

**CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

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

**DOC. COP9 SG-11**

Agenda item 11

## **The Strategic Plan for the Convention**

1. Resolution VIII.25 *inter alia*

APPROVES the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 as annexed to this Resolution as the basis for the implementation of the Convention, and INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Bureau to finalize the text of the Plan to take into account the Resolutions adopted by the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and to make available the finalized text of the Plan to Contracting Parties and all others concerned with its implementation;

URGES all Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the Ramsar Bureau, and the Convention's International Organization Partners to take on the renewed challenge of implementing the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 through the targets established by the Convention's Work Plan 2003-2005 (Resolution VIII.26).

2. During the current triennium it has been difficult to promulgate the Strategic Plan as a strategic document, due to its complexity and prolixity. This present document therefore attaches a suggested derivative version of the plan for 2006-2008, which will be used for promotional and outreach purposes as well as to become the major platform to test and use effectiveness indicators of the Convention. Should this trial prove effective, this form of the plan could become the norm for the Strategic Plan for 2009–2014.
3. The present document contains a short explanation of an “ideal” strategic plan, a revised version of the plan for 2006-2008, and possible elements for a new Resolution on the issue. The Key Result Areas (KRAs) are one area where Subgroup discussion and advice would be welcome to improve the format, types and form of these KRAs.

### **What is a Strategic Plan?**

4. A Strategic Plan is designed to help all concerned with the Ramsar Convention pose and answer some questions. These are:

*What are we about?* (our Mission)

*What do we want to do?* (our Goals)

*How are we going to do what we want?* (our Strategies)

*What are the results we want to achieve?* (our Key Result Areas)

And, most importantly, *How can we measure progress?* (Indicators)

5. Answering these questions and thus implementing the plan is primarily the responsibility of Contracting Parties. In addition the role of the Secretariat in Gland, and the regional support offices, is to assist Contracting Parties to implement difficult issues and to help coordinate action at regional levels. Ramsar has traditionally also had a clear role for the International Organization Partners in assisting Contracting Parties where appropriate, and in general in providing support and technical advice at local, regional and global levels.

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## THE RAMSAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2006 - 2008

## Preamble

1. Good water governance and capacity building at a local level are vital for poverty alleviation. Since 1971, the Ramsar Convention has been a key global force in promoting the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world. The Convention defines “wetland” in very broad terms: **“Wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres” (Article 1.1 of the Convention).** The Convention also asks each contracting governments (party) to “designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance”, which has become colloquially known as the Ramsar List.
2. Water is key to sustainable development. Water supplies of good quality are also fundamental to poverty alleviation. But water supplies are dependent upon the protection and sustainable use of wetland and related ecosystems that naturally capture, filter, store and release water, *inter alia* swamps, mires, fens, lakes and riverine systems. Component biodiversity of such systems plays a key role in ensuring continued delivery of these water-related functions. Changing component biodiversity may increase poverty, increase risks to human health, and undermine livelihood security (including food and water security). Water resources management schemes should be based on this integrated approach. Only then will human livelihoods, including food through agriculture and fisheries, access to clean water and adequate sanitation be properly ensured.
3. Disaster reduction and early warning systems are an essential part of integrated water management, since poor people are the most vulnerable and the hardest hit by water-related disasters, such as floods, tsunamis and drought. Contracting Parties are encouraged by the Convention to develop and implement wetland and water planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory. They must also inform if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
4. Additionally, Contracting Parties are encouraged to consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention, especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties. The Convention stresses that it is essential to integrate conservation of wetlands and sustainable use as a contribution to the health and well-being of people through sustainable development everywhere.
5. With these thoughts in mind, the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, held in Spain on 18-26 November 2002, adopted a Strategic Plan for the application of the Convention during the period 2003-2008. That

Strategic Plan recognized the adoption by the Convention of a broader approach to wetland conservation and sustainable use in achieving full application of the wise use principle and safeguarding wetland resources. Developing and simplifying this plan, the Conference of the Parties meeting in Kampala, Uganda, November 2005, has agreed this revised Strategic Plan for the second triennium within the framework of the Convention's mission. COP9 agreed five Goals, each to be achieved through a series of strategies with key result areas to measure effectiveness.

6. Collectively this strategic Plan is a contribution to:
  - achievement of Millennium Development Goal 7 (Ensuring Environmental Sustainability);
  - the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Mexico 2006;
  - achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity targets; and
  - Implementation of decisions from CSD13 policies on water and sanitation.

### ***What are we about? – The mission of the Convention***

7. *“Conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.”* The Convention stresses that it is essential to integrate conservation of wetlands and sustainable use as a contribution to the health and well-being of people through sustainable development everywhere.

### ***What do we want to do? – Our goals***

**GOAL 1. The wise use of wetlands:** To stimulate and assist all Contracting Parties to develop, adopt and use the necessary and appropriate instruments and measures to ensure the wise use of all wetlands within their territories.

Delivers Articles 3.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 of the Convention.

**GOAL 2. Wetlands of International Importance:** To stimulate and support all Contracting Parties in the appropriate implementation of the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance, including the appropriate monitoring and management of listed sites as a contribution to sustainable development, and implementation of the 2010 targets for Biodiversity.

Delivers Articles 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2 of the Convention.

**GOAL 3. International cooperation:** To promote international cooperation through the active application of the Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention and in particular to mobilize additional financial and technical assistance for wetland conservation and wise use.

Delivers Article 5 of the Convention.

**GOAL 4. Implementation capacity:** To ensure that the Convention has the required implementation mechanisms, resources and capacity to achieve its mission.

Delivers Articles 6, 7, and 8 of the Convention.

**GOAL 5. Membership:** To progress towards universal membership of the Convention. Delivers Articles 2.4 and 9 of the Convention.

***How are we going to do what we want? (Our strategies) and What are the results we want to achieve? (Our Key Result Areas – KRAs)***

Note. In this section each key strategy or strategy is linked by number to one of the five goals. Despite this linkage some strategies and Key Result Areas will in the end satisfy more than one goal.

**STRATEGY 1.1.**

**Describe, assess and monitor the extent and condition of wetland resources, especially at global and national (or, where appropriate, sub-national) scales, in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention and in particular the application of the wise use principle.**

**KRAs**

- By COP10, all Parties without completed inventories to have initiated action in line with the Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory, and as far as possible to have completed and disseminated comprehensive national wetland inventories, including information on wetland importance; potential Ramsar sites; wetlands for restoration; location of under-represented wetland types; and values and functions, in particular in relation to poverty eradication strategies.
- By COP10, a Web-based metadatabase in place and populated with information on all national wetland inventories.
- By COP10, all Parties with wetland inventories to have made these available to all stakeholders.

**STRATEGY 1.2.**

**Develop, review, amend when necessary, and implement national or supra-national policies, legislation, institutions and practices, including impact assessment and valuation, in all Contracting Parties, to ensure that the Convention, and especially the wise use principle, is being fully applied.**

**KRAs**

- At least 50 CPs to have undertaken water quality and quantity assessments.
- National Wetland Policy or equivalent instrument fully integrated into other strategic and planning processes by all Parties, including poverty eradication strategies and water resources management and water efficiency plans and national strategies for sustainable development in line with WSSD targets. SC/Secretariat to identify at least 100 Parties to initiate and if possible complete by COP10 comprehensive reviews of their laws and institutions.
- SC/Secretariat to identify at least 50 Parties to have in place Strategic Environmental Assessment for policies, programmes and plans impacting on wetlands.

**STRATEGY 1.3.**

**Develop and disseminate methodologies to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including peatlands as a demonstration of the ecosystem-based approach under the Convention.**

**KRA**

- Implementation of the *Guidelines for global action on peatlands* as adopted by Resolution VIII.17, noting the priority sought therein for inventories of peatlands, the protection and possible designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites, the transfer of peatland restoration technology, and the maintenance of the cultural significance of peatlands, and implement those actions identified as national priorities and report to COP9 on the progress in implementing the *Guidelines for global action on peatlands* (Resolution VIII.17).

**STRATEGY 1.4.**

**Increase recognition of the significance of wetlands for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defense, food security, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and scientific research.**

**KRAs**

- Analysis of values and functions of Ramsar sites prepared by the Secretariat for all CPs.
- Development and implementation of wise use wetland programmes and projects that contribute to poverty alleviation objectives and food and water security plans at local, national and regional levels.
- Use of the guiding principles in Annex I of Resolution VIII.19 to promote full recognition of the social and cultural heritage of wetlands, and ensure that this is fully appreciated and taken into account in their wise use and management.

**STRATEGY 1.5.**

**Integrate policies on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the planning activities in all Contracting Parties, and in decision-making processes at national, regional, provincial and local levels, particularly concerning territorial management, groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, coastal and marine zone planning, and responses to climate change.**

**KRAs**

- All CPs to have made available the guidance on water allocation and management for ecosystems to support decision-making on water resource management, as a contribution to achieve the WSSD target on water resources management and water efficiency plans.
- Guidelines on management of groundwater resources prepared.
- Information on wetlands and their role in mitigation and adaptation to climate change made available.
- All relevant CPs to have assessed implications of Kyoto Protocol implementation on wetlands.

**STRATEGY 1.6.**

**Identify priority wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits, and implement the necessary measures to recover these sites.**

**KRAs**

- All CPs with lost or degraded wetlands to have identified priority sites for restoration; restoration projects underway or completed in at least 100 CPs.
- Continue to add new case studies and methods to Ramsar wetland restoration Web site.
- River Basin Initiative fully operational.

**STRATEGY 1.7.**

**Develop guidance and promote protocols and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive alien species in wetland systems.**

**KRAs**

- Address the problems posed by invasive species in wetland ecosystems in a decisive and holistic manner, making use, as appropriate, of the tools and guidance developed by various institutions and processes.
- In collaboration with the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), relevant MEAs, Ramsar's International Organization Partners, and interested Parties, continue to develop and disseminate practical guidance for the prevention, control and eradication of invasive species, based on case studies and documented experiences from around the world.
- Ensure that national and, where necessary international, action plans for the prevention, control and eradication of invasive species fully incorporate wetland issues.

**STRATEGY 2.1.**

**Apply the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Handbook 7)*.**

**KRA**

- Increase in site nomination matched by increase in adequate management planning processes.

**STRATEGY 2.2.**

**Maintain the Ramsar Sites Database and constantly update it with the best available information, and use the database as a tool for guiding the further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.**

**KRAs**

- Submit missing or incomplete data sheets and/or maps of listed sites as a matter of utmost urgency, and also ensure that all previously submitted site descriptions are in the format of the approved Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands.
- Enhance the interactive capacity of the Ramsar Sites Database and its accessibility to stakeholders, including through links between the Database, the Ramsar Sites Directory Web presentation, the Ramsar Web site, and other interactive systems

such as the Ramsar Data Gateway, as well as the publication of special reports and other outputs.

**STRATEGY 2.3.**

**Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites.**

**KRAs**

- Consistent with Article 3.1 of the Convention, define and apply the measures required to maintain the ecological character of each listed site, using the integrated package of Convention tools for site management as presented in Ramsar Handbook 8 as well as the supplementary guidance adopted by COP9.
- Promote, as necessary, the establishment and implementation of zoning measures for larger Ramsar sites, wetland reserves, and other wetlands (Recommendation 5.3 and Resolution VIII.14) and strict protection measures for certain Ramsar sites and other wetlands of small size and/or particular sensitivity and consider as a matter of priority the establishment of cross-sectoral site management committees for Ramsar sites, involving relevant government agencies, local community representatives, and other stakeholders, including the business sector.

**STRATEGY 2.4.**

**Monitor the condition of Ramsar sites, notify the Ramsar Secretariat without delay of changes affecting Ramsar sites as required by Article 3.2, and apply the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems.**

**KRA**

- For all sites on the Montreux Record, and which have not been subject to a Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM), CPs to request such a Mission prior to COP9.

**STRATEGY 2.5.**

**Promote inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species.**

**KRAs**

- All CPs to have identified their transboundary wetlands. 50% of CPs to have identified cooperative management mechanisms.
- 50% of CPs with shared basins and coastal systems to be part of joint management commissions or authorities.
- Continue to promote and support the development of further regional site networks and initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species, as exemplified *inter alia* by the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network

**STRATEGY 2.6.**

**Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements.**

**KRAs**



- Continue to support the operation of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) and its related action programme, the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) and its Coordination Unit.
- Encourage development of regional arrangements under the Convention similar to MedWet, where appropriate, applying the *Guidance for the development of Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands* (Resolution VIII.30)

### **STRATEGY 3.1.**

**Collaboration with Other Institutions: Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other agencies.**

#### **KRAs**

- CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan being implemented, and full participation in the CBD LG. CMS/AEWA Joint Work Plan in place and being implemented. Joint activities developed with UNCCD and UNFCCC, including through participation in the Joint Liaison Group. Joint work plan with UNESCO-MAB being implemented.
- NEPAD's Action Plan to have fully incorporated Ramsar issues and mechanisms, and being implemented by relevant CPs, in lines with WSSD targets.
- Promote a UN General Assembly Resolution formally recognizing the Convention. In the meantime, pursue partnership approaches with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other relevant UN agencies, as well as through UN Water.

### **STRATEGY 3.2.**

**Sharing of Expertise and Information: Promote the sharing of expertise and information.**

#### **KRA**

- Continue to contribute to the development and testing of harmonized information management and reporting systems with the appropriate MEAs, including exploration of modular-style national reporting formats, consolidated reporting formats, state of the environment reporting, and regional reporting.

### **STRATEGY 4.1.**

**Local Communities, Indigenous People, and Cultural Values: Encourage active and informed participation of local communities and indigenous people, in particular women and youth, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, especially in relation to understanding the dynamics of cultural values.**

#### **KRA**

- Elaborate for consideration by COP10 further guidance on the application of the *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 5), based on experiences gained at the field level, and in particular the experience of Pacific Island States and other Small Island Developing States, and working with the CBD and others in line with the CBD-Ramsar 3rd Joint Work Plan.

### **STRATEGY 4.2.**

**Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.**

**KRAs**

- Encourage the private sector to apply the wise use principle (Ramsar Handbooks 1 to 6) in their activities and investments affecting wetlands.
- Review, in cooperation with the private sector, domestic and international trade in wetland-derived plant and animal products, both exports and imports, and as appropriate implement the necessary legal, institutional and administrative measures to ensure that harvesting is sustainable and in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).
- Promote establishment of effective mechanisms to encourage environmentally sound trade in wetland products, in particular from Ramsar sites, compatible with international trade agreements. In particular, consider the possibility of creating a voluntary “Ramsar Label” for wetland products and services.

**STRATEGY 4.3.**

**Promote incentive measures that encourage the application of the wise use principle and the removal of perverse incentives.**

**KRAs**

- SC/Secretariat to have identified at least 50 CPs to have reviewed policy and legal and institutional frameworks and sought to remove measures adversely affecting wetland conservation and wise use.
- Report to COP10 on progress in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of positive incentive measures and the identification and removal of perverse incentives, including those relating to agriculture.

**STRATEGY 4.4.**

**Support, and assist in implementing at all levels, the Convention’s Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Programme (Resolution VIII.31) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through public participation and communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA).**

**KRAs**

- At least 50 CPs to have established national CEPA action plans.
- At least 75 CPs to have established at least one wetland education centre at a Ramsar site.
- Complete re-design of Secretariat’s outreach strategy, including re-designed Web site, comprehensive media strategy in place, and novel approaches to promote WWD.

**STRATEGY 4.5.**

**Promote international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, while ensuring that environmental safeguards and assessments are an integral component of all development projects that affect wetlands, including foreign and domestic investments.**

**KRAs**

- Each CP with a bilateral donor agency to have encouraged it to give priority for funding for wetland conservation and wise use projects in relation to poverty alleviation and other WSSD and MDG targets and priorities.
- Work with international development agencies, including banks, financial institutions and private investors and developers, to ensure that proposed grants, loans, and development projects include environmental safeguards and environmental assessments of possible impacts upon wetlands.
- Review wetland-related project development approval and consider the introduction of mechanisms to direct resources derived from these activities back to hands-on wetland management in the country.

#### **STRATEGY 4.6.**

**Provide the financial resources required for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.**

##### **KRAs**

- Ensure an adequate budget and supporting financial policies in place to enable to Convention to discharge its responsibilities in a timely and effective manner.

#### **STRATEGY 4.7.**

**Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Ramsar Secretariat are operating at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness to support implementation of this Strategic Plan.**

##### **KRAs**

- Ensure that the Ramsar COP continues to have as its major focus the development of tools to assist Parties in implementing the Convention through the Strategic Plan, and a *modus operandi* that allows full and active participation by small as well as large Contracting Party delegations and the different categories of observers.
- Development of a comprehensive and flexible staffing policy to respond to key issues as they emerge, especially between COP meetings
- Through the information provided in National Reports, evaluate and report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan at each meeting of the COP, and prepare an updated Strategic Plan for the forthcoming triennium.
- Review the working priorities, and *modus operandi*, and ways of financing, of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) at each meeting of the COP.

#### **STRATEGY 4.8.**

**Develop the capacity within, and promote cooperation among, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.**

##### **KRAs**

- Encourage the review of existing national institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and on the basis of such a review, identify and implement measures to improve global management of wetlands.

#### **STRATEGY 4.9.**

**Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others.**

**KRA**

- Each IOP and the Bureau to have established and be implementing a programme of joint work in support of the Convention, including joint actions by all IOPs.

**STRATEGY 4.10.**

**Identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, and implement appropriate responses.**

**KRAs**

- The RIZA-Ramsar cooperative effort being fully implemented, linking existing and proposed training centres.
- At least half of CPs to have assessed national and local training needs.
- Ensure an appropriate capacity building effort in place for all CP's.

**STRATEGY 5.**

**Membership of the Convention: Secure universal membership of the Convention.**

**KRA**

- Achieve membership of 160 parties by COP10

**Suggested Draft Resolution – Key Elements.**

**Resolution IX.///**

**The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2006-2008**

1. RECALLING that Resolution VIII.25 adopted the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 as the basis for the implementation of the Convention;
2. RECOGNIZING that the implementation by Contracting Parties and others of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 has permitted a more coherent and effective realization of the Convention, but AWARE that there remain many and increasing challenges to achieving globally consistent delivery of wetland conservation and wise use;
3. AWARE that to achieve the Convention's objectives in wetland conservation and wise use, a comprehensible but simple and easy-to-use document would be helpful;
4. RECOGNIZING that each Contracting Party is free to choose the extent to which it will implement the Strategic Plan, the resources it will allocate to the implementation, and the timeframes to be used; and
5. ALSO AWARE that the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 has been prepared by the Standing Committee through a wide consultative process with Contracting Parties, the Convention's International Organization Partners and other partners, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

6. APPROVES a revised version of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 for the period 2006 -2008, as annexed to this Resolution, as the basis for the implementation of the Convention, and INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to finalize the text of the Plan to take into account the Resolutions adopted by the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and to make available the finalized text of the Plan to Contracting Parties and all others concerned with its implementation with minimum delay; and
7. URGES all Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the Ramsar Bureau, and the Convention's International Organization Partners to take on the renewed challenge of implementing the revised Strategic Plan especially through the Key Result Areas and associated indicators.