

Agenda item 8.15

## **Wetlands and poverty reduction**

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to review the attached draft Resolution and advise about what might be needed to finalise and submit it for COP10 consideration.

### **Note by the Secretariat**

1. Following discussion at the 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, in its Decision SC36-22 “the Standing Committee requested Wetlands International, representing the STRP, to work with Benin, Ghana, Mali, and any other interested Parties and the Senior Advisor for Africa to develop a draft Resolution on wetlands and poverty reduction for consideration by SC37.”
2. Subsequently, a small working group composed of Ghana, Mali, Benin, Wetlands International and the Ramsar Secretariat met in Accra, Ghana (31 March – 1 April 2008), to progress this matter, and it has prepared the attached draft Resolution. Funding for the meeting was contributed by Ghana, Wetlands International, and the Ramsar Secretariat.
3. In submitting the attached draft Ghana, on behalf of the drafting group, has noted that it recognizes that the draft needs some further consideration and development, notably in the current sequence of its operative paragraphs, and further clarifications especially from Wetlands International concerning the relevance of operative paragraphs 8, 13, 16 and 19 to implementing poverty reduction activities under the Convention. Accordingly, the Secretariat has placed these paragraphs in square brackets [...] in the attached draft.
4. The Accra drafting meeting identified a number of poverty reduction issues that were not covered in Resolution IX.14 (2005), including gender; sensitization and training; transfer of knowledge, skills and technology; decentralized management systems; partnership with the private sector; climate change; vulnerability; food self-sufficiency; ecotourism; empowerment; sustainability; health and wetlands; urbanization/human settlement and wetlands; micro-credit facility / cooperative credit unions; and existing structures and institutions, and text has been included in the attached draft on various of these matters.
5. Because the draft Resolution contains matters of a scientific and technical nature, in line with Resolution VIII.45 the STRP has been requested to review and provide advice on the draft Resolution, and its advice will be reported to SC37 to assist in the Committee’s consideration of this agenda item.
6. Given the very short time-line between receipt of the draft Resolution and the deadline for making it available to the Standing Committee, the Secretariat has not yet had the opportunity to fully review or edit the attached draft, nor to discuss it with Ghana and other members of the drafting group, but will do so prior to SC37.

7. From a rapid initial review, however, the Secretariat draws the following observations to the attention of the Standing Committee, especially in relation to the guiding principles for the preparation of draft Resolutions endorsed by Decision SC36-1:
  - i) the present draft does not make reference to Resolution IX.14 on the same topic;
  - ii) the Secretariat's understanding of the underlying reason for which Parties wished to bring forward to COP10 a further draft Resolution on wetlands and poverty reduction was that Parties were finding it difficult to understand how to implement the operative paragraphs of the COP9 Resolution, but there is no reference to such issues in the preambular paragraphs of the attached draft;
  - iii) it is not made clear in the attached draft whether it is designed to wholly supersede Resolution IX.14 or to complement and amplify it;
  - iv) almost all of the text of the preambular paragraphs of the attached draft (except for the last part of paragraph 3) is the same text as the preambular paragraphs in Resolution IX.14 and does not represent an advance;
  - v) operative paragraphs 20-22 of the attached draft repeat paragraphs 10-12 of Resolution IX.14;
  - vi) in the attached draft there is as yet no mention of relevant International Organization Partner (IOP) activities and programmes supporting wetlands and poverty reduction implementation, notably Wetlands International's Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Programme (WPRP) and Wetlands and Livelihoods Working Group (WLWG), but it is the Secretariat's understanding that Wetlands International will subsequently provide text on these for inclusion in the draft Resolution;
  - vii) given the close relationship between poverty reduction and human health, there will need to be a cross-check and, as appropriate, cross-reference in this draft Resolution to the draft COP10 Resolution on wetlands and human health (DOC. SC37-26) so as to ensure consistency and avoid duplication; and
  - viii) paragraph 22 of the attached draft repeats paragraph 11 of Resolution IX.14 in "instructing the STRP to prepare guidelines for the implementation of this Resolution". When considering this COP9 instruction under its 2006-2008 Work Plan, the STRP advised that before it could so do there would need to be more clarity as to which scientific and technical issues concerning wetlands and poverty reduction it should be preparing guidance for.

## Draft Resolution X.00

### Wetlands and poverty reduction

Submitted by Ghana, Benin, and Mali

1. EMPHASIZING the relevance to poverty reduction of a number of decisions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, including Resolutions 5.6 on the *Wise use of wetlands*, VII.8 on *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands*, VIII.23 on *Incentive measures as tools for achieving the wise use of wetlands*, VIII.36 on *Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) as a tool for management and wise use of wetlands*, VIII.44 on the *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Africa*, and IX.4 *Conservation, production and sustainable use of fisheries resources* and ALSO EMPHASIZING the relevance of Decision IV/4 of the Convention on Biological Diversity concerning the status and trends of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and options for conservation and sustainable use;
2. NOTING the relevance of the Ramsar Convention as an important element in the delivery of the internationally agreed development strategies, including the Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7 ("Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" and "Ensure environmental sustainability") and the World Summit on Sustainable Development's Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPoI, 2002), which promoted, *inter alia*, the adoption of integrated water resource management plans by 2005, and AWARE that the implementation of the wise use policy by Contracting Parties contributes to poverty reduction through the sustainable use, management and restoration of wetlands;
3. ALSO NOTING the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the 2005 World Summit Outcome and the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness; the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on Agriculture, Rural development, Land, Drought, Desertification, and Africa (May 2008); and the UNDP Human Development Report, 2006, on Poverty and Global Water Crisis to assist the reduction of poverty while enhancing environmental sustainability;
4. FURTHER NOTING the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, in particular the key messages in its report to the Ramsar Convention (*Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Wetlands and Water. Synthesis*), to the effect that:
  - wetland ecosystems deliver a wide range of critical benefits/services for human well-being;
  - the projected continued loss and degradation of wetlands will result in further reduction in human health and well-being, especially for vulnerable people in less developed countries;
  - maintaining the natural functioning of wetlands, however, will enable them to continue to deliver their benefits/services to human populations; and
  - a cross-sectoral approach to the management of water resources is needed urgently from policy- and decision-makers that emphasizes securing wetland ecosystem benefits/services in the context of achieving sustainable development;

## THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

5. URGES all Contracting Parties and other governments to integrate wetland management, restoration and rehabilitation in all relevant national and regional policies (e. g., Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategies) and to incorporate initiatives that contribute to poverty reduction in all wetland programmes with particular attention to the most vulnerable people (e.g., women, children and elders);
6. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to take action to raise the awareness of all relevant stakeholders about the linkages between poverty and wetland degradation and to empower communities living in and around wetlands to participate in management decisions and to derive benefits for managing wetlands;
7. EMPHASIZES the urgent need to develop simple indicators to demonstrate the complex linkages between wetland management and poverty reduction and monitor changes in the ecological character of wetlands as a result of poverty reduction initiatives;
- [8. CALLS ON all Contracting Parties to develop early warning systems and contingency plans to safeguard people against natural disasters such as cyclones, storm surges, droughts, floods, tsunamis, and to take measures to protect against impacts of climate change, sea level rise, and saline intrusion;]
9. FURTHER CALLS ON all Contracting Parties to note the role of wetlands in sanitation and human health (in particular, water borne and water-related diseases) and take into consideration wetland conservation and wise use of wetlands in urbanization, settlement planning, and land management policies;
10. ENCOURAGES all Contracting Parties to take measures to improve access to land, water and wetland resources such as fish and to develop the capacity of government, civil society, private sector and local communities through extension, training, and networking for the sustainable use and restoration of wetland resources to contribute to poverty reduction;
11. ENCOURAGES all Contracting Parties to develop Strategies and Action Plans for implementing IWRM principles and efficient water use plans in order to sustainably reduce poverty among the communities living in and around wetlands, especially in transboundary wetlands;
12. URGES all Contracting Parties to collaborate with relevant institutions for the development of ecotourism in wetlands in general and especially in Ramsar sites in order to provide opportunities to reduce poverty (while considering the possible negative impacts of tourism on wetland integrity);
- [13. URGES all Contracting Parties to collate knowledge on best practices and promote its transfer for the wise use, extraction, processing and marketing of wetlands products in order to reduce pressures on the natural resources in wetlands by adding value to enhance poverty reduction;]
14. URGES all Contracting Parties to introduce financial incentives or investments such as micro-credit schemes and seed funding, especially in partnership with the private sector,

that improve wetland management and result in tangible poverty reduction in the short and medium term, with the aim of promoting self-sufficiency and equitable benefit sharing;

15. FURTHER ENCOURAGES all Contracting Parties to create partnerships between local communities, conservationists, development partners and other stakeholders for effective participation in poverty reduction initiatives in wetland management;
- [16. URGES all Contracting Parties to respect and incorporate traditional knowledge and local perspectives into national wetland management and sustainable livelihood initiatives;]
17. EMPHASIZES that gender issues and sensitivity to local cultures should be taken into account in the sustainable management of wetlands to ensure that Contracting Parties adhere to the principle of subsidiarity in order to promote participatory decision-making in relation to poverty reduction initiatives at the lowest appropriate level in society;
18. CALLS ON all Contracting Parties to take adequate measures to safeguard the wetlands and peoples' livelihoods (while ensuring that optimum benefits are derived by the impoverished local communities) in areas where mining and other extractive industries are taking and/or likely to take place, including decommissioning phases of the extractive activities;
- [19. URGES all Contracting Parties to assist in disseminating the "Handbooks for the Wise Use of Wetlands", as much of their content is of value in helping to promote the wise use of wetlands and thus contribute to poverty reduction;]
20. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to work with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Tourism Organization (WTO) and UN-Habitat, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Ramsar Convention, International Organization Partners, national and international NGOs and others to:
  - undertake assessments of the economic, social, cultural and livelihood values of individual wetlands and wetlands in general and the benefits/services they deliver, with a view to enhancing sustainable livelihoods and wise use approaches and decision making;
  - build capacity within communities and relevant advisory services to sustainably use wetlands and their resources in order to improve livelihoods through activities designed to increase food security, diversify economies, and add value to wetland products, using the wise use principle;
  - encourage these institutions to undertake a wider consultation of the Parties to define programmes and possibilities for support for poverty reduction in order to address the real necessities of the Parties;
21. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on wetlands and poverty reduction, with a balanced geographic representation, under the supervision of Standing Committee, with appropriate input from the STRP, to coordinate the activities described above;

22. REITERATES the instruction to the STRP to urgently develop guidelines for the implementation of this Resolution; and
23. REAFFIRMS the value of linking wetland restoration to poverty reduction by incorporating the provision of work, skills and opportunities into restoration projects and by focusing on the restoration of ecosystem benefits/services upon which communities depend.