

Agenda item 14.3

Progress with the assessment of the ecological “outcome-oriented” indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention (Resolution IX.1 Annex D), and the 2010 biodiversity target

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to note the STRP’s progress in implementing its indicators of effectiveness of the Convention.

Background

1. This note by the Secretariat provides a brief update on the recent progress of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in developing its effectiveness indicator work, and how this relates to, and will contribute to, other relevant indicator processes.
2. Resolution VIII.45 (2002) called *inter alia* for a general review of the effectiveness of the process of drafting, considering, adopting and implementing Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Ramsar Convention. Concerning the implementation aspect of this call, the STRP included in its 2003-2005 work plan the identification and development of a suite of “Ecological ‘outcome-oriented’ indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention”.
3. The STRP’s proposals for this suite of indicators, a first tranche of eight indicators and a second tranche of a further five indicators to be considered for subsequent development, were endorsed by Resolution IX.1 Annex D (2005). The eight first tranche indicators, and the initial sub-indicators being developed and assessed are as follows:

Indicator theme	Indicator title	Sub-indicator(s) title
Wetland resource - status	A. The overall conservation status of wetlands	i. Status and trends in wetland ecosystem extent ii. Trends in conservation status – qualitative assessment
Ramsar sites – status	B. The status of the ecological character of Ramsar sites	i. Trends in the status of Ramsar site ecological character – qualitative assessment
Water quality and quantity - status	C. Trends in water quality	i. Trends in dissolved nitrate (or nitrogen) concentration ii. Trends in Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD)
Ramsar sites – threats	D. The frequency of threats affecting Ramsar sites	i. The frequency of threats affecting Ramsar sites – qualitative assessment

Wetland management	E. Wetland sites with successfully implemented conservation or wise use management plans	i. Wetland sites with successfully implemented conservation or wise use management plans
Species/biogeographic populations status	F. Overall population trends of wetland taxa	i. Trends in the status of waterbird biogeographic populations
Threatened Species	G. Changes in threat status of wetland taxa	i. trends in the status of globally-threatened wetland-dependent birds; ii. trends in the status of globally-threatened wetland-dependent amphibians
Ramsar Site designation progress	H. The proportion of candidate Ramsar sites designated so far for wetland types/features	i. coverage of the wetland resource by designated Ramsar sites

4. Further description of each of the indicators and what they are designed to assess can be found in Resolution IX.1 Annex D, as well as in the COP10 Information paper COP10 DOC. 23, which provided an update from the STRP on its progress in further development of indicator fact-sheets, indicator example story-lines, and implementation plans.
5. Much of the work in developing the indicator processes has been undertaken for the STRP by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), and has been done in close collaboration with the work coordinated by UNEP-WCMC on developing indicator assessments for the Convention on Biological Diversity's 2010 biodiversity indicators. These are designed to assess the CBD/WSSD 2010 biodiversity target of "significantly reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity" through the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership GEF project in which both the STRP and Ramsar Secretariat participate.

Recent progress in developing Ramsar effectiveness indicator assessments

6. Following COP10, discussions between the STRP lead on the effectiveness indicators, Dave Pritchard, UNEP-WCMC and the Ramsar Secretariat recognized that it would be timely to undertake a practical exercise to a) test the effectiveness indicator methodologies, b) trial the analysis and assessment methods so as to develop report "story-lines" for some of the indicators, and c) design a reporting structure for the indicators, in order to inform their further discussion and development by the 15th meeting of the STRP (30 March – 3 April 2009).
7. As a consequence, two small workshops hosted by UNEP-WCMC and involving STRP, UNEP-WCMC, Wetlands International and the Ramsar Secretariat were held in January and March 2009 in Cambridge, UK. The first workshop focused on Indicator A (The overall conservation status of wetlands), and the second on Ramsar site indicators (Indicator B: The status of the ecological character of Ramsar sites; and Indicator D: The frequency of threats affecting Ramsar sites).

8. The design of the Ramsar effectiveness indicators involves a two-stage assessment process:
 - i) establishing the “ecological outcome” status (and, where possible, trends in that status) of the wetland feature addressed by the indicator; and
 - ii) assessing this status in relation to a range of Convention implementation indicators as provided by Contracting Parties in their National Reports to the COP and other process-related indicators.
9. Draft results for both stages i) and ii) assessment have been achieved for Indicators A and B, and initial stage i) assessments developed for Indicators D, F and G.
10. The two workshops successfully developed and tested the two-stage method for effectiveness indicator assessment, and in doing so they have led not only to a draft status report on the wetland ecological feature, but also to evidence that different implementation activities (and the range of implementation activities) by Contracting Parties, both at policy level and in on-the-ground implementation, are positively related to the current status of wetlands and Ramsar sites in countries.
11. Analyses of wetland feature status and trends made during the workshops have also yielded some first assessments of change in wetland status in relation to the delivery (or otherwise) of the 2010 biodiversity target.
12. As to assessing the effectiveness of Convention implementation, the preliminary findings thus suggest that the Ramsar Convention can be, and is, effective in addressing the conservation and wise use of wetlands when its guidance is widely implemented by its Contracting Parties. Furthermore, the STRP’s analyses are pointing to some types of implementation activity being particularly effective in relation to maintaining wetland status, which may thus lead to it being possible to provide advice to Contracting Parties on future priorities for their implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan 2009-2015.
13. It is anticipated that following further similar work to analyse each of the first tranche of effectiveness indicators, the outcomes will be reported in two forms: a technical report with the details of the analysis and assessment of each indicator, and a summary “storylines” report to Contracting Parties providing the key findings and messages concerning the state of the wetland resource and overall implementation effectiveness.
14. The work was presented to and considered by STRP15 and in developing its work plan for 2009-2012 (DOC. SC40-17) the Panel has indicated that it believes that further work on the effectiveness indicators should be a top priority for resourcing in 2009 and 2010, particularly in view of the timelines of a number of related indicator reporting processes to which this STRP work can contribute (see below).
15. A short presentation will be made during SC40 to illustrate further the approach and initial findings of the STRP’s effectiveness indicator work.

Linkages with other related processes

16. The Ramsar effectiveness indicators work and assessment is linked to, and will draw upon and/or contribute to, other indicator work, particularly the CBD 2010 biodiversity

indicators and in relation to the Ramsar Convention's role as lead implementation partner of the CBD for wetlands.

17. Such linkages include *inter alia* that:

- i) the assessment methodology and “story-line” presentation approach developed by the STRP is informing the further work of the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) during 2009;
- ii) the 2010 BIP is contributing to the ecological status component of the Ramsar effectiveness indicators through the provision of further wetland-related components of its biodiversity status and trends reporting;
- iii) initial examples from the STRP's effectiveness indicator findings are being included in the forthcoming 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3) CBD publication, which will be prepared during 2009 and launched on World Biodiversity Day in May 2010 as part of the International Year of Biodiversity;
- iv) the effectiveness indicator assessments are being used to inform the CBD's 2009 in-depth review of its Programme of Work on the Biological Diversity of Inland Waters, which will be reported to CBD SBSTTA and CBD's COP10 in 2010;
- v) these effectiveness assessments are providing input to the preparation by the Ramsar Secretariat of the information materials for World Wetlands Day 2010, which is on the theme “Wetlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change”; and
- vi) STRP's experiences with using the COP10 National Report Form indicators will help inform the indicators needed for further Convention effectiveness assessment in the preparation of the COP11 National Report Form.