

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)  
 4th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on  
 Administrative Reform  
 Gland, Switzerland, 26 January 2010

**Immediate actions identified by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform  
 at its first meeting<sup>1</sup> and subsequent actions/assessments**

**For 26 January 2010 meeting**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Explanation of problem and immediate action identified by the WG</b>	<b>SG report on actions taken since COP10 per second, March 09, WG meeting</b>	<b>Current status – Jan 10 WG Meeting</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>1. Difficulty in obtaining travel visas for staff without international organization legitimization</b>	See paragraphs 30 to 51 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The Ad Hoc Group, requested the Secretary General to write to relevant Missions in Geneva sending copies to the relevant Ramsar Administrative Authorities to request that the Missions assist with the granting of visas to Secretariat staff as and when needed. Otherwise no further immediate action was envisaged.	The Secretariat continues to work with Heads of Administrative Authorities and the Missions to minimize this difficulty. The SG has written to all 158 Missions (now 159 with the membership of Takijistan) with a diplomatic note requesting them to facilitate the acquisition of travel visas for the Secretariat staff. Only two specifically responded (Greece and Sierra Leone).	unchanged	

<sup>1</sup> Based on problems identified in table 2 of Ramsar COP10 DOC.20 Addendum 1

<p><b>2. Difficulty in obtaining recognition of Ramsar Secretariat staff at major international meetings</b></p>	<p>See paragraphs 52 to 58 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that the SG should report back on the implementation of paragraphs 8-11 of Resolution X.5. Otherwise, no further specific action was identified.</p>	<p>The SG noted that Ramsar staff have been able to attend major meetings, but concerns still remain, mainly through the Commission on Sustainable Development process. Often the Secretariat does not receive information about meetings and must request it. Even if the Secretariat receives invitations to a meeting, it is not easy to get its voice heard. The SG expressed his view that with continued help from Parties the situation could improve. Though the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) remains problematic, Ramsar has good relations with the GEF and UNEP. The SG reported that, with support from (UNESCO), Switzerland and the Netherlands, he was able to participate in a ministerial session, where he highlighted surface water and ground water to explain the importance of water. He also spoke on infrastructure and expressed the conviction that the Ministers of Water had understood the message to assist other Ministers on wetland issues at the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul. He noted that the Secretariat intends to highlight the importance of wetlands in economic and social development, especially in tourism, and said that he is working in this direction with the World Tourism Organization and some Parties, especially Seychelles, as for example during a recent visit there. The Secretariat is also organizing special training workshops for legal personnel in the Parties to promote understanding of the Ramsar Convention and how it relates to other conventions, and has invited other conventions to participate.</p>	<p>Current status unchanged</p>	
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<b>3. Potential impossibility of making binding contracts as Ramsar has no legal power to sign contracts</b>	See paragraphs 59 and 60 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no further action with regard to the previously perceived problem was required.	The SG confirmed that the delegation of authority from the Director General of IUCN is still valid and is helpful in that regard.	Solved, unchanged	
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<b>Problem</b>	<b>Explanation of problem and immediate action identified by the WG</b>	<b>SG report on actions taken since COP10 per second, March 09, WG meeting</b>	<b>Current status – Jan 10 WG Meeting</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>4. Ability of the Secretariat to enter into international cooperation agreements</b>	See paragraphs 61 to 73 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no immediate action was required with respect to the identified potential issue.	The SG noted that this is a problem for the Secretariats of all conventions and not peculiar to Ramsar.	Problem is unchanged	Depends upon host and powers from the COP
<b>5. Legal liability of host organization for Ramsar actions (in case of staff disputes, misappropriation of funds, etc.)</b>	See paragraphs 74 to 76 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no further immediate action was required with respect to the legal liability of the host organization for Ramsar actions.	The host organization for Ramsar is legally liable for its actions (in case of staff disputes, misappropriation of funds, etc.). This is regularly discussed with IUCN. The SG noted that this matter is once again under discussion with IUCN - the Ramsar Secretariat has a letter of agreement with IUCN which specifically addresses and enforces responsibilities on both sides which are designed to mitigate IUCN's concerns in this. This does require Ramsar to adopt various control and review processes through IUCN which are not always efficient.	Unchanged with the new letter of agreement	

<p><b>6. Difficulty some Parties have in paying contributions to Ramsar Secretariat in the absence of legal identity</b></p>	<p>See paragraphs 77 to 82 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no further action was required with respect to the previously perceived problem.</p>	<p>The SG noted that the legal identity no longer seems to pose a problem in respect of Parties paying their contributions.</p>	<p>For some states, problems remain</p>	
<p><b>7. The host organization controls the Secretariat's financial procedures in ways that may not be suitable for us.</b></p>	<p>See paragraphs 83 to 88 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no further immediate action was required by the WG.</p>	<p>The SG noted that this is one of the matters under discussion; he said the improvements are being addressed via the new letter of agreement with IUCN.</p>	<p>Situation unchanged, pending discussions between the Standing Committee and IUCN</p>	
<p><b>8. Lack of staff access when in the field to UN logistical and security assistance</b></p>	<p>See paragraphs 89 to 102 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that further information would be required before any possible immediate actions could be identified.</p>	<p>The SG noted that the Secretariat works with Contracting Parties on this matter to always assess and address the risk and secure appropriate logistical support.</p>	<p>unchanged</p>	
<p><b>9. Non-Swiss employees may be losing privileges of being taxpayers in their communes</b></p>	<p>See paragraphs 103 and 104 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no further action was required.</p>	<p>The SG reported that this is no longer perceived as a major problem.</p>	<p>The problem also applies to others who do not pay taxes</p>	

<b>10. Work permits for spouses of non-Swiss staff members</b>	See paragraphs 105 to 108 of the Report for an explanation of the problem. The WG agreed that no further action was required	The SG noted that Switzerland has confirmed the situation re work permits, and that it should no longer be seen as a problem.	Work permits for spouses of non-Swiss staff have always been available	
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