

**Agenda item 6**

**Report of the Culture Working Group**

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to take note of progress to date with the first phase of work by the Ramsar Culture Working Group, which was set up in 2006 to implement Resolution IX.21 adopted by COP9. In summary the task of the Working Group is a) to assist in preparing further guidance on the cultural values of wetlands, and b) to provide coordination as necessary for implementation of other aspects of Resolution IX.21.

Initial drafts of a proposed Resolution for consideration by COP10 and of the proposed outline of a separate technical guidance document are presented. The Committee may wish to offer views on these drafts and to advise on the overall direction of the work being undertaken, including linkages with comments to be derived from the STRP.

**Establishment of the Ramsar Culture Working Group**

1. The Ramsar Culture Working Group was established by the Secretary General in June 2006, according to paragraph 17 of Resolution IX.21 on *Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands*, which:

“REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on the cultural values of wetlands, with a balanced geographic representation, under the supervision of Standing Committee, with appropriate input from the STRP, to coordinate the activities described above” [i.e. in the Resolution].

2. The members of the Working Group have been chosen on a basis of relevant expertise and of geographical balance among the Ramsar regions (see Annex A). The Working Group also includes representatives of UNESCO and the International Organization Partners (IOPs). It has been carrying out its work by e-mail.

**Task (a) defined by Resolution IX.21 - guidance**

3. Resolution IX.21, in paragraph 16, also:

“INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to complete, through a broad participatory process, the work prescribed in paragraph 17 of Resolution VIII.19 concerning the guidance to be provided on cultural values”.

4. Resolution VIII.19, in paragraph 17:

“REQUESTS that the Ramsar Bureau [= Secretariat] seek inputs from Contracting Parties, experts and practitioners, and local communities and indigenous peoples from around the world to enhance the information paper on cultural aspects of

wetlands (COP8 DOC. 15) and the detailed guidance prepared for consideration by this meeting of the Conference of the Parties, with a view to publishing it as a background document.”

5. The information paper DOC.15 referred to can be found on the Ramsar Web site at [http://www.ramsar.org/cop8/cop8\\_doc\\_15\\_e.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/cop8/cop8_doc_15_e.htm). The “detailed guidance” additionally referred to and originally tabled at COP8 includes all the content of DOC.15, plus an additional set of “guiding principles”. This original annex to DOC.15 was significantly shortened at COP8 to become the annex adopted by Resolution VIII.19 and so is no longer on the Ramsar Web site, but the original draft principles can be accessed instead at <http://www.med-ina.org/op-3.htm>. This latter document is therefore taken to be the text which the cited decisions seek to have “enhanced”, and it has been used as the basis for Working Group consultations.
6. Some additional sources and dimensions which have emerged since COP8 may also need to be addressed. It may for example be useful to add comments on the relevance of the subsequent UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (October 2005).

#### **Task (b) defined by Resolution IX.21 - coordination**

7. In addition to the guidance referred to above, the other activities described in Resolution IX.21 which the Working Group is mandated to “coordinate” include:
  - identification, analysis and dissemination by Parties of case studies;
  - incorporation by Parties of cultural values in wetland policies, strategies and management plans;
  - (conceivably also) the taking into account by Parties of cultural characteristics when designating Ramsar sites.
8. The Resolution does not elaborate further on the purpose and scope of such coordination, but it seems that the intention was to prepare, among other work, a new, consolidated draft Resolution for COP10.

#### **Proposed products**

9. Discussions so far have identified two products which could/should result from deliberations of the working Group, as follows:
  - i) a draft Resolution for COP10 embodying the Convention’s policy advice to Parties (i.e., addressed primarily to the official government Administrative Authorities for the Convention) on the role of and understanding about cultural issues a) in wetland management and b) in Ramsar site designation;

This would include the “coordination” work described in para 7) above concerning incorporation of cultural values in policies, strategies and site identification (Annex B);

- ii) a more technical guidance document, for wetland managers and others, on the day-to-day implementation of an enhanced understanding about cultural issues in wetland management (also perhaps to be adopted at COP10 or published in some other way.

This would incorporate the “guidance” work described in para 4) above, together with the case studies element of the “coordination” work described in para 7) above (Annex C).

### **First round of Working Group consultations**

10. In September-October 2006, the paper tabled at COP8 and referred to in paragraph 5) above was circulated to the Working Group for review and comment. Several improving amendments were suggested in response, and a revised version is in preparation, incorporating these, based on a new structure of the document, which is at Annex B.

### **STRP input and wider consultation**

11. Resolution IX.21 asks, in relation to the “coordination” task, for appropriate input to be made by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), which will be sought following SC35 comments on this material.
12. At a later stage, other experts and networks may be asked to offer comment, such as the IUCN Task Force on Cultural & Spiritual Values of Protected Areas, with which some Working Group members are already involved.

### **Conclusion/next steps**

Standing committee is invited to:

- suggest additional members of the Culture Working Group;
- provide advice of the desirability and content of the proposed draft Resolution for COP10; and
- provide any comments on the development of the Technical document.

## Annex A

### Members of the Ramsar Culture Working Group

The members of the Culture Working Group are as follows:

#### ***Convenor***

Ramsar Secretary-General – Peter Bridgewater, pbwater@ramsar.org

#### ***Secretary***

Thymio Papayannis, thymiop@hol.gr, thymiop@med-ina.org

#### ***Africa***

Benin – Maman-Sani ISSA, issa37@hotmail.com, missa@abe.bj  
(Mediterranean)

Algeria – Ammar BOUMEZBEUR, boumezfr@yahoo.fr, dgf.dpff@wissal.dz (**resigned due to work commitments – replacement desirable**)

#### ***Europe***

Spain – María-José VINALS, mvinals@cgf.upv.es (**resigned due to work commitments – urgent replacement needed.**)

#### ***Asia***

Thailand – Sansanee CHOOVAEW, enscw@mahidol.ac.th

#### ***Oceania***

Samoa – Pati LIU, Pati.Liu@mnre.gov.ws

#### ***Neotropics***

Ecuador – Sergio LASSO, slasso@ambiente.gov.ec

#### ***North America***

Mexico – Ernesto ENKERLIN, presidente@conanp.gob.mx, enkerlin@conanp.gob.mx

#### ***Ramsar International Organisation Partners***

BirdLife International – Dave Pritchard (also resource person for the Group),  
dave.pritchard@rspb.org.uk

#### ***UNESCO – International Hydrological Programme***

Working Group on Water and Culture –  
Khin Ni Ni THEIN, knn.thein@unesco.org;  
Alexander OTTE, a.otte@unesco.org

## Annex B

### Initial outline of draft Resolution for COP10

#### The cultural values of wetlands

1. AWARE that wetlands and water resources in all parts of the world have been a focus for people and societies, providing vital services and being places where local communities and indigenous peoples have developed strong cultural connections and sustainable use practices;
2. RECOGNIZING that sustainable traditional uses of wetland resources have frequently created cultural landscapes of significant value to wetland conservation and wise use;
3. FURTHER AWARE that a great number of Ramsar sites and other wetlands hold significant cultural values linked closely to the ecological functioning of the sites;
4. FURTHER AWARE that cultural values can be of considerable socio-economic importance, featuring in sustainable tourism and recreational activities and hence contributing to an increase of income and quality of life for the inhabitants;
5. RECALLING that the Ramsar Convention from its beginning has recognized the cultural values of wetlands in its preamble, as well as recognizing that cultural actions may be determined by ecological processes and *vice versa*;
6. APPRECIATING that the wise use of wetlands, the foundation of the Ramsar Convention, requires taking seriously into account these cultural values;
7. NOTING that the profound and rapid social and economic transformations that have taken place during recent decades have increasingly threatened both the natural and cultural heritage of wetlands in many parts of the world;
8. REAFFIRMING the importance of Resolution VIII.19 *Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites*, and Resolution IX.21 *Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands* and DESIRING that these be updated and revised to provide guidance and advice according to current thinking;
9. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the work done by the Ramsar Culture Working Group convened by the Secretary General in accordance with paragraph 17 of COP9 Resolution IX.19;
10. MINDFUL that the Ramsar Convention needs to work in cooperation with multilateral and regional agreements and other international bodies, within their respective mandates, addressing cultural heritage issues as they relate to wetlands, and NOTING especially the role of UNESCO in issues of cultural heritage;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. REPEALS Resolutions XIII.19 and IX.21 and REPLACES them with the present Resolution;
12. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to incorporate cultural values in wetland-related policies and strategies, as well as in wetland management plans, and to disseminate the results widely;
13. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider using the document '*Guiding Principles for taking into account the cultural aspects of wetlands*' which includes material previously in the annex to Resolution VII.19 and which is annexed to this Resolution in relation to the conservation, enhancement and promotion of the cultural values of wetlands;
14. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, in the context of the wise use of wetlands and within their national and legal frameworks and available resources and capacity,
  - to promote the appreciation and revitalization of these cultural values among populations close to wetlands, and in general among the wider public;
  - to include relevant aspects of cultural heritage in both the design and the implementation of wetland management plans;
  - to make efforts to integrate cultural and social impact criteria into environmental assessments, which could include issues such as forms of social organization, political structures, systems of natural resources use, including patterns of land use, languages, sacred sites and ritual ceremonies, beliefs and religions, customary practices, and customary lore/law systems;
15. CONFIRMS ITS AGREEMENT in Resolution IX.21 that in the application of the existing criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, a wetland may also be considered of international importance when, in addition to relevant ecological values, it holds examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning; and ENCOURAGES Parties to consider the compilation and assessment of both material and non-material cultural elements related to wetlands and water, in particular when preparing the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for the designation of new Wetlands of International Importance or when updating the RIS of existing Ramsar sites, taking into account, as appropriate, intellectual property rights, customary law, and the principle of prior informed consent, in accordance with CBD and WIPO rules;
16. CONFIRMS that the Ramsar Convention, through its Secretariat and Parties, needs to work in cooperation with multilateral and regional agreements and other bodies addressing cultural values, *inter alia*:
  - the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 1972);
  - UNESCO's activities in the promotion of the conservation of cultural heritage;

- the various recommendations of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for the protection, conservation, legal status, economic exploitation, and international protection of folklore;
- the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular concerning its Decision VI/10 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the *Outline of the composite report on the status and trends regarding the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*, and the plan and timetable for its preparation; and on *Recommendations for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessment regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities*;
- the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000);
- the Call of Granada (1975) of the Council of Europe on Rural architecture and its landscape;
- Recommendation 881 (1979) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Rural architecture heritage;
- IUCN and its Task Force on the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas; and

17. INSTRUCTS the Secretary General to maintain the Ramsar Culture Working Group with the following mandate:

- to update the document '*Guiding Principles for taking into account the cultural aspects of wetlands*';
- to collect and disseminate information on successful case studies of incorporating cultural aspects in the management of wetlands;
- to evaluate the general and specific proposals included in the *Guiding Principles* document on enhancing the cultural aspects;
- to monitor the implementation of the present Resolution;
- to develop, on the basis of the above, a draft strategy for the incorporation of cultural values in wetland management and wise use for review by COP11; and
- to report the results of its work to Ramsar COP11.

## Annex C

### Guidance on cultural aspects: Taking into account cultural values in the management of wetlands

The outline below is a first attempt to restructure the Information Document on the cultural values of wetlands, presented by the Ramsar Secretariat during the COP8 (Valencia, Spain) in November 2002. The intent of the new outline is to make the guidance to be provided more systematic and logical, and thus to make easier the incorporation of cultural aspects in the identification and management of wetlands.

#### Preface

#### 0. Introduction

##### 0.1 Cultural aspects in the multilateral bodies

*[Reference to the growing concern in the cultural aspects of nature, especially by CBD, but also by IUCN and others. Includes points 20-24 of original document, rewritten.]*

##### 0.2 Ramsar and cultural values

*[Brief historical reference to the efforts for incorporating cultural values in the work of the Ramsar Convention, starting with the MedWet/Com meeting in Tipaza, and continuing with COP8 and COP9 until today. Includes points 25-28 of the original document, rewritten.]*

##### 0.3 Wetlands and culture: Rationale and general context

*[The entire Section 1 of original document placed here.]*

##### 0.4 Wetlands, water, life and culture

*[Points 1-6 of original document.]*

##### 0.5 Concern for cultural aspects

*[Explanation of the rationale for taking into account cultural values in wetland management and wise use actions. Points 7-15 of original document.]*

#### Guidance on human activities and their cultural values: objectives

*[Bolded Objectives are those with a high priority.]*

#### 1. Habitation

##### 1.1 Cultural landscapes

- **Objective O.1 – To safeguard the wetland-related cultural landscapes** (*existing guiding principle 3*).

##### 1.2 Cultural heritage sites

- O.2 – To support the recognition, study and promotion of new significant cultural heritage sites (*new*).

##### 1.3 Settlements and structures



- O.3 – To improve the relation of human settlements to bodies of water by increasing environmental and cultural awareness and reinforcing the traditional link between humans and nature (*new*).

#### 1.3.1 Archaeological sites and structures (until 16<sup>th</sup> century)

- **O.4 – To take carefully into account archaeological sites in or in proximity to wetlands** (*new*).
- O.5 – To protect historical structures in wetlands or closely associated with them (*ex guiding principle 12*).

#### 1.3.2 Traditional and modern settlements and structures

- **O.6 – To manage in a sensitive way the interface between traditional settlements and wetland sites** (*new*).
- O.7 – To protect characteristic / distinctive modern structures in wetlands or closely associated with them (*new*).

### 1.4 Underwater cultural heritage

- **O.8 – To take all necessary measures for the protection of underwater cultural heritage and of wetland peat** (*new*).

### 1.5 Infrastructure

#### 1.5.1 Terrestrial transportation networks

- O.9 – To conserve or re-establish footpaths and other traditional ways (*new*).

#### 1.5.2 Water management facilities and networks

- O.10 – To promote the conservation (preferably in use) of historical and traditional infrastructure works related to water management and use and to wetlands (*new*).

## 2. Primary use of wetland resources

- O.11 – To consider the possibility of using quality labelling of sustainable traditional wetland products in a voluntary and non-discriminatory manner (*ex guiding principle 26*).

### 2.1 Agriculture

#### 2.1.1. Rice cultivation

- O.12 – To conserve –preferably in use– the characteristic landscapes created through rice cultivation (*new*).

### 2.2 Stock-breeding

- O.13 – To safeguard and promote traditional sustainable methods of stock-breeding (*new*).

### 2.3 Fishing and aquaculture

#### 2.3.1 Artisan fisheries

- **O.14 – To record and maintain traditional fishing methods in wetlands** (*new*).

#### 2.3.2 Commercial fisheries

#### 2.3.3 Extensive aquaculture practice

#### 2.3.4 Intensive aquaculture facilities

#### 2.3.5 Sports fishing

## 2.4 Forestry

### 2.4.1 Wood products

- O.15 – To encourage sustainable use of wood resources by indigenous peoples and local communities and preserve the symbolic aspects of the activity (*new*).

### 2.4.2 Non-wood products

## 2.5 Hunting

### 2.5.1 Subsistence hunting

- O.16 – To facilitate sustainable subsistence hunting by indigenous peoples and local communities associated with their cultural values (*new*).

### 2.5.2 Exploitation of sports hunting

- O.17 – To preserve the traditional social and cultural aspects of sustainable hunting (*new*).

## 2.6 Salt extraction

### 2.6.1 Artisan / traditional salinas

- **O.18 – To encourage the conservation of the cultural heritage of traditional salinas** (*new*).

### 2.6.2 Industrial facilities

## 2.7 Mining and quarrying

### 2.7.1 Sand and gravel extraction

### 2.7.2 Gold mining

## 2.8 Water use

- **O.19 – To preserve collective water and land use management systems associated with wetlands** (*ex guiding principle 14*).

### 2.8.1 Irrigation

### 2.8.2 Domestic use

### 2.8.3 Transportation medium

- O.20 – To support the documentation and preservation of knowledge related to traditional water transportation (*new*).

### 2.8.4 Industrial use

## 2.9 Use of other natural resources

### 2.9.1 Biomass

### 2.9.2 Reeds / willows

## 3. Secondary use of wetland resources

### 3.1 Food processing

#### 3.1.1 Traditional methods of food preservation

#### 3.1.2 Culinary heritage

- O.21 – To record and encourage the use of traditional culinary practices related to wetland products in tourism and ecotourism activities (*new*).

### 3.2 Craftsmanship

#### 3.2.1 Artefacts

##### 3.2.1.a Artefacts of ancient origin (until 16th century)

#### 3.2.1.b Traditional and modern artefacts

- O.22 – To protect and preserve wetland-related artefacts [mobile material heritage] (*ex guiding principle 13*).

#### 3.2.2 Handicrafts and tools

##### 3.2.2.a Handicrafts and tools of ancient origin (until 16th century)

##### 3.2.2.b Traditional and modern handicrafts and tools

- O.23 – To exhibit handicrafts and tools related to wetland activities in visitor centres and / or other appropriate facilities (*new*).

#### 3.2.3 Transportation means

##### 3.2.3.a Ancient transportation means (until 16th century)

##### 3.2.3.b Traditional and modern transportation means.

- O.24 – To encourage the use of traditional means of water transport wherever possible (*new*).

### 3.3 Traditional building construction

- O.25 – To promote the sustainable use of wetland materials (such as reeds) in building construction and in heating, in harmonisation with the environment and the climatic needs (*new*).

#### 3.3.1 Dwellings

#### 3.3.2 Utilitarian buildings

#### 3.3.3 Public buildings

### 3.4 Wetland-based traditional marketing and trading

### 3.5 Tourism – ecotourism

- O.32 – To introduce and promote the cultural aspects of wetland sites through tourism and ecotourism packages (*new*).

### 3.6 Leisure and sports

- O.33 – To encourage the incorporation in leisure and sport activities of traditional cultural practices (*new*).

#### 3.6.1 Nature appreciation

#### 3.6.2 Hiking and mountain climbing

#### 3.6.3 Rafting – kayaking

#### 3.6.4 Sailing and boating

#### 3.7.5 Diving

#### 3.8.6 Speleology

### 3.7 Scientific research and education

- O.34 – To incorporate cultural aspects in educational and interpretive activities in wetlands (*ex guiding principle 6*).
- O.35 – To encourage research on palaeoenvironmental, palaeontological, anthropological and archaeological aspects of wetlands (*ex guiding principle 10*).
- O.36 – To improve wetland-related communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) in the matter of the cultural aspects of wetlands (*ex guiding principle 25*).

### 3.8 Social activities and events

#### 3.8.1 Festivals and celebrations

- O.37 – To reinvigorate the links between wetlands / water and social events that take place in the proximity of wetland sites (*new*).

3.8.2 Events related to agriculture and other productive activities

3.8.3 Sports events

## 4. Use of intangible wetland resources

### 4.1 Traditional knowledge

- **O.26 – To keep traditional knowledge alive and to learn from it** (*ex guiding principles 4 and 17*).

4.1.1 Oral traditions and expressions

- O.27 – To safeguard wetland-related oral traditions (*ex guiding principle 16*).

4.1.2 Languages, dialects and special terms

- O.28 – To encourage research on the language aspects and terms related to water and wetlands, especially of indigenous peoples and local communities (*new*).

4.1.3 Social practices and methods

- **O.29 – To maintain traditional sustainable self-management practices and value the products resulting from these practices** (*ex guiding principles 5 and 15*).

4.1.3.a Traditional production systems

- O.30 – To safeguard wetland-related traditional production systems (*ex guiding principle 11*).

4.1.3.b Gender, age and social class-related production roles

- O.31 – To take into account culturally appropriate treatment of gender, age and social role issues (*ex guiding principle 7*).

4.1.4 Practice of traditional medicine

4.1.4.a Exploitation of medicinal plants

### 4.2 Spirituality, religious events and activities

4.2.1 Sacred natural sites

- O.38 – To encourage the co-operation between wetland managers and the custodians of sacred natural sites in order to achieve synergy (*new*).

4.2.2 Religious / spiritual events

- O.39 – To encourage the inclusion of nature conservation aspects in religious / spiritual events (*new*).

4.2.3 Spiritual and religious beliefs

- O.40 – To take into account wetland-related spiritual beliefs and mythological aspects in the efforts to conserve wetlands (*ex guiding principle 18*).

### 4.3 Artistic expression

- O.41 – To use the arts to promote wetland conservation and interpretation (*ex guiding principle 19*).

- O.42 – To cultivate the perception of wetlands and water as inspiration for artistic expression (*new*).

4.3.1 Fine and applied arts

4.3.2 Performing arts (traditional music, dance, theatre)

4.3.3 Documentary, digital and cinematographic heritage

## 5. Conservation and management aspects

*[Below are elements that should be included (between 2008 and 2011) in a Strategy for the incorporation of cultural aspects of wetlands, which could be the main task of the Ramsar Culture Working Group after COP10.]*

### 5.1 General guiding principles

- **Bridging the differences of approach between natural and social sciences** (*ex guiding principle 8*).
- Identifying relevant associated partners and encouraging cross-sectoral and international cooperation (*ex guiding principles 9 and 27*).
- Linking the cultural aspects of wetlands with those of water (*ex guiding principle 2*).

### 5.2 Conservation and management activities

- O.43 – To use the proposed Ramsar matrix in order to identify the cultural values of wetlands (*replacing guiding principle 1*).
- O.44 – To incorporate cultural aspects, where available, in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for the description of Wetlands of International Importance, whilst ensuring the protection of traditional rights and interests (*ex guiding principle 20*).
- **O.45 – To incorporate the cultural aspects of wetlands in management planning** (*ex guiding principle 21*).
- O.46 – To include the cultural values in wetland monitoring processes (*ex guiding principle 22*).
- O.47 – To consider the use of institutional and legal instruments for the conservation and protection of cultural values in wetlands (*ex guiding principle 23*).
- O.48 – To integrate fully cultural and social criteria into environmental impact assessments (*ex guiding principle 24*).

### 5.3 Proposed actions

5.3.1 Wider actions *[will include points 32-38 of the original document.]*

5.3.2 Specific initiatives *[will include points 39-42 of the original document.]*

## Bibliography