

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC25-29

Agenda item 22.8

**Work Plan of the Senior Advisor on Environment and
Development Cooperation (SAEDC) (originally titled
Development Assistant Officer)**

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to comment on the proposed work plan of this new Bureau staff member.

1. On the basis of the agreement of the Standing Committee at its meeting in late 1999 to create this new staff position at the Ramsar Bureau, the recruitment process was initiated without delay, but because the best candidate, Mr Alain Lambert, was not in a position to take up the position immediately, it was only on 1 August 2000 that the position was filled.
2. While the work of the SAECD appears in the proposed Bureau Work Plan 2001, mostly under the first column (Global Action), in document SC25-19, it was considered useful to present the work plan for the new post in a separate document. In this way the Standing Committee may have a clearer picture of the action that is planned in this area of work.

ANNEX I

Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation**Tentative Work Plan****Type of activity:**

- (I) Mainstreaming Wetlands in Bilateral and Multilateral Development Cooperation Agencies and International Finance Institutions.
- (II) Facilitating donor support to Contracting Parties and partners.
- (III) Incentives and Wetland Economics.
- (IV) Familiarisation with wetland issues and priorities.
- (V) Direct support to members and partners.

Short term (1 to 4 months)	Type of activity
1. Learn about Ramsar activities in all regions of the world (August to November 2000).	IV
2. Make contacts with Ramsar partners, in and outside Europe to familiarise myself with their work and needs, and to brief them about my work and how I can eventually support their work (August to October 2000).	IV
3. Make contact/visit the EU Commission and Aid Agencies (August to November 2000 – see strategy notes).	I
4. Visit the Mekong River delta (Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand) to familiarise myself with the region and discuss management plan with partners and national authorities (October 2000). Visit the Asian Development Bank in Manila (October 2000) to introduce myself and discuss future collaboration (see strategy paper on IFIs)	IV and V
5. Participate in the GEF first International Waters Conference in Budapest (October 2000).	I
6. Participate and make a presentation on “Financing Wetland Wise se projects” in the Evian Encounter for English speaking African contracting parties (November 2000).	V
7. Visit Mozambique, discuss Zambesi delta management and work on membership to the Convention (November 2000).	IV
8. Visit the Okavango delta and participate in the discussion and preparation of a management plan with national authorities and partners (Nov. 2000). Strengthen the working relationship with Namibia and work on Angola’s membership (Nov. 2000).	IV and V
9. Participate in the MedWet team meeting in Greece (11-13 December) to familiarise myself with the activities of MedWet and discuss how to support the Initiative.	V
10. Visit national authority, Wetland International and WWF in Moscow to familiarise myself with the region and discuss project ideas or activities related to wetland management (December).	IV and V
11. Prepare a detailed Work Plan, including short strategy notes on key topics, for the Standing Committee.	----
12. Investigate potential interest for debt-for-wetland swaps as a way to finance restoration of Montreux record sites.	III

13. Facilitate funding proposal submission from the Bureau to the Asian Development Bank for support to the Asian Wetland Symposium 2001.	I and II
Medium term (5 to 12 months)	
14. Attend the GEF Council meetings at least once a year. Support wetland proposals for funding.	I and II
15. Strengthen the working relationship with EU institutions, including the Commission, the Parliament and the Council (see strategy note). Support wetland project proposals submitted to the Commission for funding.	I, II and V
16. Secure regular funding for the Small Grant Fund from all kind of financial sources. Investigate the feasibility of a Ramsar Trust Fund and other financial mechanisms to ensure a more regular flow of funding to the SGF.	II and V
17. Visit Brazil to strengthen working relationship and suggest the designation of the região dos lagos do Amapá as a wetland of international importance. Discuss the management of the Pantanal wetland and others in and outside the Amazon region (January/February?)	II and IV
18. Visit Mexico and Belize to discuss coral reef management in the Yucatan region (February/March).	????
19. Visit and discuss possible support to MedWet initiatives in North Africa and other Mediterranean regions.	IV and V
20. Strengthen the working relationship with the three GEF implementing agencies: UNDP, UNEP and World Bank	I
21. Attend the working party on environment and development of the OECD/DAC meetings and work towards a special working meeting on wetlands.	I
22. Participate in annual meetings of the Regional Development Banks (see strategy note).	I and III
23. Strengthen the existing working relationship with the other conventions, especially with regards to joint projects and programmes.	I
24. Act as Ramsar focal point on the Rio+10 process.	I
25. Act as Ramsar focal point on economic incentives for wetland conservation.	III
26. Start working on a manual on financing the wise use of wetlands.	II and III
27. Investigate potential debt-for-wetland swaps (see strategy note).	II and III
28. Contact several potential private sector sponsors (see strategy note)	II
29. Regularly visit official national authorities and partners to support their efforts, especially in finding resources for project design.	V
30. Establish a closer working relationship with the Biosphere programme.	I and III
31. Provide training for national authorities and partners on the setting up of environment funds.	V
Long term (more than 12 months)	
32. Publish the manual on financing the wise use of wetlands.	III and V
33. Represent the Convention in international fora & Conferences as requested by SG.	I
34. Try to organise regional donor meetings for wetlands.	II and V
35. Secure a portfolio of at least 2 major wetland projects in each of the Ramsar regions, to be submitted to potential bi-lateral or multilateral aid agencies for funding.	II and V

DRAFT 5 Sept.00

Strategy Note on How to Approach Bilateral Development Cooperation Agencies

1. Objective: The primary objective is to influence OECD/DAC cooperation agencies to support and finance wetland projects. The secondary objective is to seek support from these agencies to raise Ramsar Convention's profile within their respective countries and in international fora.
2. Target: AusAid, Austria Cooperation Agency, DGIS (Belgium), CIDA, DANIDA, FINNIDA, CFD (France), GTZ, Ireland Cooperation Agency, Italian Cooperation Agency, JICA, Luxembourg Cooperation Agency, DGIS (The Netherlands), New Zealand Cooperation Agency, NORAD, Portugal Cooperation Agency, AECI (Spain), SDC (Switzerland), USAID.
3. Strategy: (1) Efficient fund raising is not the activity of having one central fundraiser visiting funding agencies, every once in a while, on behalf of project promoters or drafters, with a pile of project documents and asking for funds. It is much more of an interactive process involving a series of partners, and it is very important to maintain a permanent institutional relationship between these partners. Visiting agencies only when one needs money does, understandably, not work.
4. One should also only go with good projects or proposals. Both the format and the content of the proposals are important. Cooperation agencies staffs have no time to redraft or improve project proposals. It is wise to try to involve the Agencies from the project idea stage taking into account that donors often like to have projects discussed with and co-funded by other agencies.
5. Although the Bureau has already done a lot of work, it still seems that the Ramsar Convention is not very well known within the development cooperation community. Few institutions know about the very broad definition of wetlands adopted by the Parties. They see the Convention as a protectionist one. The Bureau and its partners have to invest some time in explaining the broad definition given to wetlands and the importance given by the Convention to wise use. In other words, the Bureau has to convince the donor community of the importance given to sustainable development and poverty alleviation. A series of presentations and maybe small workshops should be organised for the donor agencies. It would also be useful to invite field donor representatives to visit some Ramsar sites and hear about success stories.
6. On the demand side (the side of the fundraisers), knowing the structure, including level of decentralisation, as well as the priorities of the agencies is important. Many development agencies have priority countries where they work. They also have priority sectors and sometimes very specific budget lines. All of this information on aid agencies and funding sources should be known by most and are on the Web. It is important for everybody involved in the process to spend a minimum of time visiting at least two very well done sites. One gives a list of National Aid agencies: www.ids.ac.uk/eldis/aid/nat_lorg.htm and another one gives very useful information on funding sources: <http://nt1.ids.ac.uk/eldis/fund/fund.htm>.

7. The major problem is the lack of good project proposals and the lack of local capacity to prepare and draft good proposals. The Ramsar Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation will therefore try to raise project preparation funds and funds for training in the project cycle management. An interesting idea might be to organise some national or subregional training before partners actually send project proposals to the Bureau for financing consideration under the Small Grants Fund.
8. Raising funds for the SGF will also be a priority. The irregularity of the funding of the SGF has created a serious problem for Ramsar Bureau staff, as they never know how much money will be available for the upcoming fiscal year and the amounts vary enormously (from SFr 200.000 to SFr 1.000.000). This complicates any planning exercise and raises expectations which cannot always be honoured. The idea of creating a Ramsar Trust Fund for the SGF (an endowment) would help solve the problem and will be discussed with aid agencies.
9. Raising awareness of the link between poor country indebtedness and environmental degradation will also be part of the work of the Bureau and its partners. The idea of creating Ramsar Wetland Funds (site-specific environmental funds) will be discussed with donor agencies.
10. Strategy (2) Influencing policies towards a greater support for wetland projects and for the Ramsar Convention will be another priority for the work of the Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation. This can be done through the establishment of a regular working relationship with key development cooperation staff, through the organisation of seminars and workshops, and through the Ramsar Bureau or its partners' participation in the OECD/DAC meetings.
11. Many aid agencies have an Environmental Policy Department dealing with agency-wide policies as well as with international policies and in particular with international conventions. It will be important to visit these departments and discuss the importance of wetland wise use projects. Another important objective will also be to have these departments lobbying their national governors to regional development banks and have them support wetland wise use policies with their respective banks.
12. As for the other strategies, alliances and joint work with Ramsar's national authorities, partners and supporters will be key to success.
13. Expected Outputs: a better understanding by the development cooperation community of the objectives of the Ramsar Convention, leading to an increase in financial support for wetlands activities. A strong support to wetland wise use policies in national and international fora.

Alain Lambert

Draft 29/08/2000

Strategy note on Debt-for-Wetlands Swaps

1. Objective: Increase financial resources for wetland restoration and conservation, especially those wetland sites on the Montreux Record, using the proceeds of debt swaps.
 2. Target: The targets are also the beneficiaries of debt swaps. These are both the creditor countries who are interested in having poor countries implementing their international environmental obligations and the debtor countries who have part of their debt burden alleviated and their financial resources increased in order to help them fulfil their global environmental obligations.
 3. Strategy: The strategy is to concentrate on Ramsar sites which are on the Montreux Record. The reasons for this are twofold. First, this would be an incentive for Parties to the Convention to declare more sites on the Montreux Record, and second, we would like to seek GEF funds to implement this programme. We therefore need to find strong arguments and evidence on additional costs involved with the restoration and management of these degraded or seriously threatened sites.
 4. I do not have the time to develop and implement a full debt-swap programme by myself. As a first example of the implementation of the IUCN/CBD/Ramsar joint work programme, we (IUCN's Senior Economist and myself) have developed a PDF-B project proposal that will be submitted to the GEF very soon. Below is the rationale and strategy for this project.
5. Project rationale and objectives:
 - 5a) The objective of the project is to improve sustainable and long-term biodiversity conservation through wetland conservation and restoration.
 - 5b) There is no doubt that poor countries' indebtedness very negatively influences their ability to cope with environmental degradation and biodiversity conservation and also limits the ability of the governments to fight poverty.
 - 5c) The world development and environment community has been campaigning hard these past three years to have developing countries' debt "forgiven". The G7 meetings have decided to modestly alleviate many developing countries' debt but the latter remains very high, unsustainable for many.
 - 5d) Forgiveness is probably not the best solution for all as it might give wrong signals to unscrupulous future borrowers. But the relative frugidity of the G7 members to further alleviate the unsustainable burden of poor countries' indebtedness should also be constructively reviewed in the light of new obligations imposed on developing countries by global environment conventions.
 - 5e) Because of the previous work carried out in Jordan by IUCN and UNDP, Jordan would

be an excellent pilot country to implement a major debt-for-nature swap. The Government of Jordan has expressed its strong commitment to biodiversity conservation and especially wetland conservation and wise use. Unfortunately, however, financial resources are too scarce to realistically fund the additional cost involved with large scale and long term wetland conservation programs. Both the Ministers of Finance and the Minister of Environment have officially expressed many times their interest to swap debts for wetland conservation projects. A Government of Jordan/ UNDP/ IUCN work program on debt for nature swaps has been drafted.

5f) The situation many poor countries are facing is paradoxical: imposed environmental obligations on developing countries but maintenance of a high level of indebtedness which strongly limits financial resources that could be invested in biodiversity conservation.

5g) Increasingly aware of this contradiction on the side of “rich” countries, several development cooperation agencies have decided to react and promote debt relief schemes, including debt-for-nature swaps.

5h) Many developing countries, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and to IUCN would welcome debt relief activities in favour of wetland conservation and biodiversity conservation.

5i) The problem is that debt conversion is a relatively complicated and highly technical kind of operation that needs to be handled by specialists. The IUCN Secretariat and the Ramsar Convention Bureau have the technical capacity to supervise debt-for-nature swaps but do not have the capacity to identify potential interested countries, visit the debtors and creditors, analyse the debt structures, negotiate the details of the deals, etc. Incremental financing is required for such activities.

6. Expected outcomes:

Several Ramsar wetland sites of international importance well managed and receiving long term sustainable financing from the proceeds of debt-for-nature swaps. Some Ramsar sites on the Montreux list being restored with the proceeds of debt-for-nature swaps.

7. Planned activities to achieve outcomes:

- a) Identify Ramsar Sites that are seriously under threat or degraded and have therefore been put by Ramsar member countries on the Montreux Record (Ramsar Convention Bureau with IUCN).
- b) Visit these sites and prepare a restoration plan or a reinforced management plan that includes wise use activities (Ramsar Convention Bureau with IUCN and National Authorities).
- c) Evaluate the financial cost of these restoration plans (Ramsar with IUCN) and secure national commitment for the implementation of the plan (Ramsar Bureau with IUCN).
- d) Identify and contract a debt swap expert and brief him on the different aspects of this project (Ramsar Bureau/IUCN/project).
- e) Visit Jordan first to analyse the Jordanian debt structures with the Jordanian Ministry of Finance and identify “convertible” debts.
- f) Start an information/awareness campaign targeting creditor countries (project).
- g) Visit potentially interested bi-lateral development cooperation agencies, starting with the

- Belgian International Development Agency who stated their interest in debt-for-nature swaps in the agency's official policy paper. Visiting next the UK, Denmark, the US, (project)
- h) Prepare an information pack for both creditor and debtor countries on proposed debt swap activities (project).
 - i) After visiting and evaluating the potential interest of creditor countries, visit these countries for which seriously threatened wetlands have been identified. Brief the authorities on debt-for-nature swaps and seek support for it.
 - j) Under the overall supervision of the IUCN Senior Economist and Ramsar Senior Advisor for Environment and Development Cooperation, negotiate debt-for-nature swaps.

8. Stakeholders involved in project:

8.a) The first phase would consist of a PDF B grant to pilot the project with the Government of Jordan building on previous work undertaken by IUCN and UNDP. This pilot would help to shape the substance of the full-scale project proposal.

8.b) Stakeholders in the full scale project proposal would include developing (debtor) countries who are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as well as State Members of The World Conservation Union (IUCN). They would also include relevant government agencies and NGOs within these countries who would be involved in conservation programmes to be financed from the debt swap. Co-financiers of the GEF project would be developed (creditor) countries who are Parties to either the Convention on Biological Diversity or the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and are State Members of The World Conservation Union (IUCN).