

Agenda items 7, 8, and 9

**STRP advice on COP10 draft Resolutions submitted by  
Contracting Parties, and additional advice on scientific and  
technical content of other DRs**

**Note by the Ramsar Secretariat**

1. As instructed in Resolution VIII.45, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has been consulted on the scientific and technical content of draft Resolutions (DRs) submitted by Contracting Parties for the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP10).
2. In addition, members and observers of the Panel have made some further observations on the content of certain other DRs being considered by the 37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, subsequent to the distribution of SC37 agenda documentation one month in advance of the meeting.
3. This note provides a consolidation of the advice and comments on these DRs that were received from a range of STRP members (including International Organization Partners), observers, and STRP National Focal Points (NFPs). The Standing Committee and those Parties that have submitted DRs may wish to consider and request the Secretariat to take the Panel's advice into account in the finalization of the document for COP10 consideration.
4. The Standing Committee should note that in the short time available for these consultations, the advice below reflects that of individual STRP members, observers or STRP NFPs and does not represent a fully confirmed consensus view of the Panel. Nevertheless, they are provided here to help the Standing Committee determine the extent to which they should be addressed in any further revisions to the DRs.
5. The STRP has also made a general comment about the implications of the timelines for submission of DRs by Contracting Parties – under the Rules of Procedure adopted by COP9, such submissions must be made not later than 40 days before the final full Standing Committee meeting at which COP documents are approved prior to COP. However, since all Standing Committee documents are circulated 30 days prior to the meeting, if Parties submit their DRs only at the deadline, only 10 days remains for such review and consultation. The Panel considers that if a longer period for such consultation were to be available, this would have permitted dialogue with the Parties concerned before the DRs were to be transmitted to the Standing Committee, rather than the present less efficient process of having to introduce such suggested amendments during or after the Standing Committee meeting.

6. The Panel and Secretariat therefore suggest that the Standing Committee may wish to consider proposing an adjustment to the Rules of Procedure to be adopted by COP10 to the effect that Contracting Party draft Resolutions should be received 60 days, instead of 40 days, prior to the final Standing Committee meeting.
7. STRP comments are provided below on the following COP10 draft Resolutions:
  - DOC. SC37-10 Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2014
  - DOC. SC37-23 The application of response options from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) within the Ramsar Wise Use Toolkit
  - DOC. SC37-26 Wetlands and human health
  - DOC. SC37-27 Climate change and wetlands
  - DOC SC37-28 Wetlands and “biofuels”
  - DOC SC37-32 Wetlands and poverty reduction
  - DOC SC37-35 Additional guidance for the Convention’s national implementing agencies
  - DOC SC37-36 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Ramsar Convention
  - DOC SC37-38 Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies

## **DOC. SC37-10 Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2014**

### **General and specific comments**

The Strategic Plan makes no explicit reference to science-based management of wetlands and issues that are likely to be increasingly important in the near future (i.e., climate change and agriculture).

To address this, the suggestions are:

- i) to add a further strategy to goal 1 (wise use), as follows:

#### Strategy 1.8 Scientific-based management of wetlands

Promote successful implementation of the wise use concept by ensuring that national policies and wetland management plans are based on the best available scientific knowledge.

#### KRAs

By 2014:

- Research conducted into areas of key importance for wetland sustainability, such as agricultural–wetland interactions; climate change; valuing ecosystem services. (Global: Secretariat, National: CPs, IOPs)
  - All wetland management plans are informed by sound scientific research that addresses potential threats (Global: Secretariat, National: CPs, IOPs)
- ii) In strategy 3.4 (sharing information and expertise), add a KRA bullet point to address the sharing of scientific knowledge through STRP and other mechanisms:

- Relevant research findings evaluated by STRP promoted and made widely available through *Ramsar Technical Reports*, Ramsar information papers, the Ramsar Web site, IOP Web sites and other means (Global: STRP, Secretariat, IOPs, National: CPs).
- iii) In strategy 4.4 (working with IOPs and others) add a KRA bullet point:
- Support, through endorsement of relevant and appropriate funding applications, efforts by IOPs and others to obtain funding for priority wetland research. (Global: Secretariat, IOPs, National: IOPs, CPs).

## **DOC. SC37-23 The application of response options from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) within the Ramsar Wise Use Toolkit**

### **General and specific comments**

Some wording changes to the DR are needed to focus the emphasis within the MA more specifically on its response options component, rather than the overall MA. In addition, it will be useful to add text referring to the finding of the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) since its attention to water issues took the MA concepts further and attempts to integrate issues across the entire water cycle and not separate them into different systems.

- i) DR Para 2: at the end, add the following text: “and that the report to the Ramsar Convention is available only in English and not also in French and Spanish as had been expected;”
- ii) DR para 8: add “further” before “comprehensive review of MA...”
- iii) DR para 9: change text (shown here in *italics*) to sub-paras ii and iii, as follows:
- ii. *the MA volume on responses* contains little by way of options that directly address the wise use of wetlands; and where wetland wise use was treated in the response options, these were largely focused on addressing direct drivers of change (e.g., water abstraction and unsustainable harvest and resource consumption).
  - iii. *the MA volume on responses* contains few relevant response options that address indirect drivers of change (e.g., economic and socio-political drivers), and there are also a limited number of response options that deal with trade-offs in decision-making relating to wetland wise use;
- iii) DR para 13: add text at the end of the para, as follows: “and taking into account the information provided in the 2007 UNEP GEO-4 report which extends the analyses undertaken by the MA with an emphasis on the entire water cycle rather than individual systems or services and so provides a further information resource for possible inclusion in the *Ramsar Technical Report*.”

## **DOC SC37-26 Wetlands and human health**

### **Comments**

The DR mentions vectors and pathogens but, except in regard to HPAI, is not explicit in mentioning diseases. Both malaria and, to a lesser extent, schistosomiasis are diseases often linked to wetlands which contribute massively to the disease burden of many developing countries. Consequently these should be mentioned explicitly somewhere in the DR. A new paragraph is suggested, to follow paragraph 8, as follows:

“RECOGNIZING that in places wetlands provide habitat for vectors that contribute significantly to the disease burden (e.g., malaria and schistosomiasis) of local communities and that methods of environmental control (e.g., water management) can in some circumstances be the most appropriate approach to mitigation;”

## **DOC. SC37-27 Climate change and wetlands**

### **General comments**

1. The DR strongly presses for buffering wetlands from extreme events (resilience building), which is a good first step but not a long-term strategy for many wetland types and sites. The DR needs to consider that more substantial adaptive management interventions (such as relocation) will be required if many wetland biota are to survive; e.g., many alpine wetlands will run out of altitude, many coastal wetlands will be inundated, and resilience building alone will not suffice: this DR must face these facts and begin to find solutions.
2. Further, the types of changes in wetlands' ecological character resulting from climate change will challenge the survival of many Ramsar sites *in situ*. The Convention needs to further consider whether Resolution IX.6 is adequate for dealing with what is likely to be a vast number of Ramsar sites that no longer maintain their ecological character due to climate change, and in these circumstances, whether special measures are required for relocating or replacing sites and component biota.
3. The Convention may want to promote designation of Ramsar sites that are more resilient to climate change, e.g., those with south-north orientation, high altitudinal relief, or free-flowing rivers.
4. The resolution focuses mainly on the direct impacts of climate change, and only on the wetlands conversion aspect of climate mitigation policies. In fact, there are many severe threats to wetlands from poorly considered government climate change response strategies. For instance, a number of Ramsar Parties have adopted climate policies that call for expansion of hydropower production, more water storage and massive interbasin transfer schemes, and more flood control infrastructure, as well as biofuel production targets. Some of these measures will locally impact on wetlands harder and faster than the direct impacts of climate change. This DR should cover additional threats like new dams and water diversions and propose measures to harmonize climate change and wetlands conservation policies to avoid maladaptation.

### **Specific comments**

- i) Para 4, line 6: add “hydropower generation, reallocation of water,” after “such as”.
- ii) Para. 7: add a second section at the end of the current para, to read: “and CONCERNED that other wetland ecosystems may be particularly vulnerable, including those that have

been fragmented, have an east-west orientation, have a low altitudinal gradient, and lentic and ephemeral systems;”

- iii) Following para. 9, add a new para to read: “NOTING that the climate change mitigation and adaptation policies of a number of countries, provinces and cities include such measures as increased energy supplies from hydropower and biofuels, more water storages, and interbasin water transfers; and STRESSING the need to implement Ramsar’s water-related guidance (Resolution IX.1 Annex C, and [COP10 DR x]), if such climate policies are to avoid significant impacts on the ecological character of wetlands.”
- iv) Para. 11: as for para. 28, make reference here to both mitigation “and adaptation”.
- v) Following para 14, add new para, to read: “RECOGNIZING that the restoration and wise use of wetlands may attenuate natural disasters expected with climate change, such as the use of restored floodplain wetlands to reduce risks from flooding;”
- vi) Para 16, line 2, add “hydropower production and also” after “increased”.
- vii) Para 22: change “risk” to “impact” so as to avoid misunderstanding of the work “risk” in different disciplines.
- viii) Para 23: at end, add “due to the direct impacts and societal responses to climate change”.
- ix) Para 27: add and amend text (shown in *italics* here) to read:

REAFFIRMS the need for Contracting Parties to make every effort, when implementing the UNFCCC and, as appropriate, its Kyoto Protocol, *to consider the maintenance of the ecological character of wetlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation policies*, including policies for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (REDD), including revegetation and forest management, afforestation and reforestation, *and policies related to increased energy supplies from hydropower and biofuels, more water storages, and interbasin water transfers such that implementation of these policies does not lead to serious damage to the ecological character of their wetlands*; ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to utilize the role of forested wetlands in carbon storage and sequestration to contribute to the delivery of such mechanisms; and ALSO ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to use, where appropriate, strategic and other forms of environmental impact assessment and risk assessment, taking into account Resolutions VII.10, VII.16, *VIII.2* and [DR X.00], as well as Article 4.1 of the UNFCCC and Article 2.1 of the Kyoto Protocol, as appropriate;

- x) Also concerning issues in paragraph 27, following para 27 add a new para drawing attention to the opportunity to divert funding, including private sector, towards wetland conservation/restoration as an effective option in investing in carbon sequestration/mitigation, etc. (carbon accounting):

“ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, the private sector and other stakeholders to pay attention to the allocation of funds towards the maintenance and restoration of wetland ecosystem character as an effective option for investing in carbon sequestration and mitigation through carbon accounting;”

- xi) Para. 29: there is a need to add a reference to studies on wetlands and adaptation to climate change, especially including flood mitigation and water supply (i.e., not just carbon storage/sequestration and sea-level rise), and in particular economic cost effectiveness.
- xii) Para. 37: there is need to instruct STRP to pay more attention to climate change adaptation issues by adding a task in this paragraph concerning “assessing the role and economic benefits of investing in wetlands restoration/management as an adaptation to the impacts of climate change”; and an additional task to “update in the light of new information available the STRP’s report to COP8 on climate impacts, mitigation and adaptation”.
- xiii) Para 37: at the end of the penultimate clause of this para, after “appropriate policy and management responses for addressing these impacts”, add “(including management of the loss of ecological character of current Ramsar sites and options for relocating wetlands biota threatened with climate change)”
- xiv) After para. 39, add a final new paragraph which:

“INVITES the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to take note of this Resolution, and to work with their Ramsar national focal points to address its implementation.”

## **DOC SC37-28 Wetlands and “biofuels”**

### **Comment**

- i) Where biofuels are grown there is a need to promote good agricultural practices. A paragraph to follow paragraph 11 could be added, as follows:

“FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties growing biofuels to encourage agricultural practices (e.g., conservation tillage and riparian buffer strips) in order to mitigate adverse social impacts and preserve biodiversity and valuable ecosystem services, including those provided by wetlands;”

## **DOC SC37-32 Wetlands and poverty reduction**

### **General comments**

Further comments have been received from Wetlands International and IWMI concerning this DR, and these should be read in conjunction with the observations on the current structure and content provided by the Secretariat in paragraph 7 of the covering note to DOC. SC37-32.

A key issue for consideration is the extent to which a follow-up COP10 Resolution to Resolution IX.14 is needed, one that would complement the COP9 Resolution by identifying additional aspects of implementation issues, rather than largely repeating the mandates included in Resolution IX.14 (in line with the guiding principles for such DRs endorsed by SC36). There is some difference of opinion on this matter.

Wetlands International has provided detailed comments and rationale for a proposed way forwards, and this is provided below. This is followed by other general comments and specific comments on paragraphs of the current DR.

**Comments from WI on the SC37-32 DR and Secretariat covering note:**

It is not really possible to integrate our input to the DR, since (as expressed in SC35 and since) we do not support the proposal for a new Resolution that is basically a revised or expanded version of Resolution IX.14. The existing Resolution IX 14 has been adopted by the COP and stands as a fairly good framework document for the topic, although naturally it is not comprehensive. Wetlands International therefore does not support the COP10 DR [X] as the priority next step nor the proposal to putting paras 8,1 3, 16 and 19 in square brackets, as proposed in Note 3. [Secretariat note. in the DR these paras were bracketed to indicate that the drafting group felt that further development of these parps would be needed with WI's assistance.]

We do support the observations made in 7 vi and 7 vii [Secretariat covering note]. Furthermore, we consider that there is an equal need to cross-reference to the draft Wetlands and Climate Change Resolution, since it will not be possible to address climate change mitigation and adaptation linked to wetlands without addressing poverty reduction. This fact is being strongly recognised by the development sector and reflected in the emerging climate investment funds and CBD, UNFCCC texts, World Bank strategies etc.

Wetlands International recommends instead that follow up concerning implementation of IX.14 is needed, as clearly expressed by SC 25 and SC 36 and other Contracting Parties with whom we work on this topic. We are not sure whether a new Resolution is called for. If so, it should be distinct from the Res IX.14 and facilitate action on some clear priorities. Follow up guidance and tools are definately needed. Our proposals [provided below] is based on feedback from some CPs in Africa and LAC as well as on our experience of working on the topic of wetlands and poverty reduction/ livelihoods. We hope that this will assist in defining the key priorities further.

**WI suggested approach to follow-up on Resolution IX.14:***Background*

The Ramsar Resolution IX.14 on Wetlands and Poverty Reduction provides an overarching framework to address poverty reduction within the overall ambit of wetland conservation and wise use. The Standing Committee 36 decided to follow up the resolution with a further resolution plus to consider the need to develop guidance on implementation, particularly in the context of the breadth of the original resolution, the lack of clearly defined pathways for implementing the concepts / approaches suggested in the resolution. A main problem faced in the implementation of the original resolution is that several sections provide operational directions, with no supporting guidelines.

*Approach to follow up*

Wetlands International proposes that follow up to Resolution IX-14 should aim to bring in key, measurable operational elements into the resolution, without diluting the principles contained in the existing resolution. It is to be noted that the resolution specifically called for development of guidelines for implementation by the STRP, which was not undertaken in the current Triennium. In the light of these developments, three actions are therefore proposed:

- a) To develop a short, follow up resolution highlighting the obvious priorities for action by different sectors taking into account constraints, bottlenecks and opportunities for specific, measurable implementation.

- b) Present an annex to the new resolution, which could elucidate the operational elements on which guidance is required. Key outcomes of the “Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Best Practices and Lessons Learnt” document could be used as examples.
- c) Request the STRP to incorporate within the next triennium work plan development of specific guidance on the operational elements ( and possibly, a Technical Report)

Based on our working experience in developing countries, some of the broad areas wherein Wetlands International recognizes that specific guidance would be required are:

- a) Steps to develop an integrated framework linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty reduction, that can serve to shape future environment or development projects and to influence bi-lateral donors. Joined up indicators of wetland conservation/management and livelihoods are an example.
- b) Collation of assessment tools and approaches that help define and assess poverty reduction/ livelihood development needs alongside wetland ecological character.
- c) Comprehensive collation of evidences and best practices and lessons learned on self perpetuating cycles of wetland degradation and poverty and also vice-versa – on evidences on how wetland restoration and management can alleviate poverty .

*Proposed points for integration/ inclusion in a new resolution or in follow-up guidance to the Resolution IX.14:*

Following some consultation with CPs, Wetlands International consider that the following issues need to be addressed in the new resolution and technical guidance to make it more operational for CPs:

1. Specific issues and problems that CPs face in addressing poverty reduction linked with wetlands. Priorities for implementation of the resolution should be made very clear, linked to these:

Contracting Parties have indicated that a key challenge is to strongly demonstrate that wise use of wetland resources by local communities can provide a significant contribution to poverty reduction.

2. Mechanisms for stimulating inter-sectoral and mutli-scalar partnerships between conservation and development organisations, to combine skills and approaches to solving poverty reduction challenges linked to wetlands:

Amongst others, the experiences and documented lessons learned by Wetlands International in developing and managing partnerships during the Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Project, the Green Coast Project and the Central Kalimantan Peatlands Project, over the last 4 years can provide input to this aspect.

3. Specific guidance for implementation of the existing resolution is required from STRP/ IOPs:



The development of joint indicators for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation and the provision of training of local communities for sustainable practices of wetland resources use have been cited as key needs by several CPs.

4. Assessment and evaluation tools/materials required for the successful implementation of the constraints/challenges identified above. (Tools/toolkit/indicators/inventory etc):

The need to build on existing traditional practices has been identified. The need to develop a simple field tool that allows CPs to check the poverty reduction indicators has been raised by the LAC Regional meeting and by several CPs.

5. Identification of the opportunities and mechanisms at country level that would enable CPs to be able to address the issues identified above. 1-2 key entry points/portals where this resolution can be implemented by CPs and tracked by others (for example donor countries) should be identified:

Examples include linking wise wetland management to PRSPs and/or National Climate Change Strategies (NAPAs) / water and sanitation plans and strategies. Mechanisms to enable technical exchange between communities has also been proposed.

6. Identification of the main scales of interventions for implementation of the resolution (e.g. from Local Government levels to River Basin/transboundary as appropriate):

One CP identified the local scale as being the most relevant for implementation of the Resolution.

7. The appropriate time period to be used for reporting on implementation of a new Resolution or guidelines for implementation of Resolution IX.14:

Wetlands International proposes that 3 years or up to Ramsar COP11 should be appropriate.

8. Mechanisms for how CPs could clearly and explicitly report back on progress made by Ramsar CoP11. For example adjustments to the National Reporting Templates to make these able to reflect the progress made by CPs on implementing this resolution:

Wetlands International suggests that explicit or distinct reporting back on PRSPs and other relevant national instruments and development plans and Climate Change Strategies, could be integrated in National Reporting Formats. This would be facilitated by the development of a suitable, simple indicator tool.

9. The role of donors in the implementation of the Resolution:

Wetlands International urges that the Convention should trigger a strong call to the Development Banks, especially by CPs, to get involved in the implementation of this resolution. It should also be linked to new climate-related investment programmes. A strong emphasis on building capacity of governments and on forging inter-sectoral approaches to address problems of wetlands and poverty should be given.

#### **Other general comments (IWMI & Secretariat)**

1. In order to avoid duplication and repetition of paragraphs from Resolution IX.14, it would be more appropriate to remove these from the COP10 DR and instead start with a *chapeau* preambular paragraph referring to Resolution IX.14 and its content, with a second preambular paragraph to the effect that: “CONSIDERING that not all priority issues and responses concerning wetlands and poverty reduction were identified in Resolution IX.14...”
2. It would be good if the Resolution made specific reference to the importance of wetland agriculture as a means of ensuring food security, improving livelihoods, and alleviating poverty. Of course, it is important that this should be conducted in a way that does not lead to degradation and loss of other ecosystem benefits.
3. The need to increase capacity in agencies that work with local communities (e.g., agricultural extension) could be noted. Here reference could be made to work being conducted by IWMI and partners (IUCN and UNEP) to prepare a training booklet to target key areas for sustainable wetland management in southern Africa, where wetlands are utilized to support livelihoods / human well-being.

#### Other specific comments (IWMI and Secretariat)

- i) Para 6: The Resolution needs to note the efforts by IOPs in capacity building as well as raising awareness in communities. *Paragraph 6* could be phrased to include “Encourage a wider adoption of capacity building and awareness raising beyond the scope of individual projects such as research implemented by IOPs, universities...”
- ii) Para 7: A suggested alternative is: “Emphasizes the need to quantify and better understand the impacts of wetland management initiatives on poverty and ecosystem integrity to demonstrate the complex linkages between wetland conservation and poverty reduction and the trade-offs often necessary in wise use arrangements”.
- iii) Suggested new operative paragraph (perhaps after paragraph. 10): “RECOGNISES the importance for capacity building activities to invest across social, institutional, economic and political sectors to reduce local people’s vulnerability to change, especially where a wetland is characterized by dynamic ecological processes.”
- iv) Para 11: Encourages all Contracting Parties to develop strategies and action plans for implementing IWRM principles....suggest replacing “especially in transboundary wetlands” to “including in transboundary wetlands”, but noting the comments made earlier in the document under Section 4.3 in SC37-24: Wetlands and river basin management: consolidated scientific and technical guidance.
- v) Para 12: new wording suggested: “URGES all Contracting Parties to collaborate with relevant institutions for the development of **suitable** ecotourism **activities** in wetlands in general especially in Ramsar sites in order to provide opportunities to reduce poverty (while considering the possible negative impacts of tourism on wetland integrity) “
- vi) Para 14: new wording suggested: “URGES all Contracting Parties to introduce financial incentives or investments such as micro-credit schemes **including revolving funds** and seed funding, especially in partnership with the private sector, that improve wetland

management and **contribute to** tangible poverty reduction in the short and medium term, with the aim of promoting self-sufficiency and equitable benefit sharing **in the long term.**”

- vii) Suggested new operative paragraph (perhaps after paragraph 14): “RECOGNISES the importance of identifying existing marketing networks and ways to access these *before* introducing financial incentives or investments to initiate particular income generating livelihood activities in wetlands that contribute to poverty reduction.”
- viii) Para 16: new wording suggested: “URGES Contracting Parties to respect and incorporate traditional knowledge and local perspectives into national wetland management and sustainable livelihoods initiatives, **as appropriate, to ensure better uptake and acceptance by local community groups.**”
- ix) Para 22: as advised in the Secretariat’s covering note to DOC SC37-32, this repeats an instruction to STRP from Resolution IX.14, in response to which the Panel reported that it would need more clarity as to which scientific and technical issues of the topic it should prepare guidance on, and the Panel has reaffirmed this view. It may be that such clarity will come from the suggested way forward proposed by Wetlands International above. Alternatively, one possible approach to this, given the many other organizations presently involved in these issues and the large amount of existing guidance available, could be to request the STRP (with input particularly from the IOPS and their networks) to consider preparation of a practical “structured guide to the existing guidance” that would clearly identify the scale and user audience for each available guidance. This would be an approach successfully taken for a similar situation for guidance on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza prepared by the STRP and approved by SC36 for COP10 consideration.
- x) Suggested new operative paragraph: “RECOGNISES the broad range of interventions required for promoting sustainable poverty reduction arrangements, and calls on Contracting Parties, donor agencies, and NGOs to base strategic and financial planning for wetland management on medium- to long-term commitments to allow for the necessary change process to take place at local and regional, national and transnational scales, as appropriate.”
- xi) Suggested new operative paragraph: “EMPHASISES the importance of basing poverty reduction strategies on an understanding of a specific wetland’s current and future productivity, where such strategies are based on wetland resources and natural processes that may be subjected to change over time.”

## DOC SC37-35 Additional guidance for the Convention’s national implementing agencies

### General comments

This is an interesting proposal. It could do with some linguistic cleanup and clarifications in a few places of what exactly is intended. It is valuable in that it seeks to clarify the terminology concerning Administrative Authorities and focal points and usefully formalizes aspects of the guidance prepared this triennium by STRP in the form a ‘roles of national implementing agencies’ leaflet.

There is significant concern in the comments below about being too prescriptive about the structure, functioning and leadership (chairing) of National Ramsar/Wetlands Committees, since there is a wide range of different constructs being operated in different countries, in relation to differences in national circumstances.

### Specific comments

- i) Para 1 - the Convention (text) itself doesn't make provisions in respect of Administrative Authorities (Aas), so it would be good to cite whatever specific source/decisions are meant.
- ii) In para 2, "(2003)" should read "(1993)".
- iii) Para 3 could cite some additional sources, including the COP10 DR on MEA partnerships and synergies.
- iv) Para 5 might provoke some people to say that what is described is beyond the scope of the STRP, so it might usefully be made a bit more precise. I suppose this refers to the NFP brochure (assuming that's regarded as an "STRP product"); but it does raise the issue that some technical guidances in fact probably do elaborate on the respective roles of different national agencies (e.g., site management planning? Art 3.2 reporting? water resources management? etc.) and there may be a way of emphasising the importance of that kind of thing (and it may be something we want to discuss in the coming triennium).
- v) Para 8: presumably this intends to refer only to the in-country level, and it should make that clear.
- vi) Para 9: I don't think the reference to the Secretariat is correct here, or at least it's not the main Convention organ that should be mentioned there.
- vii) Para 12: The draft Resolution may be shifting the role and leadership of National Ramsar Committees (NRCs), at least as envisioned by Recommendation 5.7. The DR recommends that a NRC should be led, "in so far as is feasible, by the National Focal Point of the Contracting Party", but the annex flatly states that "NRCs are led by the National Focal Points." There are different NRC models depending on country structure, legislation and approach, both in terms of NRC leadership and membership. Therefore the guidelines should provide for a range of scenarios in order to allow for flexibility, as is the case at present. Recommendation 5.7 was at pains to acknowledge the point about different models and scenarios being applicable in different countries ("according to the needs of each Contracting Party"), and there is no reason to vary or complicate that understanding in the way that para 12 of the current DR risks doing.
- viii) Para 12: It might be a good idea to add something to the effect of recommending that National Committees should certainly involve STRP National Focal Points and CEPA National Focal Points – that would be a legitimate (and useful) update of the thinking, since such things didn't exist in 1993!
- ix) Para 13 could be usefully expanded to address potential donors, as well as the Secretariat?

- x) Para 14: Are we meant to interpret this para as referring to a Web page? I'm not sure how the reference to working languages is meant to operate – if it means people can post contributions in any of the languages, does that need saying in a Resolution? If on the other hand it means that a posting in any one of the languages ought to be translated into the other two, that would have significant resourcing implications.
- xi) Annex para 1: I'm not sure that “guidelines” is the right term for what follows there, and probably something like “information” would be more accurate/appropriate.
- xii) There is some duplication (and not complete consistency) between the “Support Tools” part of the Annex and paras 13-14 of the draft Resolution.

### **DOC SC37-36 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Ramsar Convention**

#### **Comments**

- i) There might be value in adding text which encourages the SIDS to apply Ramsar guidance (draft Ramsar Technical Report) on vulnerability assessment at an island and a subregional scale. Once there has been some experience of doing that, STRP could be asked to review the guidance in light of the experience, and see if it needs improving.
- ii) Para 6 is problematic, on three counts:
  - a) not all “the Caribbean Islands” are States - some are Overseas Territories of other States;
  - b) it doesn't seem logical to ask that they all be considered as “developing” (which is the consequence of asking for them to be considered as SIDS), if some are not considered “developing” by the main international system available (the DAC list) – rather it would seem more logical to ask for them to be “treated in an analogous way to SIDS” (for Ramsar purposes, or for SGF purposes, or whatever);
  - c) if the argument in the DR is accepted in principle, then there is no logical reason for restricting the DR (paragraph 6) to only the Caribbean, and one would anticipate that small island stakeholders in other Ramsar regions might have the same question – the DR should speak to all SIDS worldwide.
- iii) Paragraph 7 more clearly refers to “Island State Contracting Parties” – cf. point ii. a) above. But it leaves the purpose of the decision undefined – is it intending to say how such Parties should be viewed for the purposes of SGF proposals? Or for some other purpose? It will be hard to implement this Resolution unless the purpose is specified more clearly.
- iv) Paragraph 5 should be deleted: recognition of this already took place at COP9, and it is a general statement that is applicable to all wetlands, not just to those in SIDS. It might thus be better to make reference here to the issue of the particular vulnerability of islands to the impacts of climate change, with a cross-reference to this point and the IPCC findings which is made in the COP10 DR on climate change and wetlands.

### **DOC SC37-38 Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies**

## General comments

1. First, a definition of what is meant by paddy is needed to ensure that it is clear what is being discussed – not all rice is grown in paddy; further, a lot of rice is grown in mixed cropping, e.g., with wheat – is this included and covered under this DR?
2. There is a general view that the current version of the DR would benefit from some enhancements and attention to more specific issues, including in relation to rice paddy issues and practices in different parts of the world. A number of comments refer to the need to speak to issues of multi-functionality of rice fields.
3. Overall, the DR is rather weak regarding the main threats to rice paddies (only touched on in para 5). What are the big issues? Why should Ramsar be concerned? How can these be addressed?
4. Similarly, there would seem to be the need for greater precision and clarity regarding process and desired outcomes. That would be helpful and make the DR more useful, I think.
5. There is a need to develop knowledge of best management practices for rice fields. At least, there is a real need to develop rice in arid or subarid sites and to create artificial wetlands, because the current threat is that natural wetlands could be transformed in rice fields. However, in relation to this suggestion, another comment is that the expansion of rice into arid zones can also have adverse consequences with increased landscape water-logging, salinisation and sodicity.
6. The issue of multi-functionality of rice fields for fish production is both a big and contentious issue and needs to be addressed in the DR. It has been seen by some as a way of getting around trade issues, and was a major issue at the FAO/NL Den Haag conference held in 2004(?) on agriculture and wetlands. IWMI has done some work on multi-functionality, and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has also assessed biodiversity in rice fields.
7. Captured aquatic biodiversity can make an important contribution to the nutrition of farming household members as well as others (e.g., landless) who usually have free access to rice fields and the living aquatic resources they provide, whereas the benefits of culture are usually more restricted to those who have invested in the system. The International Rice Commission has taken this issue up in its last two meetings in Bangkok and Peru.
8. Concerning multi-functionality, there is also the traditional role of ducks to glean in rice-paddies which has been implicated as a major risk factor for transmission of HPAI: Detailed research in Thailand has demonstrated a strong association between the HPAI H5N1 virus and abundance of free-grazing ducks. Wetlands used for double-crop rice production, where free-grazing ducks feed year round in rice paddies, appear to be a critical factor in HPAI persistence and spread [in Thailand].
9. Inclusion of the detail of this would make the DR too complex, but it is another indication that it's not a simple story and some language in the DR to reflect that could be valuable. As we will have a DR on wetlands and health, the mention of avian flu and ducks is very relevant; a cross reference to the human health and HPAI DRs would help, with a

statement to the effect that the interaction between wild and domestic ducks in rice paddies and the transmission of bird flu is also raised in the DR on health and wetlands and that this should be further investigated as a part of the STRP's analysis of the complex inter-relationships involving wetlands that affect human health.

10. In Australia there is some preliminary work on the comparative value of rice fields and natural wetlands for some waterbirds; the rice fields do not win. There is likely to be similar research elsewhere. It might be helpful to request the STRP to further investigate such matters in its future work. Further, there are assumptions in the DR that rice fields are good for biodiversity, but where they have replaced other wetlands they may (do) alter the biodiversity – adding more taxa to an area is not necessarily a good biodiversity outcome, especially if others have been lost or populations reduced. Suggest that the less savoury outcomes are recognised along with the benefits, and an operative paragraph be added, something along the lines of “REQUESTS the STRP and other interested organizations to assess and provide a technical report on the role of rice fields and management of rice fields for supporting the conservation of wetland biodiversity and the supply of ecosystem services, taking into account differences in the manner in which rice fields are managed.”

### Specific comments

- i) Para 3: it is not helpful to call waterbirds an “apex of the ecological pyramid”. Better to broaden this text along the lines that paddies support much important wetland biodiversity and many taxa, and thus their sustained management is important for wider values/benefits and not just for food production.
- ii) Para 4: Maintaining flooded paddies when rice is not growing may increase biodiversity and provide habitat for birds, but significantly increases evaporation losses which can in turn have negative impacts downstream. Work that IWMI and partners conducted in Tanzania showed how flooding of upstream paddies in the non-growing season was contributing to the decrease in flows into a downstream wetland. Therefore consideration must be given to the catchment context (e.g., through reference to the DR on wetlands and river basin management).
- iii) Para 5: Is it possible to include text to be more specific as to what constitutes good and bad management?
- iv) Para 7: There is concern about the passage: “and thus the present Resolution is distinct from the existing Resolutions which have been dealt with mainly by the Administrative Authorities”, and a suggestion that the passage be deleted. It is true for some Resolutions but not for others, and risks inviting people who are not AAs to be more dismissive than they should be of the relevance to them in general of Ramsar Resolutions. Moreover, the first part of this paragraph seems to suggest the need for an operative clause in response to it, something to the effect of calling on all concerned to assist in bringing the content of the present Resolution to the attention of those government authorities who have jurisdiction over rice farming.
- v) Para 7: the purpose of credentials is to ensure that delegations to a COP have a remit to negotiate on behalf of all parts of their government, not just the Ramsar Administrative Authority. Thus by effectively saying delegations only represent the environment bit of the

government machine, this is a dangerous and unnecessary precedent. Rather, including a call for the Resolution to be widely disseminated to actors both in and outside government gets around this.

- vi) Para 8: This should be developed further with specific reference to some of the wording in the previous Resolution on agriculture (Resolution VIII.34), recalling that at COP8 the issue of how Resolutions did or did not impinge on trade issues was well and truly to the fore. Cross-reference to the Agricultural Resolution would be useful anyway; perhaps making reference to being aware of the responses being undertaken by the STRP to Resolution VIII.34 on agriculture and wetlands, with also references to the Comprehensive Assessment (which has a chapter on rice) and GAWI, and noting the analyses being undertaken by IWMI on the distribution and representivity of Ramsar wetland types, including rice paddy. The last text section of Para 8 could be included as part of the recollection of VIII.34 in Para 6.
- vii) Para 9: this paragraph is key: it should be made earlier in the DR, and it should be strengthened. In keeping with the spirit of para 5, for example, it should probably be acknowledged that there have been instances of conversion that have caused the loss of important natural wetlands and their ecosystem services. The point could be related to the terms of the Convention, for example by emphasising that such conversion may often conflict with the principles of wise use. There could even be an operative sentence urging Parties and others to reinforce measures for the avoidance of such conflicts.
- viii) Para 9: this is where there should be further comment about the role of wetlands in landscapes. It is not all positive – for example, an analysis of wetland loss in northeastern China where natural wetlands were lost to expanding rice paddy, and to such an extent that there is now a large wetland restoration program in place; it's not all good news or sensible for biodiversity. Further, the operation of rice paddy can have adverse effects on adjacent or downstream wetlands with changes in water flows (interruption to natural flow as well as the timing/quantity of releases of paddy water), especially with the release of 'fresh' water into brackish or saline wetlands, and the release of paddy water containing agrochemicals into streams, marshes, etc..
- ix) Para 9: Many issues and previous Resolutions have covered matters that may be primarily handled by national authorities other than Ramsar/conservation authorities (e.g., agriculture, water management) which relate to rice. Thus, the sentence could be removed or a response added, such as encouraging the conservation authority to work with the 'rice authority' to manage the rice fields in ways that enhance conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services while still serving their primary function (growing rice - especially with the recent concern over global food supplies and costs; this specific issue in fact may need to be mentioned also right at the start in paragraph 1 - rice is in short supply).
- x) Para 11: this needs to be more specific – how and to what end are Parties going to 'assess and promote'?
- xi) Para 12: this logically should form the final paragraph of the DR. Also, should there be a CEPA task here – to disseminate good management practices to rice farmers?



- xii) Para 13: add to subparagraph c) text (shown in *italics*): “ensure that such farming practices and water management are implemented wherever applicable, while being conscious of the productivity, *catchment context* and interests of local communities.”
- xiii) Para 13: There is also a need here to add something about processes and outcomes – or is the purpose just to provide to STRP for an info paper (ref. paragraph 12)? In either case some clearer text is needed.