



10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

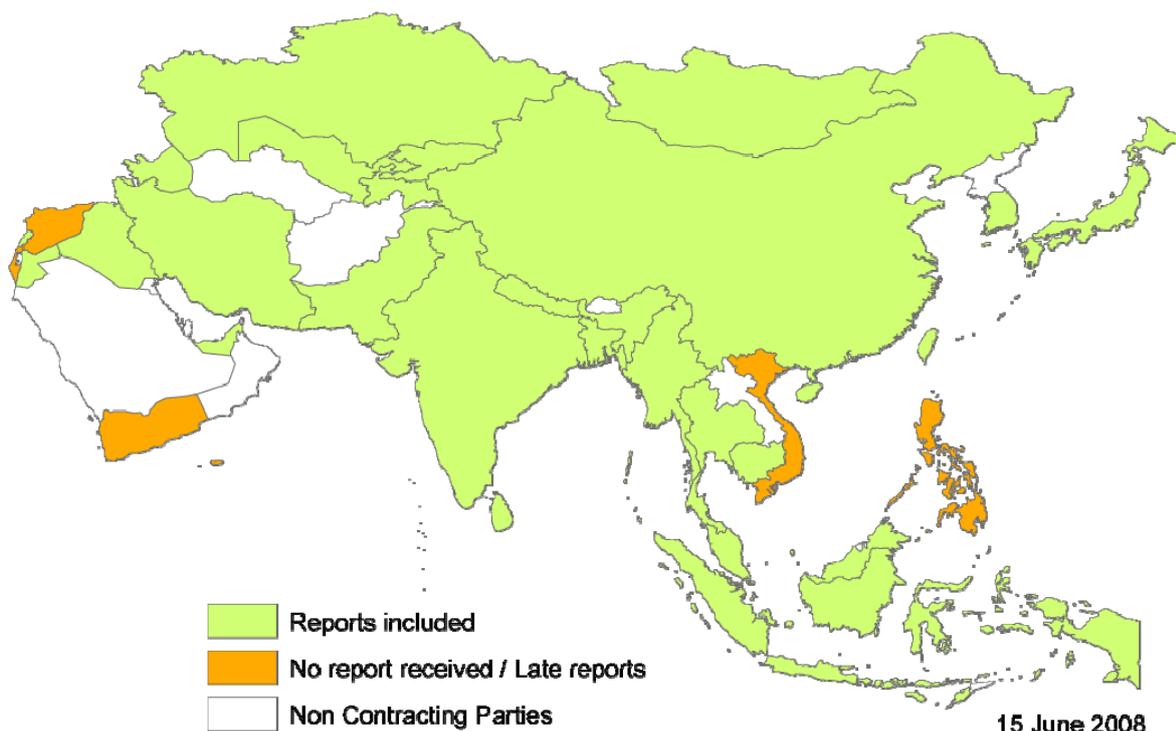
“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

Changwon, Republic of Korea,
28 October-4 November 2008

Ramsar COP10 DOC. 9

**Regional overview of the implementation of the Convention and
its Strategic Plan 2003 – 2008 in Asia**

National Reports upon which this overview is based can be consulted at
http://www.ramsar.org/cop10/cop10_natlrpts_index.htm.



1. **Contracting Parties in Asia (30):** Azerbaijan, Bahrain*, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel*, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines*, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic*, Tajikistan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam**, Yemen***.

* Contracting Parties yet to submit National Reports

** Contracting Party whose National Report was submitted too late to be included in the quantitative analysis

*** Recent accession to the Convention and so not expected to present a COP10 National Report.

2. **Contracting Parties yet to submit their National Reports** (4): Bahrain, Israel, Philippines, Syrian Arab Republic.
3. **Asian countries not yet Contracting Parties as of July 2008** (14): Afghanistan*, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, East Timor, Kuwait, Laos, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Turkmenistan*. (* Preparations are now being made for accession to the Ramsar Convention.)

Main achievements since COP9 and priorities for 2009-20011

4. Asia is a large and very diverse region in terms of geography, wetland types, biodiversity, human culture and socio-economic conditions. The way that different Contracting Parties in the region have approached implementing the Ramsar Convention reflects this diversity, being dependent on many factors, such as the government structure and legislation of the Party involved. The overview below gives examples of how the Parties in the region have been implementing the Convention and is based on analysis of the 24 (75%) National Reports submitted by the deadline of 15 June 2008. Information was also collected from the results of regional meetings, communications with the Parties, and other sources.

New and forthcoming accessions

5. The number of Parties in Asia has increased from 24 in 2002 (at COP8) to 26 in 2005 (COP9) and 30 in 2008 (COP10). Despite this increase in the number of Parties, the percentage of Parties in Asia as a percentage of the world's total has remained constant, from 18% (at COP8 and COP9) to 19% (at COP10).
6. The increase in the number of Parties since COP9 has been due to the welcome accession of four new Parties, namely Iraq (February 2008), Kazakhstan (May 2007), the United Arab Emirates (December 2007), and Yemen (February 2008).
7. At the time of writing, another two countries are very close to accession. The first is Turkmenistan, which ratified the Convention in 2008, and the Secretariat is awaiting confirmation that the signed accession instrument has been sent to UNESCO. The second is Afghanistan, where the local UNEP office has been working with the government on the accession procedure, and accession to the Convention was recently approved by the national parliament.
8. Information has been received from Bhutan and Lao PDR that their accession instruments have been prepared but are awaiting approval from their respective governments before the process can proceed further.
9. Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Maldives, Oman, and Qatar have stated their intention to accede to the Convention, and the Secretariat now needs to continue to communicate with those governments on the accession process. Further discussions also need to be held with the governments of East Timor, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Singapore on their accession to the Convention.

Designation of new Ramsar sites

10. Presently, there are 215 Ramsar sites in Asia, with 17 being added to the Ramsar List since COP9 – China (6), Indonesia (1), Nepal (4), Republic of Korea (5), and Thailand (1). [Some of these designations are in the final stages of processing at the time of writing.]
11. Many of the Parties in Asia have yet to send updated Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) as requested by the Parties in earlier Resolutions. Updates have been received from China (6), Iran (21), Kazakhstan (1), Malaysia (1) and the Philippines (1), but RISs for a further 71 Ramsar sites have yet to be received.
12. Some 12 sites from five Parties in Asia have been listed on the Montreux Record (MR): Azerbaijan (1), India (2), Iran (7), Jordan (1) and the Kyrgyz Republic (1). Positive developments have been reported at the two MR sites in India, one of the sites in Iran, and the one site in the Kyrgyz Republic, but these Parties have not officially requested that the sites be removed from the Record.

National Ramsar / Wetland Committees

13. The percentage of Asian Parties having established National Wetland Committees appears to be decreasing. In 2002 (for COP8), 67% of the Parties reported that they had such committees, and this increased to 73% in 2005 (COP9). However, the percentage has now declined to 54% (COP10). This apparent trend needs to be investigated.
14. If the above declining trend is real, it may be that although some Parties have established or are establishing interministerial committees to oversee the implementation of the Convention (e.g., China, India, Iran, Jordan, and Republic of Korea), other Parties have placed this work into committees that are responsible for more widely based issues, such as biodiversity. For example, Japan has an 'Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee' for implementing the National Biodiversity Strategy under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Ramsar issues are discussed under this Committee.

National policy and legislation on wetlands

15. There has been a welcome increase in the percentage of countries drafting National Wetland Policies (NWP) from 38% in 2002 (reported at COP8) to 47% in 2005 (COP9) and 58% in 2008 (COP10). Another 17% (4) of the Parties are now preparing their National Wetland Policies. However, some Parties (e.g., Viet Nam) may not have a separate NWP but rather national strategies on sustainable development, biodiversity, or the environment, and action on wetland issues is embedded in those broader strategies. This may have benefits in better linking Ramsar goals with other goals for sustainable development, for example in Indonesia, where the government is implementing a 'Wetland Poverty Reduction Programme'.
16. Apart from nationwide policies for wetlands, some Parties have policies for the sustainable management of particular wetland types, such as:
 - Indonesia: 'National Strategy on Mangrove Ecosystem Management', 'National Action Plan on Peat Land', 'National Strategic Action Plan on Wetland Management' and 'Management of Coastal Zones and Small Island'; and
 - Japan: 'Basic Act on Ocean Policy', which includes the conservation of coastal areas.

17. Policies and management plans have also been developed for river basins (China, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea) and lakes (India).

National Wetland Inventory

18. From 2002 (COP8), when 33% of the Parties had drafted National Wetland Inventories, the percentage increased to 40% in 2005 (COP9) and 50% in 2008 (COP10). Although this is an encouraging trend, such inventories may become outdated due to changes in the many conditions at the wetland sites. As a result, the inventories ideally should be updated on a periodic basis, e.g. China, which is now preparing the 2nd edition of its inventory.
19. Apart from general inventories of the wetlands in their territory, certain countries have surveys that target particular wetland habitat types, such as high altitude peatlands (Iran), particular wildlife groups (waterbird monitoring in Uzbekistan), features of cultural and religious significance (Nepal), or the economic value of wetlands (Iran). The results of such surveys can then go toward providing the Parties with information on potential new Ramsar sites (Uzbekistan).
20. A number of Parties are implementing projects for a range of wetland types across their country, which will help them collect valuable information on the condition of their wetlands, e.g. UNDP/GEF-sponsored projects in China, Iran, Republic of Korea, Nepal and Pakistan. Some of these projects are also focused on particular wetland types, e.g., the Marine and Coastal Management Project and Coral Reef Management Project in Indonesia.

Ramsar sites

21. From 2002 (COP8) to 2008 (COP10), the percentage of Parties establishing a strategy and priorities for further designation of Ramsar sites has stayed fairly constant, at between 54% and 67%.
22. Although the increase in the number of designated sites is very welcome, the Convention is not only about designating sites but also about supporting designated sites and maintaining their ecological character. Such supporting activities are actively being conducted by many Parties, including:
 - establishing site based management committees often involving the local community;
 - preparing management plans;
 - monitoring projects, including surveys of wise use and ecology, some of which are targeted to improve site management or reducing threats;
 - providing for law enforcement activities;
 - implementing projects for the sustainable management of sites that can also provide economic benefits for the local community. One example is the UNDP/GEF project in Kazakhstan which aims to improve the economic condition of the community inside the site by providing alternative livelihood programmes, e.g. organic farming, establishing bed and breakfast accommodation for tourists, and guiding eco-tours.

Change in ecological character

23. As noted above, the Convention is very much concerned that Parties should manage their designated sites effectively and conduct regular monitoring in order to check that the ecological character of the site is maintained. Under Article 3.2 of the Convention, Parties have a responsibility to inform the Secretariat whenever the ecological character of a site has changed or is likely to change. However, the percentage of Parties who have been reporting has been decreasing in the past six years. In 2002 (COP8), 38% of the Parties carried out such reporting but this declined to 27% in 2005 (COP9) and is 13% in 2008 (COP10). It is apparent that presently it is normally NGOs or private citizens who notify the Secretariat about changes or likely changes to Ramsar sites, and the Secretariat, in turn, then contacts the Party concerned for more information. The Secretariat needs to investigate, as a priority, the accuracy and reason for the declining trend in Parties reporting, and find ways to encourage greater reporting.

Wetland restoration

24. There appears to have been a significant increase in the percentage of Parties implementing wetland restoration projects, from 19% in 2002 (at COP8) to 80% in 2005 (COP9) and a similar 75% in 2008 (COP10). Parties that reported having started wetland restoration projects since COP9 include China, Japan, Jordan, Korea, and Viet Nam, with some of these projects receiving support from the local community and NGOs (Iran). Indonesia also reported that they were conducting rehabilitation and reconstruction on post-tsunami areas, as well as at mangrove and coral reef sites.

CEPA

25. Over 80% of the Parties reported developing and implementing CEPA programmes, aimed at a wide range of audience from policy makers to the local community. Themes of the CEPA programme were also quite wide. For example, a programme for local people in Kazakhstan included topics on the significance and cultural value of wetlands, business development; sustainable fisheries, agriculture and hunting.
26. Despite having such active CEPA programmes, the percentage of Parties reporting having developed National Action Plans for wetland CEPA is still very low, presently at 21% (COP10), although it has risen from 5% in 2002 (COP8).
27. Having an effective wetland CEPA National Action Plan is essential in identifying the wetland CEPA needs of the country, so that a prioritized list of CEPA programmes can then be developed and implemented over time to the relevant target audiences. This message needs to be better communicated to the Parties so that a greater number of them will implement this aspect of the Convention, as they agreed in Resolution VIII.31.

Capacity building

28. Increasingly Parties are providing training not only for stakeholders (e.g., site managers and decision-makers) in their own countries but also from abroad. There are presently training centers in China, Indonesia, Iran, and Japan, and the Korean government has proposed establishing one following COP10.

Funds provided/received

29. Contracting Parties in the Asia Region that were awarded Ramsar Small Grants Funds (SGF) during the 2005–2008 triennium included China (2007), Jordan (2005), Kyrgyz Republic (2006), Nepal (2006), Tajikistan (2005), and Viet Nam (2006). Two projects were funded under the Evian Initiative at the Beung Kung Lung Ramsar Site in Thailand and at the Jagadishpur Reservoir Ramsar Site in Nepal.
30. From 2005 to 2007, Japan was the only Party to provide voluntary contributions to the SGF and, in 2008, Thailand provided in-kind contributions by supplying facilities and support of various kinds for the successful hosting of the Asian Regional Meeting. Viet Nam has established a Wetland Support Fund

International Cooperation

Ramsar Regional Initiatives

31. *EAAF Flyway Partnership*: This initiative previously came under the work of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy (A-PMWCC). However, at a meeting in Bogor, Indonesia in 2006, the members of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee, which oversees the development and implementation of the A-PMWCC, agreed to their evolution into the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAF). This was in order to better incorporate their work into the sustainable use of the internationally important sites for waterbirds along the Flyway.
32. *Himalayan Initiative*: The Himalayan Initiative aims for the “wise use and conservation of the wetlands and wetland complexes in the Himalayan-Hindu Kush and Pamir-Alay region by promoting regional cooperation and collaboration” and involves the governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. A draft strategy for the Initiative was produced during the Initiative meeting in Kathmandu in 2008, which will be presented to COP10 for approval.
33. *Ramsar Regional Research and Training Center for Central and Western Asia*: This centre is hosted by the government of the I.R. of Iran with the overall goal of enhancing the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the region through training, research, advocacy and public awareness programmes.
34. *Korea-Ramsar Wetland Centre*: The government of the Republic of Korea has proposed the establishment of a ‘Korea-Ramsar Wetland Centre’ to be based in Gyeongnam Province, whose objective would be to enhance cooperation in the East Asia region through information sharing and capacity building for the sustainable management of wetlands. The draft Resolution for the establishment of the Centre will be presented at COP10 for approval.
35. Apart from regional initiatives endorsed by the Convention, the Parties in the Asia region are involved in many other regional initiatives. Some of the ones which were mentioned in the National Reports include:

- UNEP-GEF Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand;
- UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project;
- Central Asian Flyway Initiative;
- Mangroves for the Future: Cooperation on the Mekong River;
- UNDP-GEF Caspian Environment Programme;
- Twinning of sites, especially between Japan and Australia.

36. Further details about these regional initiatives can be found under ‘Strategy 2.6’ below.

Priorities for 2009-2011

New accessions

37. Both Afghanistan and Turkmenistan are in the final stages of accession to the Convention and this work needs to be supported. At the same time, the Convention needs to communicate and keep in close contact with the governments of Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, East Timor, Kuwait, Laos, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore to encourage their accession.

Designation of new Ramsar sites

38. The Secretariat has been informed that there are about 10 new site nominations being progressed by various Parties. These include
- Bangladesh (Char Kukri Mukri, Sonar Char, Nijhum Dwip and possibly Hakaluki Har),
 - Indonesia ((Rawa Aopa in Sulawesi, Rambut island in Java and Sembilang in Sumatra),
 - Kazakhstan (Alakol-Sasykkol lake systems; Ural River Delta; Lakes Systems of Irgi-Turgai lower reach; Naurzum Lake System; Zharsor-Urkash Lake System; Koibagar-Tyuntyugur Lake System; Kulykol Lake),
 - Kyrgyz Republic (Son-Kul),
 - Sri Lanka (1),
 - Uzbekistan (Aydar Arnasay Lake System),
 - Viet Nam (Tram Chim; Ba Be; U Minh Thuong; Con Dao).
39. Cambodia, India, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan (3) and Thailand (1) also said they were in the process of designating (unspecified) sites.
40. However, a number of Parties expressed a range of difficulties in designating new sites, such as:
- greater technical and financial support was required for designating new sites (Myanmar);
 - whilst central governments may be keen to designate sites, there was less support from some of the states and provincial governments who were reluctant to conserve wetlands (India, Indonesia, Malaysia);

- there were land ownership problems and a lack of cooperation, and even opposition, from the local communities at the site to designation (Lebanon and Korea).
41. As there are a range of issues, Parties also provided examples of a range of solutions. These included:
- providing training workshops to increase the capacity of policy makers and raise their awareness about the value of wetlands (UAE),
 - managing designated sites effectively and then using those as models for future sites to emulate,
 - overcoming opposition from local residents by using a variety of techniques, such as
 - developing programmes to improve the livelihood of the local communities living in and around Ramsar sites (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Kazakhstan, Viet Nam);
 - increasing the economic benefits from the designation of sites, such as by the purchase by government of (some of) the private land within a designated site;
 - organizing community-based management committees with the local stakeholders, and holding workshops with them to promote the wise use of the site (Japan).
42. After designation, a number of Parties would invest in the site by preparing management plans (Pakistan, Thailand); developing appropriate legislation (Azerbaijan, China, India, Lebanon) and zoning plans (Jordan); and even expanding the borders of the site (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic). Other Parties, however, considered that after designation, there was little follow-up in terms of financial, technical and research support (Malaysia), and that resources were needed to maintain the ecological character of the designated sites (China). Viet Nam suggested that the Secretariat should give greater attention and support to sites, such as by the Secretariat visiting the site and seeing activities of the focal point, to provide guidance on direct site management, etc. (Jordan). This is something the Secretariat will have to look into whilst remembering the limited resources that it actually has.
43. However, it should be remembered that many important wetlands lie outside Ramsar sites, and these may not even have been given protected area status yet (Indonesia). Kazakhstan reported that they were in the process of identifying and protecting these non-Ramsar listed wetland.

Government structure and communication

44. Many factors play a role in how successfully a particular Party can implement the Convention. One of the most basic is to have stable government structures, but the Kyrgyz Republic and Pakistan reported they had difficulties in this area. As a result, the Secretariat will have to see how best to support them in their work.
45. Another problem with implementation that the Secretariat has observed is that some Parties either do not send the appropriate delegates with wetland experience to the Convention's meetings, or they send different delegates each time. This leads to a lack of continuity in communication between the Convention and that particular Party and slow

progress in arriving at decisions, as the new delegate often is not familiar with the issues discussed. Parties are therefore reminded to send delegates who have the relevant expertise to meetings (Article 7.1), and to assign specific officers to attend particular meetings so that they can build up expertise in that area and thus contribute constructively to the meetings.

46. In most countries, the responsibility for the use and management of water and wetlands falls under a number of different ministries, and it appears to be a common problem in many Parties that there needs to be greater communication and coordination among those ministries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam). One solution that some Parties have come up with to address this is to form strong cross-sectoral wetland committees composed of concerned agencies. Other Parties, however, have formed broader committees under biodiversity, environment or water strategies, and Ramsar wetland issues are discussed within those committees.
47. At the Asia Regional Meeting in 2008, the delegates remarked that there should be smoother coordination and collaboration not only between the Ramsar focal points and other relevant sectors of government, but also between the various national Ramsar focal points (Administrative Authority, STRP focal point, and CEPA government and NGO focal points), as well as between the Ramsar focal points and the national focal points for other multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species, and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change).
48. In response, some countries are developing and strengthening their structures for wetland management and wise use, such as by forming national committees (Indonesia, Sri Lanka), and others are getting the involvement and commitment of a wider range of government departments in wetland issues other than the 'usual' ones (Indonesia).

National wetland legislation and policy

49. A number of Parties considered the need to balance economic and agricultural development with environmental protection, and the use and management of water resources was an important part of the implementation of the Convention.
50. Wetland issues are presently not adequately considered in socio-economic development policies and strategies, and there should be greater integration in future.
51. Whilst some Parties were in the process of preparing some form of national wetland policy (India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Pakistan), other Parties request assistance for developing similar policies (Lebanon)

National Wetland Inventory

52. Asian Parties are at differing stages of progress in preparation of their National Wetland Inventories which include Ramsar sites and non-Ramsar sites among those wetlands (Azerbaijan, India, Thailand). Whilst some countries are at the start of the process (India), others are updating an inventory (Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon) or are producing the second edition of their inventory (China).

Change in ecological character

53. Although a high percentage (59%) of the Parties have been implementing wetland restoration programmes, only 21% (5) had applied the Convention's guidance on wetland restoration (Annex to Resolution VIII.16; Wise Use Handbook 15, 3rd edition) to the design and implementation of those projects (Indicator. 1.5.2).
54. Furthermore, certain Parties reported that they required assistance in developing criteria for evaluating and monitoring the ecological status of wetlands (Indonesia), and on how to establish national wetland monitoring and evaluation systems (China).

CEPA and capacity building

55. Over 80% of the Parties reported that they were conducting a range of national CEPA campaigns, programmes and projects to raise community awareness about the values of wetlands. Some Parties were also conducting programmes to raise awareness about the relationship between wetlands and wise use with other objectives, such as sustainable development.
56. However, a number of the National Reports also mentioned that there was still a low level of awareness and participation amongst many sector of the community concerning Ramsar-related water issues, from the grassroots to the government policy makers. This in turn is hindering the implementation of the Convention in those countries. This seems to indicate that some of the CEPA activities being conducted may not have been able to raise the awareness of the target audience for a variety of reasons, e.g., the approach or theme of the activity may have been inappropriate for that target audience, etc..
57. Part of this problem may stem from the fact that only 29% of the reporting Parties said that they had produced a National Wetland Action Plan for wetland CEPA, which can be important in identifying the target audience and the priority for CEPA activities for those audiences, and then developing appropriate activities for those audiences.
58. Nationally, many Parties appear to be establishing 'wetland education centres' at Ramsar sites. These centres have a great potential for awareness raising, education and training. However, they need clear objectives and plans for their CEPA programmes, as well as a strategy for fundraising in order to support of the operation of the centre over the long term.
59. Many Parties agree that regional centres have an important role to play in promoting greater networking and information exchange between Parties. One such centre in Asia already exists in Iran to support West Asia, and a second is being proposed to be based in Korea to serve East Asia.
60. Regional centres have the potential to be developed as providers for training and capacity building, especially since in many of the National Reports, the Parties said that they lacked capacity in at least one area of implementation of the Convention. The areas where capacity building were needed differed widely, from general awareness of the value of wetlands to more specific topics such as how to implement the Ramsar guidelines; conducting wetland inventories, site management; long-term strategic management planning; development and management of CEPA programmes; transboundary and shared water resource issues; impact of climate change on wetlands; and development of Payment for Ecosystem Services.

Others

61. *Financial support:* A number of the Parties reported that they had insufficient finances to implement the Convention activities in their countries, and requested assistance (Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam).
62. The question of financial assistance was discussed at the Asian Regional Meeting in 2008 and a number of recommendations were made on this topic (Annex 1). These can be summarized as:
 - the Convention should develop a fundraising strategy so as to be able to tap available and potential funding sources in order to support its implementation;
 - the Convention should develop the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanism to secure funding for wetland conservation and wise use;
 - the Secretariat should create and maintain close links with the GEF Secretariat in view of the significant number of GEF-funded wetland conservation initiatives in Asia.
63. *Relationship between the Secretariat and Contracting Parties:* In their National Reports, the Parties expressed the view that the Secretariat should enhance its relationship with the Parties and provide adequate and timely support to them. In response, the Secretariat staff tries at all times to provide what support they can to the Parties, but they are hindered by the limited resources provided to them by the Convention. We hope that the Parties will understand this problem.
64. *Language of communication:* Another comment was that in certain Parties where neither English, French nor Spanish are the main languages spoken, there is a language barrier in implementation capacity. A solution suggested by one of the Parties was to find funds to at least translate the Ramsar material into the local languages, but this comes back to the problem of funding. The Kyrgyz Republic suggested that Russian be adopted as one of the Convention languages but, again, additional funds would be needed for the translation work.

Implementation activities undertaken since COP9

GOAL 1. The wise use of wetlands

Strategy 1.1: National Wetland Inventories and assessment

65. Half (50%) of the Parties in Asia have already prepared National Wetland Inventories (NWIs) and another 17% (4) have started preparing or planning their NWI (*Indicator 1.1.1*). For those NWI that are available, some 42% (10) are maintained and made wholly or partially accessible to interested parties. Another 21% (5) of these NWIs were partly accessible (*Indicator 1.1.2*).
66. However, only 38% (9) of the published NWIs covered all the wetlands in the territory of the Parties. Half of the NWIs had information for some sites only (*Indicator 1.1.3*). This is

probably due to many constraints, such as financial and human resources for conducting the surveys, as well as the difficulty of access to many of the wetlands. However, certain Parties mentioned that they also needed assistance in establishing national wetland monitoring and evaluation systems (China) and developing criteria for evaluating and monitoring the ecological status of wetlands (Indonesia).

67. In future, though, it is hoped that the quality and breadth of information in the NWI can improve, as some Parties are receiving support for conducting projects at their nationally important wetlands, e.g. UNDP/GEF-sponsored wetland projects in China, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, and Republic of Korea.
68. Apart from nationwide surveys of wetland inventories, certain Parties are conducting targeted surveys of particular wetland habitat types, such as high altitude peatlands (Iran) and coastal and coral reef areas (Indonesia), or features of cultural and religious significance in wetlands (Nepal), or particular wildlife groups (e.g., waterbirds), or on the economic value of wetlands (Iran). However, there are under-represented wetlands where surveys need to be conducted, e.g., desert wetlands (Mongolia).
69. The importance of these NWIs is not only that they provide information on potential new wetlands that can be designated as Ramsar sites in a particular territory, but that they also indicate trends in the status of already designated sites. From the data in the NWIs, 42% (10) of the Parties reported that there was now a greater need to address adverse change in the ecological character of their Ramsar sites than in the past triennium, and 29% (7) reported that the need had remained the same. Then for wetlands generally in their country, 7 Parties (29%) reported that there was now a greater risk to the ecological character of those wetlands that were not listed as Ramsar sites, whilst 6 Parties (25%) reported that the need had not changed since the last triennium (*Indicator 1.1.4*). It thus appears that wetlands that have been designated as Ramsar sites are still facing significant threats.
70. One of the emerging threats facing wetlands in Asia is that from climate change, as evidenced by declining water levels, changes in the migratory patterns of waterbirds, and reduction in aquatic biodiversity. However, more research is needed to document and identify options to mitigate these impacts.

Strategy 1.2: National Wetland Policies and legislation

71. In Asia, 14 (58%) Parties have already drafted National Wetland Policies (NWP), whilst another 4 (17%) Parties are in the process of preparing their NWPs (*Indicator 1.2.1*). However, some Parties (e.g., Viet Nam) have their national policy on wetlands embedded in their national strategies on sustainable development, biodiversity, or the environment, rather than having a separate NWP.
72. Apart from drafting a national policy on wetlands, China has reported that its provinces are also in the process of drafting provincial wetland legislation.
73. Certain Parties have also been active in formulating policies on the management of particular wetland types, such as mangroves, peatlands, small islands (Indonesia), river basins (China, Kazakhstan, Korea), lakes (India), and coastal areas (Japan).

74. In drafting or implementing their NWP, Parties reported that they encountered a number of constraints, such as:
- needing assistance in drafting the policy (Lebanon);
 - needing clearer prioritization for wetland issues in the policy;
 - needing greater involvement and commitment of a wider range of government departments in developing and implementing the policy (Indonesia);
 - needing to develop an effective national committee responsible for wetland issues, in implementing the policy (Indonesia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, UAE).
75. And whilst a national policy may have been developed, the states/provinces may place only a low priority on implementing it.
76. The majority of Parties recognized the importance of balancing economic and agricultural development with environment protection and the wise use and management of water resources. Some 55% (13) of the Parties reported that they had either incorporated or partially incorporated targets and actions from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) into their NWP (*Indicator 1.2.2*), and another 76% (18) Parties had incorporated or were planning to incorporate wetlands into their national strategies for sustainable development (*Indicator 1.2.3*). Despite these encouraging figures, however, some Parties still felt that more could be done to incorporate wetland issues into their countries' socio-economic development policies and strategies and to highlight to senior levels of government the impact of certain development activities on wetlands.

Strategy 1.3: Wetland ecosystem services

77. In the final statement at the Asian Regional Meeting in 2008, the delegates expressed their appreciation of the importance of wetland resources to the people of the region, and the need to ensure that the ecological character of the region's Ramsar sites is maintained. However, in their National Reports, only 21% (5) of the Parties said that they had conducted assessments of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by their Ramsar sites. Iran was one of these Parties and has been conducting economic evaluations of their wetlands. Of the other Parties, 58% (14) said that they had partly conducted such assessments or were either preparing or planning such assessments (*Indicator 1.3.1*). This is clearly an area that Parties need to put more resources in future.
78. Asian Parties agree that the Convention should give equal emphasis to the issues of wetland conservation and social and economic development, such as contributing to livelihoods and poverty reduction (Annex 1). Participants at the Asian Wetland Symposium also agreed that there was a need to identify integrated approaches for linking development goals and biodiversity conservation in order to achieve both improved local livelihoods and wetland protection. One approach could be to pursue wetland conservation and wise use actions through the Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategies (Annex 2).
79. However, in their reporting, only 33% (8) of the Parties said that they had implemented such cross-sector wise use programmes, and another 38% (9) said that they had partly or were preparing or planning to implement such programmes (*Indicator 1.3.2*).

80. Azerbaijan, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam reported that they are implementing such programmes for the communities living in and around their Ramsar sites. Kazakhstan wrote that they had a UNDP/GEF project at their sites which included an element on poverty alleviation through alternative livelihood programmes, such as developing B&B accommodation, organic farming, and eco-guiding at their sites.
81. Whilst Parties agreed that the Convention should become more active in livelihood and poverty reduction issues, they considered that the sectors that deal with human health issues did not appreciate the importance of maintaining wetland ecosystem services for human health. As a result, the Convention should be more proactive in engaging with those sectors on the global, regional and national levels (Annex 1).
82. Wetlands also play a significant role in minimising the impacts of climate change. For example, peatlands are able to store large amounts of carbon, but increasing areas are continuing to be lost or degraded across Asia, having wide-ranging impacts on human health and local economies, as well as on efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. As a result, Asian Parties agreed that the Convention needs to give greater attention to raising awareness about the value of peatlands and increase the capacity of Parties to conserve and manage peatlands (Annex 1). However, only 21% (5) of the Parties have taken action to implement the *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands* (Resolution VIII.17), and another 15% (4) said that they have partly or were planning to implement the Guidelines (*Indicator 1.3.3*).
83. Only 29% (7) of the Parties reported having applied the *Guiding Principles on Cultural Values of Wetlands* (Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21), and another 38% (9) reported that they had partly or were planning to implement the principles (*Indicator 1.3.4*).
84. Apart from a few Parties, most other Parties in Asia could be doing much better in terms of taking action to understand the services that their wetlands provide, e.g., in sustaining livelihoods, acting as a buffer against climate change, expressing cultural or religious values, and managing their sites so as to ensure that those services can be maintained for the future.

Strategy 1.4: Ramsar's water-related guidance

85. Some 29% (7) of the Parties reported that they had applied the Convention's water-related guidance (see Resolution IX.1. Annex C) in decision-making related to water resource planning and management, whilst another 54% (13) said that they had partly applied or were planning to apply the guidance (*Indicator 1.4.1*).
86. Only 33% (8) of the Parties reported they had incorporated CEPA expertise and tools into catchment/river basin planning and management, whilst another 29% (7) said they had partly or were planning to do so (*Indicator 1.4.2*).
87. Only 29% (11) of the Parties reported they had applied the Convention's guidance on wetlands and coastal zone management (Annex to Resolution VIII.4) in Integrated Coastal Zone Management, whilst another 28% (11) said they had partly or were planning to do so (*Indicator 1.4.3*).

88. Only 17% (4) of the Parties reported they had assessed the implications of national implementation of the Kyoto Protocol for wetland conservation and wise use, whilst another 13% (3) said they had partly or were planning to do so (*Indicator 1.4.4*). Participants at the Asian Wetland Symposium (Annex 2) also urged more research on the impacts of climate change on wetlands, particularly on practical and effective adaptation and mitigation measures that can be taken at wetland sites. They also stressed that climate change adaptation and/or mitigation strategies should be mainstreamed into wetland planning and decision-making.

Strategy 1.5: Wetland restoration and rehabilitation

89. More than half (59%, 23) of the Parties have been implementing wetland restoration /rehabilitation programmes, and another 13% (5) said they were planning to do so (*Indicator 1.5.1*). Parties that have recently begun such programmes include China, Japan, Jordan, Korea and Viet Nam, with some of these programmes receiving support from the local community (Iran). At the Asia Wetland Symposium (Annex 2), participants considered the restoration of wetlands to be an important issue.
90. One unique initiative that is promoting the restoration and reconstruction of coastal wetlands in Asia is that of 'Mangroves for the Future' (MFF). This is a non-Ramsar initiative that aims to promote investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development, and it focuses mainly on the 2004 tsunami-affected countries (e.g., India, Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Thailand). All but one of the countries (i.e., Maldives) are Parties to the Convention. Whilst mangroves are used as the flagship of the Initiative and rehabilitation of suitable areas of this habitat is carried out, similar work on coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, sandy beaches, sea grasses and other wetlands is also included.

Strategy 1.6: Invasive alien species in wetland systems

91. Fewer than half (46%, 11) of the Parties had developed and implemented national policies, strategies and management responses to threats from invasive species in wetlands, and another 25% (6) said that they were either partly doing so or were planning to.

GOAL 2. Wetlands of International Importance

Strategy 2.1: Strategic Framework for Ramsar site designation

92. The *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* was adopted at COP7 (Resolution VII.11), updated during COP9 (Resolution IX.1) and incorporated in Handbook 14 (3rd edition). Some 54% (13) of the Parties reported that they had applied the Strategic Framework to prepare a national plan with priorities for the further designation of Ramsar sites (*Indicator 2.1.1*). Another 29% (7) Parties said that they had partially used, or were planning to use, the Framework for further designation. This indicates that Asian Parties have yet to fully apply the Framework, and they are therefore encouraged to implement the Strategic Framework for further designation of Wetlands of International Importance.
93. Since COP9, a total of 21 sites have been added to the Ramsar list (China-6, Indonesia-1, Iraq 1, Nepal-4, Republic of Korea-5, Thailand -2, UAE -1 and Yemen -1) covering a total

area 807 808 hectares (Annex 4). Another 12 sites are in pending stage for the process of designation by six Parties (Annex 5). These figures are less than compared to the 45 sites which were designated during the period between COP8 to COP9.

94. Whilst Parties are highly encouraged to designate more sites using the Strategic Framework for Ramsar Site designation, Parties also highlighted in their National Reports the constraints they faced when designating new sites. These included:
- Limited capacity to identify and designate Ramsar sites. They requested a regional approach to build capacity, accompanied by the provision of additional tools and funding.
 - Land ownership problems and a lack of cooperation and even opposition from the local community (Lebanon, Republic of Korea). Some Parties have resolved this in a number of ways, such as through greater involvement of the local community in the decision-making and management of the site, through CEPA activities about the value of wetlands and the site in particular; and through programmes to bring greater socio-economic benefits to the local community before and after listing.
 - Whilst the national government may be keen to have more sites designated, the state or provincial governments may be less enthusiastic (Malaysia). Again, some Parties have resolved this problem by using case studies of designated sites elsewhere that are well managed and are bringing benefits to the local government (e.g., greater site recognition, tourism revenue) and to the local community (e.g., socio-economic benefits).
95. Asian Parties also mentioned that whilst there is a need to designate more sites, it is also important to maintain the ecological character of designated sites (China). However, some Parties felt they had insufficient capacity to manage their sites, and they requested financial, technical and research support for this (Malaysia). If managed well, though, the sites can be used as models for others to emulate.
96. Apart from focusing on designated sites, there was a reminder from Parties that the impact of land use changes around the designated site should also be considered, as well as the value of the wetlands that lay outside protected areas (Indonesia), and that these wetlands, if important, also need protection (Kazakhstan).
97. At the Asian Regional Meeting in Bangkok in 2008, the Asian Parties highlighted the need to further promote membership to the Convention so as to increase the number of sites designated to the Ramsar List to better reflect the diversity of wetland types in the region.

Strategy 2.2: Maintaining and updating the Ramsar Site Information Service

98. Only six Parties (*Indicator 2.2; Annex 3*) had submitted updated Ramsar Information Sheets and /or maps to the Secretariat and four Parties (*Indicator 2.2; Annex 3*) are in the process of updating their Ramsar data. The list with sites that need update is provided in Annex 6. In June 2006, the Secretariat sent letters reminding the Parties about the need for RIS updates and received those six RISs, and others sites are said to be in progress.

Strategy 2.3: Maintaining the ecological character of Ramsar sites

99. 38% (9) of the Parties reported that they have defined and applied measures to maintain the ecological character of all of their Ramsar Sites, whilst another 38% (9) said that they have applied measures partially to at least some Ramsar Sites (*Indicator 2.3.1*).
100. Ramsar Handbook 16 (3rd Edition), *Managing wetlands: Frameworks for managing Wetlands of International Importance and other wetland sites*, provides guidelines on the establishment and implementation of management plans for Ramsar sites or other wetlands to promote the conservation and wise use of wetland. 29% (7) of the Parties reported the development of management plans or strategies at all of their Ramsar sites, and 33% (8) said that they were implementing management plans or strategies for some of their sites. 17% (4) Parties are planning to develop strategies whereas 21% (5) did not have management plans for any of their sites. (*Indicator 2.3.2*; Annex 3). These figures show that the Asia region needs to develop management plans or strategies as part of an integrated management planning process for the sites.
101. 29% (7) of the Parties reported having established cross-sectoral site management committees at their Ramsar sites. In addition, some 25% (6) of the Parties have such committees at some of their sites or are planning such committees at their sites (*Indicator 2.3.3*). In the case of Japan, they have established site-based 'Nature Restoration Committees' at a number of their sites involving the local sector.
102. Other activities at sites include: the preparation of management plans; conducting surveys of wise use; baseline ecological monitoring; law enforcement against illegal activities; and resolving negative impacts.

Strategy 2.4: Monitoring the condition of Ramsar sites

103. At the Asia Regional Meeting in 2008, the participants recommended that measures need to be developed to monitor the status of Ramsar sites at the regional and global levels, in order to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures at those sites (Annex 1). If change or likely change were to occur at sites, then the Convention has guidelines and mechanisms available for the Parties to inform the Secretariat so that appropriate action can be taken to reverse those changes, or to prevent them from occurring. These measures are discussed in Ramsar Handbook 15 (3rd edition 2007) based on several Resolutions and their Annexes as well as additional relevant information related to these issues
104. Although Article 3.2 of the Convention commits the Ramsar Administrative Authority to make arrangements to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of sites have changed or are likely to change and to pass the information to the Secretariat, only the authorities from Iraq and Lebanon reported to the Secretariat about such changes. 42% (10) of the Parties reported that they have arrangements in place for the AA to be informed about changes or likely changes in the ecological character of their sites, but 75% (18) of the Parties said that they did not report all such cases to the Secretariat (*Indicator 2.4.2 Annex 3*). Seven cases were reported to the Secretariat by third parties, who were concerned individuals, journalists, Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs), national NGO or UN agencies. The Secretariat sent letters to the concerned Ramsar AAs to notify them and seek further information. The table below lists the sites where information has been received about change or likely change.

Ramsar sites where ecological change is occurring or likely to occur (Article 3.2) since COP9

Contracting Party	Ramsar Site	Montreux Record	Ramsar Advisory Mission
Azerbaijan	Kirov Bays	1990	
China	1146 Dalai Lake National Nature Reserve, Inner Mongolia		
India	230 Keoladeo National Park	1990	
India	463 Loktak Lake	1993	
	1209 Kolleru Lake		
India	1209 East Calcutta Wetlands		
Iran	49 Alagol, Ulmagol & Ajigol Lakes	1993	
Iran	40 Anzali Mordab (Talab) complex	1993	
Iran	44 Hamun-e-Puzak, south end	1990	
Iran	42 Hamun-e-Saberi & Hamun-e-Helmand	1990	
Iran	39 Neyriz Lakes & Kamjan Marshes	1990	
Iran	41 Shadegan Marshes & mudflats of Khor-al Amaya & Khor Musa	1993	
Iran	45 Shurgol, Yadegarlu & Dorgeh Sangi Lakes	1990	
*Iraq	1718 Hawizeh marsh		
Jordan	135 Azraq Oasis	1990	1990
*Lebanon	1079 Palm Islands Nature Reserve		
Kazakhstan	Lakes of the lower Turgay & Irgiz	1993	
Kyrgyz Republic	109 Isyk-Kul State Reserve with the Lake Isyk-Kul	1990	
Sri Lanka	487 Bundala National Park		
United Arab Emirates	1715 Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary		

(* information received from AA)

105. There are presently 13 sites from 6 Parties in Asia on the Montreux Record (Azerbaijan 1, India 2, Iran 7, Jordan 1, Kazakhstan 1 and Kyrgyz Republic 1). No new sites have been included on this list from Asia since COP9, and none have been removed. In the National Reports, only two of these six Parties said that they had taken action to address the issues for which their sites were listed on the Montreux Record, but the Secretariat has not been officially informed about the actions that have been taken. Parties are encouraged to use the Montreux tool widely in highlighting sites that are facing change in ecological character and are therefore in urgent need of conservation attention.

Strategy 2.5: Management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins

106. At the Asian Regional Meeting in 2008, the Parties highlighted the increasing need to enhance and promote international and multilateral cooperation amongst Contracting Parties on issues related to the management of shared water resources and shared species (Article 5).

107. Although 46% (11) of the Parties have identified all their transboundary /shared wetlands and another 8% (2) are planning to do so in future (*Indicator 2.5.1*), only 17% (4) Parties have effective cooperative management in place for the shared wetland system and another 13% (3) are planning to develop that in future (*Indicator 2.5.2*). The low rate of implementation of this indicator is of concern as many of the rivers in Asia are shared between neighboring countries such that over-use or mis-use of the river by the country upstream will likely have serious consequences to the country or countries further downstream. In some cases, this has led to political tensions between the countries.
108. Despite the potential problems, though, there are examples of where countries are cooperating to effectively manage their shared water basins, such as that for the basin of the Mekong River. Kazakhstan also reported that they and China have begun cooperation on the use of the water from the Irtysh and Iie Rivers.

Strategy 2.6: Supporting existing and promoting new regional initiatives in Asia

109. There has been substantial effort and interest from the Parties in becoming involved in the development of one of the regional initiative under the framework of the Convention, with 63% (15) reporting that they have done so (*Indicator 2.6.1*). These Ramsar Regional Initiatives include:
110. *EAAF Flyway Partnership*: This initiative previously came under the work of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy (A-PMWCC). However, at a meeting in Bogor, Indonesia, in 2006, the members of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee, which oversees the development and implementation of the A-PMWCC, agreed to their evolution into the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership. This was intended to better incorporate their work into the sustainable use of the internationally important sites for waterbirds along the Flyway.
111. Nine of the 22 countries in the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) for migratory waterbirds have joined the Flyway Partnership which was launched in 2006. Some of the government partners are Parties from the Asia region (i.e., Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea), but there are also Parties from adjacent regions (e.g., Australia, Russia and USA) and some that are not yet a Ramsar Party (e.g., Singapore). One objective of the Partnership is to develop a network of sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds in the EAAF and, so far, 63 such sites have been listed in 10 of the 22 flyway countries. Of these, 34 (54%) are also Ramsar sites. The Partnership has since held meetings in Beijing, China (November 2007) and in Changwon City, Korea (November 2008).
112. *Himalayan Initiative*: The Himalayan Initiative was officially recognized during COP9 in 2005 and aims for the “Wise use and conservation of the wetlands and wetland complexes in the Himalayan-Hindu Kush and Pamir-Alay region by promoting regional cooperation and collaboration.” Since COP9, three meetings and workshops (Delhi 2006, Changwon 2007, and Kathmandu 2008) have taken place. A draft strategy for the Initiative was produced during the Initiative meeting in Kathmandu in 2008, which will be presented to COP10 for approval.

113. *Ramsar Regional Centre for training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia in Iran (RRC-CWA)*: The Ramsar Regional Centre, Iran, was established in February 2005 with the overall goal of enhancing the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the region through training, research, advocacy and public awareness programmes. A strategy for the centre was approved in February 2007 and the first collaborative management board meeting took place in May 2007, where the board members finalized the budget and work plan and appointed the executive director of the centre.
114. *Medwet Initiative*: Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria have been participating in Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative.
115. *Korea-Ramsar Wetland Centre*: The government of the Republic of Korea has proposed the establishment of a 'Korea-Ramsar Wetland Centre' to be based in Gyeongnam Province, the objective of which would be to enhance cooperation in the East Asia region through information sharing and capacity building for the sustainable management of wetlands. The draft Resolution for the establishment of the Centre will be presented at COP10 for approval.

Other regional projects

116. Apart from regional initiatives endorsed by the Convention, the Parties in the Asia region are involved in many other regional initiatives. Some of those that were mentioned in the National Reports include:
117. *UNEP-GEF Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*: This project involves seven Ramsar Parties (i.e., Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) and more than 400 institutions. The project aimed to address challenges faced by habitat loss and degradation, over-exploitation of fisheries, land-based pollution, and regional coordination. Common actions were undertaken at demonstration sites, from which lessons were drawn for application in other sites across the region.
118. *UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project*: The goal of this project is to "Secure the ecological integrity of the network of critical wetlands needed for the survival of the Siberian Crane, migratory waterbirds and other globally significant wetland biodiversity in Asia" in four countries, namely China, Iran, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation. This project supports the activities of the Strategic Plan for the Ramsar Convention through technical and financial assistance to sites.
119. *Central Asian Flyway Initiative*: The Central Asian Flyway Initiative for migratory waterbirds was launched in 2001 and covers some 30 countries, some of which are Parties from the Asian region (e.g., Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, UAE, Uzbekistan and Yemen). The objective of the Initiative includes developing a CAF Action Plan, building capacity in the region, establishing a network of specialists, promoting exchange of information/expertise, and supporting surveys in Central Asia and the Caucasus.
120. *Mangroves for the Future*: This initiative was established after the 2004 tsunami to promote investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development, and it focuses

mainly on the countries worst-affected by the tsunami. These include India, Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

121. *Cooperation on the Mekong River:* A number of countries in the Southeast Asia region (Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam) have been cooperating through various initiatives towards the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin. These initiatives include the Mekong Programme of the Mekong River Commission, the WWF Living Mekong Programme, and the UNDP/GEF/IUCN Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme.
122. *UNDP-GEF Caspian Environment Programme:* This is a regional umbrella programme developed to halt the deterioration of the Caspian Sea environment and to promote sustainable development in the area. The programme was developed for and by the five Caspian Littoral States, who are also Parties to the Convention, i.e., Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan.

GOAL 3. International cooperation

1.

Strategy 3.1: Collaboration with other institutions

123. Many of the Parties in Asia are also involved with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in addition to the Ramsar Convention. These include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). As there are overlaps (and hopefully synergies) in the work of these MEAs, there is an obvious benefit for those concerned in cooperation on an international and national level.
124. The majority of the Parties in Asia are members of a number of these MEAs, and the percentage of them reporting that they have mechanisms in place for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements has remained fairly constant at between 50 – 53% from COP8 (2002) to COP10 (2008).
125. At COP10, 50% (12) of the Parties reported that they had mechanisms in place, fully or partly, at the national level for cooperation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other MEAs (*Indicator 3.1.1*), and an equal number of Parties also said that the national focal points of these MEAs were invited to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee (*Indicator 3.1.2*). Despite this, however, a number of Parties suggested that the cooperation with these MEAs needed further strengthening and closer coordination.

Strategy 3.2: Sharing of expertise and information

126. Over the years, the percentage of the Parties that have established networks at the national and international level for knowledge sharing and training has increased from 13%-14% between 2002 (COP8) and 2005 (COP9) to 33% in 2008 (COP10). At COP10, another 24% (6) of the Parties said that they had either partly established such networks or were planning them (*Indicator 3.2.1*). This percentage is still rather low and the need for more effort in this area was also highlighted by participants at the Asian Wetland Symposium

(Annex 2), who recommended the development of transboundary wetland agreements, “twinning”, and flyway networking arrangements as a means to enhance cooperation on shared wetland systems and species and to promote peace.

127. The low level of networking between Parties on an international level was remarked in the National Report of a number of Parties. This fact was repeated in the recommendations from the Asian Regional Meeting in 2008 where participants also said that there was a need for greater networking for information exchange in the area of actions that would mitigate the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). They recommended to the Secretariat that they should work to share information more effectively, engage proactively with the health sector, and develop efficient tools and mechanisms to monitor, detect and respond to outbreaks (Annex 1). However, a number of such communication mechanisms for HPAI have already been established, e.g., AIWEb (“The Avian Influenza, Wildlife and the Environment Web”, <http://www.aiweb.info/>), and so there may not be such a need for the Secretariat, with its limited staffing, to duplicate this communication work.

Twinning of Ramsar sites

128. In other areas of international networking, though, the twinning of wetland sites between Parties appears to have been successful in promoting knowledge sharing. Such examples of twinning of sites that were reported include:

- Kushiro-shitsugen, Akkeshi-ko, Bekambeushi-shitsugen and Kiritappu-shitsugen (Japan) with Hunter Estuary Wetlands (Australia),
- Narashino City (Yatsu-higata, Japan) and Brisbane City (Boondall wetlands, Australia),
- Nagoya City (Fujimae-higata, Japan) and Geelong City, Australia (>100 wetlands, Australia).

129. On a national level, however, Parties appear to have been more active in sharing information. This can be seen by the fact that 71% (17) of the Parties reported that information on the country’s wetlands and Ramsar sites have been made publicly available, e.g., through publications and Web sites (*Indicator 3.2.2*). In future, it would be beneficial to many Parties if such enthusiasm can be extended regionally as well by closer networking between Parties.

GOAL 4. Implementation capacity

Strategy 4.1 Local communities, indigenous people, and cultural values

130. Asian Parties paid considerable attention to the local people and their traditional practices at their sites. More than 70% mentioned that they had partially or completely documented how the local community applies tradition knowledge and practices in managing their wetlands (*Indicator 4.1.2*). This included Nepal, who reported that they had conducted surveys of the cultural and religious significance of their sites.
131. With this information on the cultural value of the sites, 63% (15) of the Parties then reported that they used the information in the management planning of their Ramsar sites and other wetlands (*Indicator 4.1.5*). Participants at the Asian Wetland Symposium (Annex

- 2) supported the idea that it is important to document and disseminate information about traditional cultural practices and indigenous knowledge which contribute positively to the conservation and wise use of wetland resources. They also suggested that such information should be incorporated into the management of the wetlands, where possible.
132. Some 79% (19) of the Parties (e.g., Japan, Lebanon, Thailand, Viet Nam) reported that they either always or sometimes involved local stakeholder in the selection of new Ramsar sites and in the management of the site (*Indicator 4.1.3*). This theme of community involvement was repeated by the participants at the Asian Wetland Symposium (Annex 2), who said that existing policy and legal frameworks should be strengthened to enable the meaningful and effective participation of all stakeholders in decision-making related to the conservation and wise use of wetlands. In particular, they considered that priority should be paid to enhancing the involvement of marginalized groups such as women, and vulnerable groups such as the poorest of the poor.
133. One example of community involvement is in Japan, where workshops were organized to strengthen cooperation with local stakeholders in promoting wise use at the site. Site based 'Nature Restoration Committees' have also been established at a number of Ramsar sites involving the local community (Japan). Such community-based sustainable management systems have also been established at the Tangaur Haor Ramsar site in Bangladesh.
134. To promote greater awareness of the cultural aspect of wetlands, 57% (18) of the Parties reported that they had either developed or partially developed educational and training activities on this topic (*Indicator 4.1.4*). In Kazakhstan, education for local people was also carried out at sites on the significance and cultural value of wetlands, business development techniques, and sustainable fisheries, agriculture and hunting methods.

Strategy 4.2: Private sector involvement

135. In many countries, the activities of the private sector, e.g. farmers, industrialists, property developers, etc., is key for ensuring the wise use of wetlands. In China, there are examples of where major property developers have been willing to set aside large proportions (30-95%) of their development site for long-term wetland conservation and to build only on the remaining area. Similarly, there are many examples of major Asian companies that have donated funds to support wetland conservation in many countries. It is therefore important to work with the private sector, to gain their support for wetland conservation, and for them to change their activities so that they are in balance with the wetland wise use principle.
136. In the National Reports received, some 46% (11) of the Parties reported that the private sector in their country was being encouraged to apply the wise use principle in activities and investments concerning wetlands. Another 21% (5) of the Parties said that the private sector was 'partly' encouraged to do so (*Indicator 4.2.1*). Such a relatively high percentage is welcomed and further cooperation with the private sector needs to be encouraged.
137. Although only 13% (3) of the Parties reported that private-sector "Friends of Wetlands" fora or similar mechanisms have been established in their countries (*Indicator 4.2.2*), we should not be disappointed with such a low percentage. This is because there are many other means by which governments and NGOs can cooperate with the private sector to achieve better conservation of wetlands.

Strategy 4.3: Measures to promote wetland wise use

138. Asian Parties generally supported implementation of the principles of wise use of resources at Ramsar sites (**Annex 1**), and 46% (11) of the Parties reported that they had implemented incentive measures at sites to encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands (*Indicator 4.3.1*). However, 50% of the Parties had not taken any actions to remove perverse incentive measures that would discourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands (*Indicator 4.3.2*).
139. Asian Parties agreed that agricultural practices in wetland areas should strive to balance the need to increase production with the need to maintain the ecosystem services provided by wetlands (**Annex 1**). This can also be seen by the fact that it is two Asian Parties (Japan and Republic of Korea) who are promoting the draft Resolution on rice fields at COP10 (DR31).
140. Participants at the Asian Wetland Symposium (**Annex 2**) also agreed on the need to develop and implement best practices for agriculture (including aquaculture) in wetlands, through the application of environment-friendly farming practices such as Integrated Pest Management, organic farming, waste treatment systems, and efficient water management.

Strategy 4.4: Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Programme (CEPA)

141. Parties have been very active in implementing wetland CEPA, as evidenced by the fact that 80% (19) of the Administrative Authorities reported that they were communicating or partially communicating with other ministries, departments and agencies on wetland issues (*Indicator 4.4.3*). Similarly, a high percentage (88%) of Parties reported that they have fully or partially been carrying out programmes to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands (*Indicator 4.4.4*), especially World Wetland Day, in which 92% (22) of the Parties had organised activities (*Indicator 4.4.5*). Furthermore, 83% (20) of the Parties reported that they had education centres at all or some of their sites (*Indicator 4.4.6*).
142. However, many of these activities do not seem to have been conducted under an overall wetland CEPA strategy for the country as recommended under Resolution VIII.31, which would help identify and prioritize the wetland CEPA works that need to be conducted. This lack of a strategy can be seen from the fact that only 29% (7) of the Parties reported that they had established a National Action Plan for wetland CEPA (*Indicator 4.4.2*), and only 44% (17) of the Parties reported that they had either fully or partially established a mechanism (e.g. National Wetland Committee) for planning and implementing wetland CEPA with the involvement of both the government and NGO CEPA focal points (*Indicator 4.4.1*).

Strategy 4.5: International support for the conservation and wise use of wetlands

143. As few Asian Parties can be said to be economically developed, it is not surprising that few have development assistance agencies. As a result, only 2 (4%) of the Parties (Japan and Korea) replied that they had provided financial support for wetland conservation projects in other countries (*Indicator 4.5.1*).

144. As expected, many Parties reported that they require financial development assistance for their wetland projects, but only 42% (10) of the Parties reported that they actually had received such support (*Indicator 4.5.2*).

Strategy 4.6: Financial contributions for the conservation and wise use of wetlands

145. Some 63% (15) of the Parties said that they had paid their Ramsar contributions in full and in a timely manner (*Indicator 4.6.1a*). Although this reply represents more than half of the reporting Parties, it should have been even higher since Parties are obliged to pay their annual contributions on time and in full to maintain the full functioning of the Secretariat. None of the Parties gave suggestions about what plans could be put in place to ensure prompt payment in future (*Indicator. 4.6.1a*).
146. As many of the countries in Asia are on the DAC list, it is not surprising that a large percentage (83%) said that they had not provided any additional voluntary financial contributions to the Convention, such as for the Small Grants Fund (*Indicator 4.6.2a*). However, some of these Parties have rapidly developing economies, and so it is hoped that soon they will be able to make voluntary contributions to the Convention for its work.

Strategy 4.7: Using National Reports to monitor implementation of the Convention

147. Some 55% of the Parties said that they had used previous copies of their National Report in implementing the Convention (*Indicator 4.7.1*) and although this is more than 50%, the percentage should be even higher. This is because the Report should provide a status summary of how far each Party has gone in implementing the Convention, describe the successes and challenges it faced during the process, and provide recommendations on how the Party could improve its implementation in the next triennium. This is especially important in government ministries where the Administrative Authority and/or Daily Focal Point are rotated on a fairly frequent basis, and so the National Report can act as a record of what has been done and what steps need to be taken next. Parties are therefore recommended to make greater use of their National Reports.

Strategy 4.8: National Wetland Committees

148. The effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention is dependent on many factors, but one of the most basic ones noted by delegates to the Asia Regional Meeting in 2008 is the smooth coordination and collaboration within the various national Ramsar focal points (i.e., Administrative Authority, STRP focal point, and CEPA government and NGO focal points), as well as that between Ramsar focal points and other relevant sectors (e.g., agriculture, water resources, health, tourism, urban development, and science and technology) and national focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species, and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) (**Annex 1**).
149. In order to set up this coordination, there must first be an understanding of the role that different national institutions play in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and this can be done through a review of the situation. However, only 13% (3) of the Parties reported that they have completed a review of the national institutions responsible for the

conservation and wise use of wetlands in their territory, and another 34% of the (8) Parties said that this work had either been partially done or was in progress (*Indicator 4.8.1*).

150. Once the stakeholders have been identified, it is then often useful to establish some form of cross-sectoral national wetland committee to discuss issues and help promote understanding and cooperation. Fewer than half (46%) of the Parties had established such committees, and another 16% (4) Parties said that such a committee was 'partially' in place or was being planned (*Indicator 4.8.2*).
151. However, Parties also suggested that implementation of the Convention could be better linked with implementation of other water strategies/strategies if incorporated into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (**Annex 1**). In fact, some Parties, instead of establishing separate committees to oversee the implementation of the Convention, have placed this responsibility into committees which are responsible for wider issues, such as biodiversity. For example, Japan has an 'Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee' for implementing the National Biodiversity Strategy under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Ramsar issues are discussed under this Committee.

Strategy 4.9: Working with International Organization Partners (IOPs)

152. The Convention is fortunate to be able to have five International Organizational Partners (IOPs) assist them in its implementation. In many cases, these IOPs can provide experts with the technical skills, or assist in finding financial support, for a wide range of wetland-related activities in the territory of Parties that may otherwise be difficult to find.
153. So far, only 46% (11) of the Parties reported they have received assistance from the Convention's IOPs in their implementation of the Convention, and a smaller, 33% (8) of Parties said that they had given assistance to the IOPs. The relationship seems to be one-sided at the moment whereas it should be mutually beneficial to both sides. It is hoped that in future, Parties can strengthen their cooperation with the IOPs and so further the aims of the Convention in their countries.

Strategy 4.10: Wetland training needs

154. Many of the Parties reported that they had insufficient capacity to implement the Convention and required training on a wide range of issues, from general knowledge of wetlands, to more specialized topics such as how to conduct wetland inventories; long-term strategic management planning; site management; upstream impacts on downstream sites; transboundary and shared water resources; best practices; development of Payment for Ecosystem Services; CEPA programmes; and impact of climate change on wetlands, and they requested examples of best practices. Such training need not just be for practitioners on the ground, but also for officials and politicians (Indonesia).
155. Although 58% (14) of the Party reported that their site managers had been provided with in-country training, only 29% (7) said that they had made an assessment of the national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention. This would seem to indicate that some Parties were providing training more on an ad hoc basis, rather than following a strategy based on the needs of the practitioners. This situation needs to be improved.

156. However, they also felt a need to establish strong 'regional centres' to provide training. Presently in Asia, there is a 'Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in Central and West Asia' based in Iran, and a second is being proposed by the Republic of Korea to cover East Asia. Initially, such centres will likely need financial and technical support to help them become established, but after some time they should be able to function more or less in an independent manner. In the long term, such centres can play an important role in promoting regional cooperation and information exchange and in finding solutions for common issues.

Goal 5 : Universal membership towards the Convention

Strategy 5.1: Membership

New Contracting Parties:

157. **Kazakhstan:** Kazakhstan deposited its instrument of accession with the Director-General of UNESCO on 2nd January 2007, and the Convention came into force on 2nd May 2007. The accession was assisted through a Ramsar Small Grants Fund project approved by the Standing Committee in 2005 and implemented by BirdLife International, mainly through the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK) and the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan. In addition, the UNDP Kazakhstan wetland project provided significant support during the ratification process.
158. **United Arab Emirates:** On 29th August 2007, the United Arab Emirates deposited the accession instrument with the Director General of UNESCO, and the Convention on Wetlands came into force on 29th December 2007.
159. **Iraq:** Iraq deposited its accession instrument with the Director General of UNESCO on 17th October 2007, and the Convention came into force on 17th February 2008. Many national and international government agencies and non-governmental organizations provided assistance during the ratification process, but the assistance from the Ministry of Water Resources, the government of Canada, and the United Nations Environment Programme-Post Conflict Branch deserve special mention.
160. **Republic of Yemen:** The Republic of Yemen deposited its accession instrument with the Director General of UNESCO on 8th October 2007, and the Convention on Wetlands came into force on 8th February 2008.

Pre-accession countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Lao PDR and Turkmenistan

161. Asia has 13 Countries that have not yet ratified the Convention, but Afghanistan, Bhutan, Lao PDR, and Turkmenistan are making progress towards accession.
162. According to information received from the UNEP-Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch, the accession instrument has been approved by **Afghanistan's** parliament and an order has been issued by the President to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ratify the Convention. The UNEP-Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch has been assisting the government of Afghanistan in accession process.

163. All the necessary paperwork for the accession of **Bhutan** to the Convention has been prepared and final approval is now being awaited from the government.
164. In **Lao PDR**, the accession process is making progress with the assistance of IUCN Laos.
165. **Turkmenistan** has ratified the Convention and further process is on going.
166. In addition, discussions have been held with the governments of Brunei, Maldives and Qatar concerning accession but more effort needs to be made to engage the governments of East Timor, Kuwait, North Korea, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore.

Annex 1

Key Messages and Recommendations from the Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting for COP10 14 – 18 January 2008, Bangkok, Thailand

The Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting for COP10 was attended by a total of 160 participants:

- 65 representing 20 member countries in the Asia region;
- 1 representing the Russian Federation, which has formal observer status in the Asia region;
- 2 from non-member countries (Lao PDR and Yemen), attending as observers; and
- 92 representing Ramsar's International Organization Partners (BirdLife International, IUCN, Wetlands International and WWF), several international organizations, and regional and national nongovernmental organizations, attending as observers plus a number of invited experts.

The Parties represented were Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, P.R. China, India, Indonesia, Iraq, I.R. Iran, Japan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam. Apologies were received from Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Philippines, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The meeting discussed issues ranging from challenges in implementing the Ramsar Convention at the regional and national levels to scientific and technical issues of concern to the countries of the region, and explored opportunities to advance regional cooperation through existing and proposed mechanisms under the Convention.

The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand.

Key messages:

Challenges in implementing the Ramsar Convention at the regional and national levels

1. The implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Asia region since COP9 has seen some progress, e.g. with the welcome accession to the Convention of Iraq, Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates, the pending accession of Yemen, and the designation of 9 new Ramsar sites, with several more planned before COP10.
2. However challenges remain with regards to the wise use of wetlands and the implementation of the Convention, particularly in terms of the need to:
 - a) increase capacity at the national and local levels to implement the wise use of wetlands;
 - b) improve coordination and collaboration within the various national Ramsar focal points (Administrative Authority, STRP focal point, and CEPA government and NGO focal points); and between Ramsar focal points and other relevant sectors (e.g., agriculture, water resources, health, tourism, urban development, and science and technology), and national focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements

- (e.g., Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species, and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change);
- c) increase the number of sites designated to the Ramsar List to better reflect the diversity of wetland types in the region and the importance of wetland resources to the people of Asia, and ensure that the ecological character of these sites is maintained;
 - d) promote membership to the Convention; and
 - e) support the implementation of the principles of wise use of resources on-the-ground at Ramsar sites.
3. There is an increasing need to enhance and promote international and multilateral cooperation amongst Contracting Parties on issues related to the management of shared water resources and shared species.

Wetlands, Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction

4. The Convention should approach the issue of wetlands and their contribution to livelihoods and poverty reduction in a more holistic way, with equal emphasis given to the conservation, social and development aspects.

Wetlands and Agriculture, including Fisheries

5. Agricultural practices in wetland areas should strive to balance the need to increase production with the need to maintain the ecosystem services provided by wetlands.

Avian Influenza, Wetlands and Waterbirds

6. To mitigate the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Ramsar authorities should work to share information more effectively, engage proactively with the health sector, and develop efficient tools and mechanisms to monitor, detect and respond to outbreaks.

Regional Initiatives

7. There are two existing Ramsar regional initiatives in the Asia region (*Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in Central and West Asia* and *East Asia-Australasia Waterbird Flyway Partnership*) and two proposed (*proposed Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia* and *the proposed Himalayan Initiative*); these serve to bring member countries together to share experience and knowledge and to find solutions for common issues. There are other wetland-related regional initiatives which provide valuable lessons and opportunities to promote the wise use of wetlands.

Wetlands and Climate Change

8. The impact of climate change on wetlands is already evidenced by declining water levels, changes in the migratory pattern of waterbirds, and reduction in aquatic biodiversity. However, more research is needed to document and identify options to mitigate these impacts.

9. Peatlands are a major wetland type in the Asia region. The continued loss and degradation of peatlands will have wide-ranging impacts on human health and local economies, as well as on efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The Ramsar Convention should give greater attention to raising awareness about the value of peatlands and increasing the capacity of member countries to conserve and manage peatlands.

Wetlands and Human Health

10. The importance of maintaining wetland ecosystem services for human health is not appreciated by the sectors that deal directly with human health issues. The Ramsar Convention should be more proactive in engaging with these sectors; mechanisms should be developed to enhance collaboration with these sectors at the global, regional and national levels.

Designation and Management of Ramsar Sites

11. The capacity within Contracting Parties in Asia to identify, designate, and manage Ramsar sites is limited. A regional approach should be adopted to build capacity among member countries. The Ramsar Convention should make available additional tools and funding to overcome this limitation.
12. Measures need to be developed to monitor the status of Ramsar sites at the regional and global levels to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures at these sites.
13. In view of the significant number of GEF-funded wetland conservation initiatives in Asia, some of which involve the conservation of biodiversity in a complex continuum of wetland resources from the high alpine zone to the sea, and transecting extensive arid and semi-arid landscapes, the Ramsar Secretariat should initiate the process of creating and maintaining closer links with the GEF Secretariat.

Financing for Wetland Conservation

14. The Ramsar Convention should develop a fundraising strategy, taking into account the need to have a sustainable long-term financial mechanism to support the implementation of the Convention, and the need to put wetland issues firmly on the global agenda so as to be able to tap available and potential funding sources.
15. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is a good mechanism to secure funding for wetland conservation and wise use; this area of work is underdeveloped in the Asia region and more effort should be directed under the Convention to advance this issue.
16. The Asia region should work towards a proposal for a financial mechanism to support the implementation of the Convention in the region to be presented to COP10; this should be linked to a good communications strategy to reach out to potential funders at the international, regional and national levels.

Annex 2

“2008 Hanoi Call to Action on Wetland Heart of Asia” from the Asia Wetland Symposium, 22 – 25 June 2008, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Wetlands are amongst the most productive ecosystems on the planet. In addition to supporting exceptional levels of biological diversity, the ecosystem services provided by wetlands contribute to natural disaster prevention or mitigation, poverty reduction, socio-economic development, and water and food security; positively contributing to human health and well-being. Wetlands in the Asia region, however, continue to be lost or degraded at an alarming rate. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports, for example, that some 1,900 million hectares of mangroves – or about 25 per cent of the 1980 area – have been lost during the last 25 years.

The 187 symposium participants from 20 countries recognized that the greatest challenge in Asia lies in the need for more effective and efficient governance structures and mechanisms at the international, regional, national and local levels to support wetland conservation and wise use. Equally, participants recognized the need to link development initiatives and biodiversity conservation goals in a coordinated and planned manner. Participants expressed particular concern about the threat to wetland ecosystems arising from the negative impacts of climate change, and recognized the need to continue to increase communications, education and public awareness about the value of wetlands, particularly within the development sector.

The Asian Wetland Symposium identified 10 urgent and immediate actions that should be taken to address these challenges, and calls on policy and decision-makers to give priority attention to these, and to ensure that the necessary resources are made available to support their implementation at the local, national and regional levels.

1. Restore degraded marine/coastal, freshwater and human-made wetlands so that they can continue to conserve biodiversity and provide the range of ecosystem services that contribute to human health and well-being such as food and water supply, water purification, climate and flood regulation, coastal protection, and recreational opportunities.
2. Develop and implement best practice approaches to agriculture (including aquaculture) in wetlands through the application of environment-friendly farming practices such as Integrated Pest Management, organic farming, waste treatment systems, and efficient water management.
3. Adopt an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the development and implementation of tools and methodologies for wetland assessment, monitoring and management, such as wetland valuation, wetland vulnerability assessment, and river basin management.
4. Document and disseminate information about traditional cultural practices and indigenous knowledge which contribute positively to the conservation and wise use of wetland resources, and where possible, incorporate these into the management of wetlands.
5. Identify integrated approaches for linking development goals and biodiversity conservation in order to achieve both improved local livelihoods and wetland protection. One approach

could be to pursue wetland conservation and wise use actions through the Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategies.

6. Undertake further research on the impacts of climate change on wetlands, and make the findings widely available. Priority should be given to research on practical and effective adaptation and mitigation measures that can be taken at wetland sites, for example, with respect to coastal wetlands, identify measures in response to rising sea levels and natural disasters such as typhoons and cyclones. Mainstream climate change adaptation and/or mitigation strategies into wetland planning and decision-making.
7. Establish, review and strengthen institution structures and mechanisms at the regional, national and local levels to support wetland conservation and wise use, including decentralized structures, public-private sector partnerships, and rights-based approaches.
8. Strengthen existing policy and legal framework to enable the meaningful and effective participation of all stakeholders in decision-making related to the conservation and wise use of wetlands; in this regard, priority attention should be paid to enhancing the involvement of marginalized groups such as women, and vulnerable groups such as the poorest of the poor.
9. Develop transboundary wetland agreements, or “twinning” and flyway networking arrangements as a means to enhance cooperation on shared wetland systems and species, and to promote peace.
10. Establish mechanisms to enable the effective transfer of knowledge and sharing of experience on wetland conservation and wise use tools and approaches among wetland researches, planners and decision-makers in Asia.

The 2008 Asian Wetland Symposium was held in Hanoi from 22 to 25 June 2008, hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Government of Viet Nam with support from the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan, IUCN and the Ramsar Centre Japan.

The organizers of the 2008 Asian Wetland Symposium seek the assistance of the Government of Viet Nam to convey this “*2008 Hanoi Call to Action on Wetlands: Heart of Asia*” to the forthcoming 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands to be held in Changwon, Republic of Korea from 28 October to 4 November 2008.

Hanoi, Viet Nam, 25 June 2008

Annex 4

Summary statistics

The table provides a general overview of the Strategies from the the document “A framework for the implementation of the Convention’s strategic plan 2003-2008 in the 2006-2008 period” briefly analysed above. Where possible, the table compares information provided in National Reports to COP9 with those provided to COP10 in order to assess progress during the triennium.

The table also shows if particular actions are more (or less) widely addressed in the Asian region, compared to the global average; based on the percentages of the Contracting Parties having answered positively. (Abbreviations: (★= Significant progress; ★= some progress; •= regression).

Strategy	Indicator	Affirmative countries in Asia at COP 9	Affirmative countries in ASIA at COP10	Affirmative countries GLOBALLY	Progress in Asia since COP9
1.1	Inventory and Assessment country has a comprehensive national wetland inventory (1.1.1.)	40	50	37%	★
1.2	Policy and legislation National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) in place (1.2.1)	36	58	40%	★
	wetland issues incorporated into national strategies for sustainable development (1.2.3)	64	42	46%	•
1.5	Wetland restoration and rehabilitation wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects implemented (1.5.1)	80	71	66%	★
2.1	Ramsar site designation strategy and priorities established for further designation of Ramsar sites, using the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List (2.1.1)	60	54	50%	•
2.4	Condition of Ramsar sites all cases of change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat (Article 3.2) (2.4.2)	27	13	20%	•
3.1	Collaboration mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar AA and the focal points of other MEAs (3.1.1)	53	50	56%	•
3.2	Sharing expertise and experience networks established for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands (3.2.1)	13	33	36%	★
4.4	CEPA mechanism established for planning and implementing wetland CEPA with both CEPA Government and NGO National Focal Point involvement (4.4.1)	13	33	22%	★
4.8	National Wetland Committee review completed of national institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands (4.8.1)	33	13	26%	•
	National Ramsar/Wetlands cross-sectoral Committee (or equivalent body) operational (4.8.2)	73	46	45%	•

Annex 5

Asian Sites designated since COP9

	Country	Number of sites	Total area of new sites (ha)
1	Azerbaijan	-	
2	Bahrain	-	
3	Bangladesh	-	
4	Cambodia	-	
5	China	6	230,728.5
6	India	-	
7	Indonesia	1	413,810
8	Islamic republic of Iran	-	
9	Iraq	1	137,700
10	Israel	-	
11	Japan	-	
12	Jordan	-	
13	Kyrgyz Republic	-	
14	Kazakhstan	-	
15	Lebanon	-	
16	Malaysia	-	
17	Mongolia	-	
18	Myanmar	-	
19	Nepal	4	10,877
20	Pakistan	-	
21	Philippines	-	
22	Republic of Korea	5	7,180
23	Sri Lanka	-	
24	Syria	-	
25	Tajikistan	-	
26	Thailand	1	6,892
27	Uzbekistan	-	
28	United Arab Emirates	1	620
29	Viet Nam	-	
30	Yemen	1	(RIS not yet submitted)
	Total	21	807,807.5

Annex 6

Number of Asian sites for which information is not up to date

	Country	Number of sites
1	Azerbaijan	2
2	Bahrain	2
3	Bangladesh	-
4	Cambodia	3
5	China	16
6	India	6
7	Indonesia	2
8	Islamic republic of Iran	-
9	Iraq	
10	Israel	2
11	Japan	10
12	Jordan	1
13	Kyrgyz Republic	1
14	Kazakhstan	-
15	Lebanon	4
16	Malaysia	-
17	Mongolia	6
18	Myanmar	-
19	Nepal	-
20	Pakistan	16
21	Philippines	3
22	Republic of Korea	2
23	Sri Lanka	2
24	Syria	1
25	Tajikistan	(RIS not yet submitted)
26	Thailand	6
27	Uzbekistan	1
28	United Arab Emirates	-
29	Viet Nam	1
30	Yemen	-

Annex 7

Pending sites in the Asia Region

	Country	Number of sites
1	Azerbaijan	-
2	Bahrain	-
3	Bangladesh	3
4	Cambodia	-
5	China	-
6	India	-
7	Indonesia	-
8	Islamic republic of Iran	-
9	Iraq	-
10	Israel	-
11	Japan	-
12	Jordan	-
13	Kyrgyz Republic	-
14	Kazakhstan	6
15	Lebanon	-
16	Malaysia	-
17	Mongolia	-
18	Myanmar	-
19	Nepal	1
20	Pakistan	-
21	Philippines	-
22	Republic of Korea	-
23	Sri Lanka	1
24	Syria	-
25	Tajikistan	-
26	Thailand	-
27	Uzbekistan	1
28	United Arab Emirates	-
29	Viet Nam	-
30	Yemen	-