

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

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

**DOC. COP9 SG-18**

**Agenda item 11**

**A proposal for 'key performance measures' of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**

**Action requested.** The Subgroup on COP9 is invited to consider whether the WWF proposals for 'key performance measures' are helpful to its consideration of the Strategic Plan for 2006-2008 and responses to Resolution VIII.45.

**Note by the Ramsar Secretariat**

1. The Secretariat has received the attached paper prepared by WWF, with a request that it be made available for the Subgroup on COP9 for their consideration.
2. The paper proposes the establishment of a number of very broad 'key performance measures' (KPMs) for the Convention, intended to respond to the intent of Resolution VIII.45 and Resolution VIII.26 on key indicators on the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan. The WWF proposal does not address what forms of indicators might need to be established for assessment of the proposed measures (except for the proposed 'local KPM' concerning the condition of the wetland resource, which is covered by the ecological outcome-oriented indicators work of STRP's Working Group 6).
3. The Subgroup on COP9 may wish to consider this approach of 'key performance measures' in relation to the proposals from the Secretariat under this agenda item for a revised version of the Convention's Strategic Plan for the 2006-2008 triennium, and in particular the proposal for establishing 'key result areas' (KRAs) for implementation of the Convention.

# A proposal for ‘key performance measures’ of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Prepared by WWF, February 2005

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## Executive summary

WWF is proposing that the Standing Committee Sub Group on COP9 build on the processes described below by preparing a proposal for the Standing Committee to recommend to COP9 for the adoption of an overall framework of ‘key performance measures’ (KPMs). These would be designed to give a simple, yet comprehensive overview of how efficiently and effectively the Ramsar Convention is performing, through a triennial assessment.

This proposal was prepared by WWF to contribute to current processes underway through the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention that are examining, in different ways, the issues surrounding the efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention. These processes were stimulated by two Resolutions, Res. VIII.45 on the effectiveness of the Convention and Res. VII.26 for key indicators on the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In forming a broad view of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention, this proposal considers the levels at which the Convention is expected to operate, namely global, regional / transboundary, national and local, and establishes a framework of ten expectations across these levels with associated KPMs.

We strongly support the development of ecologically based indicators of effectiveness being developed by the STRP. While agreeing that such indicators will be a very useful addition to an overall assessment of the Convention’s effectiveness, there are problems in relying too heavily on what these may show. It is for these reasons that WWF is proposing that the Convention adopt a set of ‘Key Performance Measures’ covering a range of procedural outputs and ecological outcomes at different scales, for use in periodic assessment of the Convention’s effectiveness. WWF’s proposal complements and enhances the STRP’s work on ecological outcome indicators, which we support.

We believe that the meeting of Standing Committee Sub Group on COP9 is an appropriate venue to introduce this concept to enable its early consideration by the Parties in preparation for COP9.

Operating Level	Key Performance Measures (KPMs)
Global	1. How well clarified are the obligations arising from the text of the Convention?
	2. How (a) comprehensive and (b) up-to-date is the guidance developed for application by the Parties?
	3. How relevant is the Strategic Plan to global priorities and threats to wetlands?
	4. What capacity exists to provide technical support to Parties that request it?
	5. What level of financial resourcing is available to assist developing and transition states with implementation?
	6. How actively promoted is the work of the Convention by (a) the Standing Committee and (b) the Secretariat?
	7. How (a) extensive and (b) effective is the network of partnerships designed to promote the work of the Convention?
Regional/ Transboundary	8. What regional or transboundary initiatives is the Convention directly associated with, and are these providing tangible benefits for the Parties involved?
National	9. To what extent has each Party implemented the Strategic Plan, and Resolution and Recommendations arising from COPs?*
Local	10. What is the condition of the wetland resource?#

\* = the review of the efficiency and effectiveness of Resolutions and Recommendations underway at present addresses this key performance measures, but only in part.

# = the development of ecologically-based indicators by the STRP addresses this key performance measure.

## 1. Introduction and background

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the oldest of the multilateral environment treaties and has evolved throughout its history from a relatively small scale convention, pigeon-holed for many years as the ‘waterbird convention’, into one that has now positioned itself on the global stage in relation to issues such as sustainable development, the world water crisis, poverty reduction, food and water security and biodiversity conservation.

At Ramsar’s 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Contracting Parties ( COP8) held in Valencia, Spain in November 2002, Resolution VIII.45 *Operation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the effectiveness of Ramsar Convention Resolutions and Recommendations* was adopted. It contained as operational paragraphs the following that in large part stimulated the preparation of this report.

- ‘10. DIRECTS the Standing Committee to undertake, as one of its highest priorities, a general review of the effectiveness of the process of drafting, considering, adopting and implementing Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Meetings of the Conference of the Parties;
11. DIRECTS that this review focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention, from a broad perspective rather than on a country by country basis;’

Resolution VIII.26 of the same Conference of the Parties included the following, also notable in this context.

- ‘19. REQUESTS the STRP to prepare a series of key indicators in relation to the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan in the next triennium, to be used as part of the National Report Format. These indicators should be adopted by the Standing Committee at its annual meeting in 2004, so that Parties may use them to complement their National Reports when they are finalised in preparation for COP9 in 2005;’

Thus, the issues of efficiency and effectiveness were key ones for the governments attending Ramsar's COP8. This is not surprising, given the resources now being directed to the management of natural resources, and the number of international treaties that have evolved to guide these activities. Government resources are under growing pressure, and so there is keen interest to ensure that the investment in international treaties is providing good value for money.

In response to these COP8 resolutions, two processes have been put in train during to examine (in part) the efficiency and effectiveness questions raised in these resolutions.

For Resolution VIII.45, the Ramsar Standing Committee has formed a sub-group, chaired by the USA, to take forward consideration of the issues of efficiency and effectiveness for the process of developing, adopting and then implementing Resolutions and Recommendations of the COP. A questionnaire was developed and circulated to all Ramsar Administrative Authorities. The outcomes of this process will be considered at the Standing Committee Sub Group meeting on COP9 in March 2005 and the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee June 2005. It is important to note that this exercise, based on the content of the draft questionnaire, is proposing to confine itself to addressing paragraph 10 of Resolution VIII.45 (see above).

For Resolution VIII.26, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention has formed a working group, and this group presented their draft proposal for indicators, also to the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee (through Document SC30-7). In introducing their report, the representative of BirdLife International (chair of the group) noted that the aim was to develop indicators '*to evaluate outcomes, rather than just activities, and to assess what difference is being made by Ramsar implementation specifically. The 19 indicators suggested are meant to be scientifically-based indicators of outcomes for Parties to use in conjunction with their National Reports, which are more institutionally based*' (Paragraph 71, Official report of the meeting).

With regard to these two independent, yet closely related assessments of efficiency and effectiveness, the following observations and comments are made.

## **2. Proposed responses to Resolutions VIII.45 and VIII.26**

### **2.1 Resolution VIII.45 *Operation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the effectiveness of Ramsar Convention Resolutions and Recommendations***

The outcome of the work of the Standing Committee (SC) Sub-Group on Res. VIII.45 is outlined in an advisory note from the Ramsar Secretariat to the SC Sub-Group on COP9 meeting in March 2005. The note discusses various methodological problems and summarises the 156 responses received to the 2004 questionnaire. Nearly half the respondents (49%) agreed or strongly agreed that '*COP resolutions and recommendations are effective, useful, easy to use, relevant and they have a positive impact on my ability to do my job and on wetland policy in my country*' as opposed to less than a quarter (23%) who disagreed. The usefulness of various COP resolutions and recommendations were then rated.

In response, the Ramsar Secretariat propose to the SC Sub-Group on COP9 a number of measures to streamline the preparation and presentation of draft resolutions for COPs. The measures proposed would improve the efficiency of the processes for preparing resolutions by enabling consolidation of proposals, greater technical review and more rigorous and early consultation.

These measures are not intended to and do not directly enhance our ability to measure the effectiveness of the Convention for wetlands conservation and management.

## 2.2 Resolution VIII.26 – *Development of ecologically-based indicators*

The STRP meeting in January-February 2005 endorsed a report of its Working Group 6 that recommended *'Building on the outline prioritisation of the original indicator proposals undertaken at the previous workshop in July 2004, priorities were reworked selecting a 'top 7' that the consultant and the WG will now develop into full fact sheets.'* The seven proposed indicators are:

- A. *The overall conservation status of wetlands;*
- B. *The status of the ecological character of Ramsar sites;*
- C. *Water-related indicator;*
- D. *The frequency of threats affecting Ramsar sites;*
- E. *Wetland sites with successfully implemented conservation or wise use management plans;*
- F. *Overall population trends of wetlands taxa;*
- G. *Changes in threat status of wetland taxa.*

The development by the STRP of more ecologically-based indicators of effectiveness of implementation is an essential approach to take since the ultimate success or otherwise of the Convention will be shown through the extent and condition of the world's wetland resources. Further, adoption of appropriate outcome indicators will assist Ramsar's collaboration with other agreements, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity, and assist in monitoring achievement of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation's (2002) target of *'significantly reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010'*.

There are number of problems in relying solely on ecological outcomes in measuring the effectiveness of the Convention, which the Res. VIII.26 process was not intended to resolve:

1. Ecological change often takes years of observation before a trend is apparent. Further, there are many methodological and resource constraints in measuring the ecological outcomes with the detail desired on a global scale. Consequently, ecological outcome indicators by themselves will not show the progress of the Convention with the detail, specific to a particular scale or process, or in the time periods that contracting parties would want;
2. One pillar of the Convention – international cooperation – and a number of implied expectations of the Convention are processes or activities where the Convention's effectiveness is best assessed by measuring procedural outputs;
3. International conventions like Ramsar are an agreed global blueprint for actions. However, they do not override sovereign rights and cannot dictate how each contracting party takes advantage of the tools, guidance and support processes that emerge from the Conference of the Contracting Parties or come about through the initiatives of the intersessional governing body, subsidiary scientific body and the Secretariat. For many Parties there are also significant impediments to implementing international conventions such as Ramsar. These capacity weaknesses, whether financial or skills-based or both, can prejudice the results if ecologically-based indicators alone are used to determine some indication of the effectiveness of the Convention. Instead, assessing a range of procedural outputs and ecological outcomes at different scales is required if the different elements of the Convention's operations are to be properly assessed.

It is for these reasons that WWF is proposing that the Convention adopt a set of 'Key Performance Measures' covering a range of procedural outputs and ecological outcomes at different scales, for use in periodic assessment of the Convention's effectiveness. WWF's proposal complements and enhances the STRP's work on ecological outcome indicators, which we support.

### **3. Gaining a fuller appreciation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention – proposed key performance measures**

When attempting to form a view about the overall efficiency and effectiveness of an international environment convention such as Ramsar, it is critical to consider the overall *modus operandi*. Multilateral environment conventions are intended to operate at several levels, as reflected in the Mission Statement of the Ramsar Convention (below) and it is important to consider all levels; from global to local. A failure to do this will only give part of the picture, and not a comprehensive overview of whether or not the Convention is performing as it should.

*'The Convention's mission is 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'* (Ramsar COP8, 2002).

It must also be remembered, as indicated in the previous section, that international conventions are globally agreed 'toolkits' for actions to be taken at the regional, national and local levels. A failure to prevent wetland loss or degradation in any particular country, or part thereof, probably represents a failure on the part of that country to apply the Ramsar Convention in full. Frequently it is the Convention itself that is wrongly blamed for such failures. Ramsar is only as effective as the Party itself makes it. Signatories must therefore accept responsibility when wetland assets are lost. The Convention can develop guidance based on international experiences and best practice, and have it adopted by consensus at the COP, however, the degree of uptake of this guidance is determined by a range of factors, not the least of which is the capacity of the Ramsar Administrative Authority in each Party to adapt and make available these global formulas, frameworks and management approaches to practitioners, policy makers and others within that country.

In many Parties the Administrative Authority is a relatively small, poorly resourced part of the Government system, and also an area that sits outside the mainstream of government operations. This has a major impact on this question of effectiveness that can manifest itself in many ways. For example, in developing countries it may mean that matters of Ramsar implementation are not recognised as national priorities and therefore don't make it onto the project lists drawn up to be considered by donor agencies. There are also some Parties that focus on Ramsar site listings and management, and overlook Article 3.1 and its urging for Parties to apply wise use of wetlands more broadly. In these cases, any review of effectiveness will immediately show that Ramsar's full array of tools are not being utilised.

Table 1 below considers the various levels at which the Ramsar Convention operates, and how different factors need to be considered when assessing efficiency and effectiveness. It also shows the relatively limited nature of the current reviews of efficiency and effectiveness (as outlined above). Table 1 also proposes a range of 'key performance measures' (KPMs). These take into consideration issues such as national reporting, the effectiveness of Resolutions and

Recommendations and ecologically-based performance criteria. However, Table 1 places these within the context of a more comprehensive consideration of efficiency and effectiveness.

**Table 1: Operating levels of the Ramsar Convention and the key performance measures proposed for assessing the overall effectiveness of the Convention**

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Delivery mechanisms (how does it happen)</b>	<b>Key Performance Measures (KPMs)</b>
<b>Global</b>	Interpret the obligations under the Convention, and develop guidance to assist Parties with its application.	Conferences of the Contracting Parties (COPs), supported by the Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and Secretariat.	1. How well clarified are the obligations arising from the text of the Convention?
	Set a global agenda for the Convention.	COPs, supported by the Standing Committee, STRP and Secretariat.	2. How (a) comprehensive and (b) up-to-date is the guidance developed for application by the Parties?
	Provide technical, financial and other support to Parties, especially developing and transition States.	COPs, supported by the Standing Committee, STRP and Secretariat.	3. How relevant is the Strategic Plan to global priorities and threats to wetlands?
	Promote the work of the Convention, and seek partnerships for advancing this work.	Standing Committee and Secretariat.	4. What capacity exists to provide technical support to Parties that request it? 5. What level of financial resourcing is available to assist developing and transition states with implementation?
<b>Regional Transboundary</b>	Facilitate international, regional or transboundary cooperation between Parties and with regional initiatives.	Parties or Secretariat or both initiate/facilitate cooperation between Parties or with regional initiatives, programmes and Conventions. Supported by Standing Committee (intersessionally) and COPs.	6. How actively promoted is the work of the Convention by (a) the Standing Committee and (b) the Secretariat? 7. How (a) extensive and (b) effective is the network of partnerships designed to promote the work of the Convention?
<b>National</b>	Policy, legal, institutional and planning frameworks in place and operating.	Ramsar Administrative Authority to lead processes to see application of the guidance developed globally, including implementation of Strategic Plan and Resolutions and Recommendations of COPs. In many Parties NGO's assist these processes.	8. What regional or transboundary initiatives is the Convention directly associated with, and are these providing tangible benefits for the Parties involved?
	Regular reviews of progress with implementation and to identify impediments to be addressed through global actions, if possible.	National reporting to each COP.	
<b>Local</b>	Wetland conservation and wise use actions taken by local custodians/practitioners and or governments.	Ramsar Administrative Authority to lead processes to see application of guidance and implementation of national policy, legal, institutional and planning 'tools' that encourage local custodians to be effective wetland managers.	9. To what extent has each Party implemented the Strategic Plan, and Resolution and Recommendations arising from COPs?*
			10. What is the condition of the wetland resource?#

\* = the review of the efficiency and effectiveness of Resolutions and Recommendations underway at present addresses this key performance measures, but only in part (see above).

# = the development of ecologically-based indicators by the STRP addresses this key performance measure.

#### 4. Recommendations

WWF asks the March 2005 Standing Committee Sub-Group on COP9 to consider either endorsing or establishing a process to redraft the key performance measures for the Convention proposed in this paper for consideration of the Standing Committee in June 2005 and COP9. We also ask the Standing Committee to recommend to COP9 an appropriate process for an assessment based on these measures to be reported to each subsequent COP.

The recommendations for the upcoming Standing Committee would be:

1. The Standing Committee recommends that COP9 adopt by resolution key performance measures for the efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention as proposed in Table 1 above.
2. The Standing Committee recommend that COP9 request the Secretariat and/or Standing Committee report to each COP on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention using the key performance measures framework adopted above.

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