THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

Its bodies and processes

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Marcela Bonells, Scientific & Technical Support Officer
OVERVIEW

• What is the Ramsar Convention?
• Mission
• Pillars of implementation
• Status of the Convention
• Bodies
• National Implementation
• Partners and Regional Initiatives
WHAT IS THE RAMSAR CONVENTION?

• An intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and ‘wise use’ of wetlands
  – Framework for national and international action

• Signed in Ramsar City, Iran in 1971

• Only Multilateral Environmental Agreement dealing with a particular ecosystem

• Covers all geographic regions of the planet
• **Wise use** of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character within the context of sustainable development, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches.

• In other words:
  – Conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of humankind.
• The three pillars of implementation
  – *Wise use of all wetlands*
    • National land use planning, policies/laws, public education
  – *Designation and management of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)*
  – *International cooperation*
    • Transboundary wetlands
    • Shared wetland systems
    • Shared species
    • Development projects
STATUS OF THE CONVENTION

• **168** Contracting Parties
  – Governments who are member states
  – Appoint an Administrative Authority (AA) responsible for national implementation
  – Ministry, department or agency
• **2,161** Ramsar Sites
• Total surface area of designated sites: **205,681,158** (ha)
• Four bodies:
  – Conference of Contracting Parties (COP)
  – Standing Committee
  – Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP)
  – Secretariat
CONFERENCE OF CONTRACTING PARTIES (COP)

- Ultimate governance & decision-making body
- Contracting Parties meet every 3 years in Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP)
  - Decide budget, implementation and priorities for next triennium
  - Last COP: COP11 Bucharest (Romania) July 2012
  - Next COP: COP12 Uruguay, mid-2015
  - All other Convention bodies responsible to COP
• Intersessional governance body (in between COPs)
• Contracting Parties membership pro-rata by 6 Ramsar geopolitical regions
  – Africa, Asia, Europe, N. America, Neotropics, Oceania
• Meets annually (except COP year)
  – Sub-groups:
    • Finance
    • Management Working Group
    • COP
    • Others as needed (e.g. Strategic Plan redevelopment)
SECRETARIAT

- Executive group responsible for
  - facilitating Convention processes and meetings, maintaining the Ramsar Sites list, public communication, providing sci. and tech. support to Parties, etc.

- 22 staff, hosted by IUCN, Gland, Switzerland

- 1 out-posted officer – Oceania (in SPREP, Samoa)
• Core group of 18 Members appointed for expertise “in their own right”
• Appointed by STRP Oversight Committee and endorsed by the Standing Committee
• Responsible for providing scientific & technical advice and guidance at the request of Parties
• Also ‘horizon-scanning’ to pro-actively advise on new and emerging issues
• Supported by: invited experts, Observer Organisations, STRP National Focal Points
STRP 2013-2015

13 Appointed members + the Chair

5 International Organisation Partner representatives

5 Appointed invited experts
• Work governed by STRP *modus operandi* adopted by COP
• Meets in 2 plenary sessions per triennium
• Plus mid-term workshops
• Intersessionally through Working Groups
  – Electronically through the STRP Platform
Administrative Authority (AA)
the main government agency responsible for the application of the Convention
daily contacts are kept by the AA focal point

STRP focal point
provides liaison between the STRP members and national experts

CEPA (Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness) Government and NGO focal points
- provide leadership to spread the Convention’s approaches to wetlands management

National Ramsar Committee, provides a mechanism to spread the Convention’s tools beyond individuals and develops national policies.
Ramsar’s Partners and Synergies

- 5 International Organisation Partners

- Synergies with other Conventions
  - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),
  - Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD),
  - Convention on Migratory Species (CMS),
  - African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA),
  - World Heritage Convention (WHC), and
  - UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme
  - UN Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change (UNFCCC)
  - Regional treaties and Basin Commissions
    - Cartagena Convention, Barcelona Convention, Carpathian Convention, etc.
• **What**
  – Support implementation in geographic regions, through international cooperation of wetland issues of common concern

• **In Asia**
  – The Partnership for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway
  – Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RRC-EA)
  – Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA)
Thank you!

Marcela Bonells,  
Scientific & Technical Support Officer  
Ramsar Convention Secretariat  
28 rue Mauverney, CH-1196 Gland (Switzerland)  
Tel. +41 22 999 0182; bonells@ramsar.org

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