

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND
THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (RAMSAR, IRAN, 1971)

- I. REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (RAMSAR, IRAN, 1971)
- II. PROPOSED JOINT WORK PLAN BETWEEN THE CONVENTIONS (1998-99), PREPARED BY THE BUREAU OF THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

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1. The Ramsar Bureau prepared this proposal based on the:
 - a. Texts of the two Conventions;
 - b. Memorandum of Cooperation between the two Convention secretariats;
 - c. Decisions from past Conferences of the Contracting Parties for the two Conventions;
 - d. Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands 1997-2002, approved at the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties in Brisbane, Australia, 1996;
 - e. Work Program 1997-99 of the Ramsar Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);
 - f. Report of the Third Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)
 - g. Approved Work Program of the Bureau (secretariat) of the Ramsar Convention 1998;
 - h. Technical program for the 7th Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties, San José, Costa Rica, May 1999.

BACKGROUND

2. The Memorandum of Cooperation and the proposed Joint Work Plan between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Wetlands recognizes that the two Conventions have a number of areas of common interest, particularly in, but not restricted to, inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems.

3. The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971) is the recognized specialist Convention for matters relating to the conservation and sustainable use (called "wise use" by the Ramsar Convention) of wetlands, which are very broadly defined under that Convention as follows:

"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".

4. Further, the Convention provides that wetlands "may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands". The Convention also recognizes human-made wetlands such as fish and shrimp ponds, salt pans, reservoirs, gravel pits and sewage ponds. In practice, the Ramsar Convention promotes those activities which will lead to the sustainable use of water-dominated ecosystems, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, that are not deep marine waters.

5. The areas of synergy between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) have been recognized by the member states of these two Conventions at their respective Conferences of the Contracting Parties (COPs). The CBD member states adopted Decision III/21 at their Third COP in 1996 which noted the Ramsar Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 (adopted at Ramsar's 6th COP earlier in the same year) and invited it to cooperate as a lead partner in the implementation of activities under CBD related to wetlands. The relevant extract from that Decision is given below.

Extract from CBD's Decision III/21 at COP3, 1996:

(a) In relation to cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance:

(i) to note the Strategic Plan for 1997-2002 adopted by the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, in March 1996, which includes actions aimed at creating synergy between that Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(ii) to invite the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance to cooperate as a lead partner in the implementation of activities under the Convention related to wetlands, and, in particular, requests the Executive Secretary to seek inputs from the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, in the preparation of documentation concerning the status and trends of inland water ecosystems for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting.

6. Likewise, the member states of the Convention on Wetlands at their 5th and 6th COPs adopted Resolutions (5.1 and VI.9, respectively) urging closer cooperation between the two Conventions. At Ramsar's 6th COP in Brisbane, Australia in 1996, the member States adopted a Strategic Plan 1997-2002 for the Convention which further reinforces the desirability of cooperation between the Conventions. The relevant extract is given below.

Extract from Convention on Wetlands - Strategic Plan 1997-2002, adopted at COP6, 1996. Operational Objective 7.2, Action 7.2.3:

Strengthen cooperation and synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular as regards inclusion of wetland concerns in national biodiversity strategies, and planning and execution of projects affecting wetlands.

In addition, the Ramsar Bureau assisted in the 1997 CBD SBSTTA meeting by contributing to the paper on "Biological diversity of inland waters" (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/2) and by organizing a workshop on "Biodiversity of Inland Waters" and providing its report as an information document (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/Inf.26).

7. In January 1996, a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between the secretariats of CBD and Ramsar was signed by the Executive Secretary of CBD and the Secretary General of Ramsar. This MoC, through six Articles, sets out a range of actions designed to establish a closer working partnership between the two Conventions. The text of this MoC is given in Section I of this Information Document, which also describes the actions taken in response to each Article. It is followed in Section II by the proposed Joint Work Plan for the Conventions as developed by the Bureau (secretariat) of the Convention on Wetlands for the information of participants at the Fourth COP of the CBD in May 1998, in Bratislava.

8. The Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was signed on 19 January 1996 in Geneva, Switzerland, by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Dr Calestous Juma, and the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, Mr Delmar Blasco. The operative paragraphs of the MoC are reproduced below along with a brief statement of the actions which have been taken in response to each.

Article 1. Institutional cooperation

a. The secretariats will explore the possibility for the organs of one Convention to participate as observers at meetings of the other.

9. It is now regular practice for "observers" from each Convention secretariat to attend COPs of the other. It has been suggested that this could be extended to include meetings of the Ramsar Convention's Standing Committee and the Bureau of the CBD in 1998 and beyond. The Chair of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel and the Ramsar secretariat attended the Third meeting of the SBSTTA in 1997. An invitation was extended to the Chair of SBSTTA and the Secretariat of CBD to attend the Seventh meeting of Ramsar's STRP in April 1998.

b. The secretariats will inform their respective focal points in each Contracting Party of their cooperative activities, and will seek to promote consultation and cooperation between focal points in those Contracting Parties where the focal points for the two Conventions are different.

10. In November 1997, the Ramsar Convention Bureau advised its Contracting Parties under Diplomatic Note of the proposed collaboration with the CBD and urged that there be dialogue at the national level between those officials responsible for implementation of the two Conventions. This was repeated in April 1998 when this Information Document was distributed to all Ramsar Contracting Parties.

Article 2. Exchange of information and experience

a. The secretariats will institute procedures for regular exchanges of information in their respective fields of action.

11. The secretariats exchange information on the outcomes of key meetings at present. In 1997, the Ramsar Bureau engaged an expert consultant, Dr Ken Lum, based in Montreal, to further discussions on areas of mutual interest between the Conventions. The development of the proposed Joint Work Plan (Section II) was assisted greatly by this arrangement and efforts will be escalated in the future to continue this level of dialogue. It is proposed that the Joint Work Plan elaborated in Section II be reviewed on a regular basis by the relevant officers within the two secretariats, and that future Joint Work Plans be prepared by annual meetings of these staff. These could then be considered by the Ramsar Standing Committee and the COP or the Bureau of the CBD.

b. The secretariats will work out modalities for exchanging data on biodiversity contained in their databases and the Clearing-house Mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity and for cooperating in preparing relevant documents under each Convention.

12. Both secretariats are at present supporting the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) in its project which is reviewing options for harmonization of data and information exchange between international biodiversity Conventions. Further, the sites maintained by each secretariat on the World Wide Web are "hot-linked" to facilitate access to the information provided by each and the networks they are, in turn, connected to. The additional expectations raised by this sub-paragraph are

addressed through the proposed Joint Work Plan which follows in Section II.

Article 3. Coordination of programs of work

a. The secretariats will explore the possibility to coordinate the preparation of their respective work plans.

13. Refer to Section II below.

b. The secretariats will explore the possibility of harmonizing the reporting requirements of Contracting Parties under both Conventions.

14. Both secretariats are at present supporting the WCMC project which is reviewing options for harmonizing the reporting requirements of Contracting Parties under both Conventions.

Article 4. Joint conservation action

a. The secretariats will consult their Contracting Parties with a view to encouraging integration and consistency between National Strategies, Plans or Programs under the Convention on Biological Diversity and National Wetland Policies under the Ramsar Convention.

15. The Ramsar Bureau has been encouraging the Administrative Authorities of the Convention in the Contracting Parties to ensure that they contribute the appropriate Ramsar elements to the preparation of national biodiversity strategies. There is evidence to indicate that this is occurring in a number of countries. At Ramsar's COP7 in Costa Rica in May 1999, this issue will be addressed through one of the Technical Sessions (see section II.2.a). It is proposed that the secretariats collaborate in preparing for this Technical Session, a product of which will be guidelines for ensuring that national biodiversity and wetland policies or strategies are integrated or harmonized.

b. The secretariats will consult their Contracting Parties with the view to encouraging effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in wetlands, particularly for the purposes of promoting the maintenance of ecological character of sites designated by Contracting Parties for the Ramsar List and promoting the development of a consistent approach for monitoring ecological character and ensuring conservation of wetland biodiversity.

16. The expectations raised by this sub-paragraph are addressed through the proposed Joint Work Plan, in Section II.3.b. Specifically, Ramsar's STRP is at present developing guidelines to assist Contracting Parties with monitoring the "ecological character" of sites. Ramsar's Wise Use Guidelines (and Additional Guidance) also provide a framework for "encouraging effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in wetlands" (see section II.5.a following).

c. The secretariats will endeavor to coordinate their activities in research, training and public awareness activities.

17. The expectations raised by this sub-paragraph are addressed through the proposed Joint Work Plan, in Section II.7 and II.8.

Article 5. Consultation, reporting and further guidance

The secretariats will institute measures for consultations on the implementation of this memorandum of cooperation and will report accordingly to their respective governing bodies and seek further guidance on new areas of cooperation.

18. Refer to the statement in response to Article 2.a above.

Article 6. Review and termination

This agreement may be reviewed at the request of either party and will be terminated by either party giving a one-year written notice.

19. Not applicable.

SECTION II - PROPOSED JOINT WORK PLAN, 1998-99

To assist Contracting Parties of the CBD in reviewing this proposed Joint Work Plan, the actions described below have been arranged in the order of the relevant Articles of the CBD Convention text. To assist Ramsar focal points, the actions are cross-referenced to the relevant Articles of the text of the Convention on Wetlands and the General Objectives in the Strategic Plan 1997-2002.

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- II.1 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
(CBD Article 5; Ramsar Article 5 and Strategic Plan General Objectives 1 and 7)
 - a. Transboundary cooperation
Article 5 of the Ramsar Convention expects Contracting Parties to work cooperatively to manage transboundary watersheds and the migratory species reliant on wetland ecosystems (inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems). There are several examples of where this is occurring under the Ramsar Convention at present. The Ramsar Convention also collaborates with the Convention on Migratory Species to promote multilateral approaches to the conservation of migratory species. The secretariats of the Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Migratory Species have a Memorandum of Understanding in place.

The Ramsar Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 indicates that at COP7, the Contracting Parties will consider for adoption guidelines on the implementation of Article 5 which will be directly relevant to the CBD. Transboundary and regional models for international cooperation will also be a major part of Technical Session V at Ramsar's COP7 entitled *The Frameworks for Regional and International Cooperation*.
 - b. Small Island Developing States
The CBD recognizes the special significance and circumstances of the Small Island Developing States, as does the Ramsar Convention in its Strategic Plan. On World Wetlands Day 1998, the Ramsar Bureau launched a special publication intended to encourage these States to join the Convention and gain access to its expertise and resources. The publication draws attention to the obvious synergy between CBD and the Convention on Wetlands for the habitats common in these countries, as well as the impending development of this Joint Work Plan. It is proposed that the two Convention secretariats collaborate to encourage an integrated approach to implementation of the two Conventions in the Small Island Developing States, the results of which would be reported on at Ramsar's COP7 and at a future CBD COP.
- II.2 GENERAL MEASURES FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE
(CBD Article 6; Ramsar Article 3 and Strategic Plan General Objective 2)
 - a. National strategies, policies and plans

The development of appropriate policy and legislative instruments at the national level is a very high priority for both Conventions. For the long-term sustainability of inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems, there must be cross-sectoral approaches taken for the development of national policy instruments which integrate biodiversity and wetland conservation considerations into broader frameworks. At Ramsar's COP7 these issues will be considered in Technical Sessions I (*Ramsar and Water*) and II (*National Planning for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use*). Projects examining models for policy development and legislative review (see II.4.e also) are under way at present under Ramsar, and will be reported on and further elaborated at that time.

Also, the Ramsar Convention promotes the establishment of cross-sectoral National Wetland Committees as a mechanism to encourage a more integrated approach to water systems management. Similarly, at the local scale, through its Management Planning Guidelines, the Ramsar Convention promotes full stakeholder consultation and the establishment of cross-sectoral management committees for Wetlands of International Importance and other wetland sites. Collaboration with CBD will assist with moving towards integration of these consultative instruments and national advisory bodies and processes at the country level. The collaboration with CBD will strive to use the ecosystem approach for the work of those bodies and processes.

The first national reports submitted by Parties to the CBD address Article 6 (General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use) and report on measures taken in the development of national strategies, programs and other plans. A synthesis is being made in document UNEP/CBD/COP/4/11. Decision III/9 of the third meeting of the COP of the CBD urged Parties to include in their national plans or strategies, *inter alia*, integration of biological diversity objectives in relevant sectoral policies.

b. Integrated watershed and coastal zone management

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity has adopted an ecosystem approach to implementing the Convention. At Ramsar's COP7, Technical Session I (*Ramsar and Water*) will examine lessons learned in integrated watershed management and provide advice to governments, organizations and the general community on best practice in this area. To the extent possible, this session could examine the findings under the principles of the ecosystem approach so far developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance includes 903 sites. Of these, 435 have coastal components and, of these, 379 are totally coastal or marine wetland types. Through the Convention, management plans to promote the integrated management of these areas are being prepared or have been completed. Through the National Reports being prepared by Ramsar Parties for COP7, up-to-date information will be provided on the status of these plans and the focal points for each site. This information will be available to the Secretariat of CBD, the SBSTTA and the focal points of CBD in the respective Contracting Parties to assist them with promoting an integrated approach to marine and coastal area management.

Decision III/11 of the third meeting of the COP of the CBD endorsed the conclusions of the 1995 CSD sectoral review of Agenda 21, which, *inter alia*, recognized the need for an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the planning, development and management of land resources, and that the achievement of the multiple objectives related to sustainable agriculture and rural development requires a whole system approach. In view of the inter-relationship and impacts between land use and the status of inland

water and marine and coastal ecosystems, collaboration will be developed between the Ramsar and the terrestrial work programs of the CBD with attention to incentive measures for sustainable use.

c. Appropriate technologies

As indicated under II.2.b above, Theme I of the Technical Sessions at Ramsar's COP 7, *Ramsar and Water*, will examine lessons learned in integrated watershed management. Two sub-themes being considered for attention in this Technical Session are also relevant here, namely, "The role of wetlands in the hydrological cycle" and "The role of wetlands, both natural and constructed, in pollution management". It is proposed that the guidelines emerging from these presentations be added to Ramsar's Wise Use Resource Centre (see II.5.a below) and be generally available to CBD Parties and others for their application as appropriate.

II.3 IDENTIFICATION AND MONITORING

(CBD Article 7; Ramsar Article 2 and 3.2, Strategic Plan General Objectives 2, 5 & 6)

a. Status and Trends

The *Global International Waters Assessment* (GIWA) project has as its overall objective the development of a framework for the identification of priorities for remedial and mitigatory actions in international waters, where significant environmental benefits can be achieved at the national, regional and global levels. The Ramsar Convention is at present funding Wetlands International to prepare Phase I of a Global Review of Wetland Resources. This project is directly complementary to the GIWA project and is due to report on progress at Ramsar's COP7.

b. Monitoring and assessment

Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has prepared a paper entitled *Early Warning Systems for Detecting Ecological Change in Wetlands*, which will provide Ramsar Contracting Parties with a basis for monitoring to detect impacts on water-dominated ecosystems. The Bureau convened a small technical workshop to progress this topic on 20-22 April 1998 from which a paper, with recommendations, is to go forward to COP7. The paper, *Early Warning Systems for Detecting Ecological Change in Wetlands*, also considers issues of indicators and criteria which could be directly transferable to the SBSTTA program for inland water ecosystems.

With respect to undertaking the assessment of inland water ecosystems which may be regarded as important in accordance with the terms of Annex I of the CBD Convention, this matter is considered further under II.4.a. below. The Ramsar Convention also encourages all Contracting Parties to prepare National Wetland Inventories, and then to use these for planning and management as well as the identification of nationally and internationally important wetlands (see II.12.a also). The Ramsar Convention will urge its focal points in each Contracting Party to collaborate with their CBD counterparts to ensure that this information is available to them for national biodiversity planning activities.

The use of Earth Observation data to describe the status, trends and threats to wetlands is also presently under investigation by the Ramsar Bureau and may be the subject of special consideration at COP7.

The third meeting of the COP of the CBD endorsed the recommendation II/1 of its SBSTTA concerning indicators, monitoring and assessment, including a list of priority tasks. There is a need for collaboration and coordination between the work of the two processes in this area.

c. Assessment techniques

At the 7th Ramsar COP, Theme IV of the Technical Sessions is to be entitled, *Tools for Assessing and Recognizing Wetland Values*. This will include a special analysis of indicator species and guidelines for rapid assessments of wetlands and water resources from the perspectives of biodiversity and ecological/hydrological functions. The outputs from this Technical Session will assist CBD Contracting Parties and the SBSTTA with progressing activities in this area.

II.4 IN-SITU CONSERVATION

(CBD Article 8; Ramsar Articles 3.1, 4.1, Strategic Plan General Objectives 2, 5 & 6)

a. "Important" sites

Further to II.3.b above, the Ramsar Convention urges that CBD consult with the Ramsar Convention when considering how best to prepare indicative lists of inland water ecosystems of importance for biodiversity conservation (in accordance with Annex I of the Convention on Biological Diversity). The Ramsar Convention has criteria in place for identifying Wetlands of International Importance (which are under review at present by the STRP and secretariat). It is expected that at COP7 there will be consideration given to a proposed re-organization of these criteria to group all of the "biodiversity" criteria together. Ramsar's STRP is also reviewing the wetland classification system used by the Convention. The attendance of the chair of SBSTTA, or other relevant representatives, at future STRP meetings will assist in encouraging this convergence in approaches to take place.

Ramsar's criteria also include recognition of ecological communities, and the work being done at present on this by IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC) is of direct interest to the Convention on Wetlands as well. It is proposed that CBD and the Ramsar Convention consult with the IUCN SSC as necessary, to assist with the progress of this work.

b. Rehabilitation and restoration of ecosystems

Ramsar's Strategic Plan (Operational Objective 2.6) sets down a range of actions intended to promote the rehabilitation and restoration of wetland ecosystems. The Ramsar Convention Bureau is working with appropriate partners, and through the STRP, to access the established expert networks in this field. It is also proposed to document case studies demonstrating best practice in rehabilitation and restoration of wetland ecosystems in time for Ramsar's COP7.

Issues relating to the rehabilitation and restoration of ecosystems are addressed in the CBD COP decisions on marine and coastal, agricultural and forest ecosystems.

c. Alien species

This is an emerging issue for the Ramsar Convention and is being considered as a Special Intervention at COP7. It is proposed that CBD and Ramsar liaise with IUCN, ICSU and SCOPE in their Global Invasive Species Initiative to further this work for the Contracting Parties.

This area is being addressed by the CBD in its thematic programs and under the issue of identification, monitoring and assessment of components of biological diversity and of processes that have adverse impacts.

d. Involvement of local and indigenous communities

Ramsar's COP7 has the overall theme of *People and Wetlands: The Vital Link*. The Bureau is at present working with IUCN (and a number of other NGOs) to document case studies, lessons learnt and best

practice in the involvement of local and indigenous people in the management of wetlands. On the basis of this project, Guidelines for the involvement of local and indigenous people in wetland management will be presented at COP7 under Technical Session III entitled, *Involving Local People at all levels*.

e. Legal instruments

As indicated under II.2.a above, the development of appropriate policy and legislative instruments at the national level is a very high priority for both Conventions. To assist Ramsar Contracting Parties in the area of legislative frameworks, the Convention Bureau has engaged the IUCN's Environmental Law Centre to develop guidelines for reviewing the legal framework for wetlands conservation and wise use. The report on this project (with Guidelines) will be presented at COP7 in Technical Session II on national planning instruments. It will produce direct advice to Parties which will be equally relevant to CBD focal points.

f. Financial and other support

CBD Decision III/21, Operative Paragraph 12, "Invites contracting parties to relevant biological diversity-related Conventions to explore opportunities for accessing funding through the Global Environment Facility for relevant projects, including projects involving a number of countries". Given the areas of close collaboration and synergy between CBD and the Convention on Wetlands which this proposed Joint Work Plan describes, the Bureau of the Ramsar Convention has outlined under Section II.12 of this document a range of projects which it considers should be recommended for support to the GEF by CBD's COP4. These are mostly priority actions at the country level to enable developing countries, and those with economies in transition, to better implement their obligations under the CBD and Ramsar Conventions as they pertain to inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems.

II.5 SUSTAINABLE (WISE) USE OF RESOURCES

(CBD Article 10; Ramsar Article 3, Strategic Plan General Objective 2)

a. Wise Use Guidelines and Resource Centre

The Ramsar Convention has adopted Guidelines and Additional Guidance on implementation of its Wise Use concept for inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems. On World Wetlands Day in 1998, the secretariat launched the Wise Use Resource Centre which aims to accelerate dialogue and the sharing of information and expertise in this area. The facility is available to all, and is to be promoted to CBD focal points to assist them with the management of these habitat types.

b. Economic valuation

Ramsar's 1997 publication *Economic Valuation of Wetlands: a Guide for Policy Makers and Planners* provides the most current information on wetland valuation techniques. As a follow-up action, Theme IV for Ramsar's COP7 will look at four aspects related to this under the theme of *Tools for Assessing and Recognizing Wetland Values*. Ramsar is seeking to collaborate with the Global Wetlands Economists Network in moving ahead on issues such as recognizing and valuing wetland functions and services and measuring the social impacts resulting from the degradation of water resources. Also, under Technical Session III at COP7 with the theme *Involving local people at all levels*, it is proposed that there be a review of fiscal and other incentive measures for wetland conservation and wise use (see II.6 below).

c. The ecosystem approach under the CBD and the Wise Use Guidelines

The two secretariats will examine whether the Wise Use Guidelines and the principles of the Ecosystem Approach are compatible or how they could be harmonized, and propose the results to their next COPs. This would allow for joint implementation of the two Conventions.

- d. Remedial actions - refer to II.4.b above.

II.6 INCENTIVE MEASURES

(CBD Article 11; Ramsar Article 2, Strategic Plan General Objective 2)

a. Incentive measures

As advised under II.5.b above, the area of incentives, disincentives, etc., is to be examined in detail in Technical Session III at COP7, which has the theme *Involving local people at all levels*.

The CBD Web site on incentive measures, which is being developed, can be linked to the Wise Use Resource Center to facilitate active information exchange.

II.7 RESEARCH AND TRAINING

(CBD Article 12; Ramsar Articles 4.3 & 4.5, Strategic Plan General Objectives 2, 4 & 7)

a. Research

Promoting research and the transfer of the knowledge gained is a priority for both Conventions. The respective "clearing-houses" for information maintained by the Conventions are the mechanisms for dissemination (see II.11.a below), but they should also become a tool for promoting research into the ecosystem-based approach to managing inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems. Ramsar's Wise Use Resource Centre (see II.5.a above) is designed to be a proactive way of examining current management issues and directing the efforts of the research community to priority issues.

b. Training and capacity building

During 1998 the Ramsar Bureau is assembling a catalogue of training opportunities for wetland managers. This "clearing-house" for information on training will form part of the Bureau's Wise Use Resource Centre (see II.5.a above).

It is proposed that in partnership the two Conventions should seek to mobilize donor support, and especially that of the Financial Mechanism, to escalate the level and intensity of training and capacity building (see II.12.a) to allow the representatives from developing countries and those with economies in transition to attend training programs. Also, it is proposed that in-country training be fostered through this initiative.

II.8 PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

(CBD Article 13; Ramsar Strategic Plan General Objective 3)

a. Public education and awareness

Ramsar's Communication and Public Awareness Plan (1998-99) describes approximately 30 different target groups for its activities in these areas. During 1998 a Communications Strategy will be developed for the Convention which will provide a framework for these activities for the period 1999-2002. Under Ramsar's Strategic Plan, collaboration with several organizations promoting environmental education approaches is advocated, among them the Global Rivers Environmental Education Network (GREEN). The Bureau is also at present pursuing direct contact with the formal education system through its various teachers networks in order to promote and make available models for curriculum development.

II.9 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MINIMIZING ADVERSE IMPACTS
(CBD Article 14; Ramsar Article 2, Strategic Plan General Objective 2)

a. Environmental Impact Assessment

One of Ramsar's NGO Partners, Birdlife International, is working with the STRP and the Bureau to develop Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for wetlands. It is proposed that these be presented at COP7 under Technical Session II, *National Planning for Wetland Conservation*, and then made available in the Wise Use Resource Centre (see II.5.a above)

b. Toxic chemical reduction

At Ramsar's 6th COP attention was focused on the impact of toxic chemicals on wetland systems, and member States were urged to take appropriate actions in response. This issue has not gained the prominence it should have in the period following, especially given the seriousness of the problem. With support from WWF, Ramsar proposes to develop a program of action to be considered for funding under appropriate avenues, such as the Financial Mechanism's Targeted Research Program (see II.12. b below).

II.10 EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION
(CBD Article 17; Ramsar Article 4.3, Strategic Plan General Objective3)

a. Wise Use Resource Centre

As indicated under II.5.a above, on World Wetlands Day 1998 the Ramsar secretariat launched the Wise Use Resource Centre, which aims to accelerate dialogue and the sharing of information and expertise in this area. The facility is available to all, and is to be promoted to CBD focal points, through the established links between the two Web sites, to assist them with the management of these habitat types. The Centre, housed on Ramsar's site on the World Wide Web, includes an experts database, a resource library, a "hot topics" dialogue area, and details on training opportunities around the globe.

b. Refer also to II.11 below

II.11 TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION
(CBD Article 18; Ramsar Article 4.3, Strategic Plan General Objectives 3 & 8)

a. Clearing house mechanisms

Both Conventions maintain sites on the World Wide Web which operate as "clearing-houses" or entry points to networks of networks. These sites are "hot-linked" to facilitate access to the information each houses, and it is proposed they have "mirror" pages to demonstrate the collaborative approaches being taken by the two Conventions for inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems.

b. Collaboration between technical bodies

Both Conventions have expert advisory groups, SBSTTA for CBD and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel for the Ramsar Convention. Even though the two bodies are different in composition and *modus operandi*, regular dialogue and a flow of information between these expert bodies will clearly be advantageous. It is proposed that the current practice of inviting the chairs of these respective bodies to the meetings of the other should continue. This has also included members of the secretariats in the past and it is likewise proposed that this continue.

c. Sharing networks and rosters of experts

The Ramsar Convention launched its Wetland Experts Database on World Wetlands Day (2 February) 1998. The Secretariat of the CBD is also

building its own rosters of experts. It is proposed that there be collaboration between the two Conventions to complement CBD's establishment of a roster of experts with specialization in inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems.

In addition, the Convention on Wetlands has four non-governmental organizations as its official "partners". These are The World Conservation Union (IUCN), Wetlands International, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and BirdLife International. The Ramsar Convention holds regular planning meetings with these partners and a number of joint projects are underway at present. In future it is proposed to invite the CBD Secretariat to have representation at these planning meetings.

- d. Collaboration with broader water resource community
Ramsar is actively participating in the World Water Council and the Global Water Partnership which both strive to encourage integrated water resource management. The Ramsar Bureau has established itself as a "kiosk" in the GWP's World Wide Web site, the so-called Water Shopping Mall. The secretariat of the CBD is participating in the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, which oversees the coordination of UN system activities regarding water resources. The Ramsar Bureau has also participated in the Water and Sustainable Development Conference held in Paris in March 1998 and both secretariats cooperated during the Ad-hoc Intersessional Working Group of the CSD on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management (New York, 23-27 February 1998), and plan to do likewise at the Sixth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in April 1998. In these high-level global fora, the Ramsar Bureau is actively advocating and encouraging the adoption of an ecosystem approach to river basin management.

II.12 FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

(CBD Article 21; Ramsar Strategic Plan General Objective 8)

CBD Decision III/21, Operative Paragraph 7 (a) (ii) invited "the Convention on Wetlands to cooperate as a lead partner in the implementation of the activities under the Convention related to wetlands". It is clear from the foregoing Joint Work Plan, and the Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002, that the Convention on Wetlands is well placed to take on this role.

As indicated under II.4.f above, CBD Decision III/21, under Operative Paragraph 12, also invited "contracting parties to relevant biological diversity-related Conventions to explore opportunities for accessing funding through the Global Environment Facility for relevant projects, including projects involving a number of countries".

Given this previous Decision by the CBD, the Ramsar Convention Bureau has prepared the following advice for the Contracting Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is designed to assist with providing Additional Guidance to the Financial Mechanism at COP4 (Agenda Item 14.5) in order to operationalize the priority actions under the two Conventions as they pertain to inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems:

- a. Mobilizing resources at the country level
At the country level, the priorities for funding support through the Financial Mechanism are as follows:
- a. enabling activities to establish the necessary policy and legislative frameworks and instruments, including cross-sectoral consultative processes, leading to harmonized implementation of

the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Wetlands at the national scale;

b. the completion of national inventories of wetland and associated water resources to allow the identification of ecosystems (according to the definition used by the Ramsar Convention) of global importance in accordance with the Criteria for Wetlands of International Importance adopted by the Ramsar Convention, and encouraged under Annex I of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

c. the preparation of integrated management plans for the Wetlands of International Importance designated under the Ramsar Convention, and those identified under b. above;

d. the preparation of management reviews and the undertaking of appropriate remedial and other actions for those sites included on the Ramsar Convention's Montreux Record of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur;

e. the preparation, and implementation, of integrated river basin management plans, where these cross international borders, to ensure the long term conservation of these sites of global significance for the conservation of biological diversity, and

f. the capacity building and training needed to provide the long-term skills base within these countries for a-e above to be undertaken.

b. Targeted research

Further to II.12.a above, and also recognizing Operative Paragraph 6 (a) from CBD Decision III/5, relating to the Financial Mechanism supporting targeted research which contributes to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components, CBD's COP4 is urged to advise the Financial Mechanism to give high priority to supporting:

a. a review of the threatening processes contributing to the loss of biological diversity and breakdown of ecological processes in wetland ecosystems,

b. the identification of the global measures needed to combat these threats, and

c. specific investigations into the degrading impacts of toxic chemicals on inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal ecosystems, and how these can be addressed.