

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
1st meeting of the CEPA Oversight Panel
Gland, Switzerland, 29 May, 2006

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Summary report

Present: Charles Amankwah, Stefan Bohorquez, John Bowleg (Chair), Peter Bridgewater (ex-officio), Rebecca D’Cruz, Sandra Hails (*Ex-officio*), Tunde Ojei, Chris Prietto, Maria Rivera, Sebastia Semene (Observer), Gerhard Sigmund, Petra Spliethoff.

Apologies: Herb Raffaele

1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair, John Bowleg, and the Secretary General, Peter Bridgewater, welcomed the members of the Panel, reminding the members that the Oversight Panel was launched at COP9 by Resolution IX.18.

Panel members were invited to introduce themselves.

2. Discussion of key functions and identification of priorities

The members were reminded of the key functions of the Panel as defined in doc. SC34-11:

- i** Monitor and report on CEPA issues within the Convention and the progress of implementation of the CEPA Programme as established by Resolution VIII.31, *The Convention’s Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003-2008*, especially with reference to the CEPA activities of the Secretariat.
- ii.** Advise Standing Committee and the Secretariat on the CEPA work priorities at the national and international levels, including the CEPA priorities of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);
- iii.** Clarify the broad roles of the two Government and Non-Govt CEPA National Focal Points (NFPs);
- iv.** Identify, with the involvement of the Ramsar Advisory Board on Capacity Building, priorities in recognition of the gaps between capacity building opportunities and needs for the broad range of wetland professionals and stakeholders;

- v. Liaise with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to improve synergies across conventions, as called for in Resolutions VIII.5 and IX.5;
- vi. Advise the Standing Committee on the form and function of the next CEPA Programme, for the period 2009–2014, to be proposed to COP10.

3. Funding available for CEPA within Ramsar's core budget

It was noted that the CEPA budget in Ramsar's core budget for the current triennium is:

- 2006: CHF 17,201 (NB: a proportion will be spent in organizing this meeting)
- 2007: CHF 39,268
- 2008: CHF 30,000

4. Monitoring and reporting on CEPA issues and progress of implementation of the CEPA Programme (Resolution VIII.31)

The discussion considered two levels: national implementation by CPs and Secretariat implementation.

4(a) National level:

Key documents referred to during the discussion included (i) Resolution VIII.31, (ii) the National Reporting format for COP9, which included a number of questions relating to implementation of the CEPA Programme that formed the basis for (iii) the COP9 report *Implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme for the period 2003-2005*.

In terms of monitoring and reporting on CEPA implementation at the national level, the CEPA Panel identified the National Report format as the main tool for assessing and reporting on implementation by Contracting Parties (CPs). It was agreed that a major and imminent task for the Panel was to advise Standing Committee (SC) on the CEPA implementation questions that should be included in the National Reports format for COP10 which will be developed by a sub-group of the SC in time for consideration at SC's 35th Meeting (February 2007).

Concerning the new National Report format, it was noted that:

- the new format will be considerably shorter than the format used for COP9 as requested by the CPs;
- the questions asked must refer to the current CEPA Programme (Resolution VIII.31)¹;
- there is value in looking again at the questions asked in the COP9 format² and the CEPA implementation report based on this³;

¹ Available for download here http://www.ramsar.org/res/key_res_viii_31_e.doc

² Available here http://www.ramsar.org/index_key_docs.htm - look for National Planning Tool + Report format, COP9

³ Available here http://www.ramsar.org/cop9/cop9_doc25_e.htm

- attention should also be paid to the CEPA components of the Convention Strategic Plan 2003-2008⁴ and the recently adopted Convention Work Plan 2006-2008⁵.

The Panel members agreed that they would identify 5-10 key CEPA questions for the National Report format for COP10 that should be communicated to the new SC Subgroup charged with developing the new Strategic Plan and National Report format. Members agreed to submit their suggestions to the Secretariat (hails@ramsar.org) by the end of July 2006 so that a final document can be prepared, agreed upon by the Panel, and passed on to the Subgroup.

It was noted that while reference is frequently made in the National Reports regarding CEPA activities of the IOPs when they have assisted in national-level implementation, this is an *ad-hoc* process and does not fully reflect the diverse CEPA activities of the IOPs.

The Panel members agreed that the Secretary General should ask the IOPs at their next meeting (October/November 2006) if they would be willing to report on their CEPA activities in implementing the CEPA Programme in the future. The SG will report back to the Panel.

4 (b) Secretariat level

4 (b) i The key document referred to in this discussion was *Communication activities of the Secretariat in implementing the Convention's CEPA Programme*. There was insufficient time to consider this document in any detail. It was broadly felt that while some of activities reported on clearly responded to activities in the CEPA Programme, others filled a wider remit.

The Panel members agreed that they should ensure that the communication activities of the Secretariat are clearly articulated in the new CEPA Programme for the period 2009-2014 to be deliberated at COP10, bearing in mind human and financial resources.

4 (b) ii During the discussion of the Secretariat's communication activities, two additional items were discussed: Web site design and functionality, and the need for a new Ramsar logo.

There was some discussion on the design and utility of the Ramsar Web site. Some members felt that: new users do not find it a friendly site to easily access the information they required; there may be some target audiences not well catered for in the current format; and the current design could benefit from modernising.

It was suggested that, perhaps a way forward would be to view the current site as an intranet for major users, and accommodate new target audiences in other ways.

⁴ Available here http://www.ramsar.org/key_strat_plan_2003_e.htm

⁵ Available here http://www.ramsar.org/sc/34/key_sc34_doc05.htm

There was a discussion on the need to change the Ramsar logo to better reflect what Ramsar is. It was noted that this had been discussed by SC but that no decision had been taken to change the logo. While some people may feel the current logo conveys only the notion of water and not wetlands, changing the logo a second time within an 8-year period could have negative impacts through loss of identity.

It was noted that a decision on a new logo would have to be taken by the CPs through SC and that there should be full justification of the need for a new logo with a clear definition of the image the Convention would wish to project.

There was some support for finding innovative ways to make use of each COP logo in the longterm since these logos are often quite creatively designed yet are not used after the COP.

4 (b) iii It was also noted that the full range of communication activities in the document *Communication activities of the Secretariat in implementing the Convention's CEPA Programme* will have to be re-assessed in the light of the decision to discontinue the Convention Development Officer post beyond 2006.

5. Role of the CEPA National Focal Points

The key document referred to during this discussion was the *Roles and responsibilities of the Ramsar CEPA National Government and NGO Focal Points*.

There was a broad-ranging discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the CEPA National Focal Points (NFPs), the discussion benefiting considerably from the experiences of the two Government and two NGO CEPA NFPs present.

Key points from the discussion included:

- It is important that both CEPA NFPs are nominated since they bring different skills to the CEPA Programme, with the NGO NFP in many cases more actively engaged at the grass roots level.
- Nominating an active NGO engages them in the CEPA Programme, gives recognition to their work, and can often bring additional funding to a CEPA Programme.
- While it is preferable that the Government NFP is a CEPA expert, it was recognized that many CPs are not be willing to nominate a person outside of their Administrative Authority and that frequently this means the nominated person is not a CEPA expert.
- It is unfortunate that the Government NFP changes rather frequently in some CPs, since this does not support continuity in the national CEPA Programme. Frequently the NGO NFP is the longterm representative.
- It is important that the two NFPs should agree and collaborate on their country's CEPA Programme.
- It is important that the NFPs are key members of the National Wetland Committee, where these exist, and that they are in contact with other key

Administrative Authority personnel (such as the Daily Contact and the STRP NFP).

- It is important that the CEPA NFPs are consulted by the Administrative Authority when completing the CEPA questions in the National Reports to the COPs.
- While the current CEPA Programme requires the nomination of a Non-governmental rather than NGO NFP, it was thought that in fact it should specify NGO because of the critical role NGOs play as CEPA actors.

The Panel agreed that it would be useful to develop a Web page that identified the key people within the CPs (Administrative Authority, Daily Contact, STRP NFP, and CEPA NFPs) with links from there to pages where these lists are available.

The Panel edited the draft paper on roles and responsibilities and agreed that the following should be the major roles and responsibilities of the CEPA NFPs:

It is ultimately the task of each Contracting Party to agree precise roles and responsibilities for their nominated NFPs. These roles and expectations must reflect the capacity to operate at different levels and the resourcing of the individuals filling the positions. The CPs should provide some information to potential NFPs of the expected time required to fulfill their role and responsibilities.

Major roles and responsibilities of the CEPA NFPs:

In providing a supportive environment in which wetland CEPA planners and practitioners can develop their work, NFPs should:

- provide leadership through a single point of contact for the development and implementation of a wetland CEPA programme at an appropriate level (national, subnational, local) as described in the Resolution and annexed guidelines;
- be the main point of contact on CEPA matters between (a) the Secretariat and the Contracting Party, and (b) between Contracting Parties;
- be key members of the National Ramsar/Wetland Committees (if such a body exists) or similar national structures;
- assist in the practical CEPA implementation at the national level and in national reporting on CEPA activities to the Ramsar COPs;
- ensure a high, positive public profile for the Ramsar Convention and its conservation and wise use goals;
- be an active spokesperson for wetland CEPA;
- establish and maintain any contacts, networks, structures and mechanisms necessary to ensure the efficient communication of information between relevant actors at all levels and in all sectors.

6. The new CEPA Programme for the period 2009-2014

The current CEPA Programme, defined by Resolution VIII.31 and its annexed guidelines, is time-limited (2003-2008) and a new programme will have to be developed for adoption at COP10. After a broad-ranging discussion, a number of key priorities emerged regarding the development of the new CEPA Programme. These included:

- The first CEPA programme (1999-2003) was replaced by the current Programme (2003-2008) and the differences between these two documents presented some difficulties for implementers. It was strongly recommended that the new Programme should not introduce new approaches and should be clearly based upon the current Programme.
- The new Programme should try to simplify and clarify the activities to be implemented.
- The role of the Focal Points (both Government and NGO) is critical to the delivery and reporting on the CEPA Programme, and this importance should be emphasized in the new Programme.
- Since many CPs/NFPs have limited time and resources to support implementation of the CEPA Programme, they should be encouraged to focus on a few areas where they can make progress.
- It should be ensured that the possible scales of CEPA action planning (site, local, catchment, national, regional) are made explicit and that the steps that lead to a national plan should be indicated.
- Participation should be addressed in the new Programme as a highly effective strategy for building awareness of wetland values and/or skills for wetland management; a link should be made to the participatory resolutions already adopted.
- The CEPA Programme should encompass all the Convention activities related to improving the understanding of the target audience or the sharing of information for a particular purpose, including the activities that are the domain of the Secretariat, those that are recommended by the IOPs, and those that relate to synergies with other MEAs.

The Panel agreed that the Secretariat should provide a first draft for the new Programme, following the key priorities identified by the Panel, by the end of July. The Panel will work together to finalise this draft by the end of December 2006 for consideration at SC35 in February 2007.

The Panel also agreed that, while participation should now be included in the new CEPA Programme, the acronym CEPA should not be changed as it should remain consistent with the accepted wording used by other conventions (thus the 'P' representing Public should not be changed to represent Participation).

7. CEPA priorities of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);

The STRP CEPA expert briefly informed the meeting of some background information on CEPA and STRP.

Although Resolution VIII.31 called for the establishment of an STRP CEPA Working Group to ensure that CEPA issues are effectively integrated in the technical guidance of the Convention, a lack of funding prevented this. Instead a CEPA Specialist Group, with Chris Prietto as its Chair, was set up within Wetland International's Specialist Group system with the task of assisting in advising on CEPA issues for both Wetlands International and Ramsar.

A recent development for Ramsar has been the inclusion of a CEPA expert member in STRP, this role being filled by Chris Prietto so that there is an effective link between the Specialist Group CEPA skills and STRP. The role of this expert will be twofold: to ensure that CEPA issues are integrated as necessary into the new technical guidance being developed by STRP; and to try to build communication skills and capacity within STRP.

It was noted that the current STRP work on the critical path approach to the river basin management planning cycle will present an excellent opportunity to show how CEPA tools/skills need to be integrated into technical guidance. It was also noted that the European Water Framework Directive has effectively integrated participation and communication into its management procedures.

8. The Ramsar Advisory Board

The Ramsar Advisory Board representative on the CEPA Panel gave a brief overview of the form and function of the Board. Supported by the Netherlands Government, the Board meets twice a year (next meeting June 6th, 2006) with the goal of assisting Ramsar in identifying training needs and developing the capacity of wetland managers.

The Panel agreed that, since training and capacity building now come under the purview of the Panel, there should be a two-way exchange between the Advisory Board and the CEPA Oversight Panel. The Panel should receive the reports of the Advisory Board to extract advice which will be passed to SC, and the Advisory Board should receive any important feedback on training and capacity-building issues from the CEPA Oversight Panel.

9. Liaison with other MEAs

In practical terms the Secretariat noted the difficulties of working with MEAs on CEPA issues. There is currently an effort being made to collaborate with the CBD in the development of a CEPA toolkit to assist CEPA implementers of both Conventions. The process is proving to be very slow and time consuming, and it is difficult to find common ground between the two CEPA Programmes. It was noted that there has been greater success in the development of collaborative work on inland waters.

The Panel agreed that while it should keep an eye open for possibilities of synergy, this is not regarded as a priority task for the Panel.

10. Regional initiatives

It was noted that while the Regional initiatives that are formally associated with Ramsar report financially to the Convention, there is no current mechanism for reporting on their CEPA-related activities.

The Panel agreed that it would suggest to SC that the Ramsar Regional initiatives reporting financially to the Convention should be required to report to the CEPA Oversight Panel on their CEPA-related activities.

11. Key CEPA priorities

While key priorities have been identified for the development of the new CEPA Programme in section 6, the Panel also identified, during the course of the day, a number of broad CEPA priorities for the next triennium. This should be considered as a work in progress and further priorities may be added as the work of the Panel progresses. The priorities identified so far include:

- The CEPA Programme should be promoted as a continuum of activities, ranging from those that raise awareness of a particular target audience to those that train participants for a particular range of skills.
- Participation should be promoted as a highly effective CEPA strategy for building awareness of wetland values and skills for wetland management.
- The integration of CEPA activities into STRP guidance should be clearly demonstrated, through the CEPA expert, to illustrate what, how and where CEPA activities can be used for achieving management objectives.
- Two-way communication processes should be developed with the various groups represented on the CEPA Panel, through their representative on the Panel, to gain the support in building a more integrated CEPA Programme for the Convention.

12. CEPA Oversight Panel reports to Standing Committee

Under the terms of reference of the Panel, it is required to report on its progress to each meeting of the SC.

The Panel agreed that a note on the panels deliberations would be included in the SGs report to SC in July 2006.

The Panel agreed that this present report, updated with any advances made in the coming months, would form the basis of a report to SC35. The report to SC will be drafted by the Secretariat and circulated to all Panel members for approval.

13. Future *modus operandi* of the CEPA Panel

The Panel agreed that it should propose to SC that the Panel should meet again in late 2007, at a date and location to be determined but in the meantime the Panel should continue its work by email.