

Agenda item 9

Issues concerning transboundary Ramsar sites

1. It has been recognized many times that a coherent national and international network of Ramsar sites and their sustainable management can provide a powerful demonstration and important contribution to countries achieving their sustainable development goals, through the recognition and maintenance of the wetland services and functions they provide in water and food security and poverty eradication, especially for local communities and indigenous people.
2. What has not been well developed is the issue of transboundary Ramsar sites, their “status” and importantly their management. “Transboundary Ramsar sites” are defined as those internationally important wetlands which cross international borders and have been designated as Ramsar sites by at least two Contracting Parties within whose territories they lie.
3. The suggestion has been made that Parties should identify shared wetland sites and catchment basins, and that such initial identification of sites and catchments should be followed by an assessment of their specific functions and values that would merit recognition as Wetlands of International Importance. As a matter of priority, wetlands with unilateral designation (i.e., on only one side of a border) should be identified for listing in the neighbouring Party as well.
4. During recent years, a number of new Ramsar sites in the European region have been formally (*de jure*) declared jointly as “transboundary sites”, i.e., through a common letter of designation, signed by the two national authorities, sometimes also complemented by a common Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) covering both parts of the site, specifying its values on each side of the border. Such sites may carry the same name or different names, for reasons of overriding importance of local names, different languages and alphabets used, etc. A detailed paper was presented to the European Regional Meeting in Armenia in December 2004 and is available at http://www.ramsar.org/mtg_reg_europe2004_docs1d1.pdf.
5. A related issue is that which concerns the desirability and operability for developing a mechanism for specifically identifying transboundary Ramsar sites in the Ramsar List and any reporting requirements for this.
6. The Subgroup on COP9 is invited to comment on this issue and to advise on the desirability or need for a draft Resolution to be prepared for consideration by the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2005.