

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

DOC. SC41-30

Agenda item 18.3

Plans for the Convention's 40th anniversary

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to note the preparations underway for the celebration of the Convention's 40th anniversary.

1. The 40th meeting of the Standing Committee launched preliminary discussions on the Convention's 40th anniversary celebration in 2011 and encouraged Parties to consider planning special local, national, and regional celebrations, requesting the Secretariat, through Decision SC40-36, to prepare a suitable 40th anniversary commemoration in collaboration with the Parties and the International Organization Partners.
2. In November and December 2009, the Secretariat held two staff meetings dedicated to planning activities and products to promote a global celebration of the 40th anniversary. The fruits of these discussions led to a detailed planning document that identified key messages about the Convention, prioritized Secretariat activities and products, and suggested a number of key activities that the Convention's Administrative Authorities, the International Organization Partners and other international and national NGOs, and the Convention's private sector partners might consider as a contribution to the celebrations.
3. On January 28th 2010, a Diplomatic Note on the 40th Anniversary was sent to the Parties with an annex including key messages, information on Secretariat activities and suggested activities for the Ramsar Administrative Authorities. The note also encouraged Parties to inform the Secretariat of any concrete suggestions regarding regional and national actions, by the end of April 2010 so as to allow time for internal discussions. The annex to the Diplomatic Note is available on the Convention's web site at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-notes-2010-2010-03-annex/main/ramsar/1-31-106-438%5E24441_4000_0__ and for ease of reference is included as the Annex to this document.
4. In February, the Senior Regional Advisors and the CEPA Programme Officer sent this Diplomatic Note annex to the National Focal Points and the CEPA Focal Points, respectively, encouraging them to work together and consider planning actions for the 40th.
5. A 40th Anniversary Coordination Group has been set up within the Secretariat to oversee activity plans and products. The Group welcomes any suggestions from Standing Committee.

Annex to Diplomatic Note 2010/3

Celebrating the Convention's 40th Anniversary

As many of you will be aware, February the 2nd 2011 is a special date for the Convention. February 2nd is of course the date the Ramsar Convention was agreed in the city of Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, and around this date each year the Convention celebrates wetlands through World Wetlands Day activities.

**But February 2nd 2011 is more than just another World Wetlands Day –
It is the start of the Convention's 40th anniversary year.**

What should be our collective response? We hope you will agree to join with the Secretariat in looking upon this date and indeed the whole year as an appropriate time to celebrate the Ramsar Convention, to celebrate the ever-growing list of Ramsar sites, as well as our collective achievements over 40 years in working to secure the health of all of our wetlands for future generations.

What can we do? The Secretariat has held two 'brainstorming' sessions in recent weeks and we have a draft plan for what we hope to do to celebrate, and what we think should be our key anniversary messages. We also have a number of suggestions that we hope our Administrative Authorities, our International Organization Partners, and our many other wetland partners will consider for their contribution to the celebration. We are sure that our Ramsar family has many other innovative ideas and suggestions to bring to the table and we look forward to discussing these in the coming months.

For the moment we are happy to share with you, in the following pages, our key messages (which may yet be further developed and refined), our draft of the Secretariat's intended activities, and our suggestions for your involvement as the Ramsar Administrative Authority. We will also be communicating our plans to our International Organization Partners and private sector partners and to the many NGOs and other institutions that have contributed to the development and implementation of the Convention over the past 40 years.

We hope that our plans and suggestions will encourage you to move forward rapidly with your own national planning. We also very much look forward to hearing from you of any concrete suggestions you may have about national and/or regional suggestions, and we would suggest a deadline of the end of April to allow time for your internal discussions. In the first instance, please direct any comments you may have to your Senior Regional Advisor or to Sandra Hails (hails@ramsar.org).

Annex

Within the next few months we will be fine-tuning our planning and suggestions and we will be communicating again to keep you informed of new developments and, particularly, of evolving timelines for production of our materials. By that time, we hope we will have heard from you and be able to share your plans and commitments with other Administrative Authorities.

Our key 40th anniversary messages

Key message 1

The Convention is the key intergovernmental treaty concerned with wetlands.

Key message 2

The Convention has an impressive track record of achievements: implementation has led to improved condition of wetlands, an effective network of sites, advances in national management of sites (through effective national policies, legislation), and regional collaboration (such as through the Ramsar Regional Initiatives).

Key message 3

Our Ramsar sites form a global network of internationally important wetlands for conserving ecosystems and their species.

Key message 4

We are facing a global species extinction and wetland biodiversity is proving to be particularly under threat: supporting the Ramsar Convention, and designating and managing Ramsar sites, can help in the fight against extinction.

Key message 5

Wetlands provide a great diversity of essential ecosystem services for humankind: we lose them at our peril, jeopardizing their role in poverty reduction and the livelihoods they support.

Key message 6

Wetlands have a key role to play in the carbon cycle and thus in climate change mitigation; wetlands also have a key role in climate change adaptation.

Key message 7

Wetlands are all about water and water is all about wetlands. Wetlands play a critical role in the water cycle; managing freshwater for people and for wetlands is one of the Convention's most significant challenges.

Key message 8

Wetlands and water are important for other sectors (such as agriculture, fisheries, development, etc.) and for other processes such as other multilateral environmental agreements (CBD, CMS, UN-ECE, UNFCCC, UNCCD, etc), GEF, IPBES

Key message 9

The Convention is not just about Ramsar sites – Ramsar's commitments extend to the “wise use” of **all** wetlands, and this is important in responding to current challenges such as climate change, avian influenza, and more.

Key message 10

Wetlands are more diverse than most people realise –from marshes, rivers, and lakes to peatlands, wet forests, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs and reservoirs, from mountaintop to coast.

What the Secretariat plans to do

- 1. Produce a small format publication that will be a brief reflection on, and celebration of, the evolution and achievements of the Convention since 1971.** This would be primarily targeted at our 'Ramsar family' including the Parties, IOPs and NGOs already familiar with the Convention. It will be prepared in the three official Convention languages, available in PDF and in print, and the design files will be made available for translation and customization.
- 2. Produce a professionally designed 40th anniversary logo** for global use by Parties, IOPs and others, based on the main Ramsar logo.
- 3. Produce a 40th anniversary slogan**, probably with professional marketing assistance.
- 4. Produce an illustrated PPT presentation file especially for the 40th, perhaps reflecting our 40th publication, but perhaps quite separate**, for your use at national and local events.
- 5. Produce video messages from personalities involved with the growth of Ramsar over the last 40 years and from important figures in the environmental world** (e.g., UN Secretary General, UNEP Executive Director, etc.)
- 6. Produce and widely disseminate a leaflet with our key messages** (with the help of our member countries, hopefully we can produce these in many languages).
- 7. In addition to 6., and to maintain momentum throughout the year, disseminate our key messages at monthly intervals on www.ramsar.org during 2011.**
- 8. Produce a "40 years of Ramsar" addition to our Ramsar exhibition panels** and make it available in poster format to be used by the Secretariat and the Parties for press conferences, etc. This will be made available for translating and customising at the national/local level.
- 9. Produce a number of 40th anniversary short article(s)** (text & images) about Ramsar that can be widely used by our IOPs, NGOs, relevant environmental magazines, etc.
- 10. Produce regular media releases during the year**, each with a different focus, which will be broadly disseminated.
- 11. Invite our Ramsar 'family' to send good photos of Ramsar sites** and put them on the Convention's web site; we may consider a voting system to identify the 'best' photos by the end of 2011.
- 12. Work with our Administrative Authorities to identify one country in each region to 'champion' the anniversary.**

13. Use the pre-COP regional meetings in 2011 to celebrate the 40th anniversary, and work with the meeting organizers to ensure engagement of international/national/local media.

14. Ensure an appropriate focus on the 40th anniversary as part of our WWD materials in Feb 2011. The theme currently endorsed by Standing Committee is *Wetlands and forests* since 2011 is the UN International Year of Forests, but an appropriate focus on the 40th anniversary can also be addressed in the WWD materials.

15. Create a special 40th anniversary area on our web site that will communicate the Secretariat's planned activities and products, progress and timelines, and will share the plans and progress of members of the Ramsar family.

Some suggestions for our Administrative Authorities

1. Hold regional celebrations that our Senior Regional Advisors could attend. These should have an appropriate regional focus. For example, a region might decide to focus on celebrating its Ramsar sites. Adequate engagement of international/national/local media will be important for maximum regional and national exposure.
2. Standing Committee regional members could act as catalysts for a regional event.
3. Produce innovative activities/products at the national level – e.g., production of national postage stamps on wetlands and Ramsar sites.
4. Consider a special focus on teachers and the children they teach, perhaps with some simple materials about Ramsar and wetlands.
5. Produce radio broadcast material for use at national level (see also point 6).
6. Have a special focus on Ramsar site managers – perhaps having them produce radio broadcasts that are highly localized for Ramsar site local communities.
7. Identify and designate a National Ambassador for wetlands. This could be a celebrity (sports, film, etc.).
8. Engage with our International Organization Partners (and their respective national members) and others to promote Ramsar activities during the year.
9. Organise a wetland film festival, possibly with postings of all films on YouTube.
10. Prepare and publish national implementation achievements.