

## Secretary General's Report to Standing Committee

### Ramsar Secretariat Activities – July to December 2012

Dear Standing Committee members,

I am pleased to send a review of the Secretary General's and the Secretariat's main activities between the end of COP11 (July 2012) and December 2012. I will be happy to provide further information as needed:

#### **Process and timelines for the recruitment of the next Secretary General (ref. Decision SC45-4)**

Following Decision SC45-4, the Executive Team of Standing Committee has taken the lead in the recruitment process, assisted by the Secretariat (ref. Report of Executive Team teleconference of 15 November sent to Standing Committee on 30 November).

#### **Other personnel matters**

The recruitment of a new STRP Support Officer to replace Ms Monica Zavagli has been carried out, and the new incumbent, Ms Marcela Bonells, is due to take up her post in February 2013.

In line with the normal rotation process, an Assistant Advisor has been recruited for Europe; Ms Laura Máiz-Tomé has started work at the beginning of November. A new Assistant Advisor for the Americas Ms. Sara Casallas is also being recruited and will take up her post in March 2013, and preparatory work for the recruitment in 2013 of a documentation officer and of an administrative officer has been carried out.

Following the practice established in 2010, a "staff advance" took place on 28 September 2012 with the input and support of an external facilitator.

#### **Preparations for COP12**

The Secretary General wrote to the Minister of Environment of Uruguay on 29.9.12, and the Senior Regional Advisor for the Americas visited Uruguay in early December. (see also below report of the Americas team). The Secretariat has followed up with a letter in early January 2013.

Internally, the Secretariat has taken stock of the experience gained at COP11 and is updating relevant elements in preparation of a MoU.

#### **Preparations for SC46**

Invitations and a draft agenda were sent to all Contracting Parties via diplomatic channels during the week of 17 to 21 December.

#### **Financial matters**

Romania has paid 80% of the sum the Secretariat had expected to cover COP11 organization. This covers the majority of actual expenditure.

**Small Grants Fund:** A generous 2012 contribution from the Government of Norway will fund three Ramsar Small Grants Fund (SGF) projects in Belize, Ghana and Uganda, simultaneously supporting wetland conservation goals and development goals. This follows Norway's 2011 support for SGF projects in Belarus, Georgia and Moldova.

**Follow-up to COP11 Resolutions:** In general, tasks allocated to the Secretariat are in progress, as appropriate and in a timely fashion. In particular:

**Resolution XI.1 on hosting of the Secretariat, para. 13:** A diplomatic note was sent to all Contracting Parties on 2.11.12, bringing this decision to their attention.

**Resolution XI.6 on Cooperation :**

- The SG could not attend the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EMG, but provided input in writing.
- The SG and DSG participated in a BLG teleconference on 26.10.12.
- The SG is planning to attend a meeting of the “Friends of the CBD” in early February 2013.
- The Secretary General and the outgoing Vice-Chair of STRP will participate in the first plenary meeting of IPBES (January 2013).

**Resolution XI.7 on Tourism:** The Secretary General visited the Headquarters of the UN World Tourism Organization in October, met with the Secretary-General and laid the basis for further collaboration at regional level. The UNWTO has responded positively to these steps and has proposed cooperation on a project on flyways.

**Resolution XI.8 on RIS:** The DSG and Secretariat are making the necessary preparations regarding the new Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) and progressing the objectives of allowing for electronic submission in line with this decision. A Secretariat team led by the Regional Affairs Officer is driving forward the upgrade of the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) and Ramsar Sites Data Base (RSDB).

**Resolution XI.10 on Energy:** (ref. para. 23) Through a letter to the Executive Director of UNEP/Chair of the EMG, the SG has brought this decision to the attention of the Secretary General of the UN and of the High Level Panel in charge of the “Sustainable Energy for all” Initiative. Mr Achim Steiner replied on 10 December and stated that the resolution may make the case for a new area of collaboration under the Sustainable Energy for all initiative. He has transmitted the resolution to the Chair of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, and to the Chair of UN-Energy/Special Representative of the SG for the Sustainable Energy for All initiative.

**Resolution XI.11 on Urban Wetlands:** During CBD COP11, the SG participated in the Cities for Life Summit, at which he delivered a speech and participated in a panel.

**Resolution XI.14 on wetlands and climate change:** On 21.11.12, the SG sent a letter to the Executive Secretaries or Secretary-Generals of the CBD, CITES, CMS, ITPGR, and the World Heritage Convention (i.e. the members of the BLG), and requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to bring this decision to the attention of the JLG. Subsequently, the Secretary-General of CITES responded that climate change would also be discussed at the upcoming COP16 of the Convention and that he had made our Resolution XI.14 available as an information document for that meeting, in order for CITES Parties to learn from Ramsar’s approach.

**SG and DSG participation in major events and meetings:**

- African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) Technical Committee meeting: Accra, Ghana – August (DSG);
- IUCN – World Conservation Congress in Jeju (Rep. of Korea) September (SG and DSG);
- TriesteNext International Science Conference (closing keynote address on "The future for our world's water: natural infrastructure, management and cooperation") - Trieste, Italy, September (DSG);
- WTO Official visit –Madrid (Spain) 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> October 2012;
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP11: Hyderabad (India) October (SG and DSG);
- International conference on Hydrodiplomacy Meeting (*a Tool for sharing water across borders*) - Chiang Rai (Thailand) November;

- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP-18 – Doha (Qatar) November (SG);
- TEEB Economics of Water & Wetlands report core writing team meeting - Brussels, Belgium, November (DSG);
- Danone Steering Committee of the Danone-Ramsar “Fund for Water” – Paris (France) December (SG);
- China 20<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Anniversary Celebration - Beijing, China, 12<sup>th</sup> – December (SG);
- Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) partners meeting: Cambridge, UK – December (DSG).

**CEPA activities:**

1. The CEPA Oversight Panel met during COP11 and since continued its work during the handover period to the new Panel. A report of the COP11 meeting, including an annexed work plan for the new triennium, is available here [www.ramsar.org/CEPA-Panel/](http://www.ramsar.org/CEPA-Panel/).

The Secretariat has followed up on the nomination process for the CEPA Focal Point members agreed by the Panel and the final decisions on the four Focal Points (two from the Government and two from NGOs) will be made imminently. The Panel will provide a report on the completion of their work in the last triennium and the work plan for the new triennium to SC46.

2. Ramsar Website: As web technology moves forward the current Content Management System for the Ramsar website is no longer well adapted to Ramsar’s needs limiting its capacity for new features. A more flexible, open, system that is easier to modify in the coming years will enhance its capacity to assist in the delivery of the Convention’s strategic goals for 2013-2015 and help to ensure that the website can continue as a key communication tool to strengthen Ramsar’s position as a global “wetlands knowledge portal”. The Secretariat has already made advances in moving towards a more flexible system which will hopefully be fully functional by the end of 2013.

3. During COP 11 the Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention launched the long-awaited publication *Enhancing the Wise Use of Wetlands: A Framework for Capacity Development*. Targeted in the first instance at Ramsar’s National Focal Points this publication is undoubtedly of use to many others. It is available here for download [www.ramsar.org/pdf/cepa/EnhancingWiseUse\\_CapacityDevelopment.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cepa/EnhancingWiseUse_CapacityDevelopment.pdf) and the Secretariat has some hard copies for distribution. The Secretary General has been in recent contact with the Board to consider the future of the Board which has been under review for some time but no response has been received to date.

4. During COP 11 the Secretariat, in partnership with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), launched the publication *Destination Wetlands: Supporting sustainable tourism*. This 80-page publication looks at the opportunities and challenges of wetland tourism and was based on case studies from the Contracting Parties on wetland tourism as well as other materials. It is available in the Convention’s three languages (and soon to be available in Arabic) here [www.ramsar.org/tourism-publication/](http://www.ramsar.org/tourism-publication/). Since this launch the Secretariat has continued to work with UNWTO and is currently collaborating on a project entitled Development of Sustainable Tourism Along Migratory Bird Flyways. (See also above under “Resolution XI.7.”)

5. The number of Facebook followers passed 60’000 on 2nd November thus continuing the remarkably rapid success of this social media platform in introducing wetlands and the work of the Convention to a broader constituency.

6. For the festive season the Secretariat has launched Ecards on the Ramsar’s online community platform. Initial responses from the Ramsar community have been very enthusiastic and the cards

very much appreciated as a branding tool. It is intended to continue using the ecards for World Wetlands Day branding too.

7. World Wetlands Day 2013 materials were launched in early October as in previous years. In support of the UN International Year for Water Cooperation, the Secretariat, with Standing Committee approval, launched the Ramsar theme of Wetlands and water management with the slogan *Wetlands care for water*. Materials are available here [www.ramsar.org/WWD2013/](http://www.ramsar.org/WWD2013/). For this World Wetlands Day the Secretariat partnered with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme, who have a lead role for the International Year, in production of our poster and leaflet. The Secretariat will present a suggested thematic area and possible partner for World Wetlands Day 2014 to Standing Committee 46.

### **STRP related activities**

The call for nominations for the STRP membership (Chair and appointed members) for the coming triennium was published on 24.10.12.

## **Activities of the Secretariat's regional teams**

### **Africa**

This report presents briefly the achievements of the Africa team from August to December 2012. Several planned activities have been contributing to a gradual implementation of the team's 2012 Work Plan approved in January 2012. Some unplanned activities were also implemented. This report is focused on post-COP activities and the continuation of planned activities from January 2012.

#### **1. Planned activities: Achievements**

- The final draft for the project on Wetlands and Urbanization in West Africa is produced
- The Integrated Critical Mangroves Conservation and Sustainable Use program framework has been adapted to the MAVA project request format to start with fund-raising.
- The SRA took part in FAO's project on the preparation of the guidelines for Inland Wetlands Development during this period.
- The team planned to develop a project on a Bulletin of the implementation of the Convention in Africa. It will be the publication (soft copy only with maximum of 6 pages – 3 sheets) of a "Quarterly Bulletin of the implementation of the Convention in Africa." This newsletter will be in English and French. Several topics will be presented in this bulletin and the Secretary General will be the Director of publication, the SRA Africa columnist and the assistant for Africa will be responsible for editing, with other colleagues and an external reviewer on the reading committee.

#### **2. Ramsar sites designated in Africa since COP11**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>SITE NAME</b>
Congo	Site de Ntokou-Pikounda
Congo	Site de Odzala Kokoua
Congo	Site de la vallée du Niari
Kenya	Tana River Delta (TRD) Ramsar Site
Tunisia	Barrage Mlaabi
Tunisia	Complexe des zones humides des Chott el Guetayate et Sebket Dhreia et Oueds Akarit, Rekhama et Meleh

### **3. Small Grant Fund**

- 2006 Kenya: CEPA Project (Developing Awareness and Educational Materials on Ramsar Sites in Kenya): Awareness materials and final reports are available.
- 2006 Madagascar: - Finalize designation of the 10 Ramsar sites and follow up final payments. 10 RIS already corrected and annotated summary descriptions done. Designation of 5 new Ramsar sites is ongoing.
- 2008 Cape Verde: Project to re-launched.
- 2010 Guinea-Bissau: Protection and development of wetlands of Lagoa de Cufada Ramsar site in Guinea-Buissau: Progress report has been received.

### **4. Swiss Grant for Africa (SGA)**

- Sudan 2012: Ramsar secretariat has been contacted by UNEP for a project in Sudan within the framework of the National Wetlands Inventory. SGA Project submitted and we are processing to issue the contract.
- South Sudan 2012: Project on the accession of South Sudan to the Convention and a desk study for a National Wetland Inventory. SGA Project submitted and we are processing to issue the contract.
- Mauritania 2012: IUCN-PACO to summit project for the Mauritanian National wetland policy. SGA Project submitted and we are processing to issue the contract.

### **5. Assist Contracting Parties to implement the Convention:**

- Draft Atlas on Burundi Ramsar Site ongoing review by the Secretariat to provide comments for finalization of the document and project reports (progress and final).
- Ensure the participation of Malawi, Lesotho and Madagascar at the Southern Africa Region Environmental Symposium on Natural Disasters. The Secretariat assisted Malawi and Madagascar to prepare and secure attendance at the Symposium.
- Ensure the participation of West African Countries in a Workshop on the logical framework of the Project on Wetlands and Urbanization. Nine countries attended this workshop in Dakar.
- Translation of the Guidelines for Inland Wetlands Development for Agriculture: contract to be prepared.

### **6. Partnership with Regional Initiatives**

- 2012 Contract to be signed by NigerWet and WacoWet.
- Technical mission to support Regional Initiatives NigerWet and WacoWet is underway.

### **7. Projects:**

- Collaborative Projects with “Université Senghor” in Alexandria: 12 Students are currently drafting their Master 2 Thesis on Wetlands.
- Wetlands component within priority landscapes for African Elephants. Draft submitted to Bornfree.
- Wetlands and Urbanization Project in West Africa: Draft 0 is available.
- The Integrated Critical Mangroves Conservation and Sustainable Use Project: Submitted to MAVA Foundation.
- Promotion of the sustainable use of small wetlands for human well being UNEP-Ramsar: Draft 0 is undergoing development.

## Americas

The main activities under taken in the Americas region from July to December 2012 are summarized below:

### 1. Technical support and assistance to Contracting Parties

Technical support via a Ramsar Advisory Mission was provided to the Ramsar site Caribe Nordeste and other wetlands in Costa Rica and to Uruguay under the project SGF -Danone 7079-770/09/UY/1 for the removal of Bañados del Este from the Montreux Record.

### 2. Regional Initiatives

Under the Regional Initiative's program the Ramsar Secretariat supported technically and logistically the IX meeting of the High Andean Regional Initiative organized by the Ministry of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Chile that took place from 19-24 November in Santiago and San Pedro de Atacama. Likewise, the Secretariat continues working with UNEP in the submission of the GEF project on evaluation of ecosystems services of high Andean wetlands. The Secretariat also supported the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the PI<sup>at</sup>a River Basin regional initiative organized by the Ministry of Environment of Uruguay that took place from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6 of December<sup>in</sup> Montevideo.

The Ramsar Secretariat authorized the regional initiative funds allocated to Panama for CREHO to hire the center's executive director and technical officer. Likewise the Secretariat participates with the Board of Directors in the recruitment process.

### 3. Preparation for COP12

Participation in the meeting of the National Wetlands Committee/Environmental National Commission of Uruguay that has been established as the organization body for COP12 and took a visit to one of the possible venues for the COP in Punta del Este in Uruguay.

### 4. Regional cooperation

Discussion of the terms of the renewal agreement with the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) and participation in the intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme (IGM15) and Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (COP12), and Spaw meetings.

### 5. Wetlands for the Future

The Wetlands for the Future fund has been reactivated since 21 September thanks to the contribution of the United States that will allow the funding of 10 projects in the region.

### 6. Small Grants Fund

Thanks to the contribution of the Government of Norway the project "Reducing Deforestation in the Sarstoon Temash National Park and Binational Ramsar Site Collaboration between Maya Organizations in Belize & Guatemala" will be funded.

#### Ramsar site designations

From July to December 9 Ramsar sites have been designated and two have been extended in the region as follows:

### 7. Designations:

1. Humedales de Península de Valdés (Argentina)
2. Reserva Ecológica El Ángel (Ecuador)
3. Sistema Lacustre Lagunas del Compadre (Ecuador)

4. Sistema Lacustre Yacuri (Ecuador)
5. Manglares del Estuario Interior del golfo de Guayaquil “Don Goyo” (Ecuador)
6. Río Blanco (Bolivia)
7. Río Yata (Bolivia)
8. Río Matos (Bolivia)
9. Manglares del Bajo Yuna (Dominican Republic)

#### **8. Updates:**

- a. Fraser River Delta (Canada)
- b. Área Natural Protegida Laguna El Jocotal (El Salvador)

#### **9. Accession to the Convention**

The Caribbean state of Grenada deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention on Wetlands with the Director-General of UNESCO as of 22 May, and the Convention came into force for Grenada on 22 September 2012. Grenada joins as Ramsar’s 162nd Contracting Party.

### **Asia-Oceania**

#### **1. New accessions:**

In Asia, Bhutan became a new Contracting Party with the Convention coming into force in September 2012. Forthcoming accessions include the Sultanate of Oman where the highest authority is reported to have endorsed the country’s accession to the Convention and the Secretariat is awaiting written confirmation of this. Then the Cabinet of the Government of Kiribati has approved accession to the Convention in November 2012 and they are now in the process of submitting their instrument of accession and associated documentation to UNESCO.

Other governments have shown interest in the Convention, e.g. Brunei, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Vanuatu, and information has been provided to them to assist their process of accession.

#### **2. Ramsar Sites:**

In 2012, 19 new Asian wetlands were placed onto the List of Wetlands of International Importance. These were in Bhutan (2), India (1), Indonesia (1), Japan (9), Kazakhstan (2), R.O. Korea (1), Marshall Islands (1), Philippines (1), and Viet Nam (2). Updated RIS were received from Australia, Cambodia, China, Iraq, and the UAE.

#### **3. Activities:**

The Asia-Oceania Team supported the Contracting Parties in the region in a number of ways, including:

- Organization of a Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) at Ramsar Sites and other wetlands along the Indus River, Pakistan to identify opportunities for restoration and management so that they can be used to store flood waters during the monsoon season and so reduce the risk of downstream flooding;
- Attending and providing information to a meeting of the National Wetland Committee in Fiji;
- Cooperating with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to participate and contribute to workshops for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region on CBD’s Program of Works on Protected Areas, and the development of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs);
- Holding a Russian language workshop in the Kyrgyz Republic to provide information on how to complete Ramsar Information Sheets, and to share experience between Central Asian countries;

- Assisting in developing an Arabic language wetland training program and piloting the training course in Jordan before finalization of the program in 2013;
- With financial support through UNEP, translation of COP11 draft resolutions into Arabic and Russian, as well as translation of further Ramsar Handbooks, 'Destination Wetland' tourism booklet and 2013 World Wetland Day material.

#### 4. SGF projects:

A number of Small Grants Fund projects were competed in 2012. These include projects in Bangladesh ('People acting through social mobilization for the conservation and wise use of the wetlands in the southwest coast of Bangladesh, 2008), India ('Integrated management planning for conservation and wise use of Lake Chilika, India', 2004), and Vietnam (Expanding Vietnam's network of Ramsar Sites to help deliver on the country's commitments under the Ramsar Convention). A number of SGF projects in Oceania are in the final stages of completion, i.e. Fiji (2007), Kiribati (2006), Marshall Island (2008), Samoa (2004).

#### 5. Other funded projects:

From time to time, Contracting Parties would provide voluntary contributions to support wetland projects within the territory of other Parties. In 2012, the government of Japan generously provided support for a project at Myanmar's first Ramsar Site and the government of Norway also pledged support for longer-term projects at various wetland sites within Myanmar.

## Europe

1. The UNECE Water Convention celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a special event in Helsinki (where it was originally signed in 1992), to which the Ramsar Convention was invited, to reflect and look forward on cooperation for water and wetland resources, cf. our short report here: [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-archives-2012-helsinkianniversary/main/ramsar/1-26-45-520%5E25919\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-archives-2012-helsinkianniversary/main/ramsar/1-26-45-520%5E25919_4000_0) . This was followed by the 6<sup>th</sup> conference of the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Water Convention on 28-30 November in Rome (cf. <http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop6.html> ). At this meeting, the Parties decided to open the UNECE Water Convention for ratification at global scale, and a number of Asian, African and American countries present indicated their interest to sign the convention in the near future. It is also believed that the framework 1997 UNGA Water Convention will come into operation in the near future, when it will have reached its minimum number of ratifications. Both water related conventions are moving towards cooperation and complementarity, to serve as a global water governance mechanism. This provides a unique window of opportunity for the Ramsar Convention, operating already since more than 40 years, to join these sister conventions and contribute the needed environmental and ecosystem aspects to the nascent global governance mechanism for freshwater resources. The coming years are likely to see the establishment of a global water governance structure. And the Ramsar Convention has a number of reasons to aim to become part of it.
2. Our long-lasting business partnership with the Danone group is developing along the well-established lines established for the Danone Fund for Water, mainly supporting outreach, communication, promotion and branding activities of Ramsar. In this context, we have worked with the division of Danone Waters on their internal water stewardship tool for the protection and sustainable and parsimonious use and recycling of water resources. An expert workshop will be held in the Ramsar premises on 24-25 January 2013, with support by IUCN, to assess this



business tool. The results will be presented to Standing Committee (in April 2013) for endorsement.

3. Two Ramsar regional initiatives had meetings of their governance boards. On 6-8 November the management body of the BlackSeaWet initiative met in Istanbul to define its work programme for 2013, after a dormant period in 2011-2012, cf. our short report [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-blacksea-meeting-dec12/main/ramsar/1-26%5E26017\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-blacksea-meeting-dec12/main/ramsar/1-26%5E26017_4000_0) . On 17-18 December the steering group for the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) met at the Ramsar Secretariat to define its priorities and restructuring of the Athens-based Secretariat, seriously hit by the Greek financial crisis.
4. The Republic of Moldova held a workshop for the finalisation of a national wetlands policy in Chisinau on 7 December, supported by the Ramsar Secretariat and a Small Grants Fund project, cf. here: [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-sgfmoldova/main/ramsar/1-26%5E26027\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-sgfmoldova/main/ramsar/1-26%5E26027_4000_0) .
5. The Association Ramsar France organised the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Ramsar stakeholder meeting in the Brenne Ramsar Site and Regional Nature Park. This was the occasion to look back on the first year of its activities, creating a strong Ramsar community at national level to support the efforts by the public authorities for Ramsar implementation with contributions by civil society, Ramsar Site managers, NGOs, experts and local stakeholders, and aiming to raise the profile and awareness about the Ramsar Convention and its tools through communication, marketing and quality label branding work.