

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Meeting of the Standing Committee Subgroup on COP9
Gland, Switzerland, 7-10 March 2005

DOC. COP9 SG-8

Agenda item 8

Synergies with other conventions

Action requested: The Subgroup may wish to suggest that the Secretariat:

- Prepare a short draft resolution for SC31 endorsing and re-affirming the liaison existing between the Convention and other parts of the international environmental governance structure, including developments taking place since COP8, and
- Prepare a draft Resolution for SC31 which deals with the question of national reports, their format, and harmonization with other MEA reporting systems.

General issues

1. COP8 adopted a Resolution on the issue of cooperation with other MEAs and agencies, VIII.5, in which *inter alia* it
 - Urged Contracting Parties to make renewed efforts to increase collaboration at the national level between the institutions and focal points responsible for the implementation of MEAs, including through ensuring their participation in National Ramsar Committees, so as to foster synergies and harmonization;
 - Requested the Secretariat to continue to participate in and contribute to the work of the United Nations Environment Programme, in particular its Division of Environmental Conventions and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, in the area of promoting synergies among MEAs, as well as in the work of the Environmental Management Group (EMG);
 - Endorsed the third Joint Work Plan (2002-2006) between the Convention on Biological Diversity and this Convention, the Programme of Joint Work between MAB and this Convention, the Joint Work Plan with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the Joint Work Plan between the Convention on Migratory Species and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement and this Convention;
 - Requested the Ramsar Secretariat to further strengthen its working relations with the GEF Secretariat; and
 - Directed the Secretariat, in collaboration with the secretariats and other bodies of other MEAs and relevant regional fora, to keep under regular review the progress, successes and constraints in the implementation of joint work between these bodies and the Convention, and to report to Ramsar COP9.

Specific liaison

2. During the period since COP8 there has been increased cooperation with the GEF Secretariat and a number of exercises with other MEAs on synergy, including new joint plans of work or programmes with CMS, AEWAs, CBD, and UNESCO-MAB. The Joint Liaison group of the Rio Conventions, to which Ramsar had been invited as an observer, met without Ramsar in 2004. The SBSTTA of the UNFCCC urged that Ramsar be invited as an observer, and it is probably appropriate that Ramsar COP9 reaffirm the wish of the Parties for the Secretariat to be so involved, if they so wish.
3. At COP7 of the CBD the Parties formed a Biodiversity Liaison Group, and the Executive Director of the CBD Secretariat was asked to convene a meeting of the five biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, Ramsar, CMS, CITES, and World Heritage Convention). A meeting was held in Geneva in late 2004, and a full meeting planned for February 2005 in Paris, in the margins of the French biodiversity conference – that meeting could not take place, however, and has been postponed. The Secretary General is cooperating fully in this venture, but COP9 should endorse and promote this participation.

National reporting

4. In October 2004 UNEP-WCMC organized a meeting on the harmonizing of national reports amongst the relevant MEAs, and the outcomes of this workshop are to be considered at the next meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group. The workshop was attended by representatives of the five global biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, Ramsar, CMS, CITES, and World Heritage Convention), two CMS agreement secretariats, eight countries, the European Commission and several international organizations, and was chaired by the Ramsar Secretary General. The meeting addressed country needs for avoiding duplication of effort in reporting processes, increasing efficiency and reducing the burden of reporting, and improving access to reported information. Discussions drew heavily on the lessons learned through the UNEP-supported pilot projects carried out in Ghana, Indonesia, Panama and the Seychelles.
5. For four of the five global biodiversity-related treaties, mandates for this work come from:
 - Resolutions VII.4 and VIII.26 of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, and the Strategic Plan 2003-2008;
 - Decision 12.87 of the CITES Conference of Parties, and the Strategic Vision Through 2005 adopted by Decision 11.1;
 - Resolution 7.9 of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Information Management Plan adopted by Resolution 6.5; and
 - Decisions V/19, VI/25 and VII/25 of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
6. The workshop resulted in the following **recommendations**¹:

¹ This is a selection of those recommendations that are of specific relevance to the conventions' governing bodies and secretariats. The full set of recommendations, including those aimed at the national level, is available

- i) **Purpose of reporting:** In the interests of increasing the efficiency of reporting, conventions and agreements should clarify and refine the information they need in order to assess implementation and outcomes. They should also address the balance between reporting on implementation and reporting on outcomes, particularly in the light of the 2010 target. When requesting reports, conventions and agreements should also explain clearly what the information will be used for and how it will be analysed.
- ii) **Focus of reporting:** Reporting should relate to the decisions taken by the governing bodies, both providing information to support the decision-making process and reporting on actions taken to implement decisions and their effect.
- iii) **Coordination at international levels:** The Biodiversity Liaison Group should consider establishing a technical task force to develop and promote a streamlined reporting agenda across conventions and agreements, taking account of the issues raised in the pilot projects [and in the workshop report], developments requested by governing bodies, and issues discussed during the EMG review [of harmonization of reporting]. The task force would comprise technical officers from the secretariats, supported as necessary by other appropriate experts. It is anticipated that the group and task force would work inter-sessionally to develop proposals which would be considered and adopted by governing bodies.
- iv) **Action by individual conventions:** Conventions and agreements should also explore opportunities for taking concrete actions to reduce the reporting burden that they themselves control, for example by not adding new requests for information without removing existing requests in parallel, by reducing the amount of information requested, by linking reporting more closely to strategic planning, by exploring new mechanisms for reporting, and so on. This can be done within existing mandates given to most secretariats.
- v) **Thematic issues:** Active consideration should be given to focusing on specific themes that are relevant across several conventions and agreements, and identifying means to harmonize approaches to information management and reporting, learning lessons from the CPF Task Force on Forest-related Reporting. Consideration might also be given to thematic reports on specific issues which would be relevant to all conventions and agreements which consider the issue. This may also be a matter for consideration by the Biodiversity Liaison Group.
- vi) **Web portal on reporting:** The convention secretariats and UNEP-WCMC should work together to develop and maintain a single, multilingual website (and perhaps also a CD-ROM) that links to existing questionnaires, guidelines and other instructions that secretariats have provided for national reporting, as well as results of the work on streamlining and harmonization. This might also incorporate discussion fora and opportunities for sharing of experience. The Joint Web Site of the Biodiversity Related Conventions (currently hosted by CBD) should be investigated as a possible home for this.

in the workshop report. Note that the numbering of the recommendations here is different to that in the workshop report.

- vii) **Capacity building:** Capacity building activities for information management and reporting among local, national, regional and multilateral applications should focus on all three levels of capacity development: individual, institutional and systemic. It is also recommended that steps should be taken to ensure that the Global Environment Facility and the GEF Implementing Agencies take fully into account the coordination and information management required to support both implementation and reporting for the various MEAs when financing and implementing programmes.
7. The workshop report has been made widely available. It is, together with the background documents and the presentations given at the workshop, available at <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop.htm>.
8. While this work continues, the Subgroup may wish to recommend that the Secretariat prepare for SC31 a draft Resolution reaffirming the liaison that the Convention should be undertaking, and provide guidelines on the harmonization of national reports, as well as reform to the process of national reports in the Convention.
9. As part of this item the Convention Development Officer will outline the process so far regarding National Reports for COP9.