



9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods”

Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005

Ramsar COP9 DOC. 5

Agenda item X

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

Preamble

1. This report covers developments in the Convention from the closing of Ramsar COP8 on 26 November 2002 to 15 September 2005.
2. As the title indicates, the report is an analysis of the implementation of the Convention at the global level. An analysis for each of the six Ramsar regions to complement this report 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 Wednesday, 9 November, whilst the regional reports should serve as the basis for discussion at the regional meetings scheduled for Tuesday, 8 November.
3. The purpose of the global and regional reports is to review the implementation of the Convention in the last triennium. However, as this is the first report that I have the honour to present to the COP as Secretary General, I am taking the opportunity to provide some personal perspectives and overviews which I have formed during the past two years. The structure of the report is based on the Strategic Plan 2003-2008, and the National Reports received, and also shows the activities of the Secretariat and how these dovetail with activities in Contracting Parties and the International Organization Partners (IOPs). The reports of the subsidiary bodies, namely the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), are contained in separate documents, as is my report under Article 8 on the status of List of Wetlands of International Importance.

General remarks

4. The Convention, despite some problems during this triennium with the budget, is in a very healthy state. We currently have 146 CPs, and we are working with another six or so countries to enable accession in the very near future – a larger number are in a state of discussion. We are thus moving rather quickly towards universality of membership, an important objective.
5. That said, the demands that this increasing membership places on the Secretariat are significant. We hope that COP9 will agree to the budget as presented in DR 13, but this is not a significant enough increase if we continue to work as we are currently configured in

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the Secretariat. Therefore, after the COP has reached its budgetary decision, I will be examining how we can best use the available human resources which arise from the budget, so that we “work smarter not harder” and thus are able to deliver more effective results for Parties from the new suite of COP decisions and advice.

6. Part of this means a need to de-bureaucratise the way the Convention works at all levels, already started by the implementation of some of the reforms proposed under Resolution VIII.45. That Standing Committee 31 took the view that the Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45 should continue its work in the next triennium will be a great help. But we do require a commitment of excellence in effective delivery of the Conventions’ various plans and programmes, with simplicity of form and clarity of language as high priorities.
7. One innovation introduced in this last year has been the role taken by some Parties (in particular Argentina and Switzerland) to represent the Convention at other meetings where it was operationally or financially difficult to have a member of the Secretariat present. This is a trend we should continue, for not only is it a more effective use of resources, but it confirms visibly the commitment of Parties to the Convention in a very powerful way. It is not the only answer, however, and we do need to find alternative sources of sustainable financing for all operations of the Convention, including the critical areas of Communications, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA), the work of the STRP, and the support for Parties through the Small Grants Fund.

National Reports

8. A total of 110 Contracting Parties submitted their National Reports in preparation for COP9 (as of 20 September), all of which are available (in the language of submission only) in the Ramsar Web site at http://www.ramsar.org/cop9/cop9_natlrpts_index.htm. Parties which have recently joined the Convention are not expected to submit a National Report. Annex 1 contains the list of Parties who submitted reports by the time of the analysis for this report.
9. There seems a widespread view that the format of the National Report for COP9 was far too complex and detailed for Contracting Parties to deal with effectively, although the number that were submitted in time for analysis bears evidence to the dedication of the Convention’s member states. Nevertheless, it is clear that for COP10 we need a simplified form of National Report which will enable easy analysis of the main trends in the Convention and allow effective feedback to Parties on the key trends which are emerging. At the same time, as DR 5 shows, there is a move afoot among the conventions in the biodiversity cluster to promote more cross-linkage and lessen redundancy of effort in providing national reports.
10. Should the COP agree, the Secretariat will work with the Standing Committee to prepare a revised format of National Report for COP10 and try to maximise linkage with activities in other conventions. Further developments are planned to include the simplification and the improvement of the user-friendliness of the form used for National Reporting for COP10. This includes envisaging new forms of reporting like common reporting with other major conventions for some parts of the reports and the possibility to complete the National Report questionnaire directly on the Internet, for an easier, simpler and faster reporting process

11. Of course, such a revision should also fully reflect the Strategic Plan, yet here again the Secretariat has received views from Parties that the Strategic Plan agreed in Resolution VIII.25 is too complex to work with, overly ambitious, and not readily capable of being monitored. For example, so far only 8% of the global implementation targets listed in the Strategic Plan have been achieved, even though we are 50% through the period covered by the Plan. Further, it is likely that 36% will not be able to be achieved at all, with a further 33% *unlikely* to be achieved, with the remaining 23% only *possibly able* to be achieved. While the enthusiasm behind constructing the plan for 2003 – 2008 was commendable, the reality check halfway through the period suggests that a different approach is needed for the next triennium.
12. A key objective thus of the Secretariat in the next triennium will be to simplify and demystify the National Report and Strategic Plan, as well as the work plan for the STRP and CEPA activities. To start this process, this current report is organized along the lines of the five goals and 25 strategies of the Strategic Framework developed for DR 9.
13. One point which emerges is that developing countries in particular see the need for high priority to be given to the issues of:
 - wetland inventories
 - identification of wetlands that need restoration
 - restoring damaged wetlands
 - monitoring of ecological character
 - development of alternative wise use livelihoods for wetland dwellers,
 and that donor countries and agencies should be notified of these issues.

Analysis of the National Reports

14. A relational database has been created to store and analyze the information provided by the Parties in their National Reports for COP9. The database includes indicators related to the implementation status of the actions included in the Convention's Work Plan 2003-2008, as reflected in the National Reports format.
15. The following section reviews the implementation of the Convention by Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Secretariat activities in the last triennium in relation to the 25 strategies identified in the draft Strategic Framework presented in DR9, cross referenced to the Operational Objectives in the Strategic Plan 2003-2008.
16. The detailed quantitative results provided for the National Reports have been the basis of this analysis, although as the numbers in some cases are very uncertain, there is a strong degree of "*caveat emptor*" in this analysis. Nonetheless the major trends seem consistently clear and will form a basis against which the COP10 National Report format can be developed to ensure continued consistency in analysis of implementation trends.
17. Overall, the percentage of "positive" replies, including, "yes", "partly implemented", "in progress" and "being updated", summarised globally for each strategy, range between 30% and 70%. The percentage of absolute "yes" responses range between 10 and 65%, with the

lowest “yes” response dealing with the strategy on incentives, and the highest dealing with the institutional mechanisms of the Convention.

CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS AND WATER RESOURCES

GOAL 1. The wise use of wetlands

STRATEGY 1.1 (Operational objective 1.1)

Assessment and monitoring extent and condition of wetland resources

18. Around 25% of respondent Parties currently have or are in the process of developing a comprehensive wetland inventory, with a further 35% showing they used or will use the Ramsar *Framework for Wetland Inventory*. However, the percentage fully dealing with *all* aspects of Inventory is only 30%, with an additional 25% dealing with or developing ways of dealing with inventories. Problem areas seem to exist in the adequate storage and retrieval of data, with 35% of parties saying they did not have arrangements in place for custodianship of data, as well as storage and development of metadata to ease handling and recall of the inventory data.
19. Further, only around 40% of respondent Parties used the inventory to deal with issues like identifying wetlands for poverty alleviation, food security, coastal protection and flood defence. However, nearly 60% included wetlands important for water supply in their inventories.
20. Use of inventory data in some way by managers and decision-makers was reported by over 90% of Parties, but only just over 70% reported promotion of inventory data in some way among wetland users.
21. *For the next triennium the challenges are clearly in the area of developing metadata and archival approaches to inventory, and to ensure that inventories are being used to help focus on specific wetland issues, such as poverty reduction, flood defence, environmental security, human health issues, etc.*

STRATEGY 1.2 (Operational objectives 2.1& 2.2)

Develop, review, and implement national or supranational policies, to ensure that the wise use principle of the Convention is being effectively applied.

22. 35% of Parties appear to be implementing this strategy, although around 60% have plans so to do in the future.
23. Over 70% of Parties are already developing National Wetlands Policies to help implement the sustainable development strategies as called for by WSSD, and to incorporate wetland issues into water resource management plans undertaking this, or they are planning to undertake it soon.
24. A particular issue is that although there are increasing amounts of experience accumulated by Parties in this area, the percentage of Parties transmitting material and information to the Secretariat or STRP for developing into advice and guidance is very low.
25. Another key issue is that it is clear that for synergies between different MEAs to work at the national level it is indispensable that there be clear linkages between the different

environmental policies and legislation at the national level, e.g., wetland policies vs. ocean and marine policies, water policies, and biodiversity policies. Some of the latter policies in some countries do not make reference to Ramsar, which is disappointing.

26. *For the next triennium the challenges are to accelerate work in Contracting Parties on the implementation of relevant policies to help implement the wise use principle, and to ensure that from Secretariat, STRP and the IOPs policy-relevant information is provided to Parties to assist this policy development. Key areas of concern include Parties reviewing legislation and policies impacting negatively on montane wetlands, where appropriate, and ensuring ELA considerations are incorporated into policy development for wetlands.*

STRATEGY 1.3 (Operational objectives 3.1 -3.3)

Increase recognition of the significance of wetlands for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defence, food security, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and scientific research.

27. Only 20% of Parties are promoting the wise use of wetlands for water supply, coastal protection, etc., while 17% are promoting conservation and wise use of peatlands as an example of the ecosystem approach, and 14% are involved in the dissemination of methodologies to achieve the conservation and wise use of peatlands. However, 90% are planning to promote the significance of wetlands for water supply, coastal protection and flood defence – particularly relevant given recent events such as the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and recent hurricanes. 77% are attempting better dissemination of materials to promote wetland wise use.
28. Disappointingly, only 14% have contributed, or are planning to contribute, to STRP work on guidance for wise use using the ecosystem approach.
29. In response to Resolution VIII.17 the Secretariat has established a Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands, which, as requested, has developed an Implementation Plan for the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GGAP) adopted at COP8. The Committee is a multisectoral consortium involving representatives of NGOs, the private sector, academic and research institutes and intergovernmental conventions and agreements, and this has led to enhanced common understanding and agreement on implementation issues and priorities. The Committee is preparing a progress report on implementation of the COP8 guidelines which, together with the GGAP Implementation Plan, will be prepared as a *Ramsar Technical Report* so as to make it as widely available to Parties and other interested organizations as possible.
30. *For the next triennium the challenges are to accelerate work in Contracting Parties on recognising the key role of wetlands and their ecological services, and to provide the STRP with national case studies and information, in order to enable Parties to formulate the most effective policy reactions.*

STRATEGY 1.4 (Operational objective 3.4)

Integrate policies on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the planning activities and decision-making processes at national, regional, provincial and local levels, all in the context of implementing IWRM.

31. Only 17% of respondent Parties are attempting to integrate conservation and wise use of wetlands in policies as they develop, although another 25% have plans so to do. On the

positive side, over 50% of Parties have representatives of the water management authorities on their National Ramsar Committees.

32. Disappointing is that less than 10% of Parties have assessed the implications of the Kyoto Protocol on wetlands, and only 8% have studies on the role of wetlands in carbon sequestration underway. The same percentages relate to Parties undertaking efforts to avoid serious ecological damage to wetlands following implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. Only slightly better are the 22% of relevant Parties that are undertaking planning measures to ensure the role of mangrove ecosystems in mitigating the effects of climate change. And especially disappointing is the only 10% of Parties who are using the information provided *in extenso* at COP8 on climate change to inform national policy making on wetlands.
33. Between 10% and 20% of Parties have implemented activities to ensure that the critical role of water allocation to maintain the ecological character of wetlands, especially in drought situations, is maintained.
34. *For the next triennium the challenges are to ensure that Contracting Parties undertake more effective work on the relationship between the ecosystem services from wetlands in ameliorating climate change and ensuring that wetlands receive adequate water flows, especially during drought events.*

STRATEGY 1.5 (Operational objective 4.1)

Identify priority wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial.

35. Less than 25% of Parties have undertaken studies of priority wetlands to receive attention for restoration or rehabilitation, although 25% more are likely to undertake such work in the near future.
36. Over 70% of Parties are intending to take action to restore wetlands, and over 60% have taken account of wetland restoration to ensure adequate river basin management. A very low 5% of Parties are using the guidelines on wetland restoration in consideration of the implications of the Kyoto Protocol.
37. On training needs for restoration of systems, around 20% of Parties have identified opportunities for this.
38. *For the next triennium the challenges are to accelerate work in Contracting Parties on ensuring that wetland restoration and rehabilitation are seen as critical elements of the wise use approach, and to develop training needs assessments for restoration processes.*

STRATEGY 1.6 (Operational objective 5.1)

Develop guidance and promote protocols and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive alien species in wetland systems.

39. Only 17% of Parties have developed protocols for the control and management of invasive alien species in wetlands, although 33% more are in the process of so doing.
40. Somewhat worrying is the fact that only 5% of Parties have assessed and communicated invasive alien species problems as part of the Article 3.2 process.

41. *For the next triennium the challenges are to ensure that better prominence is given to issues of alien species invasion as a critical problem in wetland management.*

GOAL 2. Wetlands of International Importance

STRATEGY 2.1 (Operational objective 10.1)

Apply the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*

42. 36% of Parties have applied the *Strategic Framework* to help develop the Ramsar List, and an additional 15% intend to. However, that leaves just under 50% apparently *not* using the Strategic Framework to develop the List. Particularly poor efforts have been made with respect to humanmade wetlands, cultural significance and wetland dependent taxa other than water birds. Around 35% of Parties have made efforts to nominate Ramsar sites of under-represented types, with another 9% working towards that.
43. *For the next triennium the challenges are ensure much more widespread use of the strategic framework in developing the list, to ensure quality additions, especially of under-represented wetland types, and taxa other than water birds.*

STRATEGY 2.2 (Operational objective 10.2)

Maintain the Ramsar Sites Database Service and constantly update it with the best available information.

44. A progress report on the Ramsar Sites Database and Information Service is provided in COP9 DOC. 22. While just over 40% of Parties say they are utilising the Database, an additional 40% say they intend to. There is still too low a level of Parties submitting required updates of Ramsar Information Sheets to the Secretariat and completing existing data, including maps. The number of sites requiring this, and the number of Parties involved, have increased since COP8.
45. A positive development in Europe has been cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) to share Ramsar site information more efficiently and to take advantage of their database EIONET, to include digitised boundary maps of Ramsar sites, which will then also be available through the Ramsar Sites Information Service.
46. *For the next triennium it will be critical to ensure better usage of the Sites Database, to ensure adequate feedback to the Database itself, and to ensure that the funding expended on maintenance of the database is well used.*

STRATEGY 2.3 (Operational objective 11.1)

Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites.

47. 30% of Parties have made efforts in this area, with a further 25% intending to.
48. While it is pleasing that many Parties are involving stakeholders in the management planning process, and are using the guidelines for management planning, it is disappointing that only 13% have recognised the need to increase wetland resilience to climate change, and almost none have recognised the need to deal with the agriculture-wetland dynamic. It

is surprising that almost no Parties have undertaken the challenge of developing coherent networks of sites to help combat poverty.

49. *For the next triennium the challenge is to ensure that maintaining ecological character remains a headline issue for the Convention, and that better linkage is made to the role of wetlands in the context of Parties implementing other obligations, such as those of the UNFCCC and the CBD.*

STRATEGY 2.4 (Operational objective 11.2)

Monitor the condition of Ramsar sites, notify the Ramsar Secretariat without delay of changes affecting Ramsar sites as required by Article 3.2, and apply the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems.

50. Information Paper COP9 DOC. 6 deals with this issue in some detail.

STRATEGY 2.5 (Operational objectives 12.1 + 12.2)

Promote inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species.

51. While around 35% of Parties are dealing with integrated management of shared wetlands or shared hydrological systems, an additional 25% are promoting future cooperative management of wetlands shared by wetland dependent species.
52. *For the next triennium the challenge is to have Parties address the issue of regional site networks for wetland dependant species, and to encourage innovative approaches to managing shared hydrological systems.*

STRATEGY 2.6 (Operational objective 12.3)

Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements.

53. At least 45% of Parties are implementing or supporting regional arrangements, with a further 15% forecasting activity in the future. This complements the spirit and text of DR 8 on regional initiatives. Clearly the Convention will move quite quickly in this direction over the next triennium.

GOAL 3. International cooperation

STRATEGY 3.1 (Operational objective 13.1)

Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other agencies.

54. Under this strategy 33% of Parties report positive developments and a further 22% report that they are moving in this direction.
55. More formal cooperation exists with regional agreements which have overlapping interests, such a river basin commissions (where we have, for example, active participation of the Ramsar Secretariat and national focal point levels in the work on the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River ICPDR, the Niger Basin Authority, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission). Similar commissions exist for other international rivers where similar cooperation could be established as well. Cooperation with the

UNECE Water Convention, notably through technical seminars such as on “the role of ecosystems as water suppliers” (December 2004) and on “water-related ecosystems for water management: environmental services and financing for the protection and sustainable use of ecosystems” (October 2005), has been a positive development this triennium.

56. *For the next triennium, implementation of DR5 will assist the delivery of this strategy. There are still areas in which Parties can help, through closer collaboration between national focal points for the five biodiversity-related conventions, and between UNESCO programmes such as MAB and IHP and the national Ramsar/wetland committees.*

STRATEGY 3.2 (Operational objective 14.1)

Promote the sharing of expertise and information.

57. 30% of Parties have this issue under consideration, with 30% actually promoting sharing of expertise and information already.
58. However, 20% or less of Parties are involved in promoting active networks for knowledge sharing, development of Internet-based resource kits for information sharing, or using twinning arrangements to promote exchange of experiences relating to management, etc.
59. *For the next triennium this issue should receive a stronger focus from Parties, IOPs, and the Secretariat, in part through implementation of DR19 and the active involvement of the proposed CEPA oversight panel in promoting this effort.*

MANAGING THE CONVENTION

GOAL 4. Implementation capacity

STRATEGY 4.1 (Operational objective 6.1)

Encourage active and informed participation of local communities and indigenous people, including women and youth, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including in relation to understanding the dynamics of cultural values.

60. 50% of Parties envisage developing this strategy, but only 23% are already implementing the strategy by late 2005.
61. There is critically low implementation for actions to improve understanding and representation of cultural elements in wetlands, including the development of educational and technical centres. Indigenous people’s participation also scores rather on the low side.
62. *For the next triennium the challenge is to build on the outcomes from the COP9 Technical Session to improve an understanding and use of cultural values in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and to improve participation of local communities in wetland management.*

STRATEGY 4.2 (Operational objective 7.1)

Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

63. 25% of Parties are already involved in this exercise, and an additional 27% are planning on better involvement in the future. This remains, however, a weak aspect of the Convention, and *for the next triennium more attention must be given to drawing the private sector into the Convention's orbit, including in support of sustainable trade and other activities.*

STRATEGY 4.3 (Operational objective 8.1)

Promote incentive measures that encourage the application of the wise use principle and the removal of perverse incentives.

64. Only 10% of Parties report activities promoting the reduction of perverse incentives and the development of incentives which promote application of wise use principles, although an additional 20% are planning such actions.
65. Very low levels of implementation in respect to removing perverse subsidies on groundwater use and agricultural expansion suggest that more action in this area is needed, although an encouraging 40% are actually or are considering promoting incentives for conservation and wise use.
66. *For the next triennium promotion of incentives for wise wetland use should be a priority for the Convention's implementation, especially as more information becomes available on the ecosystem services provided by wetlands.*

STRATEGY 4.4 (Operational objective 9.1)

Assist in implementing at all levels the Convention's Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Programme.

67. While 25% of Parties report actively integrating CEPA activities into the implementation of the Convention, a further 27% are planning such moves. While around 60% of Parties have appointed national and NGO CEPA focal points, it is disappointing that the figure is not higher. This can be an issue for the proposed CEPA oversight panel, if established, to consider.
68. Particularly weak areas of implementation include the establishment of national wetland CEPA task forces, developing national action plans for wetland CEPA implementation, reviewing existing CEPA programmes, and documenting existing programmes.
69. Also needing attention is the development of national wetland centres, and linking these with global initiatives and networks, such as Wetland Link International (WLI). World Wetlands Day (WWD) functions have been carried out by over 70% of respondent Parties, with a further 16% planning so to do. This implies that the Secretariat and Parties will need to cooperate more on the range of possible activities, as well as establishing suitable new activities and directions for the WWD celebrations. One particular issue is the degree to which the Secretariat can cope with demands for materials for WWD, and we may have to try alternative strategies for this purpose.
70. In terms of formal education, very little seems to have occurred in terms of review of national curricula to include Ramsar concepts and ideas. This will require more work at national level to ensure adequate communication between relevant ministries. Perhaps development of some pilot reviews might help.

71. Another area which could receive more attention is the incorporation of CEPA into integrated management strategies, reported as positive only by 14% of Parties, although 30% other Parties are examining the possibilities.
72. *For the next triennium the CEPA programme needs to be more visible and active, from the Secretariat to the Parties. Development of an oversight panel (DR 19) will undoubtedly help in this, as will the dedication of more resources.*

STRATEGY 4.5 (Operational objective 15.1 + 15.2)

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

73. 20% of Parties report positive action under this strategy, with a further 20% planning such actions. Some strong points under this strategy are that 65% of Parties are actively mobilising, or planning to mobilise, resources for assistance in support of conservation and wise use of wetlands, although of those Parties with development assistance programmes only 40% mobilised support for such initiatives during the triennium. Very disappointing is the failure of Parties with development assistance capacities to use the Ramsar guidelines for international cooperation and to assess the development needs in relation to wetland issues. There is also scope for much better interaction with multilateral development agencies to fund wetland-related projects with strong wise use outcomes.
74. And finally, working to ensure the viability of the Convention's Small Grants Fund could be dramatically improved.
75. *For the next triennium ensuring adequate consideration of wetland issues in the framework of development assistance would be highly desirable. During the triennium a cooperative effort between Standing Committee and Secretariat to develop a more sustainable funding mechanism for the Convention's SGF and other activities would also be highly desirable.*

STRATEGY 4.6 (Operational objective 16.1)

Provide the financial resources required for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

76. 50% of Parties report paying dues in a timely manner. However, it is the Secretariat's experience that very few Parties do indeed pay in the first two months of the year, even though this is the time that contributions are supposed to be paid.
77. In the last triennium, a disappointingly large number of Parties paid very late in the year, or simply not at all. One consequence is that the budget line for unpaid contributions has to be increased in COP9 DR13 to CHF50,000 instead of CHF20,000, and even this figure is not realistic. DR 13 contains some recommendations concerning collection of non-payment of contributions – an issue which must be resolved during the next triennium.
78. Voluntary funding of various aspects of the Conventions work has been very pleasing during the triennium. Annex 2 lists those Parties and organizations that have made voluntary contributions and the contributions they have made.
79. During the past year, IUCN made an offer to deliver more effective overall financial management, which, after approval by the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance and the Chair

of the Standing Committee, has been accepted. One consequence has been that the Secretariat no longer needs its own accountant, and this post has been suppressed, although the net cost to the budget remains the same, with an increased level of advice and service. We are also investigating using the same external auditors as IUCN, to provide greater transparency and accountability, provided the cost of this does not become significantly higher than the existing charges.

80. *For the next triennium the budget processes will be more streamlined and better managed. Establishing the linkages between the different elements of budget, approved programme, and deliverables will be a Secretariat priority for the first months of the triennium.*

STRATEGY 4.7 (Operational objective 17.1)

Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Ramsar Secretariat are operating at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness.

81. This strategy has an implementation rate of over 65%, which is relatively satisfactory. The precise improvement in the next triennium will depend on the decisions of the COP on budget and administration, and the Secretariat and Standing Committee will need to work quickly and effectively to ensure smoothly operating conditions. The lack of funds budgeted for STRP prevented the Convention from establishing operational relationships between the STRP members (and their work in progress) and STRP national focal points. This was a missed opportunity for NFPs to fulfil several functions: to be a relay between national networks of expertise and the STRP experts, to promote the work of the Convention in those and other national circles, to circulate draft STRP documents for comment in their country, and to feed back such comments to STRP. *Activating the STRP focal point network is a priority for the next triennium.*

STRATEGY 4.8 (Operational objective 18.1)

Develop the capacity within, and promote cooperation among, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

82. 35% of Parties report satisfactory implementation of this strategy, with an additional 25% having this objective under development. In general this strategy is being achieved well, although a particularly disappointing area of implementation is the promotion of linkages between climate change and wetland conservation and management. This particular issue should be a priority for the upcoming triennium and will involve greater joint efforts between Ramsar, UNFCCC, and UNCCD. This could be achieved through the existing Joint Liaison Group of the Rio conventions, at which Ramsar is an observer convention.

STRATEGY 4.9 (Operational objective 19.1)

Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others.

83. Discussions are underway with IOPs to draw together the work of the organizations supporting the Convention with the programme of work agreed by COP. A mechanism to have a meeting of CEOs of the Partners before the next meeting of the Standing Committee is envisaged, so that each Standing Committee meeting can receive a report on forward work proposals from the IOPs as a group, and can comment and amend such

proposals as is relevant with the agreed programme of COP and the views of Standing Committee at that time.

STRATEGY 4.10 (Operational objective 20.1)

Identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

84. With only 20% of the Parties acting in a positive way on this issue, and only 23% additional Parties looking to develop this area, there is a serious gap in the necessary tools available to the Convention. The proposed new initiatives with the Government of the Netherlands through its RIZA and associated partners offer a new and exciting way forward for this activity.
85. *The challenge for the next triennium is to really make this happen in a coordinated and effective way.*

GOAL 5. Membership: To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

86. At present the membership stands at 146 Contracting Parties, and with accessions in progress in Africa, Asia, and Oceania, the Convention is moving towards universality rather quickly. Areas still with significant numbers of countries not yet having joined the Convention include the Middle East and central Asia, Oceania and the Caribbean, and parts of Africa.
87. *Continued efforts by the Secretariat and the Standing committee should aim to reach at least 170 Parties by COP10.*

Some remarks for the future...

88. Ramsar's role in the future, building on the past 34 years, must be to ensure wise use of wetlands and associated ecosystems and through these actions achieve adequate and potable water for people, by ensuring water for ecosystems.
89. We must however be careful that we do not try to be *wetlands for everything* or we will lose focus! Therefore, our major challenge is: *balancing the new conditions*, while upholding *what makes Ramsar special and effective*. In 2004 and 2005 the Secretariat and some Parties have made efforts to specifically emphasise the role of the Convention in the rapidly developing global discussion on water issues.
90. This includes a presence at the 12th and 13th sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, where an intervention was made by the Secretary General with support from other countries and the European Union. It also includes presence at meeting on IWRM and at UNEP-organized meetings, including one by the Global Programme of Action for land-based pollution in the marine environment. The Secretariat acknowledges gratefully the support of the Government of Switzerland which made these additional efforts possible in a time of constrained budgets.

Six imperatives for future action

91. Based on what we have been able to achieve in the last triennium, and looking forward realistically, what are the imperatives for action for the Convention? – here I include

Parties, Secretariat, IOPs and civil society at large. I think there are six, which cut across and integrate the goals of the Convention. Each is briefly noted below, linked to key draft Resolutions that the COP has before it.

Understanding the new international institutional frameworks

92. The general milieu of international environmental governance is changing, in part rapidly, in other directions slowly. There is also a feeling of frustration at the lack of urgency in governance mechanisms to resolve issues satisfactorily. The Ramsar Convention has avoided being too enmeshed in sterile debates in the past, and this is one imperative to continue. However, to paraphrase the poet John Donne, no convention is an island, and we need to ensure that while preserving our own effective *modus operandi*, we continue to enmesh with the broader global debates, especially in the issues of water and climate change as they affect wetlands and as wetlands affect those issues. DRs 3 and 5 especially bear on helping implement this imperative.

Reinforcing and developing the science base

93. Since COP8 we have the results of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and the report specifically prepared for the Ramsar Convention will be presented at COP9. The Assessment results are dealt with in detail in our discussions, but the key messages extracted by the STRP at its 12th meeting from the large volume of work on the assessment (Annex 3) identify a number of serious issues which should be followed by the Convention and its subsidiary bodies as a matter of urgency. It must be said that these key messages are subject to further reflection and work by the STRP, but they do represent a clear imperative for us at the moment of the COP. What comes through is that we know quite a lot about the dynamics of wetland systems, but there are some critical areas we need to develop further, more particularly as to how we link wise use of wetlands to improving human health and well-being. Issues of integrating knowledge and developing a cross-sectoral policy response are clearly paramount. DRs 1, 2 and 4 are important here.

Managing the List of Wetlands of International Importance effectively

94. The COP has before it some revisions to the Strategic Framework for development of the Ramsar List (DR1, annex B). Adoption of these will assist Parties to manage their additions and changes to the List. But we need to take a clear view of how we develop this pillar of the Convention: past discussions reflect a view that we should have a global target of a number of sites. Current thinking in protected area science would argue that it is not number but representativeness that we should be considering, not just generally under-represented wetland types, but ensuring homogenous global coverage of all wetland systems. And placing the designation and management of sites as part of the wise use development in all Parties should be seen as the positive way forward. Linking with the first imperative, we also need to have clarity on the desirability and overlap of site designation with other regional and global site designations. Besides DR1, DRs 4, 6, 7 and 16 have special relevance here.

Promoting integrated management approaches

95. Integrated water resources management has been clearly recognized as a crucial issue for the Ramsar Convention since COP6 and has assumed an even more significant role since

its adoption in the WSSD joint programme of implementation. The Convention's River Basin Initiative contributes to this, but has taken too long to develop, although we seem to be reaching closure soon. Ramsar's special role in also dealing with the coastal systems, including mangroves and seagrass beds, means we are in a special position to deal not only with IWRM but also ICZM. In short, our imperative must be to insist on integrated management approaches wherever. Here issues under discussion in DRs 10 and 15, as well as in DR1, will be important.

Developing a fully effective CEPA programme

96. Discussions at Standing Committee and at STRP have all focused on the need to engage as effectively as possible our CEPA programme endorsed by COP8. A particular challenge is the lack of specific resources allocated in the current budget to achieve this. DR 13 has a proposed budget which does foresee a growth in CEPA funding, which can be used to attract further developmental funding. Again, we need to ensure that our CEPA activities are linked and reinforce those of other MEAs, as well as promoting widely and effectively information for civil society to help in the conservation and management of wetland resources. Capacity building and training are issues that have advanced somewhat during the triennium, especially through the support of the Government of the Netherlands in broadening the response of the advisory board on training to RIZA to include broader Convention-relevant issues. DRs 9, 13 and 19 are important here.

Ensuring that the Convention has effective management

97. Ensuring that the Convention has adequate management is paramount to achieving any of the goals above. This means management at the Secretariat, as well as in national offices dealing with the Convention, and adequate integration of the work of Parties, Secretariat, and the scientific and NGO communities, especially through leadership shown by the IOPs. It is usual to declare that we have insufficient funds – and a comparison with other MEAs shows that clearly we are underfunded compared with what we achieve. But I don't want to labour that point, as it is not funds alone that we need. Simply to note that the budget presented in DR13 is the minimum to permit the Convention to continue to be effective.
98. Whatever budget is agreed by COP, the Secretariat will respond by ensuring that we adapt ourselves to delivering the best results for Parties we can, within all the usual constraints. In managing the Convention, we will continue to work closely with IUCN, as the body which houses the Secretariat and is the source of our financial and human resources management, as well as the Government of Switzerland, the country in which the Secretariat sits, and UNESCO, as our depositary.
99. The package of draft Resolutions for approval before COP should enable a constructive programme for the next triennium, building on our collective achievements, and working forward on a positive agenda.
100. Finally, I should like to put on record the excellent support received from all members of the Secretariat, who work long and hard to achieve the Convention's goals; the commitment of the IOPs in helping us deliver parts of the programme; and the members of STRP and Standing Committee who work tirelessly when they are with us to make sure

the Convention continues to perform its crucial role in International Environmental Governance.

Annex 1

Contracting Parties that have submitted their National Reports as of 20 September 2005

Albania	Georgia	Philippines
Algeria	Germany	Poland
Argentina	Ghana	Portugal
Armenia	Guinea	Republic of Korea
Austria	Honduras	Republic of Moldova
Azerbaijan	Hungary	Romania
Bahamas	Iceland	Russian Federation
Bahrain	Indonesia	Saint Lucia
Bangladesh	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Samoa
Belarus	Israel	Senegal
Belgium	Italy	Serbia and Montenegro
Belize	Jamaica	Slovak Republic
Bolivia	Jordan	Slovenia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kenya	South Africa
Botswana	Kyrgyz Republic	Spain
Brazil	Latvia	Sri Lanka
Bulgaria	Lebanon	Sudan
Canada	Lesotho	Suriname
Chile	Liberia	Sweden
China	Liechtenstein	Switzerland
Colombia	Lithuania	Thailand
Congo	Luxembourg	The FYR of Macedonia
Costa Rica	Madagascar	Trinidad & Tobago
Côte d'Ivoire	Malawi	Tunisia
Croatia	Malaysia	Turkey
Cyprus	Mali	Uganda
Czech Republic	Malta	Ukraine
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mauritius	United Kingdom
Denmark	Mexico	United Republic of Tanzania
Djibouti	Morocco	United States of America
Dominican Republic	Mozambique	Venezuela
Ecuador	Namibia	Viet Nam
Egypt	Nepal	Zambia
El Salvador	Netherlands	
Equatorial Guinea	New Zealand	
Estonia	Nicaragua	
Finland	Niger	
France	Nigeria	
Gabon	Norway	
Gambia	Pakistan	
	Peru	

Annex 2

Voluntary contributions to the Ramsar Convention 2003-2005

Country or organization	CHF
Australia, Ministry of Environment & Heritage	83,040
Austria, Nature & Species Protection	98,483
Belgium	105,490
Canada	131,147
France - Danone (Evian)	1,157,500
Denmark, Ministry of the Environment	44,634
Fiji, Department of Environment	23,486
Germany - Bundesministerium fur Umwelt, Naturschutz & Reaktorsicherheit	80,216
Hungary	37,713
Iran, Department of Environment	10,000
Ireland, Department of Environment & Heritage	15,428
Italy, Ministero dell'Ambiente	61,732
IUCN	3,070
Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	67,683
MAVA	20,000
Minera Escondida Limitada	44,961
Netherlands, Min. van L.N.V.	72,662
Norway, Royal Ministry of the Environment	30,000
Rio Tinto, Australia	36,300
Sweden, SIDA	1,057,192
Spain, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente	558,542
Switzerland	684,450
UK, DEFRA	179,780
UNEP IETC	33,550
UNESCO	36,185
United Kingdom - DEFRA	148,040
USA – Departments of State and Fish & Wildlife	1,019,259
USA - University of Berkeley	9,963
Wetlands International	52,402
World Bank	43,332
WWF Global Freshwater Programme	28,750
Other (reimbursements for trips, etc.)	89,908
TOTAL	6,064,898

Annex 3

Key Messages – from the millennium ecosystem Assessment – Draft views from the 12th meeting of the STRP

- Wetlands encompass a significant proportion of the area of the planet; the global estimate is 1280 million hectares and is recognized as an under-estimate.
- A cross-sectoral focus is urgently needed from policy- and decision-makers that emphasizes securing wetland ecosystem services in the context of achieving sustainable development and improving human well-being.
- Management of wetlands and water resources is most successfully addressed through integrated management at the river (or lake or aquifer) basin scale that is linked to coastal zone management for coastal and near-shore wetlands.
- Wetlands deliver a wide range of critical and important services (e.g. fish and fiber, water supply, water purification, coastal protection, recreational opportunities, and increasingly, tourism) vital for human well-being. Maintaining the natural functioning of wetlands will enable them to continue to deliver these services.
- The principal supply of renewable fresh water for humans comes from an array of wetland types, including lakes, rivers, swamps and groundwater aquifers. Some 1.5 billion people are dependent on groundwater as a source of drinking water.
- The services delivered by wetlands have been arguably valued at US\$14 trillion annually. Economic valuation now provides a powerful tool for placing wetlands on the agenda of conservation and development decision-makers.
- The degradation and loss of wetlands is more rapid than that for other ecosystems. Similarly, the status of both freshwater and coastal species is deteriorating faster than those of other ecosystems. Wetland-dependent biodiversity in many parts of the world is in continuing and accelerating decline.
- Wetland loss and degradation has primarily been driven by land conversion and infrastructure development, water abstraction, eutrophication and pollution and over-exploitation. Losses tend to be more rapid where populations are increasing most, leading to demands for increased economic development. There are a number of broad, interrelated economic reasons, including perverse subsidies, why wetlands continue to be lost and degraded.
- Global climate change is expected to further exacerbate the loss and degradation of wetland biodiversity including species that cannot relocate and migratory species that rely on a number of wetlands at different stages of their life cycle.
- The projected continued loss and degradation of wetlands will result in further reduction in human well-being, especially for poorer people in less developed countries where technological solutions are not as readily available.
- The priority when making choices about wetland management decisions is to ensure that the ecosystem services of the wetland are maintained. This can be achieved by application of the wise use principle of the Ramsar Convention.