

Agenda item 10.3

**Communicating Ramsar's ideas
(and fundraising through them...)**

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to consider the following ideas concerning outreach and the possibility to fundraise for the Convention's activities for and through communications, and to advise the Secretariat on their preferred way forward.

I. Context

1. One of the most significant realities facing the Ramsar Convention is that it has progressed beyond its original focus, though not its original mandate and mission. Because the Convention exists in an evolving world, it has progressively developed its scope and approach to address the sustainable utilization of wetlands in the context of integrated territorial and water resource planning and management, and the integration of wetlands and sustainable use as a contribution to people's health and well being.
2. The Ramsar Convention is the oldest of the environmental international agreements, and it has been, in many cases, pioneering concepts like sustainable development and use of resources, integrated management and planning, etc. That in no way means our work is done. Despite its acknowledged work, and considerable corpus of effort, the Ramsar Convention is recurrently lacking good recognition among the general public, and at the international level.
3. Over its history, the Ramsar Secretariat has lacked a fully-structured communication framework that would allow our mission to be more effectively promoted, our achievements to be showcased, our successes and failures to be built on. In short we need better outreach¹.
4. For the Ramsar Convention to meet its future goals, wider public awareness and acceptance is essential. A strategy that fosters such a consensus is a vital component of future successes and accomplishments. More than simply a collection of decisions about themes, messages, and tools, this strategy would focus the responsibilities and activities of the Secretariat. Focused communication efforts help constituents understand clearly what is being communicated, how they benefit, and how they can help.

¹ **Outreach** is an effort by an organization or group to connect its ideas or practices to the efforts of other organizations, groups, specific audiences or the general public. Outreach often takes on an educational component (i.e., the dissemination of ideas), but it is increasingly common for organizations to conceive of their outreach strategy as a two-way street. In this case outreach is also framed as engagement, rather than simple dissemination/education. Outreach strategies are linked to the organization's mission, and define targets, goals, and milestones.

II. Why do we need to communicate?

5. An outreach strategy, as part of the whole CEPA approach, will support the aims and objectives of the Ramsar Convention, promote the activities that it organizes, and assist the efficient running of the organization.
6. The key strategic aims are:
 - to **promote** the Ramsar Convention and its activities in a coherent way,
 - to **improve** communication between the Ramsar Convention and those with whom it has contact,
 - to **make it easy** for people to find out about the Ramsar Convention services and events,
 - to **establish links** with governmental bodies and other organizations,
 - to **make effective use** of C&IT (communication and information technologies), where appropriate.
7. Such a strategic framework for communications would also help:
 - to **motivate** employees/partners organization's staff and to encourage identification with our aims and values,
 - to **encourage** users to make appropriate use of wetlands and water resources and to take responsibility for their health and well-being,
 - to **enhance** the reputation of the Ramsar Convention,
 - to **inform** – accurate, up-to-date information about us and what we do,
 - to **persuade** – influencing people to take responsibility for wetland and water resources,
 - to **differentiate** between what happened before and what happens now, e.g. service changes. What are we doing differently? What is our new scope? What are the reasons for the change?
 - to **improve** efficiency of service delivery by using integration of communication between service delivery partners to convey key messages.

III. The cost of communication

8. Despite several Resolutions and decisions of the Contracting Parties and the Standing Committee, the Secretariat has never been allocated a proper budget for communication, although the budget for the coming triennium has finally acknowledged that some funding should be allocated to this effort. In the past several years, the partnership with the DANONE Group has allowed us to develop some communication tools and activities (such as the material produced for World Wetlands Day each year or, more recently, the Ramsar Game).
9. Through networking for the development of the Ramsar Game, it appeared that many of the communication activities of the Secretariat could be funded through partnerships and sponsorships from the private/public sectors. The development of a “giant” version of the Ramsar Game for the World Water Forum, in collaboration with the water company Bonafont and the Government of Mexico, is the latest example of this.

10. Contacts made during the phase of development and testing of the game indicate that several Swiss and international companies could be interested in a partnership with the Ramsar Secretariat to develop communication tools and activities. It's for example the case for Switchers (Swiss textile company), Migros (Swiss supermarket), Suez or Evian (French water companies), etc.
11. Part of the outreach activities of the Secretariat could, therefore, be funded externally, through partnerships/sponsorship, without affecting the core budget of the Convention at all.

IV. Fundraising through communication

12. One of the main problems of the Ramsar Convention has been, for a long time, the lack of financial resources outside of the core budget: the funding for the Small Grants Fund (SGF) is rather modest and, at present, even in decline; all the Ramsar regions benefit from a more or less constant source of funding for regional projects (Wetlands for the Future in the Americas, Swiss Grant for Africa) except Asia.
13. Better funding for the Ramsar Secretariat will enable an increase in its capacity to respond to an ever-growing demand for support and services. While some donor countries provide funding for some activities, these are not adequate to cover all the needs of the expanding Convention membership. No Contracting Parties have expressed their particular willingness to support these kinds of activities.
14. Following up on the idea expressed in section III, private partnerships/sponsorships can help in developing a funding mechanism for projects in Asia, similar to the Wetlands for the Future initiative in the Americas or the Swiss Grant for Africa.
15. Similarly, fundraising with the private/public sector can be a solution to increase the Secretariat's resources outside the core budget, as it has been the case in past years with the DANONE Funds and partnership. This requires, nevertheless, that we develop a really good range of products and good packaging for them, making Ramsar's activities more attractive to the private sector/potential donors. This would be achieved by the implementation of section III.
16. The experience acquired through the Ramsar/DANONE partnership, as well as previous ones, allows us to think the Secretariat is actually able to undertake this challenging but urgently needed activities to raise money both for and through communication.

V. In brief..

17. New and more structured communication tools are needed, addressing the entire range of public the Convention wants to reach and allowing Contracting Parties to use, adapt and replicate them for a more country or region specific use.
18. One of the aspects could be to consider the possibilities for a better corporate communication framework, involving, maybe, the development of a "corporate logo" based on the Ramsar Jewel presented at COP9.

19. Very little communication activities are possible with the current budget of the Convention but this can be improved through private/public partnerships and sponsorships.
20. At the same time, building bridges with the private/public sector for communication purposes will allow us to develop fundraising opportunities for the Convention itself (cf. DANONE/Ramsar partnership, Wetlands for the Future, etc.).
21. The Standing Committee may wish to consider asking the CEPA Oversight Panel and Subgroup on Finance to work jointly on these ideas, requesting the Secretariat to elaborate an outreach strategy and develop the communication tools that go along with it, with the condition that none of these projects would be funded by the core budget of the Secretariat, but only with external funds (sponsorships/partnerships).
22. The Standing Committee may wish to consider requesting the Secretariat to explore possibilities of fundraising, sponsorships and partnerships to increase the Secretariat's capacity to respond to increasing and new demands.
23. The Standing Committee may wish to consider requesting ideas on the development of a "corporate logo" based on the Ramsar Jewel, that would be used for communication and projects, while the current logo would remain as the official logo of the Convention for any institutional matter (like site signage).