

Agenda item 9.10a

Implementation of the Convention's Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) Programme in 2006-2008

CEPA and Capacity Building – A note for discussion on the future programme with particular regard to the role of the Secretariat

Action suggested: While Resolution VIII.31 is still active, there seems no need to propose new CEPA Resolutions for COP9. The Standing Committee may nonetheless wish to suggest that, for the COP, a note building on the present Resolution be developed as an Information Paper. The SC may also wish the Secretariat to include some of the action ideas included in this document as part of the strategic framework for implementation of the Convention (DOC SC31-22).

Introduction

1. Resolution VIII.31 deals with the issues of Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) at length and establishes some ideas and priorities. It urges the Secretariat to attempt to find external funding for these activities, as there is no allocation in the Core Budget.
2. Since the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (2002), the Secretariat has attempted to implement as much as possible the ideas and CEPA programme set out in Resolution VIII.31, yet the lack of secure funding inhibits delivery of what everyone seems to agree should be a basic thread through all the Convention's activities. The Secretariat has two roles in the implementation of Resolution VIII.31: 1) a role as facilitator to assist the Parties in their implementation, and 2) a direct role in certain specific areas identified in the Resolution. Implementation is however mainly meant to be achieved through the Contracting Parties, and the International Organization Partners (IOPs) have a significant role here in partnership with Parties.
3. Although Resolution VIII.31 calls for the development of a Working Group on CEPA within the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to undertake a comprehensive programme of work, lack of funding has so far precluded this. As an alternative, a CEPA Specialist Group has been set up within the Wetlands International Specialist Group system that will work to deliver the CEPA objectives of both the Ramsar Convention and Wetlands International, including through its input to the work of the STRP.
4. Through the comprehensive work programme recommended by the CEPA Resolution VIII.31, the stage is now set for wetland CEPA to assume a more broadly recognized and significant role in ensuring the wise use of wetlands within the Ramsar Convention.

5. The vision of the Ramsar Convention's CEPA Programme is: *People acting for the wise use of wetlands.*
6. The guiding principles of the programme, as outlined in Resolution VIII.31 and Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 6, are:
 - a) Wetlands provide important goods and services which help sustain human life, conserve biological diversity, and combat the impacts of climate change and desertification. Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) are the tools for placing people's social, political, economic and cultural realities within the context of the goods and services provided by wetland ecosystems.
 - b) The Ramsar Convention seeks to motivate people to appreciate the values of wetlands so that they become advocates for wetland conservation and wise use and may act to become involved in relevant policy formulation, planning and management.
 - c) The key actors in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention need effective CEPA tools and expertise to engage major stakeholders and to convey appropriate messages in order to mainstream the wise use principle throughout society.
 - d) Wise use issues and concepts need to be communicated effectively to ensure participation of major stakeholders from different sectors and mainstreaming of the issues in sector plans and actions. This communication needs to operate laterally, across and between relevant sectors, and also vertically from stakeholders to governments and back.
 - e) Support for the CEPA Programme should be recognized by Parties to the Convention as an investment which will reduce conflicts over wetland resources, increase the number of advocates, actors and networks involved in the issues, and build an informed decision-making and public constituency. CEPA mobilises actions directed at achieving the wise use of wetlands. CEPA should form a central part of implementing the Ramsar Convention by each Contracting Party.
7. This paper provides an update on activities and basis for discussion on a number of aspects of CEPA and capacity building in relation to the future CEPA programme, with particular regard to the role of the Secretariat and any budgetary implications for each area of activity.

I. Communication

8. Communication is the two-way exchange of information leading to mutual and enhanced understanding. It can be used to gain the involvement of stakeholders and is a means to gain understanding and cooperation of civil society in implementing the Convention. Communication is the key means by which the aims, objectives, and achievements of the Convention reach the wider world. Communication about the Convention at large comes from Parties, the Secretariat, and the IOPs, but key global communication messages should originate from the Secretariat. There are three significant communication tools which

ought to be more effectively used by the Secretariat; press, the Internet, and public awareness activities.

I.1 Press

9. Thus far the Convention Secretariat has had a largely reactive press or media strategy, dealing with critical issues in an *ad hoc* way. For the next triennium it is proposed that we develop a more coordinated approach, seeking media opportunities and connections to spread good and positive stories and to try to achieve a better profile for the Convention. We will attempt to start this process for COP9, working particularly with the Ugandan authorities, but also seeking to ensure appropriate international press attention to the meeting. The Secretariat will implement this with Contracting Party support and assistance for particular opportunities.
10. Budget impact: none on core budget

I.2 The Internet

11. Internet access and information is critical now to the communication armoury of any organization. The Convention has developed a comprehensive Web site which features archival material as well as a bulletin board. However, the technologies available for Web site development have moved on, and it is time to develop the site completely. This project will be undertaken after COP9 and, while ensuring that the information content of the existing site is retained, will develop a new style, with easier access to the parts of the site, and reflect emerging concepts of Web design, as well as integrating other aspects of the Convention's work, including better links, and more direct incorporation of the STRP Support Service and the database of information on Ramsar sites.
12. Budget impact: the majority of costs for this work will come from extra budgetary sources, with some funds from core budget lines allocated to STRP and the Ramsar Sites Database management.

II. Education

II.1 Ramsar Game

13. The Secretariat has developed, in collaboration with UNESCO and Group Danone, a board game aimed at educating schoolchildren about wetlands and water, their values and importance. The game is currently being tested in 700 schools from the associated school network of UNESCO. One thousand copies of the game will be produced and distributed for the COP. However, further distribution of the game raises some logistical problems – the Secretariat has insufficient resources to deal with these issues, and the game is only one example of the material produced by us.
14. An option could be to give a mandate to an external organization to deal with any issues related to publications, mailings and communication activities of the Convention. This entity could be auto-financed by the material sold (posters, books, games, etc.). The Secretariat would then be entering a new and more professional way of dealing with

communications and public awareness, similar to the one used by the World Heritage Convention, among others.

15. Budget impact: funded completely from extra-budgetary sources.

II.2 Curriculum development

16. Resolution VIII.31 talked about curriculum development, yet the Secretariat is not aware of significant activity in this respect in the last triennium, although we have yet to analyse the COP9 National Reports in detail. Given that curriculum development is the responsibility of education ministries, there is a difficulty in seeing a clear nexus with the Convention.
17. However, given the responsibility of UNESCO for education matters, including through the Decade for Sustainable Development, and given the Joint Programme of Work with UNESCO-MAB, this would seem to offer possible ways forward. The Secretariat will explore with UNESCO the possibilities for any further action in the next triennium, including seeking resources to implement new actions, jointly with UNESCO and/or Contracting Parties.
18. The role of wetland education centres (see also III.3 below) in helping to formulate and deliver curriculum development is also important, and the Secretariat will continue to work with Wetland Link International (WLI) to develop this aspect globally, including investigation of additional resources to implement these activities.
19. Budget impact: none on core funds; external funding to be sought to implement new work on wetland centres in conjunction with WLI.

III. Public awareness

20. Awareness activities bring the issues relating to wetlands to the attention of individuals and key groups who have the power to influence outcomes. Awareness is an agenda setting and advocacy exercise which helps people to know what and why issues are important, and what can be done to realise outcomes for better wetland management and conservation.
21. Several activities are being planned by the Secretariat regarding this issue. Contacts have been established with production companies, and a wide range of highly media-related events could be developed to promote the Convention and its message. Such projects include a possible short length animation movie produced by Pixar Animations Studios (productions include Toy Story, Bug's life, Nemo, etc.), a documentary on the Ramsar game made by the famous French director and photographer Raymond Depardon, several other film possibilities, an exhibition concept linked to the idea of a high impact art event, increased number and range of publications, etc. These activities will be self-financing.
22. Again, there is a vital need to think seriously about a mechanism to ensure a proper delivery and follow-up of these projects. The Secretariat cannot deal with all this itself, and the most sensible solution is to contract out to an external body expert in dealing with these matters, subject to approval by the Standing Committee.

23. Budget impact: None on core funding, except the continued provision of staffing funds to maintain the secretariat staffing time.

III.1 Wetland centres

24. Establishment of functioning wetland centres has now taken off worldwide, but often with a lack of particular focus. The work undertaken by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust on wetland centres is proving very effective, and the Secretariat will continue to work with the Trust to develop global policies for the establishment and functioning of such centres, linked where relevant and appropriate to the regional Ramsar centres.

III.2 Interpretation

25. Interpretation at Ramsar sites is very varied, from excellent to non-existent. Whilst the Secretariat provides advice to Parties on a standard wording on the plaques identifying sites, we have not promoted standards for interpretation. Of course such standards will vary, depending on the conditions for each site and the available resources, but it is suggested that during the next triennium the Secretariat examine this issue with relevant institutions, including securing better financial support for interpretation activities.
26. Budget impact: limited impact on staffing and operational costs, which can be accommodated within existing funding envelope.

III.3 World Wetlands Day

27. Launched in 1997, World Wetlands Day – 2nd of February - celebrates the signing of the Ramsar Convention in February 1971. Each year, government agencies, NGOs, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community undertake actions to communicate the values and benefits of wetlands in general, and the Ramsar Convention in particular, to a broad range of target audiences.
28. The success of WWD as a campaign tool is amply demonstrated by the increasing number and diversity of reports sent to the Secretariat each year. WWD activities come in all shapes and sizes, from lectures and seminars, nature walks, children's art contests, sampan races, football games, community clean-up days, to radio and television interviews and letters to newspapers, designation of new Ramsar sites, the launch of new wetland policies and new programmes at the national level.
29. Each year, with financial support from the Groupe Danone, the Ramsar Secretariat provides WWD materials (posters, stickers, leaflets, videos, e-cards, etc.) with a different wetland theme for event organizers. In recent years, the Secretariat has successfully encouraged event organizers to customize and translate these materials into local languages by also providing the design files on CD-ROM.
30. In the future, WWD could evolve into something more media-related. The Secretariat will be developing new concepts and ideas for WWD (CD-ROMs building on the menu of posters and stickers, for example, books, etc.) as well as about some more media-related events noted in the "public awareness" section above. Support for WWD comes from funding supplied by Groupe Danone, which expires in 2006. The Secretariat is working with Groupe Danone to ensure continuation of this funding.

31. Budget impact: except for staff time, no core resources are used or needed.

IV. Capacity building

32. Contracting Parties can clearly benefit from building capacity in science, management, education, and awareness. Each Contracting Party has both different needs and different possibilities to carry out such activities. While the Ramsar Small Grants Fund has provided very small opportunities for some capacity building, as has the Swiss Grant for Africa and the Wetlands for the Future funds, there is little directed funding for this purpose. Of course, some GEF and bilateral aid funding has provided opportunities for capacity building, and it is hoped that the GEF will fund part of the Ramsar/CBD River Basin Initiative, which will emphasise the availability of information as helping to build confidence and capacity.
33. Budget impact: The Secretariat will continue to seek funding opportunities for capacity building projects with Parties where this is feasible, including where possible support for the national CEPA focal points.

IV.1 Wetland management training

34. Training needs are immense and not just in developing countries. The recent training activities developed by the RIZA Institute of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management of the Netherlands have been very helpful in this regard.
35. In close cooperation with the Ramsar Secretariat and several other Dutch institutions (e.g., ITC in Enschede, IAC in Wageningen, and UNESCO-IHE in Delft), the development of regional wetland training courses is being facilitated, including using the Ramsar Panama Centre. Another good example is the training course in Kenya, which started with alumni from the courses in the Netherlands. In the past three years, this course has developed into a fully-fledged annual wetland training course for the whole of Eastern Africa. Several other initiatives are trying to follow the Kenyan example.
36. RIZA has an Advisory Board, which the Ramsar Secretary General has traditionally chaired. The Board advised RIZA on the development and execution of the International Course on Wetland Management, the International Course on Wetland Restoration, and other courses in the Netherlands and abroad to which Dutch institutions contribute.
37. This relatively small body has had an excellent effect on the development of training opportunities for wetland professionals. Actions under the Board have resulted in better management plans and better wetland management in many countries, thereby substantially contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands worldwide. An additional feature is that many of the alumni of the Netherlands courses now constitute a global knowledge network which operates at a local scale. This feature is being institutionalised as an Internet-based “wetland professionals” platform.
38. The RIZA Advisory Board has the potential to move towards becoming a global platform for policy development and also acts to stimulate initiatives for new wetland training opportunities. The Secretariat understands that the Netherlands Government is interested

in developing this function, so that the Advisory Board can report, perhaps through Standing Committee, to the COP. This would be without impact on core budget

39. In recent years, the thinking about capacity building has moved on, and within Ramsar increasing emphasis is rightly being placed on a regional approach, as is also demonstrated by the range of proposals from Contracting Parties to the Standing Committee for regional initiatives under the Convention (see DOC. SC31-21). Capacity building is being developed within the regions with exchange of knowledge and experience taking place directly among the participants. This experience led the RIZA Advisory Board last year to decide on a new approach to accommodate these changes. This has led to the following course of action:
- A new 3-week training course for trainers has been set up in the Netherlands. The aim is to train participants to initiate and organize their own national or regional courses, in Panama or East Africa for instance, where these initiatives have been developed and there is a need for substantive support. The Training of Trainers course will be organized once a year by the IAC in Wageningen, in collaboration with RIZA, UNESCO-IHE, ITC, and Wetlands International, and will replace the RIZA wetland management course. After a pilot course in September 2004, the first fully-fledged course took place in April 2005 in Wageningen with 22 participants and was a great success.
 - The establishment of a “wetland professionals platform”, a virtual community of people involved with wetlands: managers, researchers, trainers, and policy-makers. This platform will improve the exchange of important information and will be maintained by various wetland institutes.
 - The name of the RIZA Advisory Board has been changed to the “Ramsar Capacity Building Advisory Board”. The Dutch Government is pleased to continue its active support of Ramsar by hosting this new Capacity Building Advisory Board.

V. The Role of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

V.1 CEPA expert group

40. The STRP and the proposed expert group on CEPA should be made more effective in the coming triennium. For the 2003-2005 triennium, the STRP Work Plan agreed that the cross-cutting role of CEPA into its work and Working Groups would be delivered through the Wetlands International CEPA Specialist Group and its Chair. In practice, this has not been wholly effective, not least owing to lack of resources. The 12th meeting of the STRP considered this issue and is proposing that the establishment of an expert advisor mechanism for its key areas of work should include a CEPA expert advisor, potentially the Chair of the WI Specialist Group, who could facilitate the linkage to other appropriate CEPA experts, with this network acting as an official STRP Working Group.
41. While CEPA is and can be promoted through voluntary funding, there should be an allocation of at least some funding support from core for these activities, including allowing the development of an official Working Group for STRP, which might meet largely virtually and drawing on the expertise from CEPA National Focal Points, IOPs, and others as appropriate. Such a group should allow the linkage with Parties' own capacity

building and CEPA plans and make more effective use of the global network of CEPA Focal Points. In parallel the Secretariat will develop a more cohesive unit dealing with CEPA and capacity building, depending on the final budgetary allocation for the triennium.

VI. Future directions

42. As this paper demonstrates, CEPA has many facets. In delivering the Secretariat's aspects of the Convention's current CEPA programme, the existing resources for staff are largely adequate, and, provided Groupe Danone funding remains available, day-to-day funding is also secure. However, for any programme expansion, additional funding would be needed.
43. The Standing Committee may wish to accept this information note simply "as is" or task the Secretariat to prepare a more expansive note for COP9.
44. A separate note prepared by the Secretariat on Ramsar's corporate image is available as DOC. SC31-33b. Since this issue is related to the CEPA activities of the Convention, it will be considered by SC31 under agenda item 9.10b.