

Agenda item 10

Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel

Action requested: The Panel proposes to the Standing Committee that the Panel should meet in mid-2007, as noted in paragraph 8, but in the meantime the Panel should continue its work by e-mail.

1. In Resolution IX.18, Contracting Parties requested Standing Committee to establish a Oversight Panel for communications, education, and public awareness. The Panel was established at the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee in April 2006 with the following key functions:
 - 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 (SC) 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-Government CEPA National Focal Points (NFPs);
 - iv) Identify, with the involvement of the [Advisory Board on Capacity-Building for the Ramsar Convention], 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 SC on the form and function of the next CEPA Programme, for the period 2009–2014, to be proposed to COP10.

2. As established by the Standing Committee, the membership of the Panel for this triennium includes:
 - i) The Vice Chair of SC: Bahamas (John Bowleg)
 - ii) Chair of the SC Subgroup on Finance: USA (Herb Raffaele)
 - iii) Chair of the STRP/WI CEPA Specialist Group: Chris Prietto
 - iv) Vice-Chair of the STRP: Rebecca D'Cruz
 - v) Representative of the Advisory Board on Capacity-Building for the Ramsar Convention: Petra Spliethoff
 - vi) CEPA National Focal Points:
Government: Charles Amankwah, Ghana
Government: Gerhard Sigmund, Austria

- NGO: Stefan Bohorquez, Ecuador
NGO: Christine Prietto, Australia (also Chair of the STRP/WI CEPA Specialist Group)
- vii) Regional Ramsar Centre representative: Maria Rivera, CREHO
viii) Representative of the International Organisation Partners (IOPs): Tunde Ojei, Wetlands International
ix) Ramsar Secretariat (*ex officio*): the CEPA Programme Officer and the Secretary General.
3. The first meeting of the Panel was held in Gland on the 29th May 2006. The full report of this meeting is available on the Convention's Web site at http://www.ramsar.org/outreach_oversight_panel.htm. A summary of major decisions, the current status of these decisions, and future areas of work for the Panel is provided in the following paragraphs.
4. **National Reporting Format.** Noting that the National Report format is the main tool for monitoring and reporting on implementation by Contracting Parties, it was agreed that the Panel should advise the SC, through the appropriate SC Subgroup, on the CEPA indicators that should be included in the National Reports format for COP10. The Panel has considered the draft format provided by the Secretariat, and suggestions and comments will be sent to the Subgroup for its consideration at this meeting, SC35.
5. **Roles and responsibilities of the CEPA National Focal Points (NFPs).** The CEPA Programme recognises the critical role played by CEPA National Focal Points in implementing the Programme of work. An extensive discussion on this, with important input from the four CEPA NFPs present, identified a number of key points on the nomination of the CEPA NFPs and their activity within the National Administrative Authorities, and defined their major roles and responsibilities.

Key points on CEPA NFP nomination and activity:

- It is important that both the Government and the Non-Government CEPA NFPs be nominated because 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 be a CEPA expert, it was recognized that many Parties are not willing to nominate a person outside of their Administrative Authorities and that frequently this means that the nominated person is not a CEPA expert.
- It is unfortunate that the Government NFP changes rather frequently in some Parties, since this does not support continuity in the national CEPA Programme. Frequently the NGO NFP is the long-term representative.

- It is important that the two NFPs should agree and collaborate on their country's CEPA Programme.
- It is important that the NFPs be key members of the National Wetland Committee, where these exist, and that they be in contact with other key Administrative Authority personnel (such as the Daily Contact and the STRP NFP).
- It is important that the CEPA NFPs be 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-Government" rather than "NGO" NFP, it was thought that in fact it should specify NGO because of the critical role NGOs play as CEPA actors.

Major roles and responsibilities of the CEPA NFPs (to be included as an annex to the new CEPA Programme):

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 Contracting Parties should provide some information to potential NFPs of the expected time required to fulfill their role and responsibilities.

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 objectives;
- be an active spokesperson for wetland CEPA;
- establish and maintain any contacts, networks, structures and mechanisms necessary to ensure the efficient communication of information among relevant actors at all levels and in all sectors.

6. The new CEPA Programme to be considered at COP10 for the period 2009-2014.

The Panel identified some key priorities regarding the development of the new CEPA Programme and requested the Secretariat to provide a first draft of the new Programme for the Panel to finalise for consideration by SC. This process is currently underway.

The key priorities 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 Parties' 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 strong link should be made to the participatory Resolutions already adopted.
- The CEPA Programme should encompass all of 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.

While the Panel had insufficient time to fully consider a document on the communication activities of the Secretariat, it was agreed that these activities should be clearly articulated in the new CEPA Programme and that there was a need for the Panel to further consider these activities, especially in the light of current staff changes within the Secretariat.

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 Secretary General is following up with the IOPs on the potential for more effective reporting on their CEPA activities in implementing the CEPA Programme in the future and will report back to the Panel.

7. **Ramsar logo and Web site.** After discussing the need for a new logo, the Panel agreed that such a decision would have to be taken by the Parties 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 support within the Panel for finding innovative ways to make use of each COP logo in the long term since these logos are often quite creatively designed yet are not used after each COP.

In a discussion on the Ramsar Web site, some Panel members felt that new users do not always find it a friendly site to easily access the information they require; there may be some target audiences not well catered for in the current format; and the current design could benefit from modernising.

The Panel suggested that it would be helpful to have a Web page that identified the key contacts within the Ramsar Administrative Authorities with links to contact details for each group. This has been effected.

8. **The Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention (ABCB).** The ABCB representative on the CEPA Panel gave a brief overview of the form and function of the Board. 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 ABCB and the CEPA Oversight Panel. Web pages have been developed in the CEPA mini-Web site to describe the origins, form and function of the CEPA Oversight Panel and the ABCB, and the minutes of their meetings will be posted on these pages. There will be further interaction in the coming year between the Panel and the ABCB to identify capacity building priorities for the Convention, and this will be reported back to SC.

The ABCB met in late December 2006 and agreed further approaches for linking and strengthening existing and known capacity-building exercises supporting the general advancement of Ramsar's objectives. It felt there was a need to involve more the regional initiatives which have a specific and identified role in capacity building, including training. The ABCB made a specific proposal that in mid-2007 the Board and the Panel should hold their next meetings back-to-back, in the Netherlands, and between the meetings organize a day's workshop/seminar bringing in the regional initiatives which are already working well.

9. **Regional initiatives.** The Panel 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 suggests 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.
10. **Key CEPA priorities.** While key priorities were identified for the development of the new CEPA Programme, the Panel also agreed 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 representatives on the Panel, to gain support in building a more integrated CEPA Programme for the Convention.