

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
41st Meeting of the Standing Committee
Kobuleti, Georgia, 26 April - 1 May 2010

DOC. SC41-11

Agenda item 8

Progress report on engagement with the Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to note the progress on engagement with the GEF and advise on how to take this process forward.

1. In Decision SC40-14 (2009), the Standing Committee “requested the Subgroup on Finance to consider how best the Secretariat and Parties could engage more strongly with the Global Environment Facility so as to enhance the opportunity for GEF to act more directly as a funding instrument for the Ramsar Convention (as presently for the CBD, the UNFCCC, and the UNCCD), especially in relation to *inter alia* its International Waters focal area and including in relation to opportunities for further redevelopment of “Signature Initiatives” in collaboration with the IOPs; to identify Ramsar Parties that are also members of the GEF Council and request them to use their positions to help to accomplish this; and to report on this to the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee.”
2. Accordingly, the Secretariat has taken the following actions:

Regular communication with the GEF Secretariat and other relevant bodies to obtain updated information about the GEF process:

Interaction with the GEF Secretariat:

3. Since the GEF is the most important designated financial mechanism for a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) or conventions, the Ramsar Secretariat is making efforts to improve our knowledge about the way GEF assists countries in meeting their obligations under the conventions that they have signed and ratified. The conventions for which the GEF is designated as financial mechanism provide guidance to the two governing bodies of the GEF: the GEF Council and the GEF Assembly.

Information on opportunities to improve the implementation of the Convention

4. The Ramsar Convention is not included amongst the conventions for which the GEF is designated as financial mechanism; therefore, the Ramsar COP does not provide guidance to the two governing bodies of the GEF. However, our communication with the GEF has shown that the GEF is also associated with many global and regional MEAs that deal with international waters or transboundary water systems. Ramsar is a global convention dealing

with Biodiversity and International Waters and the GEF has been helping to fund initiatives to assist developing countries in meeting the objectives of the Convention.

5. For instance, under GEF4, 180 projects have been approved in the International Waters focal area. Most of these projects are still under implementation in Argentina, Brazil, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Egypt, Georgia, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Moldavia, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russian federation, Senegal, Serbia, Slovenia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Vietnam. In addition, 128 regional projects are going on in Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. In the International Waters focal area alone, 180 projects that are sponsored by the GEF are relevant to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. These projects receive \$1,093,445,300 from the GEF Trust Fund together with \$6,138,917,700 co-funding.
6. Under the current Work Programme, at least seven Project Identification Forms (PIF) submitted to the GEF Council for approval are relevant to Ramsar in China, Costa Rica, India, Jordan, Nigeria, Senegal, and the Mediterranean
7. The Secretariat is encouraging all Ramsar Administrative Authorities to take an active part in the implementation of GEF ongoing projects and to take the lead in the preparation of new projects to submit to the GEF Council. In this regard, we are happy to announce that an agreement has been signed between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Organization of American states (OAS). The purpose of the agreement is to establish a framework for collaboration to further common goals, including sharing data, knowledge and information relevant to biodiversity conservation of wetlands and sustainable management within the Americas. It also includes the development and execution of joint projects related to Ramsar Strategic Plan and the OAS mandates, such as the proposed UNEP-implemented, OAS-executed, GEF-funded project entitled "Valuation of Ecosystem Services," which is part of the Ramsar Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of High Andean Wetlands.

Synergy between the Ramsar Mission & Strategic Plan and the Strategy and Goal of the GEF International Waters focal area (GEF IW)

8. The Ramsar Secretary General attended the 5th Biennial GEF International Waters Conference, hosted by the government of Australia in Cairns, North Queensland, October 26 through 29, 2009. This meeting offered participative learning opportunities, including technical workshops on complex basin and marine systems, dealing with resolving conflicting demands among diverse stakeholders, and coping with water scarcity and the technical as well as societal impacts of climate change. It was useful to be involved in the discussions on the Coral Triangle Initiative and the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands, aiming to help GEF IW projects exchange practical experience in linking freshwater and marine management. The key objective of this portfolio learning event was to promote sustainable development in basin and coastal communities sharing natural resource systems, to achieve Millennium Development Goals through the benefits of transboundary cooperation in ecosystem-based management. With an eye to integrated-ecosystem based management and mainstreaming climate variability and change, the meeting was meant to build on 2009's key freshwater and marine meetings with an eye to preparing the GEF IW portfolio for the future. To that end,

participants were encouraged to read both the Ministerial Statement from the World Water Forum and the Manado Ocean Declaration.

9. During this meeting the Secretary General had the opportunity draw a parallel between the Ramsar Mission & the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 and the Goal & Strategy of the GEF International Waters focal area. During the meeting, the GEF International Waters strategy for GEF5 was still in a draft form and the participants were invited to provide comments. It was also possible to provide comments after the meeting. The Ramsar Secretary General forwarded the draft Strategy to the STRP and the Ramsar staff but the STRP was not in a position to provide comments.
10. We are happy to see that the GEF International Waters strategy for GEF5 is pursuing integrated approaches across GEF focal areas for a thematic priority related to water where multiple benefits may be generated because of inter-linkages such as with sustainable forest or land management and sustainable use of biological diversity such as in floodplain wetlands. This may protect groundwater recharge areas or control erosion and soil loss in the upper reaches of watersheds with benefits in flow regulation and the hydrological balance. The approach will assist states in balancing the competing uses of surface and ground water for energy, irrigation-food security, drinking water, and support of fisheries for protein in the face of multiple stresses, including climatic fluctuations in transboundary basins and aquifers.
11. It is also encouraging to note that the goal of the International Waters focal area is the promotion of collective management of transboundary water systems and implementation of the full range of policy, legal, and institutional reforms and investments contributing to sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services.
12. The parallel with Ramsar shows that the reduction of land-based sources of marine pollution continues to demand GEF attention, particularly nutrients from sewage and agriculture that contribute to coastal “dead zones”. Support to the GPA (Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities) will be mainstreamed in Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) projects to improve coastal quality.

Approaches to enhance GEF support to the work of the Ramsar Convention

13. So far the Ramsar Secretariat has been able to attend all GEF meetings, including the GEF Council meetings, following a request for invitation. On GEF Council, we are invited as an observer if the GEF Secretariat considers there are wetland-relevant issues on their agenda, and thus formally we are not automatically able to attend – though in practice of late it seems that we are now invited to each GEF Council session. We also understand that being in the UN system is not enough to attend all GEF Council meetings. The conventions that can automatically attend the GEF Council are only those that are officially linked to one of the six GEF focal areas: Biodiversity, Climate change, International waters, Ozone depletion, Land degradation, and Persistent organic pollutants
14. Ramsar is expecting to be formally linked to “International Waters” focal area with the assistance of the Ramsar Contracting Parties that are members of the GEF Council. This can

happen if a request is made by at least one Ramsar Contracting Party in its capacity as GEF Council member. If Ramsar should be able to obtain this status, the International Waters focal area would become the financial mechanism for the Ramsar Convention and the GEF would receive guidance from the Conference of Parties (or COP) on policy, strategy, programme priorities, and eligibility criteria related to the use of resources for purposes of the Convention.

Upcoming opportunities to strengthen partnership with the GEF

15. The Fourth Assembly of the GEF will be held 24-28 May 2010 in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The Assembly, held once every three to four years, is a strategic opportunity for GEF stakeholders to meet, take stock, and collectively strengthen strategies and actions for protecting the global environment and achieving sustainable development. The Assembly is the governing body of the GEF, in which representatives of 177 member countries participate. It is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the GEF's general policies, the operation of the GEF, and its membership. The Assembly is also responsible for considering and approving proposed amendments to the Instrument, the set of rules by which the GEF operates. The Assembly will combine plenary meetings and high-level panels, exhibits, side events and GEF project site visits. Prominent environmentalists, parliamentarians, business leaders, scientists, and civil society organizations (CSO's) and community leaders will discuss global environmental challenges within the context of sustainable development and other international development goals.
16. The forthcoming GEF Council meeting will be held from 29 June to 1 July 2010 in Washington D.C., United States of America. The GEF Council Meeting will develop, adopt, and evaluate GEF programmes.
17. A second GEF Council meeting will be held from 15 to 18 November 2010 also in Washington D.C. This Council Meeting, too, will develop, adopt, and evaluate GEF programmes.

Annex 1. A list of GEF Council members and alternates

The Council is the main governing body of the GEF comprising 32 Members appointed by constituencies of GEF member countries: 14 from donor constituencies and 18 from recipient constituencies. The Council meets every six months and is responsible for developing, adopting and evaluating the operational policies and programmes for GEF-financed activities, as well as reviewing and approving the work program (projects submitted for approval). As decisions are made by consensus, two-thirds of the Members of the Council constitute a quorum.

Current composition of the GEF Council

Council Member	Date of Appointment	Alternate Member	Date of Appointment	Constituencies
ABOUL AZM, Mawaheb (Egypt)	Jul. 2007	ECHIRK, Djamal (Algeria)	Jun. 2007	Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia
BABAEI, Mahmoud (Iran)	Oct. 8, 2008	RAHAGHI, Massoud Rezvanian (Iran)	Nov. 2006	Iran
BERARDI, Gisella (Italy)	May 2008	MORDINI, Claudia (Italy)	Nov. 2006	Italy
BJORNEBYE, Erik (Norway)	Oct. 2006	ANDERSEN, Geert Aagaard (Denmark)	Oct. 2006	Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway
BUYS, Jozef (Belgium)	Mar. 2008	FERJANCIC, Emil (Slovenia)	Mar. 2008	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey
CORNEAU, Hélène (Canada)	Nov. 2006	SHELTINGA, Jan (Canada)	Jul. 31, 2008	Canada
DE JONG, Gerben (Netherlands)	Sep. 2005	SIPS, Herman (Netherlands)	Oct. 2007	The Netherlands
MINGA, Alexis (Congo)	Sep. 2008	KASULU, Vincent (Congo DR)	Sep. 2008	Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Congo DR, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe
FASS-METZ, Frank (Germany)	Apr. 2008	von Kleist, Wilhelm (Germany)	Feb. 2007	Germany
GRAYEB-BAYATA, Claudia (Mexico)	Jun. 2005	MENDOZA, Lamed (Panama)	Mar. 2008	Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela
HENDERSON, Jan (New Zealand)	Feb. 2008	Fulton, Deborah (Australia)	Feb. 2008	Australia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea
IVANOV, Violeta (Moldova)	Jan. 2007	STOICA, Silviu (Romania)	Jan. 2007	Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Ukraine

Council Member	Date of Appointment	Alternate Member	Date of Appointment	Constituencies
JORTIKKA-LAITINEN, Tiina (Finland)	Jun. 2007	RABE, Patrick (Sweden)	Oct. 2007	Estonia, Finland, Sweden
KOLLY, Thomas (Switzerland)	Aug. 2006	HILBER, Anton (Switzerland)	Apr. 2005	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
KUMAR, Dhanendra (India)	Nov. 2005	KHAN, Zakir (Bangladesh)	Nov. 2005	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka
NAPICA, Policarpo (Mozambique)	Oct. 2007	FAKIR, Zaheer (South Africa)	Oct. 2007	Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe
ALVAREZ FRANCO, Vanesa (Spain)	Sept. 2008	MOTA PINTO, Nuno (Portugal)	Nov. 2003	Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain
ODENBREIT, Andre (Brazil)	Jan. 2008	ALBAN, Andrea (Colombia)	May 2007	Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador
OTENG-YEBOAH, Alfred (Ghana)	Feb. 2008	BARRY, Nima Bah (Guinea)	Oct. 2008	Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo
PIZER, William (United States)	Aug. 2008	REIFSNYDER, Daniel (United States)	May 2006	United States
PURNOMO, Agus (Indonesia)	Mar. 2008			Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu
RENCKI, Julien (France)	Jul. 2007	MARTIN, Marc-Antoine (France)	Sep. 2002	France
SAPAG, Alvaro (Chile)	Jul. 2008	LOPEZ, Carlos (Paraguay)	Jul. 2008	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
SARR, Momodou (Gambia)	Dec. 2007	GOMES BARBOSA, Tomas (Guinea-Bissau)	Oct. 2008	Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, The Gambia
SHAH, Shuja (Pakistan)	Aug. 2005	LUTFI, Sultan (Jordan)	Feb. 2001	Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen

Council Member	Date of Appointment	Alternate Member	Date of Appointment	Constituencies
TAKAMI, Hiroshi (Japan)	Jul. 2008	KATO, Kikuko (Japan)	Aug. 2007	Japan
TOTSKIY, Anatoly (Russian Federation)	Sep. 2006	DAVTYAN, Ruzanna (Armenia)	Aug. 2006	Armenia, Belarus, Russian Federation
VAN TAI, Nguyen (Vietnam)	Mar. 2008	RITHIRAK, Long(Cambodia)	Mar. 2008	Cambodia, Korea DPR, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
WEECH, Philip (Bahamas)	Feb. 2008	WARD, RICARDO (Barbados)	Feb. 2007	Antigua And Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts And Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
WHEATLEY, Josceline (United Kingdom)	Mar. 2004	WHALEY, Christopher (United Kingdom)	May 2006	United Kingdom
WOLDEYOHANNIS, Mogos (Eritrea)	Mar. 2007	GEBRE EGZIABHER, Tewolde (Ethiopia)	Apr. 2007	Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda
ZOU, Jiayi (China)	Mar. 2005	YANG, Yingming (China)	Oct. 2007	China