

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
35th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 14-16 February 2007

Agenda item 13

Report of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan

The Subgroup on the Strategic Plan met during the morning of Tuesday 13 February 2007.

The Subgroup considered two Agenda items: the Strategic Plan framework to be proposed for COP10, and the National Report Format for COP10.

1. Strategic Plan framework (DOC. SC35-9)

The Subgroup considered the issues raised in DOC. SC35-9, and focused on developing recommendations concerning the four bullet-point issues in paragraph 6 of that document, namely:

- agree a basic framework for the development of the Strategic Plan;
- discuss any possible changes to the five Goal structure;
- agree the mission statement; and
- decide how complex the Strategic Plan needs to be, or how simple.

The Subgroup also identified a number of other matters for attention and consideration in the drafting of the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan.

Concerning the **basic framework** for the development of the Strategic Plan, the Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 1:

- i. the basic framework should be in line with the proposals for this in paragraph 5. of DOC. SC35-9;*
- ii. the plan should be specific about its audience and how the plan will be used;*
- iii. some vision of the world by 2014 should be included, so as to provide the global context of the Plan (e.g. trends in global policy and governance; and trends in state of wetland ecosystems;*
- iv. major issues specific to the Plan period should be recognized, such as global responses to the 2010 biodiversity target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, and global responses to climate change;*
- v. a short summary of implementation achievements and progress during the 2002-2008 period should be included; and*
- vi. there should be convergence and linkages clearly established between the Strategic Plan and other Convention planning and reporting documents e.g. the budget, Secretariat Work Plan, STRP Work Plan, and National Report Format, with an attempt, where possible, to indicate costs of delivery of the Strategic Plan.*

Concerning the **5-goal structure** the Subgroup considered that changing the goal structure and goals too much would likely send a confusing message to the outside world about the future direction of the Convention. The Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 2:

- i. the 5-goal structure should be retained; but*
- ii. as currently worded some of these Goals are not goal statements, and need to be reworded;*
- iii. the language of the top-level section heading of the Plan concerning “Conservation and wise use of wetlands and water resources” also needs rewording to reflect the convention business more clearly.*

Concerning the Mission statement of the Convention, the Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 3: the Mission statement is retained unamended for the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan.

Concerning the complexity/simplicity of the new Strategic Plan, the Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 4:

- i. the Plan be as strategically-focused and as short and succinct as possible;*
- ii. the new Strategic Plan should be less complex and detailed than the current (2002-2008) Strategic Plan;*
- iii. the model of the structure and level of detail of Convention’s Work Plan 2006-2008 should be followed; and*
- iv. The Strategic Plan should identify and point at where more detailed sources of information exist such as in Work Plans, action plans etc. concerning different aspects of implementation.*

Concerning the next steps for the process of drafting and consulting on the Strategic Plan, the Subgroup recognized the importance of including in the consultation process other Conventions through the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), and notably the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to Ramsar’s lead implementation role on wetlands for that Convention, and consultation with other groups and sectors who need to be involved in implementation of the Convention’s goals, such as also NGOs, the private sector, UN organizations, and other bodies such as the Global Water Partnership. The Subgroup recommends that the process will be:

Recommendation 5:

- i. taking into account the recommendations above, the Secretariat prepares a first draft which is circulated for comment to all members of the Subgroup in mid-2007;*
- ii. following their comments a second draft is prepared in early autumn 2007 for circulation to all Standing Committee members and observers;*
- iii. a third draft is then provided to the Subgroup prior to, and for consideration at, the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee in early 2008.*

2. National Report Format for COP10 (DOC. SC35-10)

The Subgroup considered the draft National Report Format (NRF) for COP10 as presented in the Annex to DOC. SC35-10, along with the additional suggestions in DOC. SC35-10 itself.

The Subgroup expressed its pleasure that the scale and level of detail in draft format in the Annex represents a significant response to the COP9 instruction to undertake a major simplification of national reporting as compared with the COP9 NRF.

The Subgroup confirmed that the format for COP10 should be based around a series of 'process-oriented' indicators for each of the Convention Work Plan 2006-2008 strategies, rather than attempt to be a comprehensive reporting on each and every action that Contracting Parties, through COP decisions, have given themselves.

Concerning progress in harmonization of national reporting to different Conventions in the biodiversity cluster, the Subgroup recognized that the Convention on Biological Diversity's national report format has shifted from process-oriented reporting to outcome-oriented reporting in relation to national responses to the 2010 biodiversity target, and considered that taken together the two report formats could enhance national reporting under the two conventions, in relation to implementation of the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan.

The Subgroup recognized the need to ensure that the relationship between the COP10 National Report Format and the 'ecological outcome-oriented indicators of the effectiveness of the Convention', under further development by the STRP with the assistance of UNEP-WCMC, are clearly understood, recognised and linked to the purpose of the indicators in the COP10 NRF. This will be achieved through the STRP, at its mid-term workshops in March 2007, reviewing the draft COP10 NRF and identifying which of the NRF indicators it will need for assessment of effectiveness of Convention implementation, and whether there are additional 'process-oriented indicators' it considers should be included in the COP10 NRF to support its work.

Taking these, and other more specific, issues into account, the Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 6: the Secretariat be instructed to further develop the COP10 NRF based on the approach and reduced number of indicators presented in the Annex to DOC. SC35-10.

Concerning this further development of the COP10 NRF general structure, the Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 7: the Secretariat be instructed to:

- i. include, in a preamble, a clear explanation of the purposes for national reporting, and the uses to which the COP10 National Reports will be put, amplifying DOC. SC35-10 paragraphs 2 and 3;***
- ii. include a 'free-text' summary section for reporting national implementation progress, based on the questions set out in DOC. SC35-10 paragraph 6;***
- iii. include a 'free-text' section under each Strategy, as an optional section for Parties to provide additional information if they so wish, to cover a) additional information concerning each of the indicators for that strategy, and***

- b) any information concerning other aspects of implementation progress of that strategy;*
- iv. for each specific indicator, to include other 'tick-box' options than a simple Yes/No answer, such as inter alia Partially/In progress/completed/not applicable etc., depending on the precise formulation of that indicator; and*
- v. review and amend the wording of each indicator so as to ensure that its wording is precise and clear, and will yield information useful for assessing and reporting on Convention implementation progress.*

Concerning the suite of specific indicators to be included in the COP10 NRF, the Subgroup recommends that:

Recommendation 8: the Secretariat be instructed to:

- i. under Strategy 4.4 include additional CEPA indicators, covering the full breadth of the Convention's CEPA programme implementation, based on those recommended by the CEPA Oversight Panel, but consolidating these so as to avoid unbalancing the overall report format;*
- ii. under Strategy 1.2 add a small number of indicators concerning the status of National Wetland Policies (or their equivalents);*
- iii. add, if necessary and following the advice of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP), any additional process-oriented indicators that it deems essential for assessing the ecological-outcomes of the implementation of the Convention; and*
- iv. add a short section reporting the availability of national information on the status and trends of the ecological character of wetlands (both specifically for Ramsar sites and for the overall wetland resource), through the provision of 'meta-data' on such information rather than reporting the status and change itself, so as to facilitate the STRP's follow-up work on site and national level information sources for certain of its indicators of effectiveness.*

Concerning the steps to finalise the COP10 National Report Format in a timely manner, in particular so as to permit Contracting Parties sufficient time to complete and submit their national reporting in advance of COP10, the Subgroup recommends that the process and timelines are as follows:

Recommendation 9:

- i. the Secretariat prepares a revised version of DOC. SC35-10 Annex (early March 2007) and provides this to the STRP for consideration at its mid-term workshops;*
- ii. at its mid-term workshops (last week of March 2007) the STRP reviews and comments on the format and identifies any additional process-oriented indicators it needs for its indicator work;*
- iii. a revised draft is made available to the Standing Committee member and observers in April 2007, for their comment and approval;*
- iv. the finalized COP10 NRF is issued to all Contracting Parties in June 2007; and*
- v. the deadline for the submission of COP10 National Reports is set as 28 February 2008.*