

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

25th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland: 23- 27 October 2000

DOC. SC25-6

Agenda item 10

Synergy and partnerships with other conventions and organizations

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to review the following latest information and proposals regarding working partnerships with other Conventions and organizations, and to decide on the appropriate actions to be taken by either the Bureau or the Standing Committee itself.

Background

1. The Convention Work Plan 2000-2002 as adopted by Resolution VII.27 (Actions 7.2.1-7.2.9) identifies a range of actions to be taken under the theme of 'working partnerships'. This includes developing or further strengthening cooperation with the Convention to Combat Desertification, CBD, World Heritage, the Man and the Biosphere Programme, CMS, CITES, UNFCCC, EC, SPREP, etc. Under this Agenda Item, it is also proposed that Standing Committee consider the Ramsar presence in the Rio+10 process.
2. The targets adopted for these actions under the Work Plan 2000-2002 are indicated below. Actions taken so far are reported in each case. Proposed actions by the Bureau for the coming year are also identified under Operational Objective 7.2 of the Bureau's Policy & Technical Work Plan 2001 (DOC. SC25-19).

Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

3. **Target:** a Joint Work Plan which seeks cooperative implementation of both conventions at the international, national and local levels.
4. The Secretary General made a statement to CCD's COP3 in Brazil in November 1999. The Deputy Secretary General and Regional Coordinator for Africa visited the CCD secretariat in August 2000 to discuss further the development of joint actions under the 1998 Memorandum of Cooperation between Ramsar and CCD, particularly in relation to Africa. In pursuance of this the Bureau is preparing a gazetteer of key wetlands in arid and semi-arid regions, and is exploring joint production with CCD of a video on wetlands in drylands. The Bureau anticipates attending CCD's COP4 in Bonn in December 2000 and presenting a progress report on implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation, leading to the development of further joint action during 2001.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

5. **Target:** A Joint Work Plan implemented to the maximum extent possible and resulting in cooperative implementation of both conventions at the international, national, and local levels.
6. The 2nd CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan was strongly endorsed by CBD's COP5 in Nairobi in May 2000, and COP5 also incorporated cooperation with Ramsar under a number of its Decisions (refer to Agenda item 9 and DOC. SC25-5 for further details of the cooperative implementation of activities under the Joint Work Plan). It is anticipated that the Deputy Secretary General will attend CBD's SBSTTA6 in Montreal in March 2001, at which invasive alien species will form a major topic for discussion. In preparation for this, the Deputy Secretary General participated in CBD's Liaison Group meetings (Cape Town, September 2000), which were designed to assist the CBD secretariat in establishing the structure and content of materials for the SBSTTA6 discussion. DOC. SC25-5 also draws the Standing Committee's attention to the issue of timing and priority for preparing a 3rd Joint Work Plan with CBD, preparations for which would need to be made during 2001.

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and the World Heritage Convention

7. **Target:** a Memorandum of Cooperation with MAB, leading to Joint Work Plans with the MAB Programme and with the World Heritage Convention which establish cooperative implementation of both at the international, national and local levels.
8. The Memorandum of Cooperation with the World Heritage Centre was signed at COP7, specifying actions and cooperation that will take place. Several areas of joint activity are now underway. In April 2000, the Regional Coordinator for Africa participated in the WHC's "International Task Force Meeting on the World Heritage Action Programme for capacity building for outreach, Natural Heritage networking, education, cooperation and training (CONNECT)" in Paris. Also in April 2000, in the United Kingdom, the Executive Assistant for Communications took part in the WHC's "International Expert Meeting on the Revision of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention". Two joint Ramsar/WHC Advisory Missions, both involving the Regional Coordinator for Africa, were undertaken in 2000 to sites listed as both Heritage Sites in Danger and on Ramsar's Montreux Record: to Lake Ichkeul, Tunisia (April) and the Djoudj National Park, Senegal (September). During 2001 it is proposed to undertake a joint review, with the assistance of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, of the status and management of sites designated under both WHC and Ramsar, as the basis for promoting future co-management.
9. The Bureau is working with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) to develop a joint work plan for implementation to start in 2001. Cooperative actions here would focus on site-based activity relating to co-management of shared sites and the sharing of information, tools and processes (including inventory, assessment and monitoring, and management planning). The possibility will also be explored of developing a Memorandum of Cooperation with UNESCO, which would seek to cover joint actions with both WHC and MAB.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

10. **Target:** a Joint Work Plan which seeks cooperative implementation of both conventions at the international, regional, national, and local levels.
11. Initial areas of potential joint activity have been explored with the CMS secretariat and it is planned to further develop a joint work plan during 2001 provided human resources permit. The Regional Coordinator for Africa represented the Bureau at the COP4 of CMS in South Africa in November 1999, as well as at the first Meeting of the Parties (MOP1) to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) under CMS, which immediately preceded the COP. The Bureau is represented on the Steering Committee of an UNEP-GEF project designed to implement elements of the AEWA by “Enhancing conservation of the critical network of wetlands required by migratory waterbirds on the African/Eurasian flyways” which is being initiated in late 2000.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)

12. **Target:** A Memorandum of Cooperation, leading to a Joint Work Plan between the conventions, which aims towards cooperative implementation of both at the international, national and local levels.
13. The Bureau believes that before pursuing such an initiative it will be important to identify with some care the areas of potential cooperation and synergy (as is being undertaken with respect to UNFCCC – see below). This will require a thorough review and the development of a discussion paper to underpin discussions between the secretariats. The Bureau is suggesting in its Draft Work Plan 2001 (Agenda Item 20) that initial discussions with the CITES secretariat and IUCN are undertaken, if human resources permit, during 2001.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

14. **Target:** a Memorandum of Cooperation, leading to a Joint Work Plan between the conventions, which aims towards cooperative implementation of both at the international, national and local levels.
15. A discussion paper “Wetlands and Climate Change”, prepared in late 1999 for the Ramsar Bureau by IUCN, identified possible areas of cooperation and synergy between the two conventions. This was introduced to UNFCCC COP5 (November 1999, Germany) by the Secretary General through a statement to the COP.
16. On the basis of this paper the Bureau has requested IUCN, working with the proposed STRP’s Expert Working Group on Wetlands and Climate Change, to develop a project which will:
 - a) prepare guidance for Ramsar’s COP8 and UNFCCC on impacts of climate change on wetlands, and adaptive management of wetlands in mitigating impacts of climate change and sea-level rise; and

- b) hold a workshop (anticipated for early-mid 2001) to review and identify elements of joint work activity between the conventions, and identify opportunities for joint implementation of national and local action to deliver the requirements of both conventions, including *inter alia* national action plans and co-management demonstration projects.
17. The Deputy Secretary General made a statement (copy attached) on cooperation to UNFCCC's SBSTA12 (Germany, June 2000) and this SBSTA welcomed the continuing cooperation between UNFCCC secretariat and other conventions. It is anticipated that Bureau representatives will attend UNFCCC's COP6 in Den Haag, the Netherlands, in November 2000.

European Commission

18. **Target:** a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Commission as such or with the appropriate Directorate(s) General.
19. During 2001 the Bureau will further evaluate the best course of action for putting in place a more formal understanding regarding cooperation, including the consideration that the text of the Convention does not allow that the Commission becomes a Contracting Party and that an amendment in this direction could take years to come into force (as in the case with the Commission and CITES). Working with the EC is one of the priorities for Ramsar's Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation.

South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

20. **Target:** a Memorandum of Cooperation, leading to the preparation and implementation of a Joint Work Plan.
21. Preliminary interest in developing joint action has been expressed by representatives of SPREP, and this will be further explored, as human resources permit, during 2001.

Other conventions and agreements

22. **Target:** Paragraph 18 of Resolution VII.4 "ALSO REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau to explore developing partnerships, including joint work plans if appropriate, with the Apia Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific and the subsequent Noumea Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific, and the Cartagena Convention on the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean, to extend participation in the Ramsar Convention by small island developing states."
23. **Apia Convention and Noumea Convention** (more commonly known as the SPREP Convention). It is recommended that this matter be further considered once the 25th meeting of the Standing Committee has reviewed the Barbados Programme of Action (Agenda item 11.) and established how best to proceed in working cooperatively with these regional conventions.

24. **Cartagena Convention.** A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed by the Bureau and the Convention secretariat in May 2000 (copy attached). The Bureau is now working to define joint actions to be carried out under the terms of the MoC.
25. **HELCOM (Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea).** An Agreement on Cooperative Linkages on Coastal Wetlands and Waterbird Habitats is being finalized by the Bureau and the Baltic Marine Environment Commission. It is anticipated that this will be presented to the 4th Meeting of HELCOM's Heads of Delegation in late 2000 for adoption.
26. **Barcelona Convention.** A Memorandum of Cooperation with the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean against Pollution is ready for signature concerning a programme of actions between the Barcelona Convention's Mediterranean Action Plan Coordination Unit and Ramsar's MedWet Initiative.
27. **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR).** The Steering Group of the Commission has granted observer status to the Ramsar Convention and a draft agreement between the two institutions is under consideration.
28. **"Declaration on the Cooperation for the Creation of a Lower Danube Green Corridor".** This agreement among Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine was signed in June 2000 at a meeting in Bucharest with Ramsar representation by the Secretary General and the Regional Coordinator for Europe. The Bureau has agreed to act as the Depositary for the Declaration.

United Nations

29. **Target:** Resolution VII.19, in Section C2, requests the development of a formal Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the United Nations.
30. Action has yet to be developed on this request. The Bureau plans to approach the Legal Department of the UN to explore ways and means to develop such an MoC.
31. **"Rio+10".** The Secretary General met in September 2000 with officials at the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA) responsible for preparing the Rio+10 process. Ramsar has been invited to prepare two review papers concerning implementation of Agenda 21 in relation to wetlands. These are:
 - a) "a thematic review, which would provide a concise analysis (3-5 pages) of the state of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 in the given thematic area" (wetlands in Ramsar's case). Issues to be addressed might include: main accomplishments and main gaps in achieving sustainable development in the area; main contributing internal and external factors; and critical trends that should be considered in future work. These reviews will be submitted to the 10th session of the CSD.
 - b) "a policy review, which would provide a more detailed analysis (8-10 pages) of the impact of the policies undertaken to implement the objectives of Agenda 21 and the Programme.". This would be used for the preparation of the UN Secretary General's main policy report for the 2002 review.

32. The preparation of these reviews offers a strong opportunity to ensure that wetland issues and Ramsar are more fully incorporated in the outcomes of Rio+10 than was the case in 1992 in the preparation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. The date and location of Rio+10 have yet to be established by the UN General Assembly, but are provisionally set for May 2002 in either Indonesia or South Africa.

Multilateral cooperation among conventions

33. The Deputy Secretary General will participate in a UNEP workshop on “Streamlining National Reporting for Wildlife-related Conventions” in late October 2000. This is designed to take forward a recommendation of the earlier UNEP-WCMC “Feasibility Study for a Harmonised Information Management Infrastructure for Biodiversity Related Treaties” and to test harmonisation options in a number of countries. Ramsar’s National Planning Tool and National Report Format, provided to Parties earlier in 2000, will form the basis of the Convention’s input to this workshop.
34. The Bureau has begun exploring opportunities for developing a joint demonstration project between environment-related conventions to demonstrate ways of Parties incorporating into their management planning the requirements of each convention, possibly focusing on the Okavango Delta in Botswana for the pilot project.

Partnership with International Partner Organizations (IOPs) and other organizations

35. **Ramsar Data Gateway.** In March 2000 the Bureau signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding with the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) and Wetlands International (copy attached), concerning the development of a Web-based Ramsar Data Gateway designed to enhance public access to Ramsar-related information. A progress report is included in the Secretary General’s report (DOC. SC25-2).
36. **IUCN Global Biodiversity Forum.** A Memorandum of Cooperation (copy attached) was completed in August 2000 concerning joint activity related to the Global Biodiversity Forum series of meetings which take place in conjunction with meetings of the Ramsar Convention, CBD and other multilateral environmental agreements.
37. **The Nature Conservancy.** A Memorandum of Cooperation between the Bureau and the Nature Conservancy (TNC) concerning cooperative action on wetland wise use and management (copy attached) was completed in September 2000.
38. **Joint Work Plans with International Organization Partners.** The 24th meeting of Standing Committee urged the IOPs to emulate Wetlands International in devising a complementary work plan based on the Bureau triennial Work Plan, so as to demonstrate the added value they are able and willing to provide. It is anticipated that the representative of each IOP will provide the Standing Committee with an update on their progress on this matter. The Standing Committee may wish to discuss how best IOPs might assist the Convention in relation to the increasing requirements for Ramsar representation in meetings and activities of other conventions, as raised under Agenda item 9.