

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC25-30

Agenda item 22.9

Location and financing of the MedWet Coordination function

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to receive an update on this matter by the Secretary General at the time of the meeting and take a decision, as appropriate, on the recommendation in the last paragraph of this document, to note and comment upon the report, and to take decisions, as appropriate, concerning the issues raised in it.

Background

1. The MedWet Initiative was conceived during the Grado Symposium in February 1991. In June of the same year, an informal Coordination Group was established, headed by Thymio Papayannis (Greece), with the main task of preparing a project proposal for the EC. After the approval of the MedWet1 project in 1992, the Coordination Group was formally accepted. It consisted of representatives of the Ramsar Bureau, Greece, IWRB (later Wetlands International), Station biologique de la Tour du Valat, and WWF, with the same chairperson, and met regularly. A Steering Committee supervised the project, while the MedWet Secretariat was established at the Italian Ministry of Environment with WWF Italia playing a major role.
2. In 1996, Thymio Papayannis was requested by the Ramsar Bureau to undertake the coordination of the MedWet2 project, which was completed successfully in March 1998.
3. Also in 1996, at its 19th meeting, the Standing Committee of the Convention endorsed the establishment of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) “under the aegis of the Ramsar Convention Bureau” and in order “to provide guidance to all interested parties, and in particular to the Ramsar Bureau and the MedWet Coordinator and Secretariat, on practical measures and actions for implementation of the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy”. MedWet/Com met for the first time in Thessaloniki (Greece) in March 1998.
4. In 1997, at the proposal of France, Greece, Tour du Valat and Wetlands International, and with financial support from the MAVA Foundation, the Ramsar Bureau appointed Thymio Papayannis as MedWet Coordinator, based in Athens. In parallel, a MedWet Secretarial Unit was established at the Greek Biotope / Wetland Centre (EKBY) in Thessaloniki (with the financial support of the Greek government), and a Project Development Unit at Tour du Valat in the Camargue, later joined by a similar Unit at the

Sede para el estudio de los humedales mediterráneos (SEHUMED) in Valencia, thus creating the MedWet Team.

5. In 1999, the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention adopted Resolution VII.22 entitled “Collaborative structure on Mediterranean wetlands”, which *inter alia*:
 - “3. APPROVES the establishment of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) within the framework of the Convention, as a forum for collaboration on wetland issues in the Mediterranean and as an advisor to the Convention in this region;” and “8. ENDORSES the actions taken by the Secretary General of the Convention to establish and supervise a MedWet Team, consisting of a Coordinator and secretarial units, supported financially by voluntary contributions of governments and organizations in the region and elsewhere.”

The current situation

6. In early 1999, the current MedWet Coordinator proposed to the Secretary General of the Convention to start the process towards a two-year transition to a new coordination structure, as he considered that a more permanent solution with fresh personnel and ideas should be found.
7. In June 1999, the possibility of establishing the MedWet Coordination at the future IUCN Mediterranean Office in Málaga, Spain, was discussed by the Ramsar Bureau with IUCN and the Government of Spain, which were both very positive and supportive. It should be noted that the Secretary General took this initiative because placing the MedWet Coordination function -- which is part of the Ramsar Bureau -- in the IUCN Office in Málaga would be consistent with Article 8.1 of the Convention, which establishes that “The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources shall perform the continuing bureau duties under this Convention until such time as another organization or government is appointed by a majority of two-thirds of all Contracting Parties.”
8. After further discussions with the other four major donor EU-member states, and the submission of a concrete proposal by Spain, the issue was considered during the Third Meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (Djerba, Tunisia, 1-5 April 2000).
9. As registered in the Conclusions of the meeting:

“[MedWet/Com3] RECOGNISES the crucial role that has been played by the MedWet coordination and the need to ensure its continuation, and

 - a) UNDERLINES the urgency for assuring the financing of the MedWet Coordinator, which has been missing since 1 January 2000, and
 - b) RECOMMENDS that the Ramsar Bureau:
 - distributes to all MedWet/Com members by mid-May 2000 a document containing an evaluation of the work done so far by the MedWet Coordinator,

- revised Terms of Reference for this function in relation to the perspective adopted in these Conclusions, and a detailed budget;
 - invites MedWet/Com members to submit additional proposals (see paragraph 8 above)¹ concerning the location and arrangements for the office of the MedWet Coordinator by the deadline of 30 June 2000; and
 - analyses the proposals received and undertakes the necessary consultations in order to submit a recommendation for adoption by the Ramsar Standing Committee during its 25th meeting in October 2000.”
10. The action requested by MedWet/Com3 was duly implemented by the Bureau. A diplomatic note was sent to all MedWet countries on 10 May 2000 inviting proposals concerning the location and arrangements for the office of the MedWet Coordinator by the deadline of 30 June 2000. By 28 September 2000 no new proposals have been received by the Bureau.
 11. The Secretary General is concerned about the delay in taking a decision on this matter, in particular when there is one offer (from Spain) awaiting such a decision, an offer that could be withdrawn if no decision is taken soon upon it.
 12. Consequently, if by the time of the Standing Committee meeting no consensus agreement among the interested parties has been communicated to the Bureau, the Secretary General recommends that the Standing Committee formally accept the Spanish offer attached to this document, with the proviso that arrangements for the MedWet Initiative and its Coordination function may be reviewed at the time of COP8.

¹ Paragraph 8 reads: “NOTES with satisfaction the continuing willingness of the governments of France, Greece and Spain to provide administrative and technical support to the MedWet Initiative through the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, the Greek Wetland / Biotope Centre and SEHUMED, which are members of the MedWet Team, as well as the generous proposal of the government of Spain to host the MedWet Coordination in Malaga, in conjunction with the Mediterranean office of IUCN, and to cover 60% of its operational expenses of about 200,000 Euros per annum.”

ANNEX I

PROPOSAL FOR LOCATING THE MEDWET COORDINATION OFFICE IN MÁLAGA, SPAIN

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1. Presentation of Málaga

1.1 Characteristics of the city

Málaga is a city on the Mediterranean coast, at the Guadalhorce river mouth, in the Málaga province of the Autonomous Community of Andalucía.

Málaga benefits from a mild climate, with an average temperature of 18° C and 325 sunny days per year. In addition, it has many wide beaches and a frame of mountain wilderness in the inland part of the province. Its current population is approximately 550,000 people.

The city is a typical Mediterranean capital with a long history always linked to this sea and its different cultures. During its history of more than two thousand years, many peoples, including Phoenicians, Romans, and Arabs, have left their mark on its culture right up to the present.

An outstanding feature within the historic and cultural heritage of the city is the complex formed by the Alcazaba and the Giralvaro castle. Undoubtedly, this constitutes the best-conserved Arab monument situated in the antique nucleus of a city. Close by is the Roman theatre and the modern, rectangular Plaza de la Merced, where Picasso was born. The cathedral is one of the great examples of Renaissance churches in Spain.

In addition, the city has modern facilities and diversified services, and a wide range of offerings in the fields of culture – including the university – and leisure. Its privileged climate makes it attractive for outdoor activities and sports. As throughout the Costa del Sol, there is a wide offer of hotels, apartments, camping facilities, tourist villas and rural houses that allow the travellers to find the type of lodging they seek.

1.2 Infrastructure and communications

Málaga stands out for its excellent communication networks, both by land (train and roads) and sea (with one of the most important Spanish ports) and, of course, by air, with one of the country's busiest international airports. It is 544 km from Madrid, 219 km from Sevilla, and 139 km from Algeciras. The highways A-4 and A-92 and national network road N-340 give access by land. Outstanding is the Costa del Sol highway. The airport is about 9 km towards Torremolinos, with direct flights to all European capitals and a number of cities in the Americas and North Africa.

1.3 Natural values

One of the most important Spanish wetlands, the “Laguna de Fuente de Piedra”, is in Málaga province. The site was one of the first ones to be included in the Ramsar List and has been designated as a Natural Reserve; it is also a EU Special Protection Area for Birds (Directive 79/409/CEE).

It is located about 20 km northwest of the city of Antequera and approximately 10 km southwest of Laguna Amarga, which is also part of the Ramsar site “Lagunas del Sur de Córdoba”. Fuente de Piedra consists of a large shallow, seasonally variable, saline lagoon (the largest lagoon in Andalucía) and the surrounding marshlands. The lagoon is 6.5 km long and 2.5 km wide.

The site is situated at the centre of a basin that has no drainage to the outside. The wetland is fed by five small rivers, by rainfall and by highly mineralized groundwater. It contains many narrow, emergent ridges, most of them artificial. The wetland is surrounded by an old canal to protect the adjacent agricultural lands from flooding.

The site is of special importance because of its nesting colony of *Phoenicopiterus ruber* (12,000 pairs in 1988) – it is one of the most important breeding sites for this species in the Mediterranean region. The fields surrounding the lagoon support nesting *Circus pygargus* and *Burhinus oedicnemus*, as well as up to 250 wintering *Grus grus*.

1.4 Technological Park of Andalucía

As a result of its rapid development, Málaga now hosts the Technological Park of Andalucía (PTA), which constitutes the fundamental vortex of the productive triangle of the city that includes the airport and the university.

At the present time, the works at the PTA for the installation of the Office of the Mediterranean Programme of IUCN – The World Conservation Union are being finalized, on the basis of an agreement between IUCN, the Spanish Government, the Regional Government of Andalucía, and the City Council of Málaga. It is in these facilities where it is proposed to locate the MedWet Coordination Function.

The strong interest of the Technological Park of Andalucía in the new information and communication technologies means that the Park can count upon an advanced infrastructure in this area. In its central offices there are institutions devoted to nature and environment studies, such as the International Association of Science Parks (I.A.S.P.), the Centro de Innovación Histórico-Ambiental (CIHAM), and the Association of Science and Technology Parks of Spain.

In addition, the Park has a series of supply industries in the field of information and telecommunication technologies.

Several university research institutes are also located in the Park:

University Institutes
Andalucía Digital Multimedia
Cegema
Centro de Tecnología de la Imagen (C.T.I)
Instituto de Proceso de Imagen
Oficina de Transferencia de Resultados de Investigación (O.T.R.I.)-Universidad de Málaga

Presently, the Technological Park is carrying out some environmental projects, such as the MAPHA project. This is a pilot project, which is included in the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, for the transnational design and implementation of training methodology in new technologies for the protection of environment and territory. In it the PTA acts as a partner with the Tecnopolis Casata Novus Ortus (Bari, Italy), the Water and Environment European Centre (Portugal), the Universidad de Málaga, the Centro de Innovación Histórico Ambiental (Málaga), and Ecotech (Sevilla).

2. Actions undertaken by Spain for wetlands conservation

Within the European Union, Spain is the country with the greatest diversity of ecological types of wetlands, including some unique ecosystems that harbor endemic and endangered species, besides being key places along the migratory routes of many birds.

The wealth of the wetlands gives way to a great variety of traditional uses linked with the Spanish water landscapes.

Spain has ratified the most important international treaties concerning nature conservation and sustainable development, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar, Bern, Bonn, and Barcelona Conventions. They provide the framework for environmental planning in the country.

Spain ratified the Ramsar Convention in 1982, and since then it has undertaken a number of actions for its implementation, such as the designation of 38 Spanish wetlands as Ramsar sites, covering an area of 158,288 ha (see annex 1), and the development of legal and strategic instruments that provide the framework for wetland conservation. The latest and most important achievement has been approval of the “Spanish Strategic Plan for Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands” by the National Commission for the Protection of Nature in October 1999. The Plan is the first Sectoral Plan of the Spanish Strategy for Conservation of Biodiversity. It can be consulted on the Web page of the Ramsar Convention at www.ramsar.org/wurc_stratplan_espana1.htm.

This Plan identifies the actions to be developed and the agents who must implement them. The aims identified in the document are based upon those established by the Ramsar Strategic Plan (1997-2002) and upon the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy.

Also, at the last meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to Ramsar (COP7), held in Costa Rica in 1999, the Spanish proposal for hosting Ramsar COP8 in 2002 was accepted unanimously. This proposal had been approved by an Agreement of the Council of Ministers of May 7th, 1999. This shall constitute a significant occasion to reinforce Spain's capacities in the field of wetland conservation. This intergovernmental conference will gather, over nine days, the countries that have adhered to the treaty, with some 1500 participants expected to be in attendance. To organize this event, the Ramsar Standing Committee has established a Working Group chaired by Spain. Its purpose is to define the subjects of the technical meetings and to supervise the organization of the conference.

Spain, as the Ramsar COP8 host, will be in charge of providing the infrastructure, services and personnel needed for the event.

Spain, a Ramsar Contracting Party and a Mediterranean country, and as part of the regional collaborating structure of MedWet, has participated in the first meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) held in Thessalonika (Greece) and hosted the second meeting in Valencia in 1999. As a demonstration of its growing interest in these matters, the Spanish Ministry of Environment now proposes to locate the MedWet Coordination Function in Málaga. It does so convinced of the need to reinforce the Pan-Mediterranean cooperation and to consolidate the coordination function of the MedWet Initiative.

3. Offer to host the MedWet Coordination Function

3.1 Background

Spain's offer to locate the MedWet Coordination Function within the IUCN office in Málaga stems from the administrative arrangements for the Ramsar Convention secretariat established under Article 8 of the treaty. The article provides that IUCN - The World Conservation Union, with headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, shall provide the secretariat for the Convention (although the supervision of its operation is the responsibility of the Ramsar Standing Committee).

The office of the IUCN Mediterranean Programme in Málaga is supported by IUCN itself, the Spanish Ministry of Environment, the Andalucía Regional Government, and the Málaga City Council. At the moment, the premises are in the final phase of renovation. The proposal is to locate the MedWet Coordination Function within the IUCN office.

The Spanish Government considers that this management model is functioning successfully in Gland for the Convention and that, therefore, it is a valuable experience to be transferred to the Mediterranean realm.

Thus, the present proposal intends to provide to the MedWet Initiative the operational framework that it now requires.

3.2 Proposal concerning office facilities and human resources

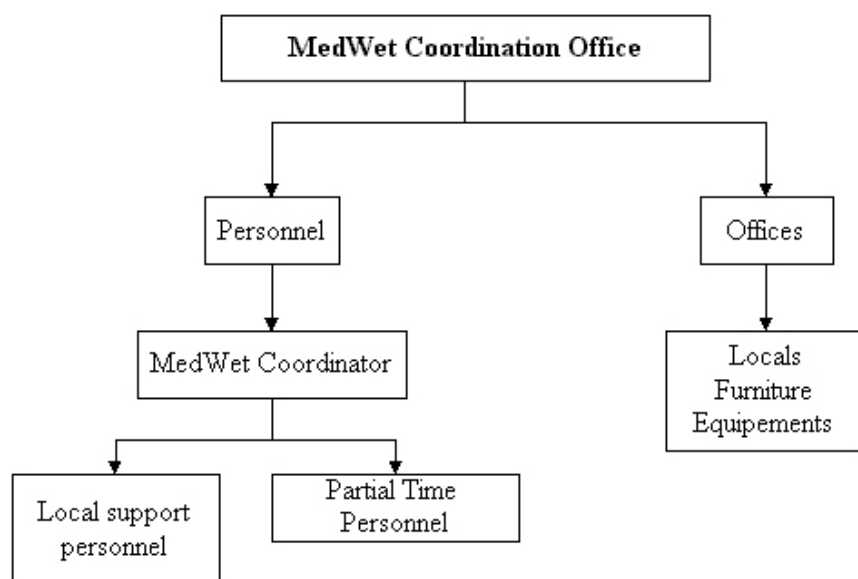
To be able to do its work, the MedWet Coordination Function requires a minimum of facilities and human resources, as listed below.

Personnel requirements

- The MedWet Coordinator: This should be considered an international post, at Grade 11 in the IUCN staff positions grading system (the same grade as a Regional Coordinator at the Ramsar Bureau in Gland).
- A support staff position: a full-time assistant, locally recruited, if possible with technical qualifications. Besides the usual secretarial skills, this person must be fluent in English, and if possible in French and Arabic.
- Part-time support: the MedWet Coordinator should have the possibility of contracting suitable consultants to carry out specific missions or tasks that cannot be carried out by the three wetland centres that are part of the MedWet Coordination Team (EKBY in Greece; Tour du Valat in France; and SEHUMED in Spain), or projects that have extreme urgency.

Offices

- Premises: Two offices will be provided, with additional storage space. A meeting room with a capacity for 20 people will be available.
- Office furniture: the office of the MedWet Coordinator shall be equipped with all the necessary furniture: desk, typing chair, computer table, meeting table and chairs, shelves, filing cabinets, etc. The assistant's office will have two desks, computer tables and typing chairs, chairs for visitors, and filing cabinets. The storage space will be furnished with open shelves.
- Equipment: three computers, equipped with the latest technical devices and software programmes, connected into a network: an appropriate printer and scanner; connections for e-mail and Internet; a fax that uses common paper; a photocopier; a digital camera and two binoculars; and a binding machine.



3.3 Financial support and indicative budget

It is estimated that setting up the MedWet Coordination Function in the UICN office in Málaga and its operation during the first year will have a cost of 197,102 Euros, as follows:

Installation expenses

Moving expenses of the Coordinator:	6,198 Euros
Moving MedWet archives and files from Athens to Málaga	3,099 Euros
Unforeseen expenses:	3,099 Euros

Total (first year only) 12,396 Euros

Yearly operating expenses

MedWet Coordinator salary and social charges	92,973 Euros
Full time assistant salary and social charges	37,189 Euros
Occasional consultants	18,595 Euros
Travel	22,313 Euros
Telecommunications	14,876 Euros
Printing (small items)	6,198 Euros
Unforeseen expenses	4,959 Euros

Total 197,102 Euros

The Spanish Ministry of Environment has foreseen a contribution of at least 20,000,000 pesetas (120,202 Euros) to this budget during the first year of operation.

Annex 1: Spanish wetlands included in the Ramsar List

Huelva/Sevilla	Parque Nacional de Doñana	1
Málaga	Laguna de Fuentedepiedra	2
Cádiz	Lagunas de Cádiz: Laguna de Medina y Laguna Salada	3
Córdoba	Lagunas del Sur de Córdoba: Zóñar, Rincón y Amarga	4
Huelva	Marismas del Odiel	5
Almería	Salinas del Cabo de Gata	6
Mallorca	S'Albufera de Mallorca	7
Ibiza/Formentera	Salinas de Ibiza y Formentera	8
Zamora	Lagunas de Villafáfila	9
Ciudad Real	Parque Nacional de las Tablas de Daimiel	10
Ciudad Real	Laguna de la Vega o del Pueblo	11
Cuenca	Laguna de Manjavacas	12
Ciudad Real	Lagunas de Alcázar de San Juan (Yeguas y Camino de Villafranca)	13
Ciudad Real	Laguna del Prado	14
Pontevedra	Complejo intermareal Umia-Grove, la Lanzada, Punta Carreirón y Lago Bodeira	15
La Coruña	Rías de Ortigueira y Ladrado	16
La Coruña	Complejo de las playas, dunas y lagunas de Corrubedo	17
La Coruña	Laguna y arenal de Valdoviño	18
Girona	Aiguamolls de l'Emporda	19
Tarragona	Delta del Ebro	20
Badajoz	Embalse de Orellana	21
Vizcaya	Ría de Mundaka-Guernika	22
Valencia	L'Albufera de Valencia	23
Alicante	Pantano del Hondo	24
Alicante	Salinas de La Mata-Torre vieja	25
Alicante	Salinas de Santa Pola	26
Castellón de la Plana	Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca	27
Zaragoza/Teruel	Laguna de Gallocanta	28
Zaragoza	Lagunas de Chiprana	29
Sevilla/Córdoba	Embalses de Cordobilla y Malpasillo	30
Almería	Albufera de Adra	31
Lugo/Asturias	Ría del Eo o Ribadeo	32
Murcia	Mar Menor	33
Santander	Marismas de Santoña y Noja	34
Valencia/Alicante	Marjal de Pego-Oliva	35
Navarra	Laguna de Pitillas	36
Navarra	Embalse de las Cañas	37
Álava	Lagunas de Laguardia (Carralagroño, Carravalseca y Prao de la Paul)	38