

Agenda item 6

Cooperation with International Organization Partners

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the Minutes of the September 2007 meeting between Ramsar and its International Organization Partners, and to provide comments or further guidance on Actions, amongst those listed, to be addressed as a priority during the period preparing for COP10 and the 4th World Conservation Congress in October 2008.

1. On 28 February 2006, a first meeting brought together senior representatives of the Convention's five International Organization Partners (IOPs) – BirdLife International, International Water Management Institute, Wetlands International, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and WWF International – to review working relationships with the Convention and its Secretariat and to identify ways of enhancing and strengthening these relationships.

At its 34th meeting, the Standing Committee received a report of this first of a planned regular series of meetings between the Secretariat and the chief officers of the Convention's IOPs and took Decision SC34-2:

The Standing Committee noted the report of the February 2006 IOPs/Secretariat meeting and encouraged the Secretariat and IOPs to institutionalize similar meetings on an annual basis. The SC urged the IOPs to establish direct contacts with the Parties' National Focal Points and to collaborate with one another when more than one is located in a Party, and it encouraged the Parties to include local officers of the IOPs in their National Ramsar/Wetlands Committees. The SC also urged SC members to explain the role of the IOPs in Ramsar to other officials in their governments. The SC urged the IOPs to assist the Parties, where appropriate, in implementing the Ramsar /CBD Joint Work Plan, and it invited the IOPs to report regularly to the SC on their relevant activities.

2. The second such meeting took place on 28 September 2006 with the additional participation of the Standing Committee chairs, in addition to senior representatives of the Secretariat and the IOPs. A summary report of this meeting was submitted to the 35th meeting of Standing Committee which debated some of the issues addressed therein (cf. paragraphs 33-46 of the meeting report, available on the Convention's Web site), without, however, taking a specific decision.
3. On 9 October 2007, a third meeting between the Standing Committee chairs, senior Secretariat and IOP staff took place. This time, the participants focused their discussion chiefly upon identifying concrete opportunities for cooperation in the run-up to the 4th World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, October 2008) and to Ramsar COP10. The

Minutes of the meeting are attached in the Annex. They list a substantial number of Action points and name lead partners.

4. The participants agreed to meet again in conjunction with Standing Committee meeting 36, in order to clarify how best to support the work of the Committee when addressing the issues on the meeting agenda and to streamline their positions regarding these issues.

ANNEX

**3rd Joint Meeting
of the Ramsar Convention and its International Organisation Partners**

Ramsar Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland, 9 October 2007

Minutes

Participants

BirdLife International	Leon Bennun , director of science and policy
IWMI	Julie van der Bliet , director global research division
IUCN	Jean-Yves Pirot , senior coordinator global programme* Ger Bergkamp , head water programme
Wetlands International	<i>last minute apologies</i>
WWF International	Guillermo Castilleja , executive director conservation Denis Landenbergue , manager freshwater
Ramsar Standing Committee	Paul Mafabi , chair John Bowleg , vice-chair Herb Raffaele , chair finance sub-group
Ramsar Secretariat	Anada Tiéga , secretary general Tobias Salathé , senior adviser Europe Abou Bamba , senior adviser Africa Maria Rivera , senior adviser Americas Pragati Tuladhar , assistant adviser Asia-Oceania Sandra Hails , CEPA officer* Mireille Katz , executive assistant to secretary general*

** for part of the meeting*

Welcome and Introduction

Anada Tiéga opens the meeting and welcomes the participants, followed by short introductions by each of the participants about their roles and functions. Paul Mafabi then welcomes the IOPs and stresses their importance for making the Convention more effective. He states that this second formal meeting with IOPs is important to build bridges rather than walls, leading to synergies and a clear understanding how all of the partners can contribute to the global mission of the Convention, despite different approaches and resources. In view of the upcoming COP10, it is important to coordinate beforehand what our different roles are (Standing Committee, Secretariat, IOPs) and who is going to contribute what?

Aims of the Meeting

Anada wishes that this meeting will:

- clarify our cooperation between now and the 4th World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, October 2008) and Ramsar COP10 (Changwon, Oct-Nov 2008),
- identify focal points within IOPs to develop specific joint actions, and
- enhance communication and mutual support.

4th World Conservation Congress

Jean-Yves presents IUCN's way towards the 4th WWC which will include, besides the statutory members' assemblies, four days of "conservation forums" under the three general themes of "new climate for change, healthy environment - healthy people, safeguarding the diversity of life". He distributes a list of proposals for wetland-related forums submitted by IOPs so far (final deadline for submissions is 31 October 2007).

IUCN expects IOPs to coordinate among themselves and put forward motions on critical issues. The theme of "environmental flows" is addressed in web-accessible work plans of all IOPs and could be an area of coordinated IOP input. The WCC forums provide an opportunity to address Ramsar-related approaches, notably specific work under way by Ramsar's STRP and CEPA experts. Another function of the Congress is to approve IUCN's programme on water, wetlands and river basin management.

Action: **IUCN** to seek specific input and feedback before the Congress from the IOPs and Ramsar concerning IUCN's future water programme. Other **IOPs** and **Ramsar** to provide such input before and during the Congress.

Action: **IOPs** and **Ramsar** to identify geographical thematic areas of common work between IOPs and to clarify if they should be addressed during WCC.

Action: **Ramsar** Secretariat to identify with the STRP chair a means to feed STRP's work into the WCC, notably those themes which will be addressed during COP10.

Action: **Ramsar** Secretariat to liaise with the CEPA Oversight Panel to identify opportunities to integrate and address Ramsar's CEPA work during the WCC.

Action: **Ramsar** Secretariat to assess the opportunity to have a physical presence (stand) during the WCC and prepare this with the IUCN Congress team in Gland, if considered worthwhile.

Ramsar COP10

Anada provides an update on preparations for COP10, indicating that during the Standing Committee meeting 36 (25-29 February 2008) a detailed progress report will be provided. A list of staff positions seconded to the Ramsar Secretariat to be filled for the duration of COP10 is distributed. The deadline for Contracting Parties to submit Resolutions is 40 days before the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee, i.e., on 22 April 2008 (receipt by the Secretariat).

Regional Ramsar meetings are also providing opportunities to prepare for COP10. The Americas meeting already took place in Mérida (Venezuela) in September. The African meeting is scheduled for 26-30 November 2007 in Yaoundé (possibility of IUCN local office involvement). The Asian meeting will take place on 14-23 January 2008 in Bangkok (again, an opportunity for local IUCN office involvement). And finally the European meeting will take place in Stockholm on 3-8 May 2008.

John Bowleg gives a rapid update on progress with the preparation of Ramsar's Strategic Plan for 2009-2014, distributes the current draft document, and stresses the need to increase coherence between Ramsar's Strategic Plan and IUCN's programme.

Action: **IOPs** are requested to actively engage in the preparation of the remaining regional meetings as much as possible, and to work with the Secretariat regional teams to this end.

Action: **IOPs** are asked to look into their possibilities to second specific staff during the duration of COP10, according to the list of needs distributed.

Action: **IOPs** to provide further feedback, by early December 2007, and actively engage in the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014.

Funding needs, donors and the private sector

Herb provides a rapid update on the Convention's financial matters (business as usual) and stresses that, again, not much money is available for the Small Grants Fund. SC35 discussed two ways forward, currently being finalized by a working group: 1) ask donors to refund the SGF budget with voluntary donations and/or to fund specific projects selected from a SGF project portfolio, and 2) discuss and identify during regional meetings the major project priorities (only 3 or 4, such as e.g. training of Ramsar site managers), to be developed into comprehensive proposals for the region. First regional priorities (identified during the Americas meeting) should be shared with subsequent regional meetings.

Regional banks becoming regional executors for GEF projects are thus becoming more important to us. GEF funds should not only be requested via the "biodiversity" window, but also other thematic fields. It is valuable to bring international banks and other donors to COP10 (through side events, stands, awareness activities). The private sector needs to be more involved. Currently, the Secretariat continues its partnership with the Danone group (since 1998) and is a partner in the new Star Alliance "biodiversity connections" agreement with IUCN, Ramsar and Unesco-MaB.

Action: The working group of Standing Committee (chaired by **Herb**) to circulate its working paper on the SGF and regional project priorities more widely, including the Ramsar Secretariat and the IOPs, for feedback before SC36.

Action: **Ramsar** and **IOPs** regularly to spread information about funding opportunities and support Contacting Parties in accessing funds and using better existing funding opportunities.

Action: **IOPs** to advise the Secretariat how to bring donors to COP10 and how to work better with the private sector (based on their specific experiences).

Action: **Ramsar** and **IOPs** to identify opportunities to expand our partnership in terms of fundraising and to prepare joint activities to implement the Convention.

Ramsar's regional initiatives

An overview is given on existing and new regional initiatives under the Convention and the concrete involvement of IOPs (notably WWF) in their preparation and execution. IOPs and the private sector can fulfill important roles in their support, including building bridges between Ramsar administrative authorities (Ministries) and other governmental sectors and the civil society. However, the responsibilities for such initiatives remains with the administrative authorities. Regional meetings and COP10 should provide opportunities for regional initiatives to meet, have an information platform or other opportunities for outreach and communication.

Action: The **Ramsar Secretariat** to assess the existing regional initiatives, clarify some issues and identify weaknesses and gaps; to review existing MoUs between the Secretariat and some regional initiatives' and, based on this, to develop terms of reference for regional initiatives that wish to be adopted by COP10 as formal Ramsar Regional Initiatives active during the triennium 2009-2011.

Communication

Anada, Sandra and Mireille give a brief overview on World Wetlands Day (WWD) 2008 materials recently distributed (“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”); on the Secretariat project to produce a versatile, short digital video on added values produced by the Ramsar Convention for wetland ecosystems and the services they provide for human well-being (to be used at many different opportunities in conjunction with other communication tools or activities); and on the Ramsar Award, to be attributed for the fourth time during COP10 in the categories “wetland science, management, and education” to individuals, organizations or community groups, including the private sector, accompanied by a 10,000 USD cash prize.

Action: **IOPs** to get more involved, including pro-active engagements, in WWD activities, and to tell the Secretariat more about their own communication programmes.

Action: **IOPs** to advise the Secretariat how to communicate and outreach better, especially in relation to water-related issues and during related meetings and other opportunities (buzzword “hydroecology”).

Action: The **Secretariat** to look into ways, together with **IOPs**, to translate STRP documents to be produced for COP10 into outreach and communication materials, using the COP10 theme as an entry point to spread our messages.

Action: The **IOPs** to disseminate the call for nominations for the Ramsar Award 2008 through their respective networks, and to consider making nominations. The Secretariat will send the material for posting on mailing list or for establishing a link on their Web sites.

Global water debate

Anada gives a brief overview on upcoming water-related events and outlines the past efforts of the Secretariat to engage with different international water-related organizations. IUCN suggests that Ramsar can learn from the IOPs' experiences in engaging with them, stressing that the activities of UN agencies and financial institutions are vital (coordinated by UN-Water, to which the Secretariat is invited), that we need to change our “wetland” language to engage with development institutions, the World Water Council and its World Water Forums and to work with regional multilateral mechanisms (SADDC, etc.) in order to build bridges between wetland and water-related issues. The annual Stockholm Water Week provides an opportunity to meet key people, and to participate in focused, multi-stakeholder platforms (to which IWMI invited the Secretariat in past Water Week events) which need, however, good preparation and clear focus, notably on our COP10 topic, i.e. health-wetland related issues.

Action: The Ramsar **Secretariat**, in consultation with Parties and IOPs, to see who could represent Ramsar interests in such major international water-related gatherings, to overcome capacity issues.

Action: The **Secretariat** and **IOPs** to evaluate possible common actions during the 2008 Stockholm Water Week, and during World Water Forum 5 in 2009, to be coordinated by Ramsar with IOPs in view of making use of synergies and pooling specific strengths.

Action: **Ramsar** and **IOPs** to scope ways in which the World Water Council, a professional forum with wide audience, can provide increased contacts with parliamentarians, a cheap and effective way to outreach for Ramsar.

Action: **IUCN** to contact the World Water Council with a view to facilitating an invitation to the Ramsar Secretary General to participate in a preparatory, brainstorming meeting for WWF5 in late November 2007 in Marseilles.

Action: The Ramsar **Secretariat** to contact Turkey's Environment Minister, responsible for Ramsar and WWF5, to explore opportunities for close cooperation, including a possible meeting between him and the Ramsar Secretary General.

STRP activities

IWMI is involved in five out of six STRP working groups and most concerned that whatever guidance is produced by STRP will also be used. Even within IWMI's focus on agriculture and the CGIAR system, it is becoming more difficult to obtain funding from donors for future work. Other IOPs may have easier access to different funding sources that could complement IWMI's needs. IWMI therefore has expectations for more joint activities between IOPs.

The COP Resolution process should not only drive the work and focus of STRP. There is value in letting the STRP also address strategic issues and provide guidance at more strategy level, e.g. what tools will Ramsar need in 10 years' time? This is a way to create value for the Convention in the future. Such a shift can only be fuelled by good science coming out of the STRP. In addition, much wetland, water, biodiversity and climate-related issues are inter-connected and require STRP to match its work closely with what others are doing (for example, the joint workshop with the CBD in March 2007).

Action: The **Ramsar** Management Working Group to look at ways to make STRP more strategic, to involve a number of other players, and to make proposals to expand the source of funding for its work.

Action: The **Ramsar** Secretariat and the **IOPs** to communicate the outputs and the work of STRP to others and make sure it is relevant to them.

Action: **IOPs**, with support from the Ramsar Secretariat, to identify opportunities for joint ventures, projects and proposals between IOPs and STRP.

Action: **IOPs** to support STRP in its task to report on the Parties' implementation of Ramsar resolutions.

Ramsar site issues

Increasingly, Ramsar sites come under pressure by extractive industries (oil, gas, mining), infrastructure projects (dams, roads, industry, airports), drainage, fisheries, tourism, water

pollution and urban development. IUCN entered a dialogue with the mining industry, and businesses agreed not to enter IUCN type I protected areas any longer. A similar agreement may be reached by leading companies concerning Ramsar sites? Shell Ltd. agreed not to drill any longer in World Heritage sites. Business relationships can serve to raise environmental standards of such companies. The World Conservation Congress may provide an opportunity to address these issues, led by IUCN's business group.

A forward looking approach could be to treat every site as if it is endangered and to empower local people to fight actual and future development threats (referring to Ramsar's Article 3.2). Development threats are best dealt with already at the conceptual stage. Ramsar has produced some guidance on this in its Handbooks on inventory, assessment and monitoring (including SEA and EIA).

Gradual changes are occurring at many sites. IWMI stresses that we need better methodologies to detect hidden changes (e.g., agricultural encroaching detected with remote sensing and on the ground truthing).

Action: **IOPs** are encouraged to work more with the Ramsar regional teams at the Secretariat concerning Ramsar site management and designation issues, and to share their local experience with the Secretariat.

Action: **IOPs** are encouraged to increase their lobbying for the establishment of land-use planning procedures and the preparation of management plans at Ramsar sites, to preempt wrong development plans.

Action: **IOPs** to support the **Secretariat** in its efforts to encourage administrative authorities to be aware of available Ramsar tools, to use them, or to use them more and better, thus effectively strengthening local and national capacities.

Action: **IOPs** are encouraged to share with the Ramsar Secretariat their experiences and ideas on how to reach out to the local areas, beyond Ramsar's national focal points. Also, IOPs need to interact as much as possible with local actors.

Action: The **Secretariat** and **IOPs** to communicate about well-managed Ramsar sites, thus providing international prestige to local and national actors. This will be an incentive to broaden the involvement of local people.

Action: **IOPs** to support the Secretariat's efforts to convince Parties to establish National Ramsar Committees, and to participate in them. Such committees need also to address site-related conflicts in a wider context, e.g. at river basin level, with up- and downstream consequences.

Intern involvement with IOPs

Providing opportunities for Ramsar interns to gain further work experience by being, at short term, more involved with IOP projects and procedures, was already considered a very valuable exercise during the first meeting between Ramsar and its IOPs in 2006. IUCN and WWF reiterate their generally positive attitude to identify such opportunities that would provide benefits to both sides.

Action: The Ramsar **Secretariat** and the **IOPs** first to agree on the principles of such short-term secondment of Ramsar interns to specific programmes of the IOPs and to outline its frame and constraints (time, cost). Once such a baseline document will be available, concrete opportunities should be assessed and acted upon.

What do the IOPs expect from Ramsar

It is essential to use existing mechanisms to work closer together and in synergy, such as National Ramsar Committees, regional initiatives, sharing project outputs and databases, looking for shared, but streamlined, ownership of databases, in order to implement Ramsar better.

IUCN's key aspects of cooperation with Ramsar are getting an excellent COP10 together, for Parties to see value in the Convention, and to develop mechanisms with them to make the Convention more effective at national level. The Convention, in cooperation with partners, should have a strategic role to build bridges, as the core of its delivery in the coming years.

WWF's priorities are to continue synergies around the development of regional initiatives, increased production of communication materials, together with the development of the Ramsar database (regularly interrogated by WWF), to enhance feasible outreach to non-traditional fora, promoting wetlands and their services to water-related stakeholders. WWF suggested that the Ramsar Secretariat provide small grants to IOPs.

Action: **Ramsar** to identify major issues and to involve **IOP** partners. Use synergies with regional initiatives and produce communication materials together. Ramsar to be informed about their existence and to use IOP regional and individual partners more. Be patient when they have constraints.

Action: IWMI will start a new strategic planning process soon and hopes to receive comments by all other **IOPs** and **Ramsar**.

Action: The Ramsar **Secretariat** looking into ways of providing larger Ramsar site diplomas for specific occasions, as requested by WWF.

Action: **IOPs** to communicate to the Ramsar Secretariat the names of their representatives who will follow Ramsar and its Standing Committee matters and attend meetings.

Action: The Ramsar **Secretariat**, in consultation with IOPs, to look into the opportunity to sign a new Memorandum of Cooperation during WCC4 or COP10?

The **next meeting** will take place back-to-back with Standing Committee meeting 36 (25-29 February 2008).

Paul Mafabi closes the meeting, stating that the relationship between Ramsar and its IOPs is very good, but there is still room to expand it: "We have to do this together, as any of us alone often can't."