

## Report of the Secretary General

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to receive the Secretary General's report and advise as appropriate.

### Introduction

1. This report covers the period since July 2007, when I took office as Ramsar's fourth Secretary General, and this analysis of the work of the Convention includes global, regional and national issues from July 2007 to March 2013, covering almost six years of the two terms of my tenure in the post. It is the first time this kind of analysis has been undertaken in such a way as to reflect the major actions taken to address key challenges and provide the opinion of the outgoing Secretary General.
2. The report analyzes the major challenges we have faced and the collective actions taken to address them. It cannot touch upon all achievements, but I am happy to report that the work of the Convention has proven to be of great relevance to sustainable development. We have made a great deal of progress in bringing the Ramsar Convention and our Ramsar principles into the centre of the global environmental discourse, and of course at the national and local levels, many great things have been achieved by our Ramsar family. I am pleased that I will leave to my successor a Convention that is continuing its growth and its momentum. But at the same time, I have to warn my successor that, especially in a time of economic uncertainty, there are challenges ahead that are also growing. The fact is that, after 40 years, the Ramsar Convention still has institutional weaknesses in the ways in which it is financed and supported by the Parties, weaknesses that make it even more vulnerable to economic stresses than are other members of the global environmental community, and I will urge my successor will continue to work with the Parties to resolve those problems.
3. But as I've said, we have achieved considerable and encouraging success together because over the past six years I have been blessed to have the help and support of many brilliant and dedicated people, to whom I want to express my sincere gratitude.

### Key challenges

4. The root cause of wetland degradation remains unsustainable land use planning, together with actions that damage vital functions and services provided by wetland ecosystems such as flood and water flow regulation, water quality enhancement, water transport, groundwater recharge, reduction of storm damage, providing habitat for species, providing food, and providing opportunities to adapt and mitigate climate change.
5. Integrating wetland issues into the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) remains challenging. The Convention will be understood and wetlands recognized

as key assets for sustainable development only if the Contracting Parties emphasize their importance during global debates such as UN General Assemblies, CSD sessions, climate change deliberations and other priority areas for decisions and actions. In this regard, the Secretariat continues to seize every opportunity to explain the importance of wetlands and to convey the key messages of the Changwon Declaration to five major sectors, covering:

- Water and wetlands
  - Climate change and wetlands
  - People's livelihoods and wetlands
  - People's health and wetlands
  - Land use change, biodiversity and wetlands
6. Therefore, understanding and recognizing the multifaceted interactions between wetlands and land use options is a prerequisite for making decisions on meaningful actions to allow wetlands to perform their functions and provide goods and services to sustain human life.
  7. The Secretariat has been looking for ways to discuss with the Contracting Parties and adopt with them the most appropriate approaches to raising the profile of wetlands in national and regional planning, policy definition and implementation, and stakeholder's concrete and joint actions.
  8. A key aspect of the wetlands-water link is the urgent need for good information, especially economic information, which is generally lacking. The dependence of water supply and water resources quality and sustainability on healthy wetland ecosystems is generally not addressed with good, quantitative economic and financial information to support decision making about water infrastructure and water allocation decisions.
  9. Reliable economic information pertaining to wetland values is a critical foundation work for us if we are to go forward with the development of this whole area of policy and science related to the economics of water-related wetland ecosystem services. With concrete examples of the actual economic and social values of wetlands, the management of wetland ecosystem services can be successful in the overall landscape by identifying where high priority management areas are, specifying what services should be managed, and taking action on how they should be managed by precise stakeholders.
  10. **Financial support:** The overall key challenge is about the need to ensure continued financial support through the timely payment of regular contributions to the core budget and to obtain voluntary funding to enhance the work of the Convention. In this regard, the implementation of Resolution X.7 on *Optimizing the Ramsar Small Grants Fund during the period 2009-2012* has been a real challenge in the context of the ongoing economic crisis. The budget approved for 2013-2015 by the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11) requires CHF13.4 m in voluntary funding.
  11. **Fundraising strategy and priority actions:** The Secretariat is still lacking an effective fundraising strategy despite the appointment of a Partnership Coordinator. A comprehensive work of streamlining priorities of the Secretariat for fundraising purposes is still urgently needed, including but not limited to the following areas of concern :
  12. **Ramsar and GEF:** Standing Committee Decision 41-17 requested the Secretariat to explore the development of an MOU with the Global Environment Facility and look for

an appropriate process for obtaining official support from the GEF. The Secretariat has explored long-term possibilities and has discussed with GEF officials many options, including a joint request to the GEF CEO by the secretariats of four biodiversity-related conventions (Ramsar, CITES, CMS and World Heritage) for a meeting with the CEO.

13. **Ramsar and other multilateral donors:** Working with regional organizations such as the European Union and its Commission requires substantial time and effort. The current capacity of the Secretariat is a limitation but efforts have to be made to explore possibilities. Other organizations such as the African Development Bank, the Asia Development Bank, and similar organizations in the Americas are being approached.
14. **Ramsar and national development agencies:** Most of the funding mechanisms are now decentralized. It is important to explore joint actions at country level in those countries receiving financial support from developed countries. The best way is to encourage fundraising activities by the Ramsar Administrative Authorities, together with other relevant water/wetland/biodiversity stakeholders in each recipient country.
15. **Ramsar and Business sector:** A comprehensive strategy for engagement of the business sector with the Convention is still needed.
16. **Secretariat's capacity:** Legal expertise, information technology expertise, and a media officer are sincerely needed to increase the effectiveness of the Secretariat.
17. **Technology challenges:** There is an urgent need to update and enhance the Ramsar website, using modern technology to escape from an outdated situation. Likewise, we need a forward-looking Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS). The online searchable Ramsar Sites Database is the only Convention investment in information technology and data and information management, but the current Sites Database operates in outdated software which is no longer commercially available. The risk of the database failing is increasingly high. Also the database does not and cannot hold all information; it cannot deliver a number of functionalities identified by the Secretariat as necessary, such as maintaining time-series records of a Ramsar Site once its RIS has been updated. It is now essential that the Database is redeveloped in modern software, and the Secretariat will communicate the RSIS implementation plan to the Parties in due course.
18. **Organizing and holding meetings of the COP:** The Secretariat is increasingly experiencing significant difficulties in handling all of the substantive and logistical matters to prepare and carry out all the tasks that are required to achieve a successful meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. In contrast with the other conventions, the Ramsar Convention does not have a distinct and approved budget allocated by the Parties for organizing and holding these meetings, and all previous efforts to include major COP expenses (such as translation, interpretation, relocating the Secretariat for the COP period) into the core budget have been unsuccessful, and host countries are increasingly reluctant to cover these. There is an increasing upward trend in the costs of COPs, and the logistics are becoming challenging in relation to the limited capacity of the small Secretariat. After 40 years of existence, it is time for the Convention on Wetlands to adopt a more sustainable way to ensure a standardized and streamlined method for organizing and holding its meetings of the COP through a more reliable funding mechanism.

19. The organization of COP11 was particularly challenging because 2012 was the year for RIO+20, the IUCN World Conservation Congress, a CBD COP, a Climate Change COP, a World Water Forum, World Water Week, and many other international meetings. The current economic crisis has made it even more challenging. The Secretariat is urging a strong and persistent support from the Standing Committee to enhance the success of all COPs.
20. **Providing practical guidance on the ground to Contracting Parties:** In addition to the global scientific and technical guidance provided by the STRP, there is a growing expectation from Contracting Parties to receive practical and specific guidance on how to address particular issues on the ground. STRP guidance is useful regarding what to do in general terms but Contracting Parties, especially their site managers, city councils and other local stakeholders are also demonstrating a need for assistance to build their capacity and enhance their ability to take the right actions in the right manner. Contracting Parties are increasingly requesting assistance from the Secretariat to help in understanding and addressing root causes of wetland degradation – to that end, Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAM) are organized, but RAMs require financial funding, and there is no provision in the core budget for such missions.
21. **Need for increasing partnership at local, national and international levels:** The Secretariat believes that the Contracting Parties will better achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands if they encourage and support effective partnership with key players at local, national and international levels. In this regard, at least three kinds of partnerships are highly recommended:
- a) encouraging collective action through urban planning;
  - b) encouraging cross-sectoral actions at river basin level; and
  - c) developing and supporting the networks established by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) at country and regional levels.
22. Implementing jointly the Ramsar Strategic Plan and the Global Water Partnership Strategy is feasible and worthwhile. The Secretariat has been advocating for water security over the last years, and the GWP's definition of water security is helpful. According to the GWP,
- “A water secure world harnesses water's productive power and minimizes its destructive force. It is a world where every person has enough safe, affordable water to lead a clean, healthy and productive life. It is a world where communities are protected from floods, droughts, landslides, erosion and water-borne diseases. Water security also means addressing environmental protection and the negative effects of poor management.
- A water secure world means ending fragmented responsibility for water and integrating water resources management across all sectors – finance, planning, agriculture, energy, tourism, industry, education and health. This integration is at the heart of GWP's strategy.
- A water secure world reduces poverty, advances education, and increases living standards. It is a world where there is an improved quality of life for all, especially for the most vulnerable – usually women and children – who benefit most from good water governance.”

23. The Secretariat will increase its cooperation with the GWP to encourage the integration of water security in urban planning, national planning, and international priorities, including actions on food security, energy security, biodiversity, climate change and economic development.
24. **Priority setting for the work of the Convention and its Secretariat:** In line with the Ramsar Strategic Plan, the Secretariat is fine-tuning its planning process to identify a set of overarching priorities based on issues and processes of global concern into which the Ramsar Convention can make an effective contribution, including but not limited to:
- wetlands and water;
  - sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Post Rio+20 (“The Future We Want”);
  - contribution to the implementation of the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity (2011-2020) and achievement of the Aichi Targets;
  - climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
  - economic valuation of wetlands (TEEB), etc.

## Responses to key challenges

### Objective/Target 1: Strategic leadership

- a) **Understanding and recognizing the state of global wetlands, trends and threats in order to support an up-to-date decision context as well as to fully engage Contracting Parties where actions must be taken to promote timely and relevant application of the Convention’s assets/resources**
25. Right after I took office in July 2007, the Secretariat undertook, under my supervision, the analysis of all national reports received for COP10 to have a better understanding of the state of national and global wetlands, trends and threats in order to support an up-to-date decision context. I strongly believe that truthful national wetland inventories that provide accurate and updated information are a prerequisite for the understanding of the state of global wetlands, trends and threats. Because of that, I have used all opportunities, including visits to countries, communication with Ramsar partners, reports to Standing Committee and COPs, to stress the need for national wetland inventories and assessments as well as monitoring and evaluation of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands. I identified practical areas of work and encouraged Contracting Parties to make the best use of past, ongoing and planned wetland inventories, assessments and monitoring processes. In this regard I encouraged Contracting Parties to consider and make the best use of existing guidance and experiences, especially:
- Key Ramsar Resolutions that relate to wetland inventory:  
Resolution VII.20 – Priorities for Wetland Inventory;  
Resolution VIII.6 - A Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory;  
Resolutions on the wider context of the status and trends of inland, coastal and marine wetlands (Resolution VIII.8), including through the work of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and through contributing to the

work of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in developing and reporting on indicators of the status and trends for inland waters and coastal and marine biodiversity (Resolutions VIII.7 and VIII.8);

Resolution IX.1, Annex A as part of the “Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character”; and

Resolution IX.1 Annex E: An Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring (IF-WIAM).

- Technical procedures for conducting status and trends of nation’s wetlands from the US Fish & Wildlife Service: These procedures are valuable tools that provide the nation with current scientifically valid information on the status and extent of wetlands, riparian and related aquatic resources and monitor trends of these resources over time.
  - The review of wetland inventory information in the Neotropics, which recognizes that no national inventories, including the recently published Costa Rican Wetland Inventory, explicitly address the issue of coral ‘wetland’ habitat.
  - The Asian Wetland Inventory (AWI), which is intended to cover all of Asia including those countries and territories in western and central Asia, Russia eastwards of the Ural Mountains, and southern and eastern Asia.
  - The ‘Pan-European Wetland Inventory’ project supported by Wetlands International. This study aims to provide as comprehensive an assessment as possible of the current knowledge of the status and distribution of European wetlands, based upon available wetland inventory material.
  - The Uganda Wetland Inventory, which has led to drawing on Uganda’s rich baseline of wetland data and poverty mapping, provides a detailed examination of the links between ecosystem services and the location of poor communities and presents practical lessons for policy-makers across government.
  - The South Africa National Wetland Inventory, which has mapped over 120,000 wetlands, ranging greatly in size and value and accounting for about 7% of South Africa’s surface area.
  - Australia’s experience in wetland inventories, wetland assessment and wetland monitoring, including response to Article 3.2. of the Ramsar Convention.
26. I have been working closely with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to strengthen partnerships with relevant organizations such as the European Space Agency, the World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC), JAXA from Japan, UN-HABITAT, the UN World Tourism Organization, and river/lake basin organizations. In this regard, special attention was given to the following geographic and thematic areas:
27. For the Mediterranean Basin, working with the European Space Agency through a joint programme, I embarked on mapping, monitoring and assessment of wetlands by airborne or satellite “earth observation” techniques which is an increasingly important component of Ramsar Convention implementation in many parts of the world.

28. Using scientific and technical information from various agencies, including the Institute for Pacific Islands Forestry (IPIF), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the US Forest Service, the Indonesian Soils Research Institute, and the Global Environment Center, I have disseminated information on carbon storage in mangrove and peatland ecosystems.
29. With JAXA (Japanese Space Agency), the World Bank, and the Danone Group I initiated a joint initiative to improve our knowledge on mangroves. I have also disseminated the 2010 update of the World Mangrove Atlas (WMA), which indicated that a fifth of the world's mangrove ecosystems have been lost since 1980. As a result of my focus on mangroves in 2010, I am presently negotiating a project for mangrove restoration with the MAVA Foundation.

**b) Ensuring a shared vision for the future of the Convention, building understanding and commitment around the mission, goals and strategic framework**

30. Following COP10, my first Conference of the Parties as Ramsar Secretary General, my key approach regarding the Ramsar vision has been to share the Changwon Declaration principles and build commitment with key organizations dealing with:
- wetlands and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use: we use the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) process to integrate wetland issues;
  - wetlands and water quality; wetlands and human health; wetlands and food security; wetlands and protected areas: we integrate wetland issues into the Global Environment Outlook prepared by UNEP;
  - wetlands and climate change: I have reinforced the role of the Ramsar Secretariat as a partner to the UN-Water process and we have integrated wetlands in the World Water Report 4 and the communication of UN-Water to the UNFCCC COP15. At UNFCCC COP17 and COP18, I conveyed the specific Ramsar message about the key role of wetlands for climate change adaptation and mitigation, using the results of various studies by the World Bank, UNEP and Wetlands International;
  - wetlands and tourism: cooperation with the UN World Tourism Organization;
  - wetlands and urbanization: cooperation with the UN-HABITAT.
31. Through the implementation of the MOU signed between the Ramsar Secretariat, IUCN and the Danone Group, I have initiated a concrete programme to reach measurable results with regard to the role of wetlands in:
- actual quantification of sequestered carbon by wetland types, starting with mangroves;
  - undertaking wetland restoration to evaluate the extent to which various management practices on restored wetlands are enhancing carbon sequestration; and
  - working with a specialized agency on a carbon market to set up a methodology that has been recognized and certified by the UNFCCC relevant body to provide carbon credits to business companies that are willing to manage wetlands to offset their carbon emissions.

32. I am encouraging Wetlands International's efforts to assess the vulnerability of wetland carbon stocks to human activities and climate change, and also encouraging the efforts to manage and conserve wetlands in danger of becoming massive sources of carbon emission to the atmosphere (peatlands, especially in South East Asia and South America. Similarly, I am also encouraging the management of periodically flooded rice fields, starting in Asia, to implement Resolution X.31 on *Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems*.
33. I continue to promote the quantification of the results of ongoing wetland restoration for water quality improvement, wildlife habitat, erosion control, and shoreline restoration with Ramsar partners.
34. In 2011, to celebrate Ramsar's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 12 key specific messages (one per month) about Ramsar and wetlands were shared from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2011 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2012 to raise awareness and better engage Ramsar Contracting Parties where actions are most relevant and urgent so as to better conserve and wisely use wetlands.
35. During the 41<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee I shared my vision for the future of the Convention with all Standing Committee members and later with all Ramsar Contracting Parties. This vision drew attention to the present and future role of the Convention with regard to the need to enhance the recognition of the vital contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, as well as to biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**c) Instilling a sense of purpose and vision to the component elements**

36. Over the two triennia of my tenure I have initiated or provided strong support and special attention to the preparation of important guidance and new principles to enhance a vision around nine major areas where the Convention needs to make significant progress to remain relevant to global challenges and trends. With the support of the STRP and Ramsar partners, these nine areas of concern have been the focus of Ramsar Contracting Parties through 13 Resolutions adopted by COP 10 and COP11:
  - Resolution X.12 on Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector;
  - Resolution X.24 on Climate change and wetlands
  - Resolution X.25 on Wetlands and "biofuels"
  - Resolution X.26 on Wetlands and extractive industries
  - Resolution X.27 on Wetlands and urbanization
  - Resolution X.28 on Wetlands and poverty eradication
  - Resolution XI.1 on Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat
  - Resolution XI.7 on Tourism, recreation and wetlands
  - Resolution XI.10 on Wetlands and energy issues
  - Resolution XI.11 on Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands
  - Resolution XI.12 on Wetlands and health: taking an ecosystem approach
  - Resolution XI.13 on An Integrated Framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication



- Resolution XI.14 on Climate change and wetlands: implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
37. Another important area of my priorities has been to start put into operation some of the key principles of the TEEB Study. In this regard, applying economic thinking to the use of wetlands and their ecosystem services can help clarify two critical points: why prosperity and poverty reduction depend on maintaining the flow of benefits from ecosystems, and why successful environmental protection needs to be grounded in sound economics, including explicit recognition, efficient allocation, and fair distribution of the costs and benefits of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is now widely recognized that nature conservation and conservation management strategies do not necessarily pose a trade-off between the “environment” and “development”. Investments in wetland conservation, restoration and sustainable development can be shown to be economically attractive, and we need to incorporate the values of nature into decision making at all levels, including urban development and business practices:
38. We are pleased to report that the Secretariat has been able to work with the team of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative and some Ramsar partners on a TEEB product on “Water and Wetlands”. This report presents insights on both critical water-related ecosystem services and also on the wider ecosystem services from wetlands. The objective is encourage additional policy momentum, business commitment, and investment in the conservation, restoration, and wise use of wetlands. The report seeks to show how recognising, demonstrating, and capturing the values of ecosystem services related to water and wetlands can lead to better informed, more efficient, and fairer decision making. Appreciating the values of wetlands to both society and the economy can help inform and facilitate political commitment to policy solutions. TEEB Water and Wetlands is about the “water - wetlands - ecosystem services” interface – it concerns the importance of water and its role in underpinning all ecosystem services and the fundamental role of wetlands in global and local water cycles. It is also about the wide range of ecosystem services provided by nature to people and the economy that need to be taken into account to ensure that the full benefits of nature are not overlooked. It is about the “values” of nature which can be expressed in a number of ways and methods, including qualitative, quantitative and monetary indicators. This report aims to support evidence-based decision making by presenting an array of ecosystem service values in varying contexts. TEEB Water and Wetlands aims to contribute towards the wise use of wetlands through creating better understanding of ecosystem service values and benefits and their integration decision making at all levels.
39. This economic and social evaluation of the values of water and wetlands was done thanks to a cooperation involving the Norwegian, Swiss and Finnish governments, which supported this initiative undertaken by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), and Wetlands International. It is an invaluable reminder of the key role that wetlands, some of the most biodiverse regions on our planet, play in our societies and economies.
- d) Driving the strategic planning process for COP preparation, overall organization, and running with host country high-level officials and COP delegates**

40. During my tenure, I enjoyed the honor and privilege of supervising the preparation, overall organization, and running of COP10 and COP11 with host country high-level officials and COP delegates. For both processes, communication with the Republic of Korea (COP10) and Romania (COP11) was maintained on a regular basis as one of the highest priority actions. The COP10 and COP11 Groups within the Secretariat met methodically to assess progress and encourage joint action with the respective host countries.
41. Following COP10, a thorough review of the process was made by the Secretariat and the lessons learnt were used to prepare, organize and run COP11. Thanks to the input from most Secretariat staff as well as from the extended COP11 'team' and a few Romanian counterparts, a very comprehensive review of COP11 is available, and this review will be used to prepare COP12. Many recommendations drawn from this comprehensive review have implications for the MOU and other elements for COP12 planning, as pointed out below:
  - i) The Secretariat should appoint a special person or company to be responsible for the logistics organization and coordination in-house, since the task can no longer be done by a member of the Secretariat who already has a full workload. While staff can manage the early planning, at least by 12 months before the COP a non-staff logistics coordinator should be in place working at 50% for the last six months before the COP.
  - ii) Feedback from the Rapporteur strongly suggests that there is a need for a second rapporteur to share the task. At COP11 the demands on the Rapporteur's time required very long working hours (more than 12 hours per day) without a break from the 7th to the 13th of July. It was also felt that the increased "politicization" of the Ramsar community has definitely brought a greater reporting burden.
  - iii) A recurring issue throughout the logistics planning and implementation was the lack of a high-level person (e.g., State Secretary level) involved directly in the planning. This greatly hindered the successful involvement of other ministries and made working with the Conference Centre in the palace quite challenging. The people involved were not senior enough and they were also inexperienced in such meeting planning. It might be useful to articulate this better in the MOU.
  - iv) The intensity of events at lunchtimes (contact groups, regional group meetings, side events), as well as the early morning meetings for many delegations, meant that participants were given little time to rest. Some side events were badly attended and it may well have been simply because of "meeting overload" for some people, especially the Parties. We may need to take a more pragmatic approach at COP12 to reduce this intensity.
  - v) It would be helpful to have Secretariat staff who are involved in major COP planning elements to write up a one-page 'how-to' document so that a new member of staff taking over the role is able to start with some basic guidance. This would help for side events, plenary set up, interventions and document revision management, opening ceremony, credentials, registration, and documentation.
  - vi) Should we give serious consideration to having two days of the COP after the excursion day? Trying to force everything into the last day puts ridiculous pressure

on everyone, as evidenced by COP11 finishing hours later than scheduled. Excursion day should still be the main documentation day, but there should be at least 1.5 days of Plenary, with the process wrapping up at lunchtime or early afternoon of the last day.

- vii) It is important to consider the need for financial support to cover the cost of the Earth Negotiation Bulletin (ENB) in the MOU with the host country of COP. This should start with COP12 so as to make sure that Ramsar COP debates are fully publicized worldwide.

**e) Establishing clear organizational management objectives for the Secretariat**

**Background**

- 42. At the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (SC), the Management Working Group and the SC as a whole considered proposals from the then-Secretary General for a rearrangement of aspects of senior Secretariat staff roles and responsibilities, with a view to helping to address significant work overloads being faced by a number of staff members, notably including the Deputy Secretary General, the regional teams, and the communications team.
- 43. In Decision SC35-31, “The Standing Committee requested the Secretary General to work with the Management Working Group to propose an organizational structure and terms of reference for senior staff to better reflect the strategic priorities and needs of the Convention for the next five years, for consideration by SC36. The Committee also endorsed the recruitment of a P1 post in the Secretariat to support the work of the Senior Regional Advisors”.
- 43. Following my arrival in my post in August 2007, I reviewed the roles and responsibilities of all Secretariat staff against the existing and anticipated future needs of the Convention and its organizational growth, and I identified a number of gaps and weaknesses in capacity and skills impeding the effective accomplishment of what the Secretariat is expected to deliver.
- 44. A discussion was underway about the desirability of having two deputy Secretaries General: one in charge of scientific and technical matters, and the second in charge of administrative and financial matters. I discussed this option with the Executive Team and the idea was rejected. Instead, the Executive Team requested the Secretary General to propose an interim structure for 2008.
- 45. Following a thorough review of the existing situation, I provided a full proposal for 2008 and beyond to the Management Working Group and Standing Committee at its 36th meeting (SC36) with:
  - i) a proposal for a 2008 interim (transitional) revised Secretariat staff management structure and responsibilities designed, without adding to staff posts or costs, to establish a clearer functional unit structure and line management responsibilities of staff;

- ii) a Secretariat “vision”, commitments and guiding principles for its operations and future development, in relation to the broader issues and strategic priorities for the organizational growth of the Convention and its Secretariat; and
  - iii) a proposed organizational structure and staffing of the Secretariat for the next triennium.
46. SC36 examined the proposals and made the following decision relating to agenda item 13.2: Future Secretariat structure and staffing:
- Decision SC36-15: The Standing Committee
- 1) endorsed the interim Secretariat staff structure for 2008;
  - 2) recognized that the SG’s review and proposals for a 2009-2011 staffing and structure are appropriate in a general sense to consider as a realistic vision for a future Secretariat structure to deliver the aspirations and development of the Convention;
  - 3) endorsed this staffing and structure, subject to its amendment with the simplified senior management structure, noting that nothing in this decision relates to issues concerning core budget matters to be considered further by SC37 and COP10 in relation to any core funding allocations for additional posts indicated; and
  - 4) requested the SG to revise and update, as necessary, the post descriptions and Terms of Reference of Secretariat staff posts in the light of the discussion, and to provide further information to SC37 a) on what options exist for additional staffing other than from core budget allocations; b) on Secretariat current work overloads, and c) on what unresourced priorities that have been set by COP Resolutions cannot be delivered by current Secretariat resourcing and staffing.
47. In line with Decision SC36-15, I took the following actions:
- amendment of the proposal about the Secretariat staff structure for 2009-2011;
  - review and update of the post descriptions and Terms of Reference of Secretariat staff posts;
  - proposals on options for additional staffing other than from core budget allocation;
  - Secretariat current work overloads;
  - what unresourced priorities that have been set by COP Resolutions cannot be delivered by current Secretariat resourcing and staffing
48. I proposed the Ramsar Secretariat’s “vision”, commitments and guiding principles for its operations and future development. SC37 endorsed the “Vision”, together with the commitments and guiding principles for the operations and future development of the Secretariat.
49. The proposals for the future Secretariat structure and staffing (2009 onwards) were made in line with Decision SC36-15, together with the following principles concerning the organizational growth of the Convention:
- i) The Ramsar Convention is committed to growing and developing its work to meet persisting and emerging challenges.

- ii) The Contracting Parties are committed to making positive changes to keep the Convention modernized and well-run in order to adjust to a changing environment.
  - iii) The Contracting Parties and the Ramsar partners are willing to ensure the growth of the Convention and enhance its achievements, taking into account new challenges.
  - iv) The Contracting Parties are committed to supporting the difficult decisions necessary for the success of the Convention.
  - v) The Contracting Parties support the Vision of the Secretariat.
  - vi) The Standing Committee and the Contracting Parties they represent think big.
50. With increasing membership of the Convention and recognition of the Convention's key role in securing the future sustainability of wetlands, the capacity of the Secretariat has become increasingly overstretched, putting at risk its ability to deliver the services expected by Contracting Parties and partners in an efficient and timely manner.
51. Following the Secretary General's review in late 2007 of current staffing and capacities, as well as the gaps in existing capacity and skills needed to deliver the work of a Convention secretariat in the modern world, I identified the following needs, including additional staff skills and expertise to undertake various aspects of the Secretariat's mandate and work plans.

**Secretary General's Office:** Under the direct supervision of the Secretary General, the following staff positions will operate:

**Executive Assistant:** The TOR has been reviewed to clarify some tasks.

**Finance Officer:** This position has been thoroughly reviewed, to integrate additional skills and expertise to advise the Secretary General regarding the financial viability of the Convention. In this regard, new strategic responsibilities are added as follows:

- Providing a clear picture and understanding of the financial health of the Ramsar Secretariat, including the development of a set of performance indicators for the ongoing monitoring of financial health;
- Ensuring that IUCN's financial reports provide high quality financial information to facilitate monitoring and informed decision-making by the Secretariat, by the Standing Committee and by the Conference of the Parties;
- Ensuring that the budgeting process reflects and supports the Strategic Plan and the priorities of the Convention;
- Providing support and high quality relevant information to fundraising efforts to ensure adequate income and strong interest and commitment from donors. As a result of this review the position was upgraded from P1 to P2 to take into account the strategic responsibilities.

**Legal officer:** in view of the increasing need for professional legal advice to the Convention on matters such as the future status of the Secretariat, the hosting agreements with IUCN, and ongoing project and contractual matters, the creation of a "Legal Officer" post was proposed. Although it was anticipated that this post would not be a full-time staff post and it is indicated at 20% on a retainer basis, the Standing Committee and the COP did not accept to make provision for funding from core budget for this position.

**Partnership Unit:** The establishment and staffing of a “Partnership Unit” in the Secretariat, including a senior post of “Partnership Coordinator”, was intended to further develop and maintain the increasingly necessary work on partnerships and synergy with other relevant processes and organizations, including *inter alia* other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and United Nations agencies and organizations. It also coordinates the involvement of the non-governmental sector, especially the Convention’s International Organization Partners (IOPs), and the private sector and governmental donor community; and importantly, takes on the lead responsibility for planning and coordination of COP preparations with the host country - an area of work which currently places a heavy load on the Secretary General, particularly in a COP year. My initial proposal for this Unit encompassed the UN/MEAs Liaison Officer, the IOPs/NGOs Liaison Officer, and the Donor/Private Sector Officer. Project officers are under the supervision of the Donor/Private Sector Officer. Following considerable debate, COP10 decided to include the position of “Partnership Coordinator” in the core budget but rejected the other three positions.

52. All other proposed new positions were rejected by the Standing Committee at its 37<sup>th</sup> Session. To take into account this reality, I made another review of Secretariat staff structure. As a result, the TOR of the Deputy Secretary General were reviewed and IUCN was requested to confirm the grading. The post descriptions and TOR of the Senior Regional Advisors were also revised and updated. As a result of this review, all Senior Advisors have moved from grade P2 to grade M, following a review by IUCN.
53. I also proposed some options for additional staffing from core budget allocations:
- paying overtime hours to staff working more than 230 days; this is done for the interns to complete on time the dissemination of materials for World Wetlands Day;
  - recruiting part time staff for specific tasks such as the Ramsar Site designation process; this had already been the case for the Americas in 2008 to process a large number of proposed Ramsar Sites, and it continued up to 2011.
54. Options for additional staffing other than core budget allocations included:
- secondments to be provided by Contracting Parties;
  - additional voluntary financial contribution by Contracting Parties; and
  - financial assistance through partnerships with the business sector.
55. As an overall assessment, the Convention has continued to grow steadily since its inception, with some measures of growth such as Ramsar Site designations and their area indicating more rapid growth in the last ten years than earlier. Despite this growth, and the increasing workloads that implies in providing maintenance of service to the increasing number of Contracting Parties and other convention processes by the Secretariat, the resources of the Convention (core budget) and capacity of the Secretariat have not kept pace with this growth. The rate of increase in the core convention budget has been progressively slowing over the past 10 years, as has the growth in Secretariat staffing. Whilst partly due to changes in administrative operations and new technology, the number of administrative staff has actually decreased since the late 1990s.

56. Compared with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, the Ramsar Convention has fewer Secretariat staff per Contracting Party and a much smaller budget per Contracting Party.
57. To continually respond to emerging needs and take into account all trends, I have been exploring all possible solutions to address staff management challenges. In this regard, following the 2008 Performance Evaluation, I made the following decisions in consultation with the Executive Team to improve the management of the Secretariat:
58. Following the evaluation of the "Interim Staffing & Structure 2008", I put an end to this structure, taking into account the fact that this arrangement did not prove to be the best option for the coordination of regional affairs. Some of the difficulties experienced in 2008 regarding staff management are due to this interim arrangement.
59. Then I decided to put into action a New Secretariat Staffing and Structure, in consultation with the Ramsar Executive Team: this new structure was discussed and explained to all Secretariat staff. The structure confirms the following adjustments needed to continually improve and change in the right direction. Key adjustments are:
  - This structure encourages all staff members to speak openly and directly with the Secretary General.
  - Taking into account the fact that quite often some people on the team have different ideas about what is important, direct supervision of the senior staff by the Secretary General is facilitating a better perception of the Secretariat's values and vision, which influences and guides the behavior of the staff.
  - Direct supervision of all regional teams by the Secretary General has enabled me to push and carry the teams to new levels especially when things become difficult, taking responsibility for making things happen on time.
  - The Secretary General is working more closely with all senior officers and recurrently providing guidance to all, including those who have developed an overpowering belief that they are perfect and who may not feel that they need guidance.
  - The Secretary General continually makes sure that for anything to be done, teammates are counting on each other when it really counts.
  - All senior staff are directly adding value to the Secretary General, working on shared values, with shared responsibilities, but on the same agenda for a common goal.
  - The Secretary General has to continually make sure that teammates are constantly talking to each other respectfully. This is a real challenge and requires continued efforts.
60. However, to minimize the damage any staff member can do because of weakness or attitude, I continually discuss with the Management Group of the Secretariat to find the best options that can make the team better. This often requires tough decisions, for which the Secretary General needs the support of the Standing Committee, especially the Executive Team. In this regard, on several occasions I drew the attention of the Executive Team regarding the perception and actions to take by the Secretariat when it comes to the following key areas.

## Building and developing our partnerships

### *Justification*

61. Because wetlands are important assets that provide a range of values to a multiplicity of stakeholders, anyone with a stake in wetland management should be involved at the right level. The success of the Convention's mission depends on involving a good mix of people and organizations in the partnership to put together and implement a range of actions that require many skills and capacity at local, national and international levels.
62. For effective management of wetlands we need to involve and support different roles and responsibilities, including:
  - leadership and policy development
  - planning
  - scientific and technical knowledge
  - communication, education, participation, and awareness
  - political liaison
  - funding, and
  - monitoring and evaluation
63. The involvement of a diversity of partners is a requirement to:
  - enhance the political leadership and the credibility of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities
  - get access to trustworthy information sources
  - distribute information and influence decisions
  - enhance the credibility and visibility for our programs
  - gain a better knowledge of environmental constituencies
  - promote awareness of problems/issues and vision/opportunities
  - gain better access to financial and scientific/technical support, and
  - get influence over values and beliefs and increase ability to shape future strategies/policies and plans
64. Required commitment and skills
  - interest in and concern for wetland issues,
  - ability to mobilize and motivate other players, including individuals and/or organizations,
  - commitment to stewardship,
  - time and talent for teamwork,
  - understanding of current conditions and trends regarding water, wetlands, biodiversity, land use, energy, and climate change, and
  - fund-raising skills

### *Our Approach*



65. The Secretariat is approaching each partner with a sense of common goal and direction, because to get the involvement of partners they need to know they are working toward a worthwhile purpose for their own organization. They also need to know what is expected of them. We must start with a few short-term tasks that have a good chance for success. We have to make sure that all initial joint activities are realistic and will be seen as “winners” in the eyes of the partners. We provide regular fresh facts and information that we are gathering as a partner for a better understanding of what we mean by “wetlands” to improve a better understanding of our work and concerns. We use the power of positive feedback, recognition, and reward, knowing that the staff of our partners will respond to positive incentives in the partnership setting just as they do as individuals.

***Improving existing partnerships and building new ones***

66. The Convention Secretariat has a large number of partners, but effective and practical partnerships are yet to be established with most of them. The partnership between our Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity is certainly the kind of relationship we wish to further develop and expand, especially through our joint actions with the Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs) who are assisting Contracting Parties at national and even local levels.
67. To be effective, we are making efforts to tighten and focus our partnerships and to concentrate our attention on those collaborative actions that are most likely to yield positive results. However, we are not choosing to be narrow-minded, and we are ready to consider ideas that are different from our own.
68. At international level we strive to enhance our collaboration with key organizations with a stake in wetlands, water, biodiversity, land use and climate change. At local and national levels, we are supporting the involvement not only of those who are affected by and interested in wetland conservation and wise use but also of those who are affected, but not interested and those who are not affected, but are interested. While each partner should understand and agree to their own roles and responsibilities, all partners should be able to take part in any decision or activity where they have interest and expertise.
69. To be successful in our partnerships we are committed to:
- Understanding what motivates each partner and making sure that these motivations are met.
  - Understanding and sharing tangible values of wetlands with relevant organizations to stimulate interest and concern for wetland issues through persuasive facts about:
    - o wetlands and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use
    - o wetlands and water supply
    - o wetlands and food security
    - o wetlands and human health
    - o wetlands and poverty reduction
    - o wetlands and energy/extractive industries
    - o wetlands and tourism
    - o wetlands and urban development, and
    - o wetlands and protected areas.

### **Dealing with delegation of authority, considering long-term vision and expectations**

70. Although we have a new staffing structure for the Secretariat, I still believe that effective delegation of authority is a key approach to success because the overall achievements of the Secretariat are the results of the combined efforts of all staff members. I am putting each staff member in the place that utilizes their talents and maximizes the team's potential. In this regard I have made the following distribution of responsibilities among senior staff members.
71. But this distribution of responsibilities is not just for senior staff – the intention is rather to clarify the delegation of authority regarding the following positions:
- a) Officers that are directly under of the Secretary General and for which there is a change in line management or responsibilities (Deputy Secretary General, Senior Regional Advisors, and Regional Affairs Officer);
  - b) Officers that are working on cross-cutting tasks such as CEPA, Financial Matters and Regional Affairs (Partnership Coordinator, CEPA Officer, Finance Officer, Regional Affairs Officer).
72. All other aspects of our work that are described in individual TOR remain valid. However, some additional clarification is needed regarding the way we organize different teams to perform specific tasks or handle meticulous processes. In this regard, to carry out important tasks or handle processes that require specific teamwork, Task Forces are established.

### ***Establishment of Task Forces***

73. Ad Hoc Task Forces may be given responsibilities for some complex issues; a team leader coordinates the work of the Task Force, in consultation with identified team members. This approach was successfully structured and managed to run COP10 and COP11, for example. The same approach is used to prepare and organize the meetings of the Standing Committee, successfully handling the logistics and the substance to be submitted to the Standing Committee. This approach was also used to assist the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform.

### ***Areas of special attention***

- Leadership
  - Vision for the Secretariat
  - Vision and strategy for enhancing the image of the Convention
  - Vision and strategy for enhancing the importance of wetland in national planning and decision-making processes
- Management
  - Human resource management
  - Financial management
  - Administration management

- Coordination of the Secretariat's activities

### ***Sharing role and responsibilities within the Secretariat***

#### **Secretary General**

Overall supervision, including administrative and financial management  
Supervision of Regional Initiatives, Small Grants Fund, and Ramsar Site status  
Supervision of partnerships with IUCN, WWF, Environment Management Group (EMG), CSD, UNEP Governing Council, GEF Council, Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), Intergovernmental Platform on Policy and Science on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services (IPBES), 2010 Biodiversity Targets and Beyond, UN-Habitat, World Tourism Organization, World Bank, GEF, Global Water Partnership

#### **Deputy Secretary General**

Overall scientific coordination, including all STRP matters  
Overall coordination on science and communication  
Overall supervision of the Ramsar Sites Database  
Supervision of partnerships with the Biodiversity Convention, CMS Convention, UNEP-WCMC, Wetlands International, Birdlife International, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), World Health Organization

#### **Senior Advisor for Africa**

Overall coordination with Africa  
Coordination on wetlands and extractive industries, wetlands and tourism, and wetlands and poverty reduction  
Coordination of partnerships with African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), African Ministerial Council for Environment (AMCEN), African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), River/Lake Basin Organizations in Africa, Africa Regional Initiatives

#### **Senior Advisor for the Americas**

Overall coordination with the Americas  
Coordination of partnerships with the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nation Economic Commission for the Neotropics and the Caribbean, River/Lake Basin Organizations in the Americas, America Regional Initiatives, Wetlands for the Future

#### **Senior Advisor for Asia & Oceania**

Overall coordination with Asia and Oceania  
Coordination of the Secretariat's assistance to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform  
Coordination of partnerships with the United Nation Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Asia/Oceania Regional Initiatives, River/Lake Basin Organizations in Asia and Oceania

#### **Senior Advisor for Europe**

Overall coordination with Europe  
Medwet Coordination  
Overall coordination of the Regional Initiatives programme

Coordination of partnerships with European Union, UNESCO, United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), WAZA, Danone Fund for Wetlands, River/Lake Basin Organizations in Europe, Europe Regional Initiatives

**Finance Officer**

Coordination of all financial management on both core and project budgets  
Facilitating positive relationships with IUCN and with donors  
Providing clear financial information to Contracting Parties  
Advising the Secretary General on the financial viability of the Convention.

**CEPA Programme Officer**

Coordination of all CEPA matters  
Overseeing capacity building programmes, including the Advisory Board on Capacity Building  
Coordination of the partnership with Biosphere Connections

**Regional Affairs Officer**

Providing support to regional teams, in consultation with Senior Regional Advisors, including training and guidance to Assistants to Senior Regional Advisors.  
Coordination of the preparation of consolidated documents on Small Grant Fund, including Project Portfolio

**Inclusive communication with Contracting Parties**

74. I strongly believe that the Secretariat's goal is to serve Ramsar Contracting Parties; our role is to continually have a better understanding of the Ramsar Contracting Parties through a better communication to know where they are, what they need and what we can provide them. Unfortunately, quite often some senior staff members do not communicate with Contracting Parties unless something goes wrong.
75. Even though I have never been inclined to focus only upon my own opinion, I continued to favor effective communication with Contracting Parties, emphasizing positive interaction and looking for success stories to publicize instead of focusing on negative aspects. Of course I have to continue to encourage all staff members to draw the attention of Contracting Parties to threats to Ramsar Sites and degradation trends regarding the overall wetlands values, and to suggest options for addressing them.

**Implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention**

76. This aspect of our work calls for a clear approach and a united team to help address controversial challenges. My approach is clear: Using diplomacy to promote Ramsar guidance at national level – when there are transboundary wetland disputes, I remain careful not to become involved in any dispute between Contracting Parties.
77. The key reality to consider is the fact that the Ramsar Convention as a whole is not an enforcement instrument; it is rather a caring and supportive instrument that provides a framework and guidance for commitment and collective action to save wetland values and functions. We are using the Convention to build a better understanding of the values of wetlands for life and for sustainable development, advising and supporting Contracting Parties to use the Convention to contribute to conservation and sustainable development.

78. My approach is constructive and it aims at articulating the intimate relationships between development and environment, taking into account the fact that the first paragraph of the Ramsar Convention text is: “RECOGNIZING the interdependence of Man and his environment”.
79. We are dealing more and more frequently with challenges regarding wetlands and socio-economic development, including poverty reduction, food security, energy, human health, climate change and biodiversity. Land use issues are key areas for recommendations to Contracting Parties. As a body serving Contracting Parties that are committed to implementing the Ramsar Convention, our Secretariat cannot behave like an NGO although some staff members have a tendency to suggest that the Secretariat should take a strong position and blame any Contracting Party that experiences conflicts between wetland management and development activities. In consultation with all senior staff, I have set up the following approach:
78. When it comes to threats to wetlands that are not Ramsar Sites, controversial views may arise within the Secretariat. For instance, there are some conflicting views within the Secretariat about the approach we can take regarding wetlands that may be perceived as potential Ramsar Sites. In this regard, I continue to make sure that the Secretariat does not go beyond its mandate, and I anticipated many cases where I will need a strong support from the Executive Team to address unpleasant challenges. I undertake regular consultation with the Executive Team to seek their views whenever needed.

#### **Promoting attitude change in the Secretariat**

79. This is a serious issue for which there is an increasing need to provide more firm leadership. I took the following actions:
- I established the Management Group to help handle the expression of conflicting views by different Secretariat members on difficult issues and how to move from disagreement to consensus.
  - Overall Secretariat priorities and work plans are always discussed during staff meetings, as are the way in which financial resources are managed.
  - I share my vision during staff meetings and Management Group meetings with regard to the approach to implementing decisions, including key steps regarding the implementation of the text of the Convention, the Strategic Plan and the decisions of the COPs and Standing Committee.
  - I make decisions about the way to handle urgent emerging issues.
  - In consultation with the Management Group I decide about the right areas of focus, taking into account the Resolutions of the Contracting Parties and the decisions of the Standing Committee.
  - I am constantly stressing possibilities rather than problems.
- f) **Effectively manage the Secretariat so as to maintain the commitment of the staff to their task**

80. At the end of each year, I take stock of all developments, including the financial situation and any significant matters so as to explore all possibilities for providing incentives to motivate staff commitment. This includes financial and non-monetary incentives.
81. When I took office in 2007, the system of the Secretary General awarding salary increases (or not) was ad hoc, with some staff receiving no increase and others, e.g., a 6% increase in any one year, and some of our hard-working staff had not received any increment above cost of living for some years. This was not a particularly good situation for overall staff morale.
82. To address this challenge, in relation to our working on future Secretariat staff needs and structure and core budget proposals for next triennium, I made a new proposal and submitted it to the consideration of the Standing Committee. This proposal was taking 2007 minimum, mid-point and maximum salary for the grade as a basis for salary increases. This proposal was anticipating that after six years of service a staffer would rise from minimum to mid-point, and to maximum after a further six years. For 2008, I applied the 1.3% cost of living increase (as per IUCN's advice) to the 2007 scale. For each following year – 2009, 2010 and 2011 – we used a 1.5% cost of living increase to calculate salary scale.
83. The rationale for using this annual increment approach is that an officer performing fully satisfactorily would expect to move up one step in the scale each year. Someone not performing to full satisfaction would stay on same step of scale (i.e., getting only the cost of living increase). At the discretion of the Secretary General, someone performing really outstandingly could be moved up two steps in one year.
84. Thus in creating this system for Secretariat salaries, we would then have a fully transparent process for all staff, and all staff could see clearly what they can expect in the form of a progressively increasing salary with length of satisfactory service. All this would of course be subject to there being sufficient funds allocated and available in the core salaries budget line for the year! This approach I thought would be very good for staff morale, and would act as a much better and clearer encouragement to staff to remain in the Secretariat and perform well.
85. The Standing Committee and the COP rejected this proposal, however. Therefore, in 2009, a salary increase of 2.6% was provided to all staff to compensate for the increase of cost of living in Switzerland. However, I could not provide any additional salary increase following this salary raise. As a result, most staff members did not like the fact that I refused to offer a financial bonus as a recognition of good performance in organizing and holding COP10. Instead, I applied IUCN practice and offered six days of leave in addition to the normal annual leave. This caused some misunderstanding about the way we recognize good performance. To address this issue I proposed to SC40 to provide some salary award to staff members who have performed above the expected level. However, the decision of the Standing Committee was to request the Secretariat to work with the Subgroup on Finance to review the overall process and mechanisms for Secretariat salary award.
86. Since there are arguments against an automatic step system, I suggested to the Standing Committee that, for the guidance for the Secretary General and staff, we take each salary band in the current IUCN scale and divide by 25 years to give a fixed nominal annual

increase per year. Staff could expect that for satisfactory performance and general progression within their job, this annual increase would be paid each year, either by way of cost of living or performance increment or both. For example, in respect of a year where no cost of living increase is given, staff could expect the annual increase entirely by way of performance increment. They could expect more than this if the official Swiss cost of living index alone increases by greater than the annual increase, but should expect no additional performance increments (unless budget allows). For example, if in a given year the cost of living index is 3.5%, staff could expect a 3.5% increase.

87. Based on the current staffing structure, assuming cost of living increases remain below 2%, this mechanism would cost Ramsar just less than 2% per annum. If cost of living increases went to between 2% and 4% and the Secretary General pays all of the increase, salary costs would increase by more, but by less than 4%.
88. The annual increase would not apply to interns or anyone in their position for less than six months before the start of the calendar year to which the increase applies. This is consistent with IUCN's policy for giving cost of living increases. Should additional budgetary capacity exist, the Secretary General would determine additional performance increments or bonuses as appropriate.
89. Following consultations, it was possible to offer some financial incentives but I am always making sure that my decision-making responsibilities do not undermine IUCN policy and practices. A consultation with IUCN has helped to find realistic options taking into account the particular nature and distinctiveness of the Secretariat as well as the financial situation.
90. I am always seeking the best balance that takes into account overall leadership, including a vision for the Secretariat, a vision and a strategy for enhancing the image of the Convention, a vision and a strategy for enhancing the importance of wetlands in national planning and decision-making processes, human resource management, financial management, administration management, and coordination of the Secretariat's activities. However, it is worth noting that for the 2013- 2015 triennium COP11 recognized that the salary budgets are frozen, but expressed no desire to reduce Core budget positions over that period; thus, if IUCN obliges staff cost increases, exceeded budget lines will be dealt with from the Reserve Fund.

### ***Sharing our Office Space***

91. In 2010, a significant part of IUCN staff moved into an adjacent new building, thus providing an opportunity for the Ramsar Secretariat to reorganize our office space. I appointed an "Office re-organization working group" that worked excellently in preparing and then presenting to the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General five scenario options for different ways of utilizing the Ramsar offices and open areas when we gained access to this in March 2010. The scenarios offered options ranging from minimizing change from our present office and space use to relocating regional teams, to creating a meeting room, to a major reallocation of offices, etc. I thank them for their hard work and for rising to the intellectual challenge of developing such clear options.
92. In developing these options, the working group also identified a range of space planning considerations/criteria against which to help assess the various options.

93. Following presentation of these scenario options by the working group on 15 February, the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General reviewed the five options against a set of prioritized guiding principles based upon the working group's space planning considerations. These particularly covered:
- maximizing the number of staff who can be placed in offices rather than in the open spaces;
  - ensuring that senior staff (and those dealing with confidential matters) have individual rather than shared offices;
  - keeping members of 'teams' located in as close proximity as possible to one another;
  - as far as possible ensuring equality of office/desk location spaces for staff of the same grade;
  - improving the location/environment/lighting for staff working at desks in open space areas;
  - screening off different sections of the open space (with partitions, shelving, etc.) as far as possible (without reducing open space location quality);
  - minimizing the number of staff who will be disrupted by changing office/open space location; and
  - maximizing the number of 'spare desks' for use by temporary staff and visitors.
94. I selected the option that fulfilled the most criteria. In addition, it was possible to retain our "open meeting space" outside the Secretary General's office. The printers, fax, mailboxes, etc., location was reorganized to a simpler grouping. We also improved the layout of the Regional Assistants' area by replacing the ad hoc collection of desks and tables with a more space-efficient desk system, which in turn created a more spacious feeling to the work area for the Assistant Advisors. This new plan also provided us with up to three 'spare' desks in the open spaces for use by temporary staff and visitors. Finally it was possible to look at the best way to reorganize the layout of the various cupboards, storage, and bookshelves, etc., in the various open areas.

**Summary of actions taken to motivate the Ramsar Secretariat staff so as to maintain the commitment of the staff to their task:**

- The updated Secretariat Structure is now fully operational, with clear line managements that take into account lessons learned over the past years.
- The "Staff Advance" process, initiated in September 2010, has been repeated each year since then. The Staff Advance is made through a "staff retreat" to examine all management challenges and explore all options to address the challenges. It is providing a framework for a better understanding and recognition of the strengths of each staff member as well as the weaknesses. In 2011, for each important task that requires teamwork, I appointed a team leader and I identified team members as indicated in the Secretariat's annual Work Plan approved by the Standing Committee.
- Through the discussions of Management Group meetings, the staff meetings, and the Staff Advance process, we also consider how to create an increasingly rewarding



and motivating working environment, including non-monetary rewards. We explore how to ensure respect for diversity and interdependent roles and responsibilities when working towards common goals, as well as actions to further improve things for the future.

- To apply lessons learned, for instance, regarding the preparation and organization of the two COPs I supervised (‘COP10 and COP11), as a means to explore alignment regarding roles and responsibilities among the staff, preparations for the two COPs were considered with the aim to determine shared goals for the COP, so that all staff then articulate what they expected to ‘give to’ all other staff members and what they ‘want from’ from all other staff members, too. Directly comparing these ‘wants’ and ‘gives’ showed high alignment regarding understanding about roles and responsibilities, whilst also identifying where some clarification was required. Concrete actions were agreed and next to each action is the name of a “champion” for the action who takes responsibility for reminding the group of the action agreed and encouraging the group to take the next steps necessary. In some cases the champion may also lead in taking the initiative to move things forward.
- Personal grievances have been the matter of frank discussions and a report on this issue is available in line with the request from SC42.
- During SC42, I presented my strategy for synergies within the Secretariat and this Strategy was accepted by the Standing Committee in May 2011.
- I also coordinated and provided a consolidated Secretariat’s view on the administrative reform/institutional hosting process that was initiated following COP9 in Kampala, Uganda, and concluded at COP11, in Bucharest, Romania.
- During my tenure I took actions to review the descriptions of all positions and update the Terms of Reference of each staff member. As a result of this comprehensive review I made the following decisions:
  - I upgraded 3 Senior Regional Advisors and since 2008 all 4 Seniors Advisors have moved from grade P2 to grade M, following a review by IUCN.
  - The position of Finance Officer was upgraded in 2008 from P1 to P2 to take into account the strategic responsibilities that were added to the position.
  - The position of Regional Affairs Officer was upgraded from P1 to P2 in 2011.
  - The position of CEPA Programme Officer has changed from P1 to P2 to take account of the new responsibilities attached to this position since 2008.
  - The post of “Senior Administrative Officer” was changed to Administrative Officer and as a result it moves from A3 to P1 in 2008.
  - Two Administrative Assistants have moved from A2 to A3 in 2011.
  - Following the retirement of the Communications Officer (who had combined communications and documentation roles) in January 2010, the position was fully reviewed and it was possible to hire a new Communications Officer and keep the former staff member as Documentation Officer at 50% up to end of January 2013. This arrangement is now under review, taking into account additional staff retirements in the near future.

- A new position was created in 2008 to have a Project Management Officer at P1 position, supervised by the Senior Regional Advisor for Europe.
- The position of Partnership Coordinator was established in 2011 as M grade.
- There was no change for the Deputy Secretary General's position at M grade.

**g) Providing leadership for the further implementation of the Convention by all Contracting Parties, and to this end bringing initiatives forward for consideration by the Standing Committee and/or the Conference of the Parties**

95. My report to the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Standing Committee demonstrates my approach and it describes the substance of my proposals to the Standing Committee regarding all building blocks of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015. This report and its essential parts have been approved by the Standing Committee, which has requested use to implement my proposals. (See decisions of SC41.)
96. The letter I sent to the Executive Team on 30 August 2011, as well as my report to the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Standing Committee, provides the details of my approach and it describes the substance of my proposals to the Standing Committee regarding my leadership role for 2011 and beyond. In this regard, I submitted for consideration by the Standing Committee and/or the Conference of the Parties my thoughts and suggestions concerning:
- Financial matters, including responses to the challenges arising from the economic crisis and the rate of exchange of the Swiss franc as well as the current status of the Reserve Fund, Contracting Parties that are consistently in arrears in their payments to the Convention, Small Grants Fund, Ramsar Secretariat Core and non-Core activities 2011-2012 and beyond;
  - Other important matters including preparations for COP11, adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, collaborative review with the International Organization Partners, promotion and utilization of the “Changwon Declaration”, the Secretariat’s Work Plan for 2011, a mid-term review of and preparation of proposals for adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015, and an update on the status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

**h) Representing the Convention in international fora and acting as the Convention’s spokesperson**

97. I have been representing the Convention in major international fora and presenting Ramsar’s views to high-levels representatives around the world. This includes global debates on Rio+20, the Green Economy, international environmental governance, water and food security, climate change, urban development, biodiversity, environmental and social safeguards, Planet Workshop, and the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO).

**i) Providing direction on how to keep the Convention relevant to global and regional priorities**

98. My leadership actions are essentially taken to enhance the recognition of the contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The most significant achievements made to encourage the implementation of the Ramsar Convention and to make its work relevant to global, regional, and national challenges are related to the following subject areas:
- Management of wetland ecosystems as an integral part of landscape planning;
  - Enhancing the implementation of the Convention at local level, recognizing the important role that local governments, regions, and cities can play in land use planning, including urban development and water and wetland management. My actions in this regard are done through partnership with UN-HABITAT and ICLEI;
  - Promoting the role of wetlands and Ramsar in the global debate on international environmental governance and sustainable development;
99. Under my leadership, the Secretariat participates in the debate on the concept of a Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication with UNEP and other organizations, mainly through the work of the Environment Management Group (EMG).
100. I encouraged Ramsar Contracting Parties to participate actively in the preparation of Rio +20 so as to take advantage of the chance to connect with those who operate outside the Ramsar community and to ensure a productive outcome from the Summit.
101. I am now actively taking part in the consultation Post-2015 Development Agenda Consultation on Water: Water Resources Management and Wastewater Management & Water Quality.
102. The Secretariat is making significant efforts to participate in the deliberations of the most relevant Commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD).
103. My key approach has always been to use “water” as an “entry point” when explaining the significance of wetland values for life on earth.

**Secretariat actions to enhance the recognition of the contribution of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods and human health, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and mitigation**

104. The most significant achievements made to encourage the implementation of the Ramsar Convention and to make its work relevant to global challenges are related to the management of wetland ecosystems as an integral part of landscape planning, including urban planning
105. Most of the interactions with key players are intended to increase the recognition of significant facts regarding wetlands, such as:
- Wetlands are part of the overall landscapes.
  - The root causes of wetland degradation are unsustainable land use planning, together with actions that damage vital functions and services provided by wetland

ecosystems such as flood and water flow regulation, water quality enhancement, water transport, groundwater recharge, reduction of storm damage, providing habitat for species, providing food, and providing opportunities to adapt and mitigate climate change.

- Ecosystem uses are increasingly seen as a “win-win situation” which generates substantial ecological, social and economic benefits.

### **The role of the Ramsar Convention as an MEA dealing with water**

106. Over the past six years, the key area of focus in this regard has been through the work of UN-WATER on challenges and trends, drivers and impacts related to water quality. The Ramsar Secretariat supports the UN-WATER Policy, presenting four strategies for policy solutions and a series of specific recommendations through which these solutions can be achieved. It would be useful to see if the STRP can examine this policy paper in order to advise the Ramsar Contracting Parties.
107. Since water quality is a complex issue involving a wide range of stakeholders, to address the challenges we need strong partnerships at all levels, involving the public and private sectors and civil society at international, watershed, national and local levels. The Secretariat encourages strong support from all Contracting Parties and Ramsar partners to raise awareness and stimulate collective action to reverse the current trends.

### **The role of the Convention in promoting people’s livelihoods through contributions to environmental and social safeguard policies**

108. The Secretariat is actively participating in the ongoing deliberations on the possibility for UN-wide environmental and social safeguards. Key UN organizations are discussing how to translate principles into practice, and Ramsar is making significant efforts to influence decisions that aim to convert or alter wetlands through market-based activities that fail to take into account the total costs of service loss. Our efforts are intended to prevent behaviors that are detrimental to wetland service delivery and to stimulate actions that increase or maintain wetland service delivery to improve human livelihoods. To that end, the Secretariat is increasingly working with some major players, including the UN agencies that are supporting activities on the ground.
109. “Environmental and Social Safeguards”, according to the UNEP Environmental Management Group’s website, refers to “the adaption and integration of precautionary environmental and social principles and considerations into decision making processes. The objective of such safeguards is to prevent and mitigate undue harm to the environment and people at the earliest possible planning stage. Safeguards can appear as a combination of minimum standards and best practice guidelines.” It is well known that a policy, programme or project that addresses one issue can affect other issues, which may not be less important. For example, inappropriate biofuel subsidies to reduce reliance on fossil fuels can contribute to wetland degradation (especially peatlands), food shortage, and deforestation.
110. In all our working relationships with the Contracting Parties and various organizations, our key objective is to raise awareness about wetland values in order to help shape public opinion towards an integrated view of human livelihoods and wetlands and the necessity to ensure healthy and productive wetlands for existing and future generations.

### **The role of the Convention in adaptation and mitigation of climate change**

111. The Secretariat is pleased to report that some promising progress has been made to enhance our knowledge and promote effective management of wetlands, including restoration, under climate change scenarios. This refers to actions that are taken to support basic human needs for food and water but also provide carbon credits to investors that are willing to support wetland management and restoration. In this regard our partnership with the Danone Group and IUCN has been significant.

### **Climate change and freshwater**

112. Many scientists are working to clarify emerging issues to assist policy makers and decision makers in addressing climate change through wetland conservation and wise use. It is worth noting the recent publication of a special issue of the journal *Marine & Freshwater Research* (March 2011) on “Conservation management of rivers and wetlands under climate change”. This publication confirms and supports the Ramsar principles on River Basin Management and investigates a number of topics such as analyses of droughts, floods and freshwater ecosystems; evaluating climate change impacts and developing adaptation strategies; freshwater conservation options for a changing climate; a new era in catchment management: integration of environmental flow assessment and freshwater conservation planning; dam re-operation as a freshwater climate change adaptation and conservation measure.

#### **j) Promoting common understanding of wetlands by all Ramsar Contracting Parties and Ramsar partners, including IOPs**

113. During each Standing Committee meeting as well as at COP10 and COP11, I have been drawing the attention of the Contracting Parties to the role the Convention can play to contribute to solutions to major challenges at global, national and local level. In this regard, in 2010, my focus was on wetlands and climate change, wetlands and economic development, particularly through sustainable tourism, wetlands biodiversity, wetlands and water quality, wetlands and food security. To translate these views into action, I am building and reinforcing partnership between Ramsar and key players, including the UN system through active participation in the work of the Environment Management Group (chaired by the UNEP Executive Director) and the UN-Water process. Another approach to enhance the recognition of the Ramsar Convention as an important player for conservation and sustainable development is our partnership with the World Bank, UN-HABITAT, five biodiversity-related conventions, FAO, and the UN World Tourism Organization. Therefore, although the Ramsar Secretariat is not managed by the UN system, the Convention is increasingly involved in global debate and the Ramsar Strategic Plan is implemented so as to contribute to sustainable development.
114. I promote the role of the Ramsar Convention as an MEA dealing with water and the vital role of wetlands as water providers for human wellbeing and livelihoods, biodiversity, climate change adaptation and mitigation, economic and social development, and human health. To enhance the role of wetland management for water quality, I continuously suggest and encourage the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, through strong partnership at all levels, involving the public and private sectors and civil society at international, watershed, national and local levels.

115. I continuously draw the attention of Contracting Parties to major threats to wetlands and the ecosystem services that are lost due to extractives industries, solid and liquid wastes, unsustainable land use, over-extraction of water, and destruction of biodiversity habitats. Special attention is given to assisting Contracting Parties in the management and conservation of listed sites whose ecological character is threatened. This is frequently carried out through the Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM); 19 RAMs have been carried out since my arrival as Secretary General, including some extremely challenging ones, involving not only technical but also political issues and international law. Despite the complexity of the issues, our action has always been successful in dealing with all those matters.
- k) Being aware of major trends regarding environmental issues and how to communicate the Secretary General's view to the Secretariat**
116. I always use staff meetings and the discussions of the Secretariat's Management Group to draw the attention of the Ramsar Staff to key issues affecting wetlands and the work of the Convention. These issues include a massive explosion of urban development, with major impacts on our environment, including wetlands; extractive industries, and waste dumping affecting water quality; degradation of key wetland types such as mangroves, coral reefs, estuaries, river floodplains and deltas.
- l) Promoting and ensuring effective synergies with the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) and other environment-related treaties, appropriate intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions, and the private sector**
117. My work with five other-biodiversity-related conventions and the so-called Rio Conventions is increasingly making them aware of the value of wetlands not only for biodiversity, but also for adaptation and mitigation of climate change and for controlling desertification. While reviewing the BLG's mandate, we are making attempts to strengthen ties with the Rio Conventions.
118. Before the CBD's COP10, BLG members agreed to seek the understanding of the Parties to the different conventions that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 is not only relevant to the CBD, but to all the biodiversity-related conventions as well. The BLG has been successful in terms of promoting greater cooperation between secretariats.
119. However, this increased collaboration has not been matched at the national level, and there are still many challenges to make the conventions work together on the ground. One of them relates to the different capacities of the biodiversity-related conventions in terms of financial and human resources. For instance, the CBD has received a lot of money to support the review of biodiversity strategies and action plans at regional and national levels, but we do not have any funding at all to make sure that we are fully contributing to that process. We are doing the best we can but we do not have capacity. There is no available funding for our Contracting Parties to fully participate in the review of biodiversity strategies.
120. Since the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity itself is not just for the CBD, but for all the biodiversity-related conventions, we need to make sure that all the conventions have a minimum of capacity in terms of human and financial resources so that they are able to contribute to the implementation of that Plan.

121. The Ramsar Secretariat and the STRP are actively participating in the establishment of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). However, despite the clear message sent to IPBES by Ramsar COP11 through Resolution XI.1 as well as the relevant decisions from the other biodiversity-related conventions, the voice of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) remains weak in the debate. The only way to address this challenge is through the voices of the representatives of the Contracting Parties which have ratified those conventions and are committed to use all available tools, including IPBES, to fully use the conventions as frameworks for effective scientific knowledge and policies that support sustainable development. Although the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions will participate in the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) as observers, and though the convention secretariats have been afforded automatic observer status in the Plenary, the reality is that this observer status is not enough to recognize the importance of MEAs in the work of IPBES.
  122. The Ramsar Secretariat therefore requests the support of Contracting Parties so that in the future, IPBES members could consider some means to ensure effective consultation between the convention secretariats and the Bureau – perhaps drawing upon the practice under IPCC. This might be an element of the strategic partnership with MEAs to be developed in the future.
  123. One encouraging sign from IPBES is the fact that the procedures recognize the challenges that the timing of IPBES submissions may pose for the conventions, given that each convention has its own timetables and decision-making processes. In this regard, we appreciate the flexibility afforded to allow relevant input from the conventions. IPBES members, and their representatives in the governing bodies of the conventions, might wish to consider further practical means to streamline these processes and facilitate the communication between the Platform and the conventions at the levels of the governing bodies, scientific bodies and secretariats.
  124. All secretariats and scientific bodies of biodiversity-related conventions are keen to work with the IPBES Secretariat and Panel to provide inputs to the intersessional process in line with the procedures established. In line with decisions of our Conferences of the Parties, the Secretariat and the STRP are seeking guidance from the Ramsar Standing Committee so as to facilitate inputs to IPBES-2 arising from the decisions of SC46.
- m) Communicating the Ramsar voice to relevant organizations, including the UN system, other conventions, NGOs, and new Ramsar partners;**
125. The involvement of the Ramsar Secretariat in the work of UN-Water is also increasingly responding to the need to be better connected to the UN system, including the Chief Executives Board (CEB) and the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP). These linkages are being further strengthened through the dialogue that we initiated last year between the chairs of UN-Water, UN-Oceans, and UN-Energy. In addition, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) is now becoming directly engaged in UN-Water's activities. This high-level engagement will strengthen the links of UN-Water not only to UN DESA but also to a number of key processes in the UN system at large. For example, the UN-Water members and partners were keenly interested in the

preparations for the Rio+20 Summit, and the guidance from UN-DESA is key in ensuring that significant and relevant messages were fed into the preparatory process.

126. Additional actions are being taken at different levels. At regional level, the Secretariat is increasing its partnership with River/Lake Basin Organizations, both with specific river or lake organizations as well as with the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO). The last General Assembly of INBO, held in Dakar, Senegal, gave the Ramsar Secretary General the opportunity to address the Assembly and to discuss six thematic areas of work with the river/lake organizations.
127. At national level, the Secretariat is increasingly working with the water sector in Ramsar Contracting Parties, stimulating joint actions between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the Ministry of Water as well as the technical agencies within the water sector.

**n) Taking action to broaden Ramsar's community**

***Enhancing the implementation of the Convention at local level***

128. The Secretariat is recognizing the important role that local governments, regions, and cities can play in land use planning, including urban development and water and wetland management. Some states, regions or cities are translating national policies into action. In the absence of national policies, some local governments and cities are even taking the lead in developing local policies that may provide models for future national efforts. However, these local policies need technical support to suitably integrate wetland issues into their development plans.
129. The Secretariat acknowledges the fact that many wetlands, including Ramsar Sites, are under the direct or indirect influence of local governments and cities, and in fact, all wetlands are under the direct influence of local stakeholders. Taking that into account, the Secretariat is now involved in the global efforts that support integrated approaches to environmental protection and sustainability at local level through cooperation with ICLEI ('International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives') - Local Governments for Sustainability. ICLEI is an association of over 1,220 local government members that are committed to sustainable development. Their members come from 70 different countries and represent more than 569,885,000 people.
130. ICLEI's basic premise is that locally designed initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national, and global sustainability objectives. They emphasize the linkages and coordination of regional and municipal services and the role of local governments in:
  - land-use, energy and transportation planning;
  - infrastructure design;
  - purchase and use of sustainable products and services;
  - building retrofits;
  - water conservation;
  - solid waste diversion; and
  - use of renewable energy.



131. Cooperation with ICLEI has begun through two areas of work: in Nagoya, Japan, on Biodiversity and Wetlands, and in Cape Town, South Africa, on local government actions on climate change.
132. Ramsar cooperation with UN-HABITAT is also growing, in order to encourage cities to integrate wetland management into their urban planning, taking into account that for the first time in human history, most of the world's population lives in cities (3.3 billion people), and the urban landscape continues to grow. According to the United Nations' publication "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision", the urban areas of the world are expected to absorb all the population growth expected over the next four decades while at the same time drawing in some of the rural population. Globally, the level of urbanization is expected to rise from 50 per cent in 2009 to 69 per cent in 2050.
133. The Secretariat has been involved in the celebration of the theme of World Water Day 2012, "Water and Urbanization", under the slogan "Water for Cities: Responding to the Urban Challenge", which is raising awareness of the impact of rapid urban population growth, industrialization, and the uncertainties caused by climate change, conflicts and natural disasters on urban water systems. The Secretariat has joined relevant organizations in encouraging action by governments, organizations, communities, and individuals around the world to engage in addressing urban water management challenges.

***Enhancing the implementation of the Convention at national and international levels***

134. In collaboration with some important players, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), NOAA, the USGS, and other scientific bodies, the Secretariat has been seeking to improve our knowledge about linkages that need to be taken into account to implement the Convention. Our working relationships with many players have confirmed that the world we live in is completely interdependent. The environment (including wetlands, climate, and biodiversity), the economies, water supplies, food supplies, even health are globally interdependent. We recognize that in society today, as in nature, all things are connected. Understanding the connectivity between land and sea, especially through the network of riverine wetlands and coastal wetlands, is a key aspect of the work of the Convention. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the challenge for wetland management to establish scientifically confirmed linkages between ecological and socio-economic systems, especially over large geographic scales. It is not enough to show correlation – effective management requires establishing the underlying mechanisms of observed changes. Unfortunately, the data required to support such analyses rarely exist; however, through increasing partnership, we can improve the trends.

***Legal framework and wetlands***

135. To stimulate positive incentives and discourage negative incentives, the Secretariat organized and led the first workshop with magistrates in West Africa to influence attitudes toward a regulation or a change in legal enforcement to enhance conservation. This judiciary workshop on environmental law was held from 27 to 30 April 2009 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire – it was sponsored by the Ramsar Secretariat, UNEP, IEPF, the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions and Star Alliance through its Biosphere Connection programme, with inputs from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), CBD, UNCCD, CITES and the Basel Convention Secretariat. Forty-five magistrates practicing in various tribunals, courts of appeal and supreme courts in West and Central

African countries took part in the seminar. Trainers came from the Universities of Limoges and Nantes in France and the University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

136. In addition, the Ramsar Secretary General and the Dean and Vice President of Stetson University signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 18 February 2010, between the Secretariat and the Stetson College of Law, which has an outstanding programme in international environmental law. The main objective of the MoU is to develop a collaborative law and policy programme for sustainable wetland and water resource conservation and management by increasing current consultation and cooperation. Common areas for joint conservation activities are conducting research related to wetland law and policy and collaboration with Ramsar Regional Initiatives, under the framework of Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015.

**o) Preparing the annual meetings of the Standing Committee and the triennial meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties efficiently**

137. During my tenure 11 Standing Committee meetings, from SC36 to SC46, have been successfully organized and held. Two meetings of the Conference of the Parties have been prepared, along with 10 pre-COP regional meetings to organize COP10 and COP11. This is an opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to the Republic of Korea for hosting COP10 and to Romania for hosting COP11 I also congratulate the Secretariat staff, especially Sandra Hails who took the responsibilities to handle all logistics issues for COP10 and COP11.
138. However, we have to advise the Contracting Parties and Ramsar partners about the challenges that need to be addressed in organizing future COPs. In this regard, it is worth noting that there is an urgent need to find the right balance between COPs expectations and the capacity of the Secretariat. Finding voluntary funding in difficult economic times to cover the cost of COP is a real challenge.

**p) Providing guidance and encouraging action to ensure collaborative activities involving Contracting Parties, Secretariat, STRP and IOPs;**

139. I continue to support basin-wide strategic planning and activities with River/Lake Organizations, involving many countries in all regions. I have articulated better working relationships with UNEP and other UN agencies, including the GEF and other environmental conventions. Our involvement with the GEF is carried out in conjunction with the STRP and some Ramsar Contracting Parties, as well as Ramsar International Organizations Partners, especially IUCN, WWF and Wetlands International.
140. Cooperation with Arab States has been improved through a meeting with the League of Arab States. Follow up is being undertaken to facilitate concrete joint actions.
141. A new agreement with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) was signed during my visit in Oceania to promote cooperation in the South Pacific region and provide assistance to protect and improve wetlands as way to contribute to sustainable development. An action plan is under implementation and we have renewed our agreement.

142. There is an active participation of the Secretariat in the establishment and implementation of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) which is one of the world's great flyways. The development of sustainable tourism along migratory bird flyways is under preparation involving the Ramsar Secretariat, UNESCO (World Heritage & MAB), IUCN, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, the CBD Secretariat, CMS/AEWA Secretariats, and the UN World Tourism Organization. The next project phase will identify different projects or even a series of clusters of projects, including specific projects that may last for 10 years, involving flyways in Africa, Asia-Oceania, and Europe.
143. The Secretariat has facilitated and encouraged the development of Regional Initiatives to enhance cooperation between Contracting Parties and IOPs. All Regional Initiatives are encouraged to use STRP guidance. The Secretariat involves STRP in all Montreux Record issues, the UN-Water process, and climate change issues.
144. As noted above, the Secretariat is providing a significant contribution in conjunction with the STRP in the Intergovernmental Platform on the interface of Science and Policy for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) with UNEP and all Ramsar Contracting Parties. The joint contribution from the Ramsar Secretariat and the STRP is highly appreciated by UNEP and by the other biodiversity-related conventions.
145. Ten Regional pre-COP meetings have been successfully organized to prepare COP10 and COP11, with active participation from the SRTP and IOPs, despite the difficulties in fundraising. These meetings were used to listen to the desires and needs of Contracting Parties. Careful actions are being taken to respond to the requests of Contracting Parties in close collaboration with the STRP and the Ramsar IOPs.
- q) Maintaining effective and harmonious working relations with the host institution of the Ramsar Secretariat (IUCN)**
146. In 2010, a new Services Agreement with IUCN was successfully prepared and signed, which has facilitated our working relationships. The new agreement has been implemented smoothly and efficiently as substantiated in Document SC41-05 on Status of the Secretariat services agreement with IUCN. As a result, IUCN and Ramsar are benefiting from mutual support.
147. In Resolution XI.1 (2012) the Parties, after some years of consultations on various options for institutional hosting of the Secretariat, reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining the Secretariat's facilities and services with IUCN.
- r) Maintaining effective and harmonious working relations with the host country of the Ramsar Secretariat (Switzerland)**
148. I have been able, with the help of my colleagues, to handle and manage all working relationships with the Swiss authorities. The Ramsar Secretariat is receiving and excellent and continued support from the Swiss government.

## **Objective/Target 2: Preparing and implementing the Secretariat Work Plan**

- a) Taking leadership in the preparation of the Secretariat Work Plan**

149. Each year I take the lead and prepare the first draft of the Secretariat Work Plan and share it with all Ramsar staff for input.

**b) Involving all staff members in the preparation of the Work Plan**

150. After receiving comments from most Ramsar staff, I review the document and share it again with all staff before sending it to the Standing Committee for comments and endorsement.

**c) Ensuring that the Secretariat Work Plan is in line with the Convention's Strategic Plan**

151. The Work Plan is structured to reflect the Ramsar Strategic Plan and to ensure that our services to Ramsar Contracting Parties and partners are facilitating the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The Work Plan always provides a listing of the main activities that are being undertaken by the Secretariat in relation to its role and responsibilities for the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2009-2015 adopted by COP10 Resolution X.1 (2008).

152. Since the Strategic Plan provides the overarching structure and content for implementation by each of the Convention's bodies and processes, the Work Plan is structured by Secretariat activities and "Key Result Areas" (KRAs) for each activity for which the Secretariat has a direct implementation responsibility. Only those Strategic Plan Strategies are listed on the Work Plan. During its work the Secretariat also, when requested, provides support and advice to Contracting Parties and other Convention bodies in their implementation of many of the other Strategies established under the Strategic Plan.

**Objective/Target 3: Implementation of the Secretariat Work Plan**

**a) Ensuring that the Work Plan clearly identifies the team leader and the other team members for each Strategic Action and the tasks to implement those actions**

153. All Ramsar Secretariat Work Plans from 2008 to 2013 clearly identify the team leader and the other team members for each Strategic Action and the tasks to implement those actions.

**b) Ensuring that staff members are fully aware of priority issues to address weekly**

154. The minutes of our weekly staff meetings are available in electronic versions and they all describe how I remind staff members about the priority actions to take during each week.

**c) Monitoring the implementation of the Work Plan and reporting to the Standing Committee**

155. Staff meetings and meetings of the Secretariat's Management Group are used to monitor our progress. The results are reported to Standing Committee through the Annual Report of the Secretary General.

**Objective/Target 4: Effectively manage the Secretariat so as to maintain the commitment of the staff to their tasks**

**a) Taking the lead to ensure that the staff structure and the line management are clear**

156. The staff structure has been updated to include new staff members. Line management responsibilities have been reviewed and updated. The Terms of Reference of all staff members have been updated and are available in electronic versions.

**b) Taking the lead to ensure that all recruitments of new staff members are transparent and in line with Swiss law and IUCN policy**

157. 26 recruitments were made from July 2007 to March 2013 by a selection panel, in line with IUCN policy and Swiss law. Decisions are made by consensus up to the final choice of the new staff member, and formal appointment is made by the Secretary General. Two internal appointments were made by the Secretary General, upgrading one intern in 2008 and a second one in 2009 to P1 for one year so as to fill a gap and avoid losing momentum in undertaking some important Ramsar's activities.

**c) Communicating regularly and effectively with all Secretariat staff**

158. I regularly communicate to the Secretariat staff my strong views on how the world is changing and how the Convention can continue to be relevant and address the real challenges. In this regard, I have been insisting over the past six years on the challenges we are facing due to the economic crisis as well as the limitation of the core budget and the inadequate level of voluntary funding.

**d) Responding to staff requests**

159. In addition to the regular weekly staff meetings and the meetings of senior staff, I undertake individual consultation with each staff member to discuss specific issues. My door is open to all staff at any time for urgent matters, and I communicate through e-mail and telephone during my absence. I provide immediate responses to requests from staff.

**e) Providing financial incentives and other actions to encourage and motivate staff**

160. From 2008 to 2011, salary increases were made, taking into account the results of annual performance evaluation, the overall salary costs, and the financial situation. However, due to the financial crisis, salary increases have not been provided following the 2011 performance evaluation. 2012 has been a difficult year and I alerted all staff members. Instead, I used non-monetary reward such as:

- recognizing achievements and encouraging innovation;
- providing mentoring to promote improvement;
- providing opportunities to work with skillful and experienced people outside the Secretariat;
- encouraging informal interactions between Secretariat staff such as excursions;
- continuing to offer possibilities for visits to Ramsar Sites; and

- continuing to provide time off to compensate for weekends spent on travel or hard working hours.
- f) **Ensuring that the management of the Secretariat effectively engages and supports the Contracting Parties wherever possible**
161. The Secretariat's annual Work Plan is made with a strong focus on our responses to the needs of Contracting Parties. The assessment of the implementation of the overall annual Work Plan as well as the performance evaluation of individual work plans are mainly based on the assistance that is effectively provided to Contracting Parties.
- g) **Having a solid understanding of cultural diversity and gender issues and taking them into account in the management of the Ramsar Secretariat and in relations with the Ramsar constituency**
162. I use different tools to recognize and better understand the diversity and difference within the Ramsar staff: in my working relationships I make efforts to understand not only the identity related to personal characteristics but also the diversity of identity vis-à-vis gender, nationality, language, politics, and so forth. For instance, with the assistance of a facilitator, we used the *StrengthsFinder* tool for an exercise to map the team and identify the strengths of each staff member. Following an internal consultation, the whole Secretariat agreed to embark on a comprehensive and inclusive process, including a key step in September 2010, resulting in continued organizational improvements called 'Ramsar staff Advance'.
163. In this process, one of my guiding principles has been to strengthen the efficiency of the Secretariat through sincere teamwork that enhances the possibility to delegate responsibilities to staff members who share a common vision of the future and are united in their pursuit of that vision.
164. Recognizing that it is important to be able to distribute power to those who are skilled and committed on our common vision, I decided to better understand and develop our strengths instead of concentrating on our shortcomings and complaining about weaknesses. As a result, all staff members agreed to work as a team with an external facilitator who can help identify our strengths.
165. To help the Ramsar staff members discover their talents, the facilitator introduced and used an online assessment called the StrengthsFinder. All staff members gave a positive response and used this new tool to discover their strengths. This process was initiated with the assistance of an external facilitator, Ms. Gillian Martin Mehers, Director of Bright Green Learning @Atadore SARL. We take this opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to Ms. Martin Mehers for providing her valuable and efficient assistance. This tool enabled each staff member to better know him/herself and give a chance to our colleagues to know each of us better. The tool also helps to map the team's strengths and thus make the teamwork easier and more efficient, capitalizing on the strengths of the different team members.
166. In addition, as part of our exploration of culture, respect for diversity, and respect for interdependence in the context of a larger organizational system working towards common goals, I asked an independent facilitator to introduce another new tool: FIRO-B. As a

result, FIRO-B provided me with a starting point for conversations about behavioral preferences related to inclusion, control and affection of each staff member. Understanding these diverse preferences has enabled me to consider options for improving working relationships and thereby the working environment now and in the future.

## **Objective/Target 5: Fundraising and financial management**

### **a) Ensuring a clear picture and understanding of the financial health of the organization**

167. To respond to this I first reviewed the Finance Officer job description and Terms of Reference for the recruitment for a new Finance Officer. The new TOR includes strategic planning and monitoring to assess the financial health of the Convention Secretariat. The new TOR also includes continued assessment of the quality of the services that IUCN is providing to the Convention.
168. Following the recruitment of the new Finance Officer, we worked together on daily activities dealing with the Secretariat's planned and actual income, expenses and the resulting balance. This careful monitoring has been instrumental in understanding the financial challenges for each year. Accordingly, I was able to alert the Executive Team about the financial risks in a timely and rigorous manner. I submitted to SC43 a set of recommendations to address 2011/2 challenges in a proactive way.
169. Based on the fact that cost optimization is my major obligation regarding financial management, in 2009, in consultation with the Finance Officer, I took the following actions to reduce the cost of the Secretariat functioning:
- a fundamental review of the agreement between IUCN and the Ramsar Secretariat on administration and financial management. We eliminated unnecessary financial burdens and a new agreement was signed to better reflect the services required of and deliverable by IUCN.
  - cost and output optimization in terms of staff, which was ensured by laying out a policy for managing salary increases over 2009-2012. This was used to manage staff expectations and ensure that precious funds were not squandered.
  - careful overall financial management, including financial risk management by identifying its sources, measuring it, and planning to address risk. Our financial risk management has specifically focused on income vulnerabilities, currency issues, and liquidity/cash flow.

### **b) Ensuring that IUCN's financial report provides high quality financial information to promote monitoring and informed decision making at Secretariat and SC level**

170. Daily communication with the IUCN Finance Division is made to ensure exchange of accurate information and make sure that Ramsar operations are in line with the IUCN finance policy and relevant Swiss law. The monthly financial report produced by IUCN is carefully reviewed by the Ramsar Financial Officer and the Secretary General. Necessary corrections are always made to finalize the report before we share it with the Chairperson of the Subgroup on Finance and Ramsar staff.

171. As an encouraging sign of our excellent working relationship within the IUCN arrangements, we received a very helpful report on internal audit from IUCN in 2012. This report confirms our understanding of the financial situation, and it strongly supported the recommendations we made to SC43 on financial matters.
- c) Ensuring that the budgeting process reflects and supports the Strategic Plan and the priorities of the Convention**
172. Our budgeting process is now twofold: a) core budget supported by the annual financial contributions from Contracting Parties, and b) voluntary funding to support activities that cannot be covered by the core budget. I consider that our current process is a major improvement, but it would be helpful to continue to refine the way in which we budget, capture, and report the actual costs of our activities, in order to optimize the direction of resources. One of the main weak elements relates to capturing how staff time is spent. In addition there is insufficient support to our non-core operations. There is a need to increase and enhance Contracting Party accountability for the objectives, outcomes, incomes and allocation of expenditures to the non-core budget, which are quite sidelined within our current processes.
- d) Providing support and guidance to fundraising efforts in order to ensure adequate income and strong interest and commitment to Ramsar from the donor community**
173. The Finance Officer and I have been undertaking regular contacts with potential donors to enhance the commitment of specific donors to support not only the Secretariat but also the management of wetlands by Contracting Parties. This includes regional banks, bilateral agencies, GEF, and the private sector. The support of Danone/Evian has been revived, with an increasing financial contribution from 2008 to 2010.
174. Our approach with regard to private sector, however, has always been with careful consideration. This explains why I prepared and submitted to COP10 the “Principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector”, which were adopted by the Parties in Resolution X.12. This Resolution encourages the business sector to seek practical ways, in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat as resources permit, to understand the linkages between their activities and wetlands ecosystems, to avoid negative impacts, and to mitigate unavoidable effects throughout the supply and production chain; to assess the status and trends of conservation of wetlands, including the threats and opportunities to maintain the structure and functions of wetland ecosystems throughout various stages of commercial activities; and to understand and appreciate the values of the ecosystem services and products on which they rely and the wetland types that produce those benefits.
175. Funding proposals are prepared by the Secretariat and submitted to donors to attract voluntary funding. In addition to the annual financial contributions, the Secretariat receives voluntary funding from some Contracting Parties. For instance, 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, and Japan’s 2011 support to Bhutan and Lao PDR.



176. Working carefully and sensitively with the Partnership Coordinator and the Senior Regional Advisors, we submitted to the Standing Committee and COP11 a Strategic Framework for Partnerships. This framework was intended to provide the strategic context for mapping out the Secretariat's future approaches in a consistent and coherent way, ensuring that partnerships and collaborative relationships contribute to and enhance the ultimate mission of the Convention.

**e) Expanding the sources and diversity of Ramsar's funding support**

177. To enhance our capacity for fundraising, a proposal on partnership development was submitted to COP10, which was partially endorsed by COP10 through Resolution X.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters*. The Secretariat initiated the implementation of this Decision in 2009. The Partnership Coordinator (the only new position that was accepted by COP10) took office in February 2011.

**f) Ensuring an effective management of the Ramsar Secretariat budget, including the submission of audited accounts for each financial year to all Contracting Parties, through the Standing Committee**

178. Over the past five years, I have been able to present to the Standing Committee audited annual accounts that demonstrate the effective management of the Ramsar budget. Because of the difficult situation that was beyond our control in 2011, special attention was paid to all expenses so as to reduce the risks of deficit. Available surpluses have been used to replenish the Reserve Fund. Even for 2011, despite serious challenges due to the economic crisis and the rate of exchange, a surplus of CHF 166,000 was added to the Reserve Fund.

179. The accounts for 2012 will be audited in March 2013, and the results will be communicated to all Contracting Parties as soon as they are available. The Secretariat anticipates a 2012 surplus of CHF 344,000. Adding this surplus to the Reserve Fund will give a Reserve Fund balance of CHF 812,000.

**Objective/Target 6: Efficient collaboration with Ramsar partners, especially the IOPs**

**a) Maintaining an adequate exposure to and a good understanding of world current affairs, including the workings of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other intergovernmental institutions, in particular the UN system**

180. I have been successful in working with the UN system through important processes, including the CSD, the Environment Management Group, UN-Water process, the RIO+20 and the Post-2015 development agenda. Through the Biodiversity Liaison Group I work closely with five other environmental conventions. In addition we have a joint Work Plan with the Convention on Biological Diversity and regular collaboration with the UNEP- World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC).

181. Currently I am involved in the open consultation process to identify priorities from citizens around the world for the post-2015 development agenda, as the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) reach their target date in 2015. The global consultation process is organized around 11 thematic areas, and water was chosen as one of those. Given the importance of water, especially due to the fact that water underpins most of the other MDGs and any future goals, it is critical that there is an insightful and informative debate on the role of water in the post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, I have participated, as a panel member, in the discussions that focus on specific areas related to water, involving representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society and business, as well as Ramsar International Organizations partners. These discussions will be synthesized into recommendations for how to move forward in the post-2015 development agenda.

182. I also work closely with the Ramsar International Organizations Partners as well as with national INGOs on water, wetlands, biodiversity, climate change and food security.

**b) Maintaining and improve working relationships with the IOPs**

183. As described in DOC SC42-13 on “Collaborative review with the International Organization Partners of the Convention’s relationships with the IOPs”, I have taken actions to respond to Decision SC41-26. From 27 to 28 September 2010, a meeting was held between the Secretariat and the IOPs to undertake a strategic review and consider future priorities for IOPs’ collaboration with the Ramsar Convention.
184. As a result of this consultation, during SC42 I described the vital role of the IOPs in assisting the Convention and Parties at all levels, regional, national, and local, and I welcomed the representatives of the five IOPs who gathered to sign a new Memorandum of Cooperation with the Convention. They were Jim Leape, Director General of WWF International; Jane Madgwick, CEO of Wetlands International; Deborah Bossio, team leader at IWMI; Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN; and Marco Lambertini, CEO of BirdLife International.

**Objective/Target 7: Effective communication**

**a) Establishing an effective framework for communicating Ramsar’s objectives and work**

185. One of our main tools for communication is an expansive section of the Ramsar website devoted to the Convention’s programme for Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA). This is a clearing house for CEPA resource materials that is also designed to give readers a broad view of what the CEPA programme is meant to achieve for wetland conservation and wise use and why that is important. It identifies the institutional structures and materials that are intended to guide implementers of the programme and offers practical advice on key topics for practitioners.
186. Through regular contact with significant organizations and distinctive people, including officials from river/lake basin organizations, members of parliaments, ministers, UN officers and the media, I have been promoting effective communication to facilitate partnership at national and international levels, enhancing the image of the Convention, and encouraging the recognition of wetland values and their importance for sustainable development by key decision makers.

187. With the Danone Group, I negotiated a special programme communication, education, participation and awareness involving local communities and NGOs. This programme, known as “Ecoles de l’eau”, was launched and undertaken from 2008 to 2011.
  188. To help Contracting Parties through the process of updating Ramsar Site information, the Assistant Advisors and the Regional Affairs Officer designed a step-by-step video guide that will walk the Parties through the necessary steps to submit their RIS updates. This user-friendly training tool, available on the Ramsar YouTube Channel, is currently in English and will soon also be available in French and Spanish.”
  189. Ramsar Sites are the flagship of the Convention and the Ramsar Sites Information Service is crucial to help the Convention fulfill its core business: the management of the Ramsar List. The RSIS overhaul is thus a top priority for the Secretariat for the next triennium. The new RSIS will allow safer, more efficient and more user-friendly data entry, management, analysis and publication of information related to Ramsar Sites, including spatial and temporal data. The new RSIS is intended to support a growing range of information needs of users and improve interoperability between Ramsar and other external platforms and tools.
  190. The new RSIS will, for the first time, allow the electronic online submission and storage of all the information provided by Contracting Parties through the new Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) format adopted by Contracting Parties in July 2012. The new system will hold both historical data from the existing sites database and newly submitted information on Ramsar Sites. It will improve data reliability/security, make data more easily accessible, increase awareness about wetlands, and save Secretariat staff time via the online submission system and an optimized online workflow process. It will have a strong geospatial mapping component, making the spatial representation of Ramsar Sites as the main entry point.
  191. The Secretariat, through Resolution XI.8 (2012), has the lead responsibility for managing the process of the necessary redevelopment of the RSIS, planned for completion prior to January 2015. The project team includes the whole Secretariat, but we have also established an RSIS Core team, the decision-making body including the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, the Finance Officer, and the Regional Affairs Officer, with the Regional Affairs Officer serving as the project manager responsible for the overall operational steps of the redevelopment process. The project of redevelopment was kicked off internally in October 2012. Since then, the specifications for the new RSIS were described and a request for proposals was prepared and disseminated at the beginning of February, with a deadline for submission on the 26th of March. The Secretariat is expecting to select the successful implementer(s) in April.
  192. It is also planned to review the Secretariat’s current communication team, taking into account existing positions and opportunities to strengthen that area of our work during when some retirements are foreseen.
- b) Developing effective relationships with Parties, donors, relevant IGOs and IOPs**
193. Right after I took office, we launched a process to enhance the Ramsar website and make it more user-friendly to increase the diversity of people using it so as to better

communicate with Ramsar Contracting Parties, Ramsar partners, and all types of stakeholders. We have long been using the celebration of the World Wetland Days as a special occasion to draw attention to the vital role of wetlands for water and food security, human health, biodiversity, economic development, energy production, and adaptation and mitigation of climate change. Every year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. Since 1998, the Ramsar Secretariat, with generous financial assistance from the private sector Danone Group, has offered a new selection of posters, stickers, videos, pocket calendars, leaflets and information packs free of charge and has suggested a unifying theme for the benefit of those who wish to use it. In recent years we have used the following themes to raise awareness about wetlands:

2012: Wetland Tourism: A Great Experience; Wetlands and Tourism, linked to the theme for COP11: Wetlands, Tourism and Recreation, which took place in July 2012, in Bucharest, Romania.

2011: Wetlands and Forests, especially chosen because 2011 is the UN International Year of Forests.

2010: With the World Wetlands Day theme on wetlands, biodiversity and climate change, we finally arrived at our 2010 WWD slogan: Caring for wetlands – an answer to climate change.

2009: River Basins: Upstream-Downstream: Wetlands connect us all

2008: Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People, also be the theme for Ramsar's COP10 in 2008 in the Republic of Korea.

194. For WWD2013 we have joined hands with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme who have a lead role for the International Year and they have partnered with us in the production of our poster and leaflet. Our 2013 theme is *Wetlands and water management*, an area of work that has been given considerable attention by our STRP over many years and resulted in much helpful guidance for our member countries.
195. Over the past six years, I have developed a regular communication with the Contracting Parties to draw their attention to major challenges but also to opportunities. In this regard, I always insist on exploring realistic ways to enhance the implementation of the Convention at national and local levels, taking into account the dilemma caused by the hard choices to make between short-term benefits and long-term sustainability. In countries where long-term consideration is missing, the end result is a deteriorating situation with the promise of short-term economic gains guiding ill-advised development and investment decisions and consequently undermining long-term sustainability. There still remains the need to better appreciate all different wetland types, to understand the cultural and socio-economic interconnections within the river basins, and to find sustainable solutions together with all Ramsar stakeholders. The difficulty of cooperating with relevant sectors of domestic administration and societies at large is still an obstacle to tackle. This concerns collaboration with the water management sector in the first place, but also many other parts of the public and private sectors. Other difficulties are the lack of political interest with no recognition of the vital values of wetlands, persistent lack of constructive economic incentives, and non-integration of wetlands in national and local land use planning.

**c) Increasing social participation in Ramsar and developing effective networking relationships with new constituencies of interest to Ramsar**

196. Using the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ramsar Convention, 2011 was a year of in-depth and far-reaching communication activities. In addition to the regular implementation of the CEPA Programme of the Convention, I directed our Communication team and encouraged them to take ground-breaking and creative actions to mark and celebrate 40 years of the Convention. As a rewarding result, the Secretariat was pleased to release a commemorative booklet that was officially launched on 2 February 2011. This 32 page booklet in the three official Convention languages is a brief reflection on, and celebration of, the evolution and achievements of the Convention since 1971. Other encouraging achievements include:
- the fourth edition of Ramsar Handbooks was finalized and made available to Contracting Parties and all Ramsar stakeholders in the three languages of the Convention;
  - the Ramsar Manual has been updated in the three languages and released in January 2013;
  - the launch and management of the new Ramsar Facebook page, which has now reached 80,583 Ramsar supporters just 18 months after its inception. As a comparison, IUCN started three years before Ramsar and has only 63,263 followers;
  - the launch and management of four Ramsar photo mosaics; we have received more than 400 photos on wetlands from all over the world for the Ramsar Photo Gallery. In addition, we have sent 1, 204 e-cards requested by readers.
197. I have been promoting the relationships between Tourism and Wetlands in recognition of the fact that people are naturally attracted to water, to coastal wetlands such as coral reefs and beaches, and to inland wetlands such as lakes and rivers, reflecting the strong bond between people and nature. The Ramsar Convention has only recently formally addressed wetland tourism, recognizing the increased demands for tourism expansion and the potential negative impacts on the health of wetlands, but also understanding that, if managed sustainably, tourism can bring many benefits, environmental, social and economic. This is why the COP11 theme was Wetlands, Tourism and Recreation, for which a new publication was created jointly by Ramsar and the UN WTO.

**d) Promoting the development of strong communities to protect/manage threatened wetland types (such as coastal wetlands)**

198. I have developed new working relationships with many organizations, including UNEP, UN-HABITAT, ICLEI, and the World Bank to target major threats to the health, productivity and biodiversity of the marine and coastal environment. This collaborative action is encouraging human activities in an integrated, multisectoral approach based on commitment to action at local, national, regional and global levels.
199. The need for improved efforts in participatory action planning at site level has been recognized, as has capacity building and training at the site level for site managers and local communities, along with carrying out training needs assessment. Less frequently mentioned by the Parties in their requests to the Secretariat has been their need to develop national CEPA action plans and place greater emphasis on World Wetlands Day planning and activities.

200. The Secretariat is committed to continuing to look for funding to support CEPA National Focal Point workshops to strengthen the Parties' capacity for CEPA planning and to work with all the Parties in engaging with CEPA NFPs to encourage improved implementation. Efforts are being made through the Secretariat and the CEPA Oversight Panel to work with the Ramsar Regional Centres to assist them in strengthening their training and capacity building skills.
201. The Secretariat is also consolidating and continuing to develop the use of social media tools as well as the regular tools of the website and e-mail lists to enhance the reach of our communication about wetlands and the Convention and to encourage a better understanding of the ecosystem services that wetlands deliver to sustain human society. Their role in the water cycle, in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and in biodiversity conservation remains poorly understood in many countries and international environmental organizations.
202. To promote a self-motivated commitment from local communities, I am strongly supporting the relationships between Culture and Wetlands. I promote the recognition of the fact that culture is an attribute of all the activities of each society, as they evolve through the ages. As wetlands, since ancient times, have been inhabited and used in many ways by human beings, there are strong cultural and spiritual values associated with many of them. Since 2006, the work of the Convention on the cultural aspects of wetlands has been carried out through Ramsar's Culture Working Group (CWG) and I am fully encouraging the coordinators of the group as well as all other active members.

**e) Developing Ramsar's Internet presence as a corporate showcase for the Convention and portal for Contracting Parties**

203. The Ramsar website, [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org), is the primary communications tool for the Ramsar Secretariat. The Secretariat updates the site frequently as part of the outreach to the general public and Contracting Parties, as well as partners.
204. Following the redevelopment and enhancement of the Ramsar website in 2008-9, the current website has all relevant information. However, there is a need for a website that is better organized, with a simpler design, and a better, Google-powered search function as well as a well-structured archive for all documents, 'the Ramsar Library'. To improve the efficiency of the publishing process in line with web users' needs, the Ramsar Secretariat has been running a web survey to assess:
  - How people currently use our website?
  - How the information is structured and how it could be structured better?
  - How Ramsar communications and information sharing can be improved?
205. We now recognize that there is an urgent need for improvement of the Content Management System (CMS), which is a computer programme that allows publishing, editing and modifying content as well as maintenance from a central interface. The core function of Content Management Systems is to present information on websites. The current CMS was custom-built and is no longer adapted to Ramsar's needs, mainly for technical, practical and strategic reasons:

- On technical grounds, it is urgent to recognize that the current system support is expiring, and the company that created it will no longer support the website publishing tools. Therefore, there is a need to find a system that is more flexible, less expensive to maintain, and easier to use.
- There is a practical need to improve the efficiency of the publishing process, to find information, faster, and easier, and to achieve 2012-13 Work Plan activities, including the integration of the new Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) which is under development.
- Finally, the strategic positioning of the Ramsar Convention needs to be strengthened to better communicate our Mission, our Goals, our Strategies, and the results of our goals.

206. Thus Ramsar wishes to enter into a contractual agreement with a vendor that will supply an open, non-proprietary Content Management System (CMS) and hosting/maintenance agreement for the Convention that will allow for the publication of content in English, French, and Spanish. To this end, the Ramsar Secretariat has established a team including the Communications Officer and a project manager to be responsible for the overall operational steps of the project. The project is intended to prioritize information for constituents and partners in 2013, to increase their capacity to deliver the implementation of the Convention, to better engage with our partners and constituents, and to better share information and expertise.

207. In the medium Term (2014-2015), we expect to have a new website that helps the Ramsar Communication Team identify key Convention needs and to produce a communications plan that helps serve the Convention in a better way. In the long term (beyond 2015), the project will add new features to our website in line with the Convention's work plan and strategic goals.

#### **f) Promoting the visibility of Ramsar worldwide**

##### ***Providing practical guidance on the ground to Contracting Parties***

208. In addition to the global scientific and technical guidance provided by the STRP, there is a growing expectation from Contracting Parties to receive practical and specific guidance on how to address particular issues on the ground. STRP guidance is useful regarding what to do in general terms but Contracting Parties, especially their site managers, city councils and other local stakeholders are also requesting assistance to build their capacity and enhance their ability to take the right action in the right manner.

##### ***Partnership with the private sector***

209. The Ramsar Convention benefits from partnerships with carefully selected enterprises in the private sector. Since 1998, the Danone Group has provided generous financial assistance, under the "Evian Initiative" named after Danone's Evian bottled water brand, to the Convention's communications and public awareness activities. "Biosphere Connections" unites Ramsar, IUCN, and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme with the generosity of the Star Alliance group of airlines to provide subsidized travel for the conservation activities of our organizations.

## Consideration of regional challenges, opportunities motivating ongoing and planned activities

210. At regional level, it is useful to consider ongoing and planned activities, taking into account key challenges and available opportunities.

### Africa Region: Challenges and opportunities

211. Challenge: Regarding Integrated Critical Mangroves Conservation and Sustainable Use, this project will tackle the issues of mangrove conservation and establish and maintenance of an effective and innovative conservation community that works in synergy to achieve common conservation objectives. Opportunity: It will be an opportunity to apply several international agreements on biodiversity guidelines and COP resolutions at the ground level.
212. Challenge: Regarding the wetlands and urbanization project, the aim is to improve human health and well-being in urban areas of West Africa through the wise use of wetlands, working at community level, the wetlands managers and urban planners' level, and national level. Opportunity: This will be a good channel to address the issue of technology transfer from city planners to communities. It is also an opportunity to valuation of urban wetlands ecosystem services and to apply wetlands-based adaptation guidelines and measures in cities.

### *Projects*

- Integrated Critical Mangroves Conservation and Sustainable Use. This project is intended to improve governance and Integrated Management of Critical Mangroves as a means to ensure their sustainability and maintain their ecological character to provide a wide range of services, including sequestration of carbon to mitigate climate change. The initial project area is Coastal West and Central Africa and the key partners are the governments of Senegal, Gambia, and Cameroon; UNEP; IUCN-PACO; Wetlands International Africa; WWF-WAMER; Global Risk Forum; UNESCO-IHE; and University of Florida.
- GlobWetland III: Satellite-based geospatial information products for wetlands monitoring. Region: Mediterranean, Congo river basin, Lake Chad Basin, Nile river basin, Niger river basin, Zambezi river basin and Okavango river basin. Key partner :ESA - European Space Agency. Objective: to facilitate the integration of remote sensing into the conservation and management of wetlands. GlobWetland III will work on Land Use Land Cover, Land Use Land Cover Change, Water Cycle Regime. Key partners: ESA, CPs, ECCAS, EAC, SADC and ECOWAS. Expected outputs/outcomes: access to remote areas, access to long ago acquisition dates, consistent information for comparable monitoring results, proven capability of the mapping approach, development of methodology and tools by the team, testing and operating the methodology/tools by mapping of 200 areas, 3 acquisition dates. Ongoing actions: Selection of pilot river basins, Preparation of Globwetland-III user consultation meeting in Rome (15-19 July 2013).
- Wetland and urbanisation in West Africa Project. Goal: To improve human health and well-being in urban areas of West Africa through the wise use of wetlands. Ten countries



of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), namely: Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Ghana. Ongoing actions: Following the planning workshop held in Dakar, Senegal, the Secretary General met with UN-Habitat in Nairobi during the third week of February in order to give some guidance to have a better synergy between Ramsar and UN-Habitat. A total of 3 cities from 3 countries are selected as pilot sites and the team will proceed to hold a workshop with the municipal council of each city to complete the logical framework. The 3 cities are the following: Aneho (Togo), Densu (Ghana) and Somone (Senegal). All the workshops will be held in each city by the end of June 2013.

- Domestication of the following COP Resolutions at regional level to integrate the principles of the Resolutions into the legislative framework of the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa countries: Resolution XI.11: *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands*; Resolution XI.12: *Wetlands and health: taking an ecosystem approach*.
- Guidelines for sustainable use of inland wetlands in Africa. These guidelines have been developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Regional Office for Africa together with the Ramsar Secretariat and a number of expert advisors so that developments of wetlands do not compromise their ecological functioning. The main focus of these guidelines is on Inland Wetlands (IWs) in Africa, excluding marine and coastal wetlands. IWs occupy about 5% of the continent's land area. Some of them are designated Ramsar Sites for which commitment for their wise use has been established by most African governments. These guidelines come on the heels of another set of guidelines for sustainable management of wetlands in Southern Africa (FAO, 2011) which address their management at the field level in relation to agricultural activities. It is hoped that they will complement the Southern African ones by focusing on IWs, including where they are in transboundary basins. The guidelines address sustainability of IWs use from an ecosystem perspective and within the context of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). They do not address rehabilitation of already degraded IWs.
- Development of a database system for Contracting Parties to record wetlands of national and local importance. Among the recurring requests from Africa, the Parties are seeking assistance to establish databases for tracking the characteristics, dynamic and resources, threats, etc., of wetlands of national and local importance. The Africa Team is trying to adapt a database from Rwanda using an Access programme. Partners: Wetlands International.
- Planned Events: Forum on Wetlands: Wise Use, Smart Plans, 8-12th July 2013, Kigali, Rwanda. The Forum will be more than a meeting or a conference because it sets out to stimulate a longer lasting and global view for supporting the wise use of wetlands. It will bring together the spectrum of regional and international social, economic and ecological interests that can affect a difference. Despite their importance for local human well-being and regulation of ecosystem services, wetland integrity continues to decline. How can policies at the local, regional and global scale be better aligned? The Forum provides for a longer term vision of combined responsibilities, linking natural, social and political sciences for more effective policy making and action for wetland sustainable use. Region: EAC, SADC and ECCAS. Key partners: UNESCO-IHE, Ramsar, REMA, UNEP.

**The Americas Region** (North America and the Neotropics)

## 213. Major achievements from July 2012 to March 2013

- Technical support on time was provided to the Costa Rica government on the Ramsar Site Caribe Nordeste and other wetlands and to Uruguay under the project SGF -Danone 7079-770/09/UY/1 for the removal of Bañados del Este from the Montreux Record.
- Reactivation of Wetlands for the Future Fund, allowing the execution of around 10 projects to support the implementation of the Convention in the region.
- Accession of the Caribbean state of Grenada as Ramsar's 162nd Contracting Party.
- Designation by the government of Bolivia of 3 new Ramsar sites totalling approximately 7 million hectares, making an important contribution to the designation of Amazonian wetlands, which are under-represented in the Ramsar List. With this designation Bolivia is moving into first place as the Contracting Party with the greatest area designated as Ramsar Sites, 14.8 million hectares, and helping Ramsar to surpass 200 million hectares of global coverage.

***Main challenges and opportunities for the future***

## 214. The main challenges for the implementation of the Convention in the region are:

- Maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar Sites and reducing the pressure of economic empowerment and development over wetlands and the lack of land use planning
- Increasing awareness at all levels (national, regional and local) about wetlands benefits and importance
- Increasing the political support for national and regional implementation
- Implementing legal, policy and technical tools
- Ensuring the financial sustainability of Ramsar Regional Initiatives.

215. Different tools and mechanisms under the Convention represent a great opportunity to address the above-mentioned issues and support the implementation of the Convention such as Ramsar Advisory Missions, the establishment and operation of Ramsar Wetlands Committees, and the consolidation of Regional Initiatives.

216. One of the most urgent priorities for the maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar Sites is the implementation of legal frameworks, such as policies and specific wetland regulations, and the application of strategic land use planning and the use of impact assessments in the decision making process.

217. Ramsar Regional Initiatives, both centers and networks, have been a good opportunity to engage and implement collaborative actions on the ground among the different Contracting Parties and interested stakeholders in the region, as well as to increase the

visibility of the Convention, but efforts have to be focused to maintain political and financial support in the upcoming years.

### Asia/Oceania Region

218. **The Norway project.** The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management (DN) has engaged the Ramsar Secretariat to provide support on an environmental cooperation programme that the Norwegian government has initiated with the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry of Myanmar (MOECAF). The “pre-project” commenced in January 2013 and will run for approximately six months. It will involve providing support to review the practical details of initiating longer-term (3-5 year) conservation projects at seven priority field sites that have been identified from discussions between representatives from both DN and MOECAF.
219. **JICA:** The MoC between the Ramsar Secretariat and JICA was signed during Ramsar CoP11. Mr. Motohiro Hasegawa (Senior Advisor, Biodiversity & Ecosystem Conservation, JICA) visited the Secretariat in February 2013 and had constructive meetings with the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, and the Regional Teams. JICA is implementing many projects around the world, with eight of them being at Ramsar Sites. It was suggested in the meeting that the Ramsar SRAs should contact the JICA Project Officer working in each of their regions and look for opportunities for closer cooperation between the two sides. Ideally, this would then lead to one pilot project between Ramsar and JICA in each of the Ramsar regions. The SRAs are now following this up with JICA.

### Europe region

220. Work on the initial “Ramsar vision 40+” is slowly taken up by Parties and partner organizations (UNECE, GWP, others) whenever an occasion arises. We need to give some thought to how to structure and manage this process (also at global level).
221. Dealing with wetland conservation increasingly through a river basin approach, as the water managers do. To this end our cooperation with the UNECE Water Convention (which is now open for global accession, also by countries outside the UNECE region) over the past six years was a good start. Particularly in Europe, there will be by this year the first European Riverprize awarded. Ramsar is a partner in this development with a view to underline the need for a river catchment basin approach, cf. [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-european-river-prize1/main/ramsar/1-26%5E26104\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-european-river-prize1/main/ramsar/1-26%5E26104_4000_0).
222. And the next step from this, again mainly driven in Europe but of global concern, and something that was also addressed during last week’s STRP meeting, is the need for a nexus approach, bringing together the aspects of water, ecosystem (wetlands), food, and energy security, i.e., using water as the linking element (during the UN year of water cooperation), to assure sufficient (secure) water, food and energy for a growing population, and realizing the important role ecosystems (and their services) play for this, with wetlands being the most important, but enlarging the scope to include agricultural lands and forests (to name the two most often mentioned, and most important categories of broad land-use categories).

## Conclusions

223. I seize this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to the Ramsar Contracting Parties, to the Ramsar Executive Team, to the Standing Committee, to the IUCN Director General, to the STRP, to the Ramsar IOPs and all partners, and of course to Ramsar staff for their support, commitment, guidance, and teamwork.
224. My six years of tenure have been challenging, but they have been fruitful for the Convention and for the Secretariat as well. The priorities for the Secretariat call for continued efforts to increase teamwork, to fulfill many ongoing and emerging responsibilities for the administration of the Convention. The new Secretary General will have quite a few additional opportunities to influence events in the wider world of environmental policy and action. I hope that to all of these, the staff of the Secretariat will devote its best abilities and look forward to working with the Contracting Parties over the next years with enthusiasm and confidence.
225. At the same time, the Secretariat will continue to count on the full support of the Standing Committee and Contracting Parties in helping to position wetlands firmly on the political and socio-economic agenda, in order to maintain the ecosystem services that are vital for sustainable development.
226. It is important to note some key challenges that need to be addressed. In this regard, the Secretariat's capacity is a major concern. More attention and greater support from Contracting Parties and Ramsar partners regarding the core budget and voluntary funding are sincerely needed to increase and enhance, even to maintain, the effectiveness of the Secretariat.
227. A key to financial support is related to the need to ensure continued payment of regular contributions to the core budget and increased voluntary funding to enhance the work of the Convention. I wish to emphasize the need for Contracting Parties to become financially self-sufficient in terms of their implementation of the Convention, and reduce their expectations of receiving central funding via the Secretariat. They can request guidance from the employed staff of the Secretariat, but they need to be realistic in terms of receiving cash from the Secretariat for implementation, including Ramsar Advisory Missions, Regional Initiatives, and STRP's work.