to funding agencies			
	7.3.2 Government represented in governing or advisory bodies of multilateral donors	40 %	35%	
16	Financing of the Convention	13 %	4%	
	8.4.1 Regular additional voluntary contributions to support the Small Grants Fund			
18	Institutional and Financial Capacity of Contracting Parties	55%	58 %	
	4.1.2 National Ramsar Committee or similar body established			
	7.4.1 National funds allocated to wetland conservation and wise use activities	83 %	78%	*
19	Working with International Organization Partners and Others	48 %	43%	*
	8.3.1 National Ramsar Committees and similar bodies include representatives of IOPs			
20	Training	30%	35 %	
	4.2.1 Training needs analysis completed			
	4.2.2 Training opportunities reviewed at national level	43 %	36%	*
	4.2.3 New training activities and modules developed	40 %	38%	
	4.2.4 Training provided to wetland managers through personal exchanges for on-the-job training and courses at specific sites	60 %	50%	**

