

World Wetlands Day themes for 2014 and 2015

Action requested. The Standing Committee is invited to a) endorse the theme of wetlands and agriculture for World Wetland Day 2014; b) consider and approve one of the two themes proposed for World Wetlands Day 2015; and c) consider and advise on the utility of linking the WWD and COP themes for 2015.

I. WWD 2014 - Wetlands and Agriculture

1. The year 2014 has been designated by the United Nations as the **International Year of Family Farming**. FAO is the lead, working in collaboration with UNDP, IFAD, CGIAR and “other relevant UN bodies”. CGIAR includes one of Ramsar’s International Organization Partners, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).
2. While such a specific focus in itself would be inappropriate for a World Wetlands Day theme for the Convention, the much broader but related focus on **wetlands and agriculture** would be a valuable thematic area that we have not yet addressed for WWD. Today 70% of freshwater resources are currently used for agriculture (mostly for irrigated agriculture), and the latest statistics predict that anticipated global population increases will make further demands on our capacity to produce food – estimates are in the range of 50% more food up to 2030 and double production by 2050. While agriculture CAN become more efficient in terms of land, water, etc., there is no doubt that wetlands and water will continue to be threatened to meet the increasing demands for food production. What are the implications for wetlands given this scenario? What are the solutions? This is the suggested theme and focus for WWD 2014.
3. The Secretariat suggests partnering with FAO and IWMI in preparing the WWD materials.

II. WWD 2015

4. The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP12) will take place in Uruguay in 2015. For the last two COPs, the COP theme and the World Wetlands Day theme in the same year have been linked (‘Wetlands and human health’ in 2008 and ‘Wetlands and tourism’ in 2012). The Secretariat’s view is that this linking of the themes brings added value to the COP and the likelihood of more substantive materials/activities on the theme during COP.
5. The Secretariat suggests two options for thematic areas for consideration for World Wetlands Day 2015 possibly linked to COP12 (with the agreement of the host country in terms of the COP theme).

Urban wetlands

6. The challenges of managing wetlands in urban and peri-urban areas are already recognized worldwide, and it is suggested by some sources that continued rapid expansion of towns and cities will see 80% of the world's people living in urban areas by 2030. Thanks to a fruitful collaboration with UN Habitat in the triennium leading up to COP11, the Ramsar Convention adopted Resolution XI.11 on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands*. Since then the Convention has continued to move forward with collaborative work between UN-Habitat and the Secretariat. Expected products in this triennium include a Briefing Note; a Ramsar Technical Report to be delivered by COP12; completion of an ongoing wetlands and urbanization project in West Africa and its further development with UN-Habitat and Ramsar into global approaches to building an understanding of ecosystem services and the role of biodiversity into urban planning practices and decision-making; and possible development of a city accreditation system. *Partners: UN-Habitat, ICLEI*

Invasive alien species

7. As a thematic area, invasive alien species (IAS) has not received any attention since the adoption of Resolution VIII.18 *Invasive species and wetlands* at COP8 in 2002. Yet IAS has been identified by the Parties during the last triennium as a significant area of concern for wetlands worldwide, and it is currently one of the top priorities for STRP in this triennium. Funding permitting, STRP will produce a *Guide to guidance on IAS* for wetlands during this triennium, and the Secretariat is currently engaging with the UN Inter-Agency Liaison Group on IAS that recognizes the global challenge of dealing with IAS, biodiversity loss, and human livelihood impacts. *Partners: IUCN's SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG), CBD & UN Inter-Agency Liaison Group on IAS*

NOTE: A key discussion continuing to the end of 2015 is the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the Secretariat is aware of the high significance for the Convention, most staff considered that while very broad-ranging discussions are already taking place, significant, coherent advances on the SDGs are not likely to be made before mid-2015. This would make it a difficult theme to deliver for WWD in 2015, quite aside from the challenge of translating the outcomes of these high-level discussions into the production of WWD materials and on-the-ground activities. In contrast, this thematic area may be of interest as a COP12 theme.