

Agenda item 5

**Meeting of International Organization Partners (IOPs) and the
Ramsar Secretariat, Gland, 28 February 2006**

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to take note of this report, provide any comments as appropriate, and note that further meetings are expected before each SC meeting in the future.

1. The Ramsar/IOPs' meeting in Gland, 28 February 2006, brought together senior representatives of the Convention's five International Organization Partners (IOPs) to review working relationships with the Convention and its Secretariat and to identify ways of enhancing and strengthening these relationships. It is intended that such meetings should take place on a regular basis, in advance of each meeting of the Standing Committee.
2. The meeting was attended by Dave Pritchard, BirdLife International; Achim Steiner and Ger Bergkamp, IUCN; Frank Rijbersman and Rebecca Tharme, International Water Management Institute (IWMI); and Chris Hails, WWF International; and Jane Madgwick (Wetlands International) for part of it by teleconference.
3. The Secretary General gave a short introduction to the meeting, explaining that the context was to provide the Standing Committee with a view from the IOPs on key issues for the Convention for the coming year, so as to help with common delivery of mechanisms to implement the Convention.
4. The IOPs engaged in a vigorous and useful discussion of the roles of IOPs vis-à-vis those of Contracting Parties and the Secretariat. The meeting canvassed how the IOP relationship had developed and agreed that it was important to keep this distinctive construct alive and vital in the future, and that the Secretariat had a key role in helping facilitate this.
5. Positive suggestions included:
 - the Secretariat reinforcing the relationship and promoting its value at all possible occasions;
 - producing a small brochure explaining, through examples, the role of IOPs; and
 - ensuring better linkages between the Convention's Web site and those of the IOPs.
6. A suggestion was made that a three-year forward calendar of Ramsar and Ramsar-related events be constructed, which would form the basis for developing activities by individual IOPs, concerted activities among IOPs, and activities which would take place between the IOPs and the Secretariat. The IOPs also agreed that occasions where they could meet

together to discuss shared targets and activities would be useful. The issue of providing a common focus at CBD COP8 and World Water Forum IV was specifically raised in this context.

7. The meeting agreed that a new Resolution for COP10 might be prepared codifying these relationships in an updated and clearer way.
8. A discussion on the Convention followed, after one IOP posed the question whether Ramsar was becoming “the water convention”. The Secretary General provided a view that it was not, but that the COP9 decisions on natural phenomena and poverty reduction, as well as the decision on water matters and interest in links with human health, all indicated that the Convention was recognising that its particular ecosystem, wetlands, had key roles to play in respect of environmental security, and thus human security.
9. A lively discussion followed in which several issues were canvassed.
10. IUCN noted some concerns on the Resolution concerning the status of the Ramsar Secretariat, and the Secretary General indicated the Resolution was relatively clear in how the actions should progress, and that he was confident a suitable solution to this issue could be proposed by COP10.
11. The IOPs expressed interest in joining the CEPA Oversight Panel in helping to deliver the CEPA programme, within the STRP framework and beyond. The idea of producing a new Ramsar video was discussed, and it was agreed that the Secretariat would send a story board to the IOPs with an invitation to them to supply suitable footage from their extensive video libraries.
12. A discussion on World Wetlands Day suggested that the 2 February date was not ideal. Options for change were explored, but caution expressed about loss of identity by merging or associating with other “days”.
13. A discussion of the way forward on the Convention’s work programme suggested the need to integrate it with STRP priority areas and with result areas and performance targets from the strategic framework, and to maintain a link between forward planning and the (revised) National Report format. The meeting discussed ways in which IOPs do (and perhaps can further in future) help with delivery of the work programme, and ways of identifying this more completely to help with planning and resource-finding among all concerned.
14. On Ramsar Advisory Missions, IOPs were unable to suggest additional funding sources, but mentioned that incorporation of the aims of the missions into IOP work, e.g., local projects, may be more possible, and that they could, on occasion, be able to provide in-kind support to RAMs through the participation of experts from their staff. There was a general view from the IOPs that they could have a more active and coordinated role in monitoring Ramsar sites and, in particular, assisting in reporting on status and trends, and they offered to give further thought to this, including the potential for developing a collaborative project involving all five IOPs.