DOC. COP8 SG-2

Agenda item 2

Brief report from the Bureau and the Host Country on developments concerning preparations for COP8 since the last meeting of the Standing Committee

Documentation for the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

1. Following the decisions of the Standing Committee in December:

    a) A diplomatic notification was sent to all Parties on 18 December 2001 requesting comments on the "Proposal to establish a Ramsar Trust Fund to resource the Small Grants Fund". The responses received are summarized in document Ramsar Finance SG-2;

    b) All Administrative Authorities were invited to comment on the draft of the *New Guidelines on Management Planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands*. A good number of inputs were received, which are being incorporated into a new draft;

    c) A final round of consultations with the Standing Committee on the draft Strategic Plan took place and the 6th and final draft was re-translated into French and Spanish. The draft was printed in the three languages and distributed to all Parties under cover of a diplomatic notification dated 10 April 2002. Five copies of the printed draft and a diskette containing the "Provisional National Target forms" were also dispatched to all Administrative Authorities during the week of 8 April;

    d) The Contact Group established by the Standing Committee to work on three draft resolutions completed its work and the proposals are included with the documentation for the meeting;

    e) The Deputy Secretary General continued to work with the STRP Expert Working Groups and partners in the finalization of the documents that were not ready for the December meeting of the Standing Committee, or that required more work. Unfortunately some of these documents have not yet been finalized due to delays in receiving inputs from some collaborators, and some will have to be tabled at the Subgroup meeting in May;

    f) All COP8 documents that have been approved by the Standing Committee are being posted on the Ramsar Web site in English, and in French and Spanish as soon as the translations are ready.

Distribution of documents

2. With the exception of the draft Strategic Plan, which has already been distributed as the final draft for consideration at the COP, all other official documents will be distributed in hard copy through a diplomatic note to all Parties by 16 August 2002 (three months before the COP, as required by the Rules of Procedure). In the meantime, the documents are being made available on the Ramsar Web site (in HTML, PDF, and Word formats) as soon as they are ready in any of the three official languages.

3. Since Parties may submit draft resolutions up to 16 September 2002 (two months before the COP), a second mailing with hard copies of the draft resolutions submitted by the Parties will be sent out on 16 October 2002 (one month before the COP, as required by the Rules).

National Reports and preparation of reports on implementation

4. Carlos Villalba (the Technical Officer seconded by Spain to assist with COP8 preparations) has led the Bureau work to develop a relatively sophisticated database to enter and process data resulting from the analysis of the National Reports (see Annex 1). As part of this exercise, a series of indicators to measure implementation at the regional and global level has been identified. Carlos Villalba will be available at the meeting to provide more details to those interested.

5. On the basis of the analysis of National Reports, the Bureau will prepare a report on implementation for each region and a report on global implementation. The global report will be presented by the Secretary General in plenary session on the first day of the COP and will be available in the three working languages. The regional reports will be available in the working language(s) used in each region (which are not necessarily all three working languages) and will be submitted and discussed at the regional meetings scheduled for the morning of 20 November.

6. The reports, while based on the analysis of implementation of the Convention in relation to the Operational Objectives of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, will present the data in a way which is applicable to the Operational Objectives in the draft Strategic Plan 2003-2008. The Bureau considers that in this way the reports will not only evaluate what has been done in the past, but, more importantly, will help to inform the future.

7. The deadline for submitting National Reports was 28 February 2002. By 16 April 2002, National Reports have been received from:

    Africa: Algeria, Burkina-Faso, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Togo, & Uganda (15 out of 34 CPs)
    Asia: Cambodia, China, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Syria, and Thailand (11 out of 24 CPs)
    Europe: Austria, Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, and UK (16 out of 42 CPs)
    Neotropics: Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Peru, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago (11 out of 22 CPs)
    North America: Canada, Mexico, and the USA (3 out of 3 CPs)

Oceania: Australia and Papua New Guinea (2 out of 3 CPs)

8.   This rate of submissions of National Reports is not very good. The Regional Coordinators have already sent four reminders to the Parties that have not yet submitted their NR, encouraging them to do this as soon as possible. A number of Parties have committed to submit their NR by a set date, but others have not responded to any of the reminders. If the Bureau does not receive a high percentage of National Reports by the end of May, its plan to undertake a rigorous analysis of the implementation of the Convention (see paragraphs 4-6 above) will fail.

Pre-registration

9.   By the end of April 2002, the Bureau will dispatch the formal invitation to the COP to all UN-member countries and interested intergovernmental organizations, as per the Rules of Procedure, together with the pre-registration form and information about visas, hotel accommodation, exhibition space, etc. The pre-registration form will be available for on-line registration as well. Pre-registered participants will be asked to indicate if they wish to receive the documents in hard copy or on a CD–ROM, or if they will download them from the Ramsar Web site. If so requested, a set of documents or a CD-ROM will be dispatched to pre-registered participants whose pre-registration form is received before 30 October 2002.

Hotel accommodation

10.   Hotel bookings will be handled by MKI Conference Management in Ottawa, Canada. Their Web site for on-line bookings is already operational, with a link to the Ramsar Web site (see http://ramsar.org/index_cop8.htm). Bookings can also be made by e-mail or fax.

Fundraising for sponsored delegates

11.   All donor countries and some institutions were sent a fundraising letter dated 11 January 2002, requesting support for sponsored delegates from developing countries and countries in transition. The letter indicated that the Bureau needed to raise some US$805,000 (or SFR 1.4 million) to provide support to some 230 delegates. By 16 April 2002, the responses received are as follows:

Australia – Negative response
Austria – No response
Belgium (Wallone region) – Contribution paid   SFR 18,000
Canada-CIDA - Request acknowledged and being considered
Denmark – No response to 11.1.02 letter. New letter requested.
Finland – No response
France – No response
Germany – Pledged Euros 35,000   SFR 51,335
Greece – No response
Hungary – US$20,000 pledged, preferably for Central Europe   SFR 34,000
Iceland – No response
Italy – No response
Ireland – No response
Japan – No response, but indications that will contribute
Liechtenstein – No response

Luxembourg – No response
Norway – No response but had requested info on needs for 2002
Monaco – No response
Portugal – No response
Spain (included in the commitments in the MOU about the COP)   SFR 100,000
Sweden-Sida – SEK 500,000 pledged   SFR 81,118
Switzerland – Pledged   SFR 50,000
UK – Pledged £25,000   SFR 59,750
USA – Pledged US$ 100,000 – To be confirmed   SFR 170,000

Asian Development Bank – Negative response
UNESCO (WH Centre) Pledged US$20,000 for managers
   of Ramsar/WH sites   SFR 33,400
WWF Australia – No response
WWF UK – Negative response
WWF International – Negative response

TOTAL PLEDGED AT 16.4.02   **SFR 524,603**
TO BE RAISED   **SFR 875,397**

12. Arrangements have been made to accommodate all sponsored delegates in the Hotel Expo, which provides adequate facilities at an affordable price. Hotel accommodation, including breakfast, will be paid directly to the hotel by MKI Conference Management. Sponsored delegates will receive an adequate amount of cash to cover meals and incidentals, and will receive reimbursement for hotel expenses incurred, if any, on the way to and/or from Valencia.

Visas

13. Spain has already provided the list of countries whose nationals require a visa to enter Spain, as well as information on the location of the visa-issuing embassy or consulate in each case. The Bureau is discussing with Spain the procedure for obtaining a visa when it cannot be issued in the country of residence of the interested person.

Pre-COP events

14. IUCN is organizing the 17th Session of the Global Biodiversity Forum, which will take place at the Conference Centre of Valencia, with the support of the Ministry of Environment of Spain and other donors, on 15-17 November 2002 under the theme "Managing wetlands for change" (to be confirmed). The workshops being proposed for GBF17 are:

    a)   The World Summit on Sustainable Development and its relevance for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
    b)   Agriculture, Wetlands and Water Resources
    c)   Wetlands, People and Climate: Preparing for Change
    d)   The List of Ramsar Wetlands: Enhancing the Framework and National Implementation
    e)   Wetland Restoration and Mitigation

15.   Spanish NGOs are proceeding with the organization of a World NGO Conference on Wetlands: "Ramsar, 30 Years Later", to take place also at the Conference Centre of Valencia on 14-16 November 2002.

16.   Friends of the Earth Spain is organizing a Youth Conference on Wetlands in La Coruña on 1-3 May 2002, in preparation for Ramsar COP8. The Secretary General is planning to be present at the opening.

17.   The Ramsar Bureau is making preparations and seeking funds to organize a "Workshop on wetland-related communication, education and public awareness (CEPA)" addressed mainly to the CEPA focal points so far designated by the Parties. An Ad-Hoc Group of CEPA focal points is working on this and the Municipality of Valencia has been approached for financial support.

Side events

18.   A number of Parties and Partners have already requested space for side events during the COP. Given the limited number of meeting rooms at the COP venue, it is possible that some of these requests will have to be turned down. The Bureau has rented a large meeting room (which can be subdivided into four small rooms) at the nearest hotel to the COP venue – seven minutes' walk – (where the Bureau staff will be staying) to provide an alternative for side events and COP-related meetings.

Preparations in the host country

19.   The Bureau maintains constant and very cordial relations with the Ministry of Environment of Spain concerning all aspects of the preparations for the COP. In the view of the Bureau, preparations are progressing on schedule. The host country representatives will update the Subgroup on this matter.

Possible Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

20.   As Subgroup members will be aware, the Bureau has transmitted to all Parties, under a diplomatic note dated 22 January 2002, the request from Algeria to initiate the process to amend the Convention. In that note, the Secretary General indicated that if the required number of Parties requested that an extraordinary meeting of the COP should be convened to deal with this matter, "the Secretary General proposes to hold this special meeting at the Science Museum Príncipe Felipe, in Valencia, Spain, on Saturday 23 November 2002 at 15:00 hours, within the context of the 8th Meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties to be held at the same venue on 18-26 November 2002."

21.   The deadline to respond to the diplomatic note is 22 April 2002. As of 16 April 2002, only four Parties have responded, which indicates that it is quite unlikely that there will be the required minimum of 44 Parties requesting an extraordinary session in the six days left until the deadline, as required by Article 10 bis of the Convention.

Annex 1 – Analysis of the National Reports
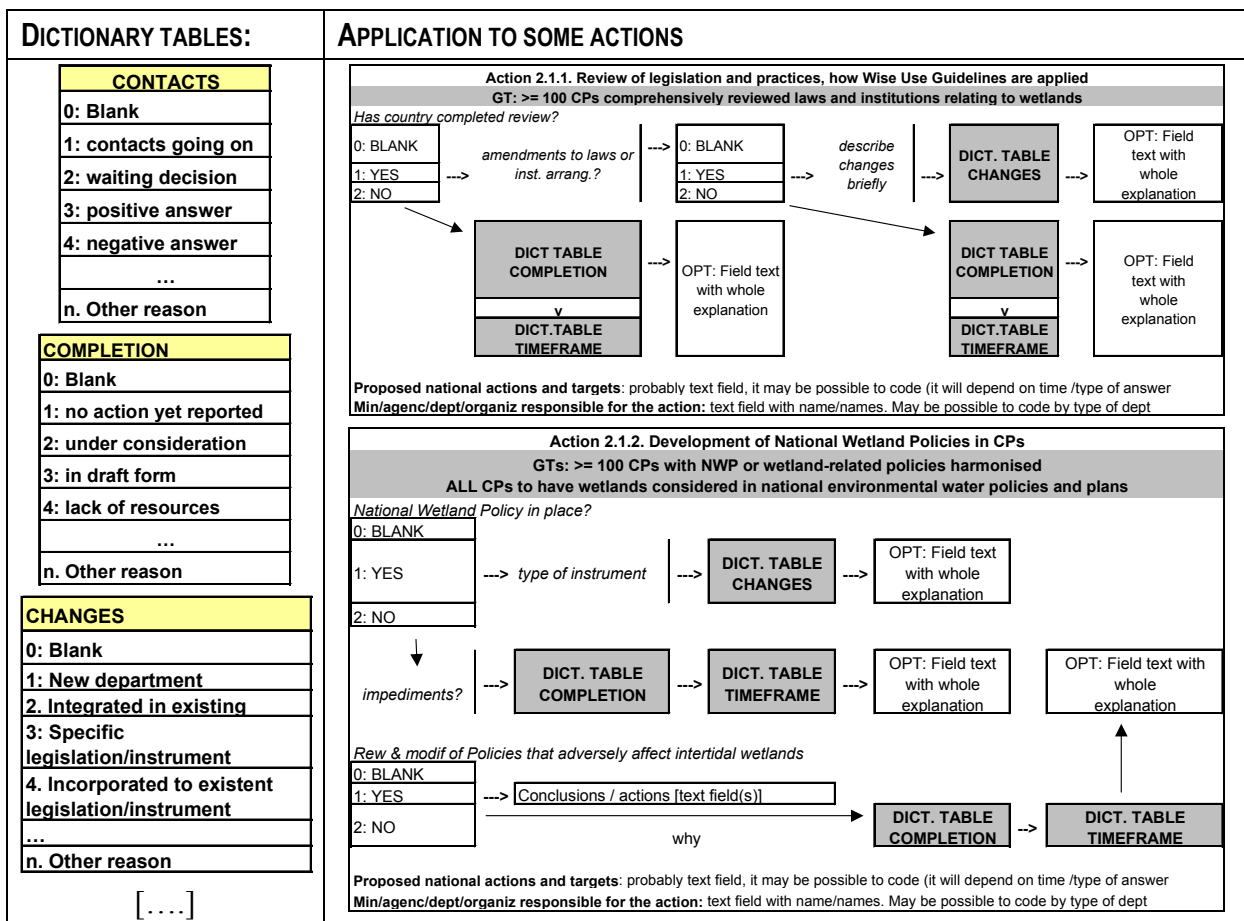
BUILDING THE DATABASE

The database will be prepared in Microsoft Access. It will be structured in a number of different tables in order to avoid redundancy (that is, to prevent information being repeated, for example objective code and names).

1. **National Plannint Tool (NPT) Table: Information on the national reports submitted by each CP**
    To be composed mainly of coded and text/memo fields (memo fields to be avoided where possible unless they are considered useful as additional information in the database). It may be necessary to create different tables for each objective.

2. **Dictionary Tables:**

    a) **Geographic classification**: Region, CP

    b) **Work Plan**: General Objective (GO), Operational Objective (OO), Action (A)

    c) **Institutional information (for each CP):** First part of NPT

    d) **Tables containing Codification of answers in NPT**: eg., { 0: [blank/no answer] 1: [yes] 2: [no] } ; { 0 [blank/no answer], 1…n-1 [more likely answers], n [others (generic)] }

Tables included in (a) and (b) above will always have the structure code/description, but incorporating the codes of previous tables from left to right. eg.,
In (a) region = (regioncode/region), CP = (regioncode/cpcode/cpname)
in (b) GO (gocode, go), OO (gocode, oocode, oo), A (gocode, oocode, acode, a)
Except for yes/no answers, the codification of tables in (c) above shall be thought over according to the different questions of NPT and the "most likely list of answers".

Codification: Some examples

DICTIONARY TABLES:	APPLICATION TO SOME ACTIONS

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DICTIONARY TABLES:

CONTACTS
0: Blank
1: contacts going on
2: waiting decision
3: positive answer
4: negative answer
…
n. Other reason

COMPLETION
0: Blank
1: no action yet reported
2: under consideration
3: in draft form
4: lack of resources
…
n. Other reason

CHANGES
0: Blank
1: New department
2. Integrated in existing
3: Specific legislation/instrument
4. Incorporated to existent legislation/instrument
…
n. Other reason

[….]

APPLICATION TO SOME ACTIONS

Action 2.1.1. Review of legislation and practices, how Wise Use Guidelines are applied
GT: >= 100 CPs comprehensively reviewed laws and institutions relating to wetlands

Has country completed review?
0: BLANK / 1: YES / 2: NO → *amendments to laws or inst. arrang.?* ---> 0: BLANK / 1: YES / 2: NO ---> *describe changes briefly* ---> DICT. TABLE CHANGES ---> OPT: Field text with whole explanation

DICT TABLE COMPLETION ---> OPT: Field text with whole explanation
v
DICT.TABLE TIMEFRAME

DICT TABLE COMPLETION ---> OPT: Field text with whole explanation
v
DICT.TABLE TIMEFRAME

Proposed national actions and targets: probably text field, it may be possible to code (it will depend on time /type of answer
Min/agenc/dept/organiz responsible for the action: text field with name/names. May be possible to code by type of dept

Action 2.1.2. Development of National Wetland Policies in CPs
GTs: >= 100 CPs with NWP or wetland-related policies harmonised
ALL CPs to have wetlands considered in national environmental water policies and plans

National Wetland Policy in place?
0: BLANK / 1: YES / 2: NO ---> *type of instrument* ---> DICT. TABLE CHANGES ---> OPT: Field text with whole explanation

impediments? ---> DICT. TABLE COMPLETION ---> DICT. TABLE TIMEFRAME ---> OPT: Field text with whole explanation / OPT: Field text with whole explanation

Rew & modif of Policies that adversely affect intertidal wetlands
0: BLANK / 1: YES / 2: NO ---> Conclusions / actions [text field(s)]
why ---> DICT. TABLE COMPLETION --> DICT. TABLE TIMEFRAME

Proposed national actions and targets: probably text field, it may be possible to code (it will depend on time /type of answer
Min/agenc/dept/organiz responsible for the action: text field with name/names. May be possible to code by type of dept

Notes:
1) It is recommended that the minimum number of dictionary tables should be created. Therefore, the codes of the existing ones can be increased if needed (for example, adding to "TABLE CHANGES" codes for national and subnational levels).
2) The need for additional codes for dictionary tables shall be carefully discussed in light of NPT questions.
3) Nevertheless, probably more dictionary tables will be needed (complete analysis of NPT shall be performed to evaluate this).

ADDING INFORMATION TO THE DATABASE

Frequently the answer to an NPT question will be supplied by a CP, or will be the name of an agency, department or organization that cannot be coded. Due to this design of the NPT and the different languages used, the most reasonable way to add information to the database is through:

1. **Codification (as detailed as possible) of the questions addressed in the NPD**. Of course, the accuracy of the codification will depend on the way each question is formulated in the NPD and the "most likely range of answers" that can be expected. However, "groups of questions" can be identified which are expected to have similar answers. It is a matter of defining the level of detail of the codification. Of course, in some circumstances there might be many possible answers, but among these will be those answers that more precisely explain the purpose of the action and its achievement by the CP. Other answers will be included in the category "Other reason". The whole text can also be stored in an additional field, if considered useful.

We may find that some answers are quite difficult to transform into codes, so that under some circumstances a text field – exact description made by CP – will have to be preserved.

2.   **Interpretation of the answers given by CPs** - assigning of the codes by the user and/or preservation (e.g., cut & paste operation in a memo field) of the answer.

NOTE: Ideally, the coding should be prepared in light of the real answers, but we might expect the National Reports to be submitted during Spring 2002. Therefore, it would be more practical to code the NPT questions in advance. Some changes can be made later but we have to be careful to avoid a continuous updating of the coding that can lead to the need for revision of those reports that were added to the database before the coding changes were introduced.

QUERYING THE DATABASE

Levels of analysis

- Geographic.- Global, regional, (CP)

- Strategic Plan/work plan: General Objective, Operational Objective and Action.

- Combination of the previous ones

Once the database is ready and filled with information from National Reports, different queries will be prepared on demand.