

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC25-7

Agenda item 11

Identification of priority actions from the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to review the attached document and to consider the proposed action contained in paragraph 15.

The following document has been prepared by the Chair of the Standing Committee. It was circulated at the last meeting of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) on 31 August 2000, inviting comments from its members, thanks to the cooperation of the Secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development at the UN Headquarters.

REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION IN RELATION TO THE BARBADOS PLAN OF ACTION

Purpose

1. To seek Standing Committee consideration of a review of the role of the Ramsar Convention in relation to the Barbados Plan of Action and the identification of a range of priority actions from that Plan that could be adopted by the Ramsar Bureau and communicated to Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Background

2. At COP7 agreement was reached on Recommendation 7.2 which requests that Standing Committee review the Barbados Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS with a view to identifying a range of priority actions which the Ramsar Bureau should pursue, both independently and in partnership with other Convention secretariats, regional organizations and programmes, the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs), and donors.
3. The Recommendation further requests that in response to this review the Ramsar Bureau with the Convention's IOPs investigate and develop as appropriate Memoranda of Cooperation and joint plans of actions with the established programs and organizations that are facilitating integrated environment management in the SIDS.
4. Recommendation 7.2 grew out of the 1998 Ramsar Oceania Regional Meeting where non-Ramsar Contracting Party SIDS sent a clear message that if they were to join the Ramsar Convention they would need assurances that the Convention was willing to work within the Barbados Plan of Action (BPA) framework.

5. In decision SC24-17 the Ramsar Standing Committee determined to continue to promote membership of SIDS in the convention and continue to seek resources to establish a long term SIDS internship within the Bureau.
6. The SC also formed a Subgroup consisting of Australia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Wetlands International-Oceania to review the BPA, seek input from the SIDS, and report to the next Standing Committee meeting.

Issues

The Barbados Plan of Action

7. The BPA was the product of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in 1994. The Plan recognises that SIDS have their own particular vulnerabilities and characteristics so that the difficulties they face in the pursuit of sustainable development are exceptionally severe and complex. In particular, the Plan promotes actions which integrate environmental considerations and natural resource consideration objectives and gender considerations consistent with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21.
8. The focus is upon the development of social and economic development policies at three levels – national, regional and international. There are in turn 14 agreed priority areas in the Plan:
 - climate change and sea level rise
 - natural and environmental disasters
 - management of wastes
 - coastal and marine resources
 - freshwater resources
 - land resources
 - energy resources
 - tourism resources
 - biodiversity resources
 - national institutions and administrative capacity
 - regional institutions and technical cooperation
 - transport and communication
 - science and technology
 - human resource development.
9. The Ramsar Convention Workplan 2000-2002 already gives prominence to issues of direct relevant to SIDS. In particular
 - **General Objective 1** – To progress towards universal membership of the Convention – indicates that “A special effort will be made to encourage SIDS to join, in recognition of their special needs and significant wetlands including coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves.”

- **Action 6.2.3** gives priority to the designation of new sites from wetland types currently under-represented on the Ramsar List, and in particular, where appropriate, coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds and peatlands
 - **Action 7.2.8** seeks to extend cooperation with conventions and agencies concerned with conservation and wise use of wetlands at regional level including with the South Pacific Regional Environment Program
 - **Action 7.2.9** seeks to develop relationships with other specialised agencies that deal with wetland related initiatives such as the International Coral Reef Initiative.
10. In considering the particular elements of the BPA that might be given special attention by the Ramsar Convention, the following general priorities are proposed:
- 10.1 activities that relate directly to the broad objectives of the Convention and the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - 10.2 those elements of the BPA that are specifically identified as targets for international institutions and processes;
 - 10.3 relevant Ramsar operational objectives described within the Convention Workplan 2000-2002 and the draft Strategic Plan 2003-2008.
11. It is also important that in pursuing BPA priorities the Ramsar Convention build upon rather than duplicate related initiatives or action plans that might already be in place. This point was emphasised in the original COP7 Recommendation, which indicated that priority actions include those which the Ramsar Bureau would pursue in partnership with other Convention Secretariats, regional organizations and programs, the Convention's International Organization Partners, and donors.
12. Against this background it is proposed that the following specific actions of the BPA be given priority.

| Proposed BPA Priorities for the Ramsar Convention | Corresponding Ramsar Operational Objective: Current (1997-2002) | Corresponding Ramsar Operational Objective: Draft proposed (2003-2008) |
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| <p>III Management of Wastes-International Action (i): Support the strengthening of national and regional capacities to carry out pollution monitoring and research and to formulate and apply pollution control and abatement measures</p> | <p>2.5 To carry out environmental impact assessments (EIAs) at wetlands, particularly of proposed developments or changes in land/water use which have the potential to affect them, notably at Ramsar sites, whose ecological character “is likely to change as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.” (Article 3.2 of the Convention)</p> | <p>1.4 [2.1]: Develop, review and, if necessary, amend national or supra-national (e.g. European Community) policies, legislation, institutions and practices in all Contracting Parties, to ensure that the Convention, and especially the wise use principle, is being fully applied.</p> |
| <p>III Management of Wastes – International Action (ix) Provide improved access for resources for national and regional efforts to formulate and implement public awareness and education campaigns designed to gain local recognition of the need to control wastes at the source, the value of reuse and recycling and of appropriate packaging and of the possibilities of converting wastes in culturally appropriate ways.</p> | <p>3.1 To support and assist in implementing, in cooperation with partners and other institutions, an international program of Education and Public Awareness (EPA) on Wetlands, their functions and values, designed to promote national EPA programs. 4.1 To develop the capacity of institutions in Contracting Parties, particularly in developing countries, to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands 4.2 To identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries, and to implement follow-up actions.</p> | <p>1.13 [3.1]: Support and assist in implementing at all levels the Convention’s Outreach Programme (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 6) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through communication, education and public awareness (CEPA).</p> |
| <p>III Management of Wastes – International Action (ii). Support the strengthening of clean production technologies as well as for the prevention of pollution and in the handling, treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes.</p> | <p>4.1 To develop the capacity of institutions in Contracting Parties, particularly in developing countries, to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands 4.2 To identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries, and to implement follow-up actions.</p> | <p>1.3 [4.1]: Develop the capacity within, and cooperation between, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands. 1.14 [4.2]: 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 follow-up actions.</p> |

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| <p>IV Coastal and Marine Resources: International Action (i) Develop mechanisms for the gathering and sharing of information and expertise, particularly inter-regionally between SIDS, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS) techniques and facilities for the assessment of coastal and marine resources</p> | <p>5.2 To develop and implement management plans for all Ramsar sites consistent with the Convention's Guidelines on Management Planning and emphasising involvement of local communities and other stakeholders. 5.4 To keep under review the content and structure, as well as the hardware and software, of the Ramsar Database, in order to ensure it retains its relevance in light of evolving information and communication technology.</p> | <p>2.3 [5.1]: Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites. 2.2: Keep the Ramsar Database up to date with the inclusion of the best available information and use the database as a tool for guiding the strategic expansion of the List of Wetlands of International Importance.</p> |
| <p>V Freshwater Resources – International Action (ii) Enhance SIDS capacity to develop and implement integrated water resource plans including water resource allocation and management, conservation and rehabilitation of watersheds, protection of groundwater fostering public awareness and water quality monitoring.</p> | <p>2.6 To identify wetlands in need of restoration and rehabilitation and implement the necessary measures. 5.2 To develop and implement management plans for all Ramsar sites, consistent with the Convention's Guidelines on Management Planning and emphasising involvement of local communities and other stakeholders.</p> | <p>3.1: Promote cooperative management of shared wetlands and river basins. 1.6 [2.2]: Integrate conservation and wise use of wetlands in all Contracting Parties into national, provincial and local planning and decision-making on land use, groundwater management, catchment/river basin and coastal zone planning. 1.7 [2.6]: Identify wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be cost-effective and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits and implement the necessary measures to reinstate these sites.</p> |
| <p>V Freshwater Resources – International Action (iii) Assist training and public awareness campaigns to build up an endogenous capacity relating to water management and conservation and appropriate rainwater catchment systems</p> | <p>3.1 To support and assist in implementing, in cooperation with partners and other institutions, an international program of Education and Public Awareness (EPA) on Wetlands, their functions and values, designed to promote national EPA programs. 4.1 To develop the capacity of institutions in Contracting Parties, particularly in developing countries, to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands 4.2 To identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries, and to implement follow up actions.</p> | <p>1.13 [3.1]: Support and assist in implementing at all levels the Convention's Outreach Programme (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 6) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through communication, education and public awareness (CEPA).</p> |

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| <p>VI Land resources – International Action (ii) Facilitate the development and improvement of national databases and the dissemination of information to relevant groups especially local communities, youth and women, for land use planning and management including estimates of carrying capacity, economic and environmental value of land resources along with appropriate decisionmaking tools such as land/geographic information systems.</p> | <p>5.2 To develop and implement management plans for all Ramsar sites consistent with the Convention’s Guidelines on Management Planning and emphasising involvement of local communities and other stakeholders. 5.4 To keep under review the content and structure, as well as the hardware and software, of the Ramsar Database, in order to ensure it retains its relevance in light of evolving information and communication technology.</p> | <p>2.3 [5.1]: Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites. 2.2: Keep the Ramsar Database up to date with the inclusion of the best available information and use the database as a tool for guiding the strategic expansion of the List of Wetlands of International Importance.</p> |
| <p>IX Biodiversity Resources – International Action (i) Provide improved access to financial and technical resources for the conservation of biological diversity including funds for basic institutional and logistic support for the conservation and management of biological diversity with priority to be accorded to territorial as well as coastal and marine biodiversity such as coral reef ecosystems.</p> | <p>4.1 To develop the capacity of institutions in Contracting Parties, particularly in developing countries, to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands 4.2 To identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries, and to implement follow-up actions. 7.4 To obtain funds to fulfil obligations contracted under the Convention, notably for developing countries and countries whose economies are in transition.</p> | <p>1.3 [4.1]: Develop the capacity within, and cooperation between, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands. 1.14 [4.2]: 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 follow-up actions.</p> |
| <p>IX Biodiversity Resources – International Action (v) Support national and regional actions for developing inventories of flora, fauna and ecosystems including training and technical assistance.</p> | <p>5.3 To obtain regularly updated information on wetlands of international importance in accordance with the approved standard format. 6.1 To identify those wetlands that meet the Ramsar criteria and give due consideration to their designation for the List</p> | <p>1.1: Describe and monitor the extent and condition of wetland resources at the global and national level in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention, and in particular the application of the wise use principle. 2.2: Keep the Ramsar Database up to date with the inclusion of the best available information and use the database as a tool for guiding the strategic expansion of the List of Wetlands of International Importance.</p> |

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| <p>IX Biodiversity Resources – International Action (vi) Promote the full involvement of NGOs, women, indigenous people, other major groups as well as fishing communities and farmers in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and biotechnology.</p> | <p>2.7 To encourage the active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.</p> | <p>1.10 [2.7]: Encourage active and informed participation of local communities and indigenous people, in particular women and youth, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.</p> |
| <p>X National Institutions and Administrative Capacity – International Action (iii) Assist in providing training and capacity building services to facilitate ratification and implementation of appropriate international instruments</p> | <p>1.1.2 Promote membership of Ramsar through regional meetings and activities, and through partners' regional offices.</p> | <p>4.1: Secure at least 170 Contracting Parties to the Convention by 2008.</p> |
| <p>XIII Science and Technology – International Action (ii) Strengthen coordination and networking of the various national centres, regional organisations and institutions and international organisations working in areas of science and technology to facilitate information flows, database creation and access, and greater collaboration and technical cooperation in programs</p> | <p>4.1 To develop the capacity of institutions in Contracting Parties, particularly in developing countries, to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands 4.2 To identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries, and to implement follow-up actions..</p> | <p>1.3 [4.1]: Develop the capacity within, and cooperation between, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands. 1.14 [4.2]: 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 follow-up actions.</p> |
| <p>XV Implementation, monitoring and Review – International Action (1) Facilitate access to and the development of environmentally sound technologies relevant to SIDS including coastal zone management and marine and ocean sciences, using incentives, joint ventures, joint research, and development programs and finance mechanisms.</p> | <p>5.2 To develop and implement management plans for all Ramsar sites consistent with the Convention's Guidelines on Management Planning and emphasising involvement of local communities and other stakeholders.</p> | <p>2.3 [5.1]: Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites.</p> |

Proposed Means of Pursuing Identified BPA Priorities

13. It is proposed that for each of the priorities from the BPA identified above a specific action be developed in consultation with SIDS.
14. These actions could be developed by the Bureau for consideration by Standing Committee at its 2001 meeting. This would enable the actions to be incorporated in the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and in the derived Work Plan 2003-2005, as well as pursued by the Bureau in accordance with Recommendation 7.2 paragraph 17.

Recommendation

15. It is recommended that Standing Committee:
 - a) note the consultation undertaken with SIDS to date (an initial round of consultation will occur in advance of the 2000 Standing Committee Meeting);
 - b) agree that the above priorities from the Barbados Plan of Action be adopted as a focus for the development of specific actions to be considered by the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan 2003-2008;
 - c) agree that in the development of these actions SIDS be further consulted; and
 - d) note that in the event that Standing Committee is satisfied with the specific actions proposed on this area in the draft Strategic Plan, these could be recommended to COP8.

Stephen Hunter
Chair
Standing Committee
August 2000