



Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority



REGIONAL INITIATIVE ON BLACK SEA COASTAL WETLANDS - BlackSeaWet

PROGRESS REPORT On the Project implementation February 2010

Contract: Ramsar Contract 256
3101-000/C:REGINIT/25911-0002

1. Aim of the BlackSeaWet Regional Initiative

The overall aim of new regional initiative – BlackSeaWet is to catalyze the conservation and sustainable development of Black Sea coastal wetlands. Wetland wise use and conservation has been initiated in the region for many years through various unrelated regional and national activities. A Regional Initiative will stimulate and coordinate cooperation around coastal wetlands issues in the region, acting as a means to address regional issues, share knowledge and expertise to address shared issues amongst different countries and stakeholders in the region and stimulate the development of capacity to address them. The issues require a multi-stakeholder approach that engages with government, civil society and increasingly the private sector. The Regional Initiative will undertake to bring these parties together.

The BlackSeaWet Initiative will strongly promote the goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-14. Of the five main goals, the Initiative will strongly contribute to the realization of 1-4 (the fifth not being relevant in the region as all countries are already Contracting Parties): **Wise use (Goal 1)** - Promotion of the wise use of coastal wetlands is a key focus of BlackSeaWet; **Wetlands of International Importance (Goal 2)** - Many of the major Black Sea coastal wetland are listed as Ramsar sites); **International cooperation (Goal 3)** - Sound International cooperation is a crucial part of BSW; **Institutional capacity and effectiveness (Goal 4)** - BlackSeaWet will build the regional capacity to implement the Convention focusing on enhanced CEPA activities to catalyze implementation of wise use.

Geographical scope of BlackSeaWet Regional Initiative is represented by the Black Sea coastal countries. The need for the Initiative is well supported by Contracting Parties in the region. At

present, 5 of them – Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine have supported the initiative. It is expected that in future Russian Federation also will join to BlackSeaWet regional initiative.

The BlackSeaWet concept was originally a recommendation of the workshop on Black Sea coastal wetlands held in Odessa in September 2000 attended by representatives of all major Basin countries. At this meeting Wetlands International was asked to take the lead in the Initiative's development. The development of the Initiative was again supported by the Ramsar European Regional meeting in Bled, Slovenia 2001. Most recently Basin countries represented by Ukrainian government (the host country for Wetlands International Black Sea Programme) indicated their support for the developing Initiative during Ramsar COP9, Uganda (Resolution IX.7).

A Dutch funded project, lead by Wetlands International facilitated the development of the foundations for the Initiative. The project has supported a regional needs analysis that has consulted each Basin country to identify priority needs and actions. This information was brought together at a regional conference "Stopping the loss of Black Sea Coastal Wetlands: the establishment of a regional initiative", held on 30-31st October 2007 in Odessa, Ukraine. 46 participants representing government ministries, national and international non-government organizations, international Conventions (including the Ramsar Convention) and scientific institutions from Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine discussed the basis for future cooperation in the field of wise use of coastal wetlands along the coast of the Black and Azov Seas. The same meeting also adopted a Declaration in which the main component parts of the Initiative are summarized based on consultations leading up to the meeting and stakeholder discussions at the meeting. This consultation process had been continued during 2008. It is planned that by end 2009 the Initiative will begin, marked by the first full management Body meeting.

In accordance to decisions of Odessa conference, BSW will be organized based on the following principles and structures:

Governance: BSW will be governed by a Management Board which will comprise the following representatives: Ministries of Environment from the six Black Sea countries, six national level non-government organizations, one from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, one from the Black Sea Commission Secretariat, up to four international non-governmental organizations active in the region (e.g. Wetlands International, BirdLife International, WWF, IUCN). Meetings of the Management Board will be conducted annually.

Regional coordination and communication: Between meetings of the Management Board a Coordination Unit will be responsible for coordination, administration, communication, monitoring and implementation of BSW plans and preparing annual meetings and reports. The Unit will comprise 2 persons – one representative of the Ministry of Environment and the other from a national NGO of the host country. The Coordination Unit will be hosted by a Black Sea country with responsibility rotating periodically.

National coordination and implementation: National Working Groups will be established in each country for implementation of BSW. They will provide inputs to the Coordination Unit and will include representatives of ministries, non-government organizations, scientific and other relevant organizations. Participation will be on a voluntary basis.

Substantive elements of the initiative

The entire premise of the BlackSeaWet Initiative is built around the fact that it is only through collaboration with a very wide range of organizations that the future of Black Sea coastal wetlands and their biodiversity can be secured. Creation of National Working Groups in each Black Sea country and their involvement in preparation of BlackSeaWet Vision were important steps for the stakeholders' consultation process and initiation of a bottom-up approach to development of the BlackSeaWet regional initiative. The successful international conference in Odessa, October 2007, formulated the aim, targets, main objectives, governance and first implementation steps for the Initiative based on National Working Groups in Black Sea countries who were in close contact with

key organizations and experts. All stakeholders strongly stressed necessity of raising awareness of local people, NGOs and governments on importance conservation and sustainable use, as well as development of communication tools for exchange of information (**contribution of the Initiative to regional collaboration**).

Raising public awareness on wetlands conservation and development of communication and collaboration are among the top priorities for the BlackSeaWet Initiative. It is anticipated that support for Ramsar's CEPA objectives will be strengthened in a number of areas. A website, training courses in different aspects of wetland management, outreach and awareness raising activities targeting different levels of society from local communities to national level policy makers and planners are anticipated. Raising public awareness of wetland conservation issues will be a major area of work, with campaigns highlighting the importance and values of wetlands and the threats they currently face playing a central role. Furthermore ensuring wise use is integrated into coastal development will require a wide range of stakeholders including the public and private sectors be engaged. All these planned directions of activities will strongly increased visibility for Ramsar in Black Sea region. (**Initiative provides increased visibility for Ramsar**).

2. The progress of the Initiative implementation

2.1 Work Plan for the year 2009

Based on the Ramsar Contract 256, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBRA) started the implementation of the project after the 1st of July 2009. Initially scheduled to start after the signature of the contract (1st of July 2009), the activities were delayed by the transfer of the funds (26,820 CHF representing 60% of the approved amount) in mid October.

DDBRA established an implementation team (Project Implementation Unit) of 5 staff part time involved.

The Project Implementations Unit started the activity following the objectives of the Work Plan for the year 2009:

Work Plan proposed for the year 2009

Objectives	Activities	Results/Outputs	Indicators
1. To launch BSW through the first implementation steps for it.	1.1 Nomination from Ministries and non-government organizations representatives in the BSW Management Body	Agreed list of persons who will represent countries in the BSW Management Body	List of nominated persons
	1.2 Preparation draft ToR for BSW Management Body and draft of first Action Plan	Agreed drafts of background documents for BSW Management Body	Draft ToR and draft of Action Plan
	1.3 Conducting first meeting of BSW Management Body for approval of ToR and Action Plan	Conducted first meeting of BSW Management Body and approved its background documents	Acting Management Body, approved ToR and Action Plan
	1.4 Establishing of Interim Coordination Unit and formalizing of National Working Groups	Established technical coordination body for BSW and strengthened stakeholders participation in BSW	Acting Interim Coordination Unit and National Working Groups involved in further development of

			BSW
	1.5 Conducting CEPA related activities (website communications)	Disseminated information on BSW and raised public awareness on coastal wetlands importance	Creation of website for BSW and printing at least one leaflet on BSW and coastal wetlands conservation
	1.6 Preparation of several project proposal for actions on sustainable use and conservation of coastal wetlands	Created background for financial self-sustaining Initiative	At least two prepared project proposals

The project implementation was focused on the implementing the Work Plan objectives as follows:

2.2 Nomination from Ministries and non-government organizations representatives in the BSW Management Body

The staff of the Project Implementation Unit from DDBRA identified the members of the Management Body and documentation sets including the invitations for designation of the representative persons to participate in the first meeting of the Management Body and presentation papers were sent to the potential members of the Management Body of BSW Initiative. All partners, with the exception of Russia, designated their representatives in the Management Body.

2.3 Preparation draft ToR for BSW Management Body and draft of first Action Plan

The **Terms of References (ToR) of the BSW Management Body** and the **Action Plan for the BlackSeaWet Initiative** reflect the common vision of all partners on the project. In this respect a short and concise draft of the ToR of BSW Management Body was elaborated by DDBRA and discussed during the BSW Management Board Meeting. The final version will be finalized once the annotations of all MB members will be received (mid-March). The draft of the Action Plan for the BlackSeaWet Initiative was elaborated by Wetlands International Black Sea Programme and DDBRA.

2.4 Conducting first meeting of BSW Management Body for approval of ToR and Action Plan

On the 4th of December 2009, DDBRA organized a working meeting of the Project Implementation Unit and the representatives of Wetlands International. The meeting was attended by the members of the Project Implementation Unit and Chris BAKER from the Head Quarters of Wetlands International in the Netherlands and Dr. Vasiliy KOSTIUSHIN coordinator of Wetlands International Black Sea Programme from Wetlands International – Ukraine, having in view their important involvement in launching the BSW Initiative. During the meeting, the period between 15th – 17th of February 2010 was proposed for the first Meeting of the BSW Management Board. The maximum number of the participants would be around 20, including 12 national representatives, 4 representatives of European NGOs, representatives of Ramsar Secretariat, Wetlands International, Black Sea Commission, BirdLife International etc. The invitation letters signed by the Romanian Minister of Environment were sent to all proposed members of the BSW Management Body.

Following the invitations addressed to all participants to the BlackSeaWet Initiative, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority organized, on the 16th and 17th of February 2010, the first meeting of the Management Board.

The list of participants (22):

- **Mr. Tobias SALATHE, Ramsar Secretariat;**
- **Mr. Grigore BABOIANU, Governor of the DDBRA;**
- **Mr. Vasiliy KOSTIUSHYN, Wetlands International Ukraine, Black Sea Programme;**
- **Mrs. Aylin HASAN, Ministry of Environment and Water, Bulgaria,**
- **Mr. Petar IANKOV, Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds,**
- **Mr. Şerif HIZLI, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Turkey,**
- **Mrs. Melike HEMMAMI, Doga Dernegi, Turkey;**
- **Mr. Boris BAROV, Birdlife International;**
- **Mr. Cristian TETEA, WWF Danube Carpathian Programme**
- **Mr. Dan Hulea, Romanian Ornithological Society;**
- **Mr. Paul SZEKELY, Romanian Ornithological Society;**
- **Mr. Peter LENGYEL, UNESCO Pro-Natura, Romania;**
- **Mr. Marian TUDOR, Danube Delta National Research Institute, Romania;**
- **Mr. Jenică HANGANU, Danube Delta National Research Institute, Romania;**
- **Mr. Dragoş MICU, Romanian Marine National Research Institute “Grigore ANTIPA”;**
- **Mrs. Otilia ANTONARU, Romanian National Administration “Apele Române”;**
- **Mrs. Aura LAVRU, Romanian National Administration “Apele Române”;**
- **Mrs. Cornelia BENE, DDBRA;**
- **Mr. Ion MUNTEANU, DDBRA;**
- **Mrs. Gabriela MOROZOV, DDBRA;**
- **Mr. Cristian MITITELU RĂILEANU, DDBRA;**
- **Mr. Marius ILIUȚEANU, DDBRA.**

Although Georgia designated its representatives, they were not able to attend this first meeting. They will be informed and will receive all documents discussed and approved during the meeting.

Russia did not respond to the invitation and didn't designate any representative in the Management Board of the Initiative, yet.

The meeting started with the introduction of the participants. Then, according to the meeting agenda, the representatives of each Black Sea country informed their colleagues, by short PowerPoint presentations, about their respective Black Sea coastal wetlands and challenges of the regions. One idea was clear, that all these wetlands are very similar and face related problems like pollution, territory organization or biodiversity threats.

After this introductory part, discussions continued with the presentation of the documents prepared by the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority: the Terms of Reference, Work Plan for 2010, Action Plan and CEPA actions.

During the 2 days meeting, the constructive discussions of the participants led to the finalization of the main documents of the Initiative: the **Terms of Reference** and **Work Plan 2010** (which are annexed to this report). The rest of the topics were inserted in these documents.

The participants agreed that the result of the meeting should be submitted to everybody for approval and annotations, by the end of February. In a second step, all comments and proposals would be introduced in the final version of the Terms of Reference and Work Plan by mid-March.

The next objective of the meeting was the designation of the Coordination Unit (formerly named Interim Coordination Unit). Decision was taken to establish the CU at the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority. The NGOs would be consulted about their involvement in the CU's activity. The role of the CU will be, in the first stage, to maintain the dialogue between members of the Management **Body** and start activities from the Work Plan. The Coordination Unit will also be responsible of organizing, in the first half of October 2010, the second meeting of the Management

Board. The main goal of this meeting is to reinforce the structure and commitment of the BlackSeaWet Initiative and to take decisions for the next period (2011).

The participants to the meeting elected Dr. Grigore BABOIANU, Governor of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, as Chairman of the Management Board.

3. Proposed activities for 2010

3.1 Establishing of the Coordination Unit

Romania offered to establish the Coordinating Unit at the DDBRA for 2010. They would consult NGOs about the participation in the Coordinating Unit.

3.2 Formalizing the National Working Groups

During 2010, National Working Groups should be established as far as it is possible in each country for the implementation of BlackSeaWet. The NWG will provide their input for the Coordination Unit.

3.3 Action Plan for 2011 - 2015

- Wetlands International to send to the Coordination Unit a general structure;
- Coordination Unit to send this structure to all members;
- NWG to provide their input to the structure to the Coordination Unit;
- Coordination Unit to submit for approval to the next meeting of Management Board.

3.4 Creation of a structure of reporting on the overview of current status wetlands international importance in Black Sea coastal area, their trends and possibility for development of network of Ramsar sites in the region

The Coordination Unit should make contact with the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory to clarify the suitability of their methodology for BlackSeaWet and report to the next meeting of the Management Body.

The Coordination Unit will explore the interest of Republic of Moldova to join the Initiative as it was expressed during the Odessa Meeting (28-29 October 2007).

3.5 Compiling existing GIS maps of coastal Black Sea wetlands

Send existing GIS maps to DDBRA for eventually posting on the BlackSeaWet website.

3.6 Conducting of overview of current status of International Waterfowl Census and possibility to develop census of migratory water birds

Wetlands International will use the opportunity of ongoing projects in Black Sea region to prepare an overview of current status of IWC in the region, print it and disseminate among participants of BlackSeaWet.

3.7. Conducting CEPA related activities

Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities have been recognized as being of key importance to implementing the BlackSeaWet Initiative. They offer structured opportunities for all BlackSeaWet members and partners to be involved in planning, implementation and review of the activities and facilitate exchange between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Initiative participants.

Raising public awareness on wetlands conservation and development of communication and collaboration are among the top priorities for the BlackSeaWet Initiative. The targets of the Initiative will require a strong commitment to CEPA activities.

Integrated approaches to river and coastal zone management are identified as a key target and will require activities to raise awareness at all levels from local to Ministerial on the importance of these approaches.

A second target is the involvement of local people in planning and decision making; this will require intensive CEPA activities at local levels and the communication of the results to regional stakeholders to promote learning and replication across the region. It is anticipated that support for Ramsar's CEPA objectives will be strengthened in a number of areas.

3.7.1 The main objectives of the CEPA activities are:

- Improvement of the flow of important and useful information related to the BlackSeaWet Initiative activities and development among all parties involved in the structure and operation of the Initiative;
- Ensuring adequate communication within the BlackSeaWet Initiative and its coherent visibility and image promotion;
- Improvement in stakeholders' knowledge of the value of wetlands for people ;
- Encouragement of school students to study the coastal wetlands;
- Promotion of environmental education for decision makers and managers;
- Development of educational centers for coastal wetlands;
- Inclusion of the coastal wetlands protection subject in the visitors' centers programme.

3.7.2 The main objectives will be addressed by the following activities:

3.7.2.1 BlackSeaWet website

The website of the Initiative will be created by the Coordination Unit, containing all necessary information. The website will be updated regularly. All important activities and milestones of the Initiative will be available on this website: first meeting of the Management Board, Action Plan of the Initiative, Work Plan for the current year, information about National Working Groups and Interim Coordination Unit and any other information about the projects of the Initiative.

3.7.2.2 Leaflet for the promotion of BlackSeaWet Initiative

A general information leaflet (draft) will be prepared by the Coordination Unit for adoption by the Management Board in order to inform the public about the Initiative and the actions for the coastal wetlands conservation. With the help of the members the draft leaflet text will be translated into members' languages. They should also provide photos prior to the next meeting of the Management Body.

In addition to the information provided by the website, these materials will be disseminated through visitor's centers and other partner institutions.

The goal is to raise public awareness among children and students on the importance of conserving the coastal wetlands and their ecological status. The activities must not only inform, but also to encourage an attitude that influences positively the coastal wetlands.

The National Working Groups are encouraged to produce additional materials and to send them to the Management Board in order to be used on a larger scale.

3.7.2.3 Celebration of international days related to the Black Sea wetlands:

- **World Wetlands Day (the 2nd of February)**
- **International Black Sea Day (the 31st of October)**

These activities provide an occasion to celebrate the ways in which wetlands enrich our lives. On these days, a number of governments, NGOs and environmental associations organize events for the public, including wetlands visits, bird watching trips, film screenings and children's contests. Each member of the MB will prepare concrete proposals of activities for the celebration of these days.

3.7.2.4 Organization of media releases

Each MB member should plan disseminating information to raise awareness of civil society, government and private sector stakeholders of wetland values and degradation danger.

3.8 Organizing a second meeting of the Management Body

This action is necessary considering 2 aspects:

- not every partner was able to participate to the first meeting and actively exercise its role;
- a second meeting will help partners reinforce their commitment and also offer the possibility for those who haven't nominated a representative from the beginning.

A face to face meeting will also allow a better evaluation of the situation, better communication and easier decision-making process.

During the first half of October 2010, possibly in the Danube Delta, the second Management Body meeting should be organized.

Agenda points for the second meeting of the Management Body will be the following:

- adopt Rules of Procedures;
- adopt the Work Plan 2011 and budget;
- adopt the Action Plan 2011 – 2015;
- brain-storming session for the Communication Plan;
- adopt the structure of reporting on the overview of current status wetlands international importance in Black Sea coastal area;
- adopt a Logo for the BSW;
- receive and endorse the reports of National Working Groups;
- adopt the structure and content of the BSW website including the content of the general information leaflet;
- adopt rules for accepting the project proposals and labelling the projects that contribute to the BSW Initiative's objectives;
- decide on the date and venue of the next meeting of the Management Body;
- decide on the hosting country for the Coordination Unit for 2011.

3.9 Preparation of several project proposals

Evaluating the projects already implemented in the region whose focal points overlap with the Initiative's objectives. Finding different sources of financing will ensure the self-sustenance of the Initiative. All partners will be involved. Cooperation between different countries in identifying the problems and addressing them by projects initiatives will allow the best ideas to be put in practice. Such ideas and proposals should be submitted to the Management Body in the second meeting.

The Coordination Unit will circulate the draft of the Working Plan 2010 and Terms of Reference to the participants to the first meeting of the Management Body by the end of February, asking for their comments and inputs. After receiving them by mid March, the Coordination Unit will integrate them into the documents and send the final version to all members of the Management Body and other observers.

This document is also to be considered as Minute of the Meeting of the Management Body from Tulcea, 16th-17th of February 2010.

4. Financial report

4.1 The financial plan for year 2009 (approved)

Activities	Budgeted expenditures (Euro)
1.1 Nomination from Ministries and non-government organizations representatives in the BSW Management Body	2,000
1.2 Preparation draft ToR for BSW Management Body and draft of first Action Plan	6,000
1.3 Conducting first meeting of BSW Management Body for approval of ToR and Action Plan	10,000
1.4 Establishing of Interim Coordination Unit and formalizing of National Working Groups	15,000
1.5 Conducting CEPA related activities (website communications)	8,000
1.6 Preparation of several project proposal for actions on sustainable use and conservation of coastal wetlands	3,000
Total	44,000

4.2 Allocated funds for year 2009: 44,690 CHF, according with the Ramsar Contract 256.

4.3 Situation of the expenditure during 2009/2010 period

	Activity	Amount spent (supported by Secretariat) (CHF)	Amount spent (supported by DDBRA) (CHF)	TOTAL Amount spent (CHF)
1.	Designation of the national representatives to the BlackSeaWet Management Board (postal expenses, stamps, stationery)	147	-	147
2.	First meeting of the Management Board organization (accommodation and meals)	3,750	-	3,750
3.	First meeting of the Management Board organization (transport tickets)	3,735	-	3,735
4.	First meeting of the Management Board organization (transport in Romania)	-	860	860
5.	DDBRA Project Implementation Unit (staff expenditures)	5,050	-	5,050
6.	DDBRA Project Implementation Unit (office expenditures)	-	1,329	1,329
	⁽¹⁾ Total	12,682	2,189	14,871

(1) Bank commissions and fees are not included.

4.4 Proposed expenditure for year 2010 (March-December)

Nr.	Activities	Forecast (CHF)
1.	Establishing the Coordination Unit and formalizing of National Working Groups	15,000
2.	Conducting CEPA related activities (website communications)	8,000
3.	Conducting second meeting of BSW Management Body	15,000
4.	Preparation of project proposals for actions on sustainable use and conservation of coastal wetlands	15,000
	Total	53,000

Taking into consideration the financing possibilities, the proposal of the expenditure for the year 2010 can be covered as follows:

- Secretariat support: 44,690 CHF – 14,871 CHF =	29,819 CHF
- DDBRA support (in kind):	5,000 CHF
- <u>Other sources (DANONE):</u>	<u>18,181 CHF</u>
Total	53,000 CHF

Dr. Grigore BABOIANU
Chairman of the Management Body
Tulcea, 26th of February 2010