

**Report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel  
CEPA - A new approach: Implementing Resolution XIII.5**

**Actions requested:**

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. Note progress by the CEPA Oversight Panel;
- ii. Note that the document SC58 Doc.15.1 was not addressed at the SC58 virtual meetings in June 2020. Nor was it addressed intersessionally between SC58 and SC59. All information that is still valid from document SC58 Doc.15.1 has been integrated and updated in this document for SC59 and thus SC58 Doc.15.1 has been superseded.
- iii. Alternative A: The results from the work by the CEPA Oversight Panel during the last triennium are incorporated in a number of draft resolutions for consideration at SC59. The Standing Committee is invited to leave comments on the new CEPA approach when these draft resolutions are addressed.

Alternative B (if draft resolutions are not addressed at SC59 in June 2021 due to COVID):  
Provide feedback on the new CEPA approach as described in this document.

**Background and introduction**

1. At the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP12) in 2015, the Parties approved a new Programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) for 2016-2024, through Resolution XII.9. The Programme includes nine CEPA goals and 43 targets.
2. The Secretariat developed a CEPA Action Plan for 2016-2018 to guide its actions. The Plan was reviewed to improve its focus and, at the 53rd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC53), a report on progress in implementing the Action Plan was published. Moving towards a more cohesive approach, the CEPA Action Plan was integrated into the Secretariat's annual and triennial work plans.
3. The Panel for 2016-2018 made recommendations on the development of a new approach for CEPA, which were included in the document COP13 Doc.10, *Report on implementation of the CEPA Programme 2016-2018 and recommendations on future directions* [https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop13doc.10\\_cep\\_a\\_programme\\_e.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop13doc.10_cep_a_programme_e.pdf). A short version of the recommendations is included in **Annex A**.

4. Resolution XIII.5 on *Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention* instructs the CEPA Oversight Panel, at SC59, “to present its proposed new approach and a draft resolution on this subject to be submitted to COP14; and further instructs the Standing Committee to take this matter further, for decision at COP14.” This new approach was to take into account the work already carried out by the Panel and the Working Group on CEPA Implementation, incorporate the advice of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and complement the work of the Strategic Plan Working Group.

#### **Work done by the CEPA Oversight Panel since SC57**

5. During the autumn of 2019 the CEPA Oversight Panel conducted a survey, in the context of considering a new approach to CEPA, to get input about priorities for change, and what elements of the existing CEPA Programme should be retained. A short compilation of the survey and the results is presented in **Annex B**.
6. The Oversight Panel has met a number of times by Skype/teleconference and discussed the findings of the survey in the context of Resolution XIII.5 and the advice provided to COP13 by the former Oversight Panel, and synthesised these points into a set of broad recommendations which will shape the new CEPA approach, as outlined below.

#### ***The CEPA Oversight Panel recommends that the new CEPA approach has the following characteristics:***

##### **1. A reduced set of activities clearly linked to the Strategic Plan**

- The effort should be focused on a smaller number of high-priority activities.
- CEPA activities should be incorporated into the Strategic Plan, but with a separate CEPA document providing supporting guidance, as needed.

##### **2. Make CEPA more strategic, integrated and effective**

- The CEPA Programme would better support and strengthen the Strategic Plan if integrated into it. The next Strategic Plan should include both stand-alone CEPA activities, and CEPA elements.
- In general, CEPA activities and CEPA elements should be integrated in planning and activities of the Convention (locally, nationally, internationally) where appropriate.

##### **3. Work to support focal points, and build more networks and partnerships**

- National Focal Points and CEPA National Focal Points are considered important to ensure a coordinated and strategic national approach to Ramsar implementation. Contracting Parties should ensure that the Focal Points are informed about their responsibilities. The CEPA Focal Points should be recognized as the key implementers of CEPA and should be provided with adequate tools and training opportunities when necessary.
- Encourage Contracting Parties with similar CEPA needs to co-operate on CEPA activities. Such co-operation can include exchange of experiences of CEPA campaigns as well as working cooperatively to produce communications materials and translating them into languages as needed by the Contracting Parties involved. Contracting Parties should also be encouraged to coordinate with their focal points for other MEAs.
- The Secretariat should seek opportunities to build networks and partnerships at the international level, including with other MEAs, in order to identify opportunities for common or complementary CEPA activities and to bring relevant tools, resources, and practices to Contracting Parties.

- The Contracting Parties should increase engagement with other sectors, consistent with priorities identified in the strategic plan at the national level. In particular, messaging should be tailored to emphasize themes that matter to the target audience.

#### **4. Strategic support by the Secretariat**

- The Secretariat should provide advice and information to Contracting Parties, for example introduction materials about Ramsar CEPA work for new CEPA NFPs and CEPA NGO FPs, and sharing good examples from other countries.
  - The Secretariat should revise the 2010 handbook on Wetland CEPA. The revised version needs to reflect the new CEPA approach, include other changes in the Convention since 2010, and include new content on social media, how to enhance networking etc. The update, before it is finalized, may also include results from COP15 on the resolution on the Strategic Plan.
  - The Secretariat should provide opportunities for the CEPA NFPs to learn more about CEPA tools. This can take place in conjunction with other relevant meetings, such as COPs or regional meetings as appropriate, or via online resources.
7. In preparing a draft resolution on the new CEPA approach the CEPA Oversight Panel will have completed the following tasks by the time of SC59. The draft resolution will be considered for submission to COP14 by the Standing Committee at SC59.

#### ***Work done by the CEPA Oversight Panel towards a draft resolution on CEPA***

- Identified a limited number of strategic priorities for CEPA that will support delivery of the goals of the Strategic Plan, some aligned to particular goals, while some provide support across the Plan.
  - Developed implementation measures (actions) against each of these priorities, focusing on practical actions and tools which have been shown to be effective, achievable and aligned with relevant Strategic Plan goals.
  - Considered ways in which Contracting Parties, their CEPA implementation networks and the Secretariat can engage with stakeholders and partners to work together on different levels to achieve the CEPA strategic priorities and goals of the Convention.
  - Considered ways for the Contracting Parties to create or strengthen networks between Contracting Parties with similar CEPA interests related to topics, challenges, or regions.
  - Prioritised and developed budget estimates for any proposals for new CEPA activities, to be considered in the budget negotiations at COP14 for the next triennium.
  - Analysed the content of the Ramsar Handbook on CEPA to determine what content needs to be revised and if new content should be added.
8. Consistent with Resolution XIII.5, the Oversight Panel is developing a draft resolution for consideration and submission by the Standing Committee at SC59 to seek the authority of the COP for the implementation of the new CEPA approach. The draft resolution is planned to be finalised before the SC59 deadline for draft resolutions.
9. The CEPA Oversight Panel and the Strategic Plan Working Group have been in contact about how the new CEPA approach can be integrated into the draft resolution on the review of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan Working Group requested that the CEPA Oversight Panel create an annex to articulate ways that Parties can enhance their CEPA efforts using the current structure of the Strategic Plan, and the CEPA Oversight Panel has produced this annex.

10. The CEPA Oversight Panel has considered an appropriate role for the Panel in light of the new approach to CEPA, and also considered different governance issues connected to the Panel. This work has been undertaken in consultation with the Effectiveness Working Group. The result is included in a draft resolution for the consideration by the Standing Committee at SC59.
11. The CEPA Oversight Panel has had one representative taking part in the work done by the group working on a new draft resolution on the City Wetlands Accreditation. The result will be included in a draft resolution on City Wetland Accreditation, for consideration by the Standing Committee at SC59.
12. The Chair of the Panel has participated in a few of the meetings held by the COP14 Working Group.
13. The Panel has also provided comments to a draft resolution about education being prepared by the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia and the Republic of Korea.

## **Annex A**

### **Summary of recommendations of the CEPA Oversight Panel to COP13**

**(through document COP13 Doc.10, *Report on implementation of the CEPA Programme 2016-2018 and recommendations on future directions*)**

#### **1. Reduced and more focused set of goals**

Efforts should be focused on a smaller number of high priority activities, against each of the goals of the Strategic Plan. (See recommendation 6 below.)

#### **2. Build an evaluation strategy**

Significant activity has been undertaken against the nine goals of the CEPA Programme. Yet the impact is difficult to assess, and there is a need to build an effective evaluation strategy on which to base further programme refinements.

The reviews of the CEPA Programme should take account of information from Contracting Parties (including from National Focal Points and the National Reports), from the Secretariat, Ramsar Regional Initiatives and other stakeholders on the implementation and effectiveness of CEPA interventions to date.

#### **3. Make CEPA more strategic, integrated and effective**

The Oversight Panel recommends to focus on making CEPA more strategic, integrated and effective in achieving wetland protection and wise use. They suggest to use limited resources on CEPA activities that will contribute most effectively to changing people's behaviour to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan.

#### **4. Integrate the CEPA Programme into the Strategic Plan**

The CEPA Oversight Panel suggests to integrate the CEPA Goals and Targets into the Ramsar Strategic Plan, rather than having a separate CEPA Programme. The Plan would include both stand-alone CEPA initiatives, and CEPA elements integrated into other initiatives.

The Strategic Plan review is an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the CEPA Programme and the work of the Secretariat. The importance of engaging people in order to encourage action needs to be reflected in the Strategic Plan, which should include outreach strategies that engage, enlist and enable people to act for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

#### **5. Reporting to be better aligned with other international Conventions and initiatives**

Including the Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals. This will streamline administration, reporting and reduce the administrative burden.

#### **6. Small number of high priority activities that follow the four goals of the Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan review is an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the CEPA Programme and the work of the Secretariat. Suggested priority actions against each of the goals of the Strategic Plan have been developed in document COP13 Doc.10.

#### **7. Working through networks and partnerships**

Greater use should be made of general and CEPA NFPs to ensure a coordinated and strategic national approach to Ramsar implementation. These networks should be used as a key tool in providing information to and gaining feedback from Contracting Parties. CEPA NFPs need to be aware of their responsibilities and provided with training resources. The positions of general and CEPA NFPs within Contracting Parties are considered important to ensure a coordinated and strategic national approach to Ramsar implementation.

Efforts should be made to build alliances, including both new and existing partnerships. These partnerships should be implemented globally, regionally and by individual Contracting Parties.

There needs to be increasing engagement with other sectors – in particular, there needs to be a focus on issues that matter to people – the benefits of wetlands to human health and well-being, disaster protection, urban and regional planning, tourism and food production.

#### **8. CEPA integrated in all planning and activities of the Convention**

The importance of engaging people in order to encourage action needs to be reflected in the Strategic Plan, which should include outreach strategies that engage, enlist and enable people to act for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. This should involve both specific CEPA initiatives as well as incorporation of CEPA into all initiatives of the Convention (locally, nationally, regionally and internationally).

At the Contracting Party level, the CEPA activities should be integrated into national planning.

## Annex B

### A short compilation of the results from the survey about CEPA of November 2019

#### *The Survey*

In October 2019 the CEPA Oversight Panel conducted a survey of the thoughts and experiences of National Focal Points, CEPA Government Focal Points and CEPA NGO Focal Points on a new approach to CEPA, based on the recommendations of the CEPA Oversight Panel 2015-2018. There were questions seeking free text responses, but also questions with suggested choices, mostly indicating to what level the respondents agreed with different statements or to choose the most important among suggested choices.

In the questions where the respondents chose to what level they agreed with a statement on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is thinking something is “very useful”, “very likely” etc., and 1 is thinking that something is not at all useful or likely, they also had the opportunity to answer “I don’t know”. For such questions it has been possible to calculate weighted averages. In the text below the levels of support of the respondents for suggestions are described according to the weighted average.

An average of 3.0 – 3.4 is considered to be a weak majority, 3.5 – 3.9 a clear majority, 4.0 – 4.4 a strong majority and 4.5 – 5.0 a very strong majority.

The results from the survey have been guiding the CEPA Oversight Panel. This is a short compilation of the results.

#### *The respondents*

The survey received 64 responses. There was an equal representation from the three NFP groups. More than 65% of the respondents had worked with CEPA issues for more than five years. All Ramsar regions were represented in the answers.

When it comes to representation in the actual answers, they vary from 4% from North America to 33% from Africa. When including all that could answer in a region the results vary from 6 % for Latin America and the Caribbean to 22 % for North America.

Region	Regional representation of the total answers in %	Regional response (response/total number of countries per region* 3 roles) in %
Africa	33	13
Asia	22	14
Europe	28	12
Latin America & Caribbean	8	6
North America	3	22
Oceania	6	17

#### **Analysis**

##### **1. Reduce the number of CEPA goals**

A weak majority of the respondents think a reduction of the number of goals for CEPA will result in a more effective CEPA implementation.

##### **2. Build an evaluation strategy**

A clear majority of the respondents think that it would be useful to build a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of CEPA measures.

The negative responses included:

- Evaluation is stealing resources from other activities.
- Reduce all kinds of reporting.
- Difficulties in measuring actual impact on wetlands achieved by CEPA activities.

If we are to build a strategy for evaluation, the respondents suggest that:

- It should be integrated in the National Report.
- Every country needs to have its own indicators.
- It should be better aligned with other reporting.

### **3. Make CEPA more strategic, integrated and effective**

Examples from the respondents on how to work more strategically:

- Integrate CEPA into the Ramsar Strategic Plan.
- Work together with other Conventions/international work, especially CBD and IPBES.
- Use new technology (webinars, social media, exchange online).
- CEPA programmes covering several countries with similar conditions and issues.
- Investigate where there are gaps in the CEPA Programme.
- The CEPA Programme should focus on the future and possible solutions.
- More training at national level.
- Share experiences in CEPA networks, create place for CEPA issues at regional level.
- Provide guidance to CEPA FPs.
- Prioritise messages and target audiences.
- Bottom-up approach, having local CEPA activities.

Better integrate the CEPA work into other activities of the Convention and national activities:

*Convention level:*

- All activities by the Convention including Resolutions should integrate CEPA activities.
- Larger Convention CEPA activities should be adopted at the COP or SC.
- Integrate the CEPA programme into the Strategic Plan.
- Joining CBD and other international fora in common activities.
- Leadership from the Secretariat is needed.

*International co-operation:*

- Stronger networks for sharing ideas and best practices among CEPA focal points, wetland managers and CEPA practitioners - for example regionally-focused webinars.

*Nationally:*

- All wetland activities nationally should integrate CEPA activities.
- Integrate CEPA programme into national plans, education etc.
- National context for identifying useful tools and methods etc. is necessary.
- Interaction/cooperation between CEPA National Focal Points and national Ramsar Committee.
- National co-operation with implementation of other MEAs.
- World Wetlands Day is one of the best tools.

### How to make the work more effective:

#### *Strategies/systems:*

- Use a system to assess how implementation of the CEPA Programme impacted promotion of wetlands conservation and management.
- Focus on policy makers, decision makers and wetland managers - aligns with the instructions given to the STRP.
- Rather than reducing the number of global goals, prioritise them.
- Support from the national government (funds).
- Include CEPA in all relevant national programmes.
- Involving all the relevant stakeholders.
- Each country has different priorities and needs.

#### *Capacity building exchange of experiences:*

- Facilitation and networking both on regional and national level.
- Increase the capacity of national focal points and wetland managers – training.

### **4. Integrate the CEPA programme into the Strategic Plan**

A clear majority of the respondents think that it would be useful to include the CEPA Programme into the Strategic Plan. But there are also many respondents that think a separate CEPA Programme can have a value.

#### Comments on the value of a separate CEPA programme:

- A separate CEPA programme makes CEPA visible and shows its importance.
- CEPA might be underestimated or lost if it does not have its own programme.
- CEPA will not have to compete with other issues.
- Increased focus on CEPA.
- Value of documents with supporting guidance apart from the Strategic Plan.
- CEPA is a specialist area of work.
- Easier to achieve goals.

### **5. Reporting to be better aligned with other international conventions and initiatives**

A clear majority of the respondents think that Ramsar CEPA reporting has to be better aligned with the reporting requirements of other international Conventions. They also think that CEPA reporting in the National Reports has to be streamlined.

### **6. Small number of high-priority activities that follow the four goals of the Strategic Plan**

A very strong majority of the respondents think that it would be useful to align CEPA activities with the goals of the Strategic Plan.

### **7. Working through networks and partnerships**

A very strong majority of the respondents think that building strong networks among the National Focal Points, CEPA Focal Points and wetland education/visitor centres is a useful way to strengthen CEPA work. They also find think that training packages for CEPA Focal Points would be useful.

### **8. CEPA integrated in all planning and activities of the Convention**

A strong majority of the respondents think that including the CEPA National Focal Point in each country's Ramsar Committees would be useful.