

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC25-16

Agenda item 18.3

8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP8):

Ramsar regional meetings: nature, purpose and timing

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to receive the advice of the Subgroup on COP8 and to take a decision on this matter.

1. The Ramsar Bureau has discussed the experience with the regional meetings held before COP7 and has concluded that organizing pan-regional meetings might not be the best way to use scarce resources and to contribute to the advancement of the Convention.
2. Ramsar regions, in particular Asia, Africa, and Europe, and to some extent the Neotropics, are extremely large regions which involve many bio-geographical regions and a wide variety of countries in terms of culture, level of socio-economic development, and political situations. Oceania is also a very extended region, but with very special characteristics.
3. Thus, whilst pan-regional meetings may sound, in theory, a very good way to generate intra-regional cooperation, in practice this is very difficult to achieve in very wide and diverse regions. The experience that the Bureau has had with smaller, subregional meetings indicates that these are much more productive, and most probably less expensive in terms of travel costs. They can also be organized without having to translate documents and provide simultaneous interpretation, two items that are always expensive.
4. The European Region has received some time ago an invitation from Slovenia to meet in that country in 2001. Consequently the Bureau is already working with the Administrative Authority in the organization of a Pan European meeting in October 2001.
5. For the other regions, the Bureau proposes the following subregional meetings:

Africa:

2 meetings for French speaking countries, involving some 12 countries each
2 meetings for English speaking countries, involving some 10 countries each

Asia:

1 meeting for countries in the Middle East
1 meeting for countries in Central Asia
1 meeting for countries in West Asia
1 meeting for countries in Southeast Asia

Neotropics:

1 meeting for countries in South America

1 meeting for countries in Central America

Note: a meeting for Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties in the Caribbean is already planned for December 2000.

7. The Bureau proposes that these meetings should be used not only as an occasion to discuss policy issues related to the Convention, but also as a training opportunity in relation to the application of the Convention tools, including the new National Report/National Planning tool format.
8. Consequently, the subregional meetings should serve:
 - a) to analyse the progress made and the obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Work Plan 2000-2002 (in particular the establishment of national targets) and the resolutions adopted by COP7;
 - b) to provide training on the use of the electronic version for the National Report format to be used for preparing the reports for COP8, and the series of Ramsar handbooks published in 2000;
 - c) to discuss and provide inputs for the preparation of the final draft of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008;
 - d) to discuss the experience at the field level of joint implementation of the environment-related conventions with which Ramsar has Memoranda of Cooperation and/or a Joint Work Plan, in particular the Conventions on Biodiversity, Desertification, Migratory Species, and World Heritage.
9. Concerning funding, Swedish Sida has invited the Bureau to submit a proposal requesting funds for delegate support to regional meetings in the amount of SFR 100,000 in 2000 and SFR 100,000 in 2001. The Bureau is awaiting a decision from Sida any time now. It is clear that in order to organize the proposed series of Subregional meetings the Bureau would need the support of other donor countries.