

Ramsar
Handbooks
4th edition

Handbook 20

International cooperation





About the Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) is an intergovernmental treaty whose mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”. As of October 2010, 160 nations have joined the Convention as Contracting Parties, and more than 1900 wetlands around the world, covering over 186 million hectares, have been designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

What are wetlands?

As defined by the Convention, wetlands include a wide variety of habitats such as marshes, peatlands, floodplains, rivers and lakes, and coastal areas such as saltmarshes, mangroves, and seagrass beds, but also coral reefs and other marine areas no deeper than six metres at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.

About this series of handbooks

This series has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention following the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP7, COP8, COP9 and COP10) held, respectively, in San José, Costa Rica, in May 1999, Valencia, Spain, in November 2002, Kampala, Uganda, in November 2005, and Changwon, Republic of Korea, October-November 2008. The guidelines on various matters adopted by the Parties at those and earlier COPs have been prepared as a series of handbooks to assist those with an interest in, or directly involved with, implementation of the Convention at the international, regional, national, subnational or local levels. Each handbook brings together, subject by subject, the various relevant guidances adopted by Parties, supplemented by additional material from COP information papers, case studies and other relevant publications so as to illustrate key aspects of the guidelines. The handbooks are available in the three working languages of the Convention (English, French, and Spanish).

The table on the inside back cover lists the full scope of the subjects covered by this handbook series at present. Additional handbooks will be prepared to include any further guidance adopted by future meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The Ramsar Convention promotes an integrated package of actions to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands. In recognition of these integrated approaches, the reader will find that within each handbook there are numerous cross-references to others in the series.

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Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands
4th edition, 2010

Handbook 20

International cooperation

Guidelines and other support for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands



This 4th edition of the Ramsar Handbooks replaces the series published in 2007. It includes relevant guidance adopted by several meetings of the Conference of the Parties, in particular COP7 (1999), COP8 (2002), COP9 (2005), and COP10 (2008), as well as selected background documents presented at these COPs.

Acknowledgements

The early preparation of these Guidelines was undertaken by the Ramsar Secretariat. A draft was reviewed by the 21st meeting of the Standing Committee in October 1998, which decided “to establish a drafting subgroup composed of representatives of Argentina, Australia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Switzerland, Uganda, the USA, BirdLife International, Wetlands International, and WWF” which “was charged, together with the Bureau, with producing a more complete draft of guidelines for international cooperation, as well as a draft decision, for submission to COP7” (Decision SC21.21).

Members of this drafting subgroup were invited to provide comments on the draft Guidelines in December 1998. The document was modified according to these comments, benefiting also from the detailed comments received from the Oceania Regional meeting held in New Zealand in December 1998. In February 1999, a report was received from the Global Environment Network project, commissioned by the Secretariat to review bilateral and multilateral donor aspects of international cooperation, and its recommendations were incorporated into the revised version of the Guidelines, which along with a draft Resolution was then circulated to the members of the Standing Committee for consideration. The document was finalised, based on the comments received, and approved subsequently by the Chair of the Standing Committee for transmission to the Contracting Parties as a COP7 document.

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the work of Faizal Parish and C. C. Looi of the Global Environment Network for their work in preparing a review of bilateral and multilateral donor support for wetland conservation and wise use. This review paper (Ramsar COP7 DOC.20.4) is available on the Convention’s website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-31-58-83^18639_4000_0__. In their COP7 paper, the Global Environment Network included the following acknowledgement: “The Ramsar [Secretariat] provided strategic guidance and financial assistance for this project as part of the process to prepare for the 7th Conference of Contracting Parties to the Convention, in May 1999. We are also grateful for the response to our questionnaire and requests for information we have received from the focal points of the Environmental Working Group of the OECD Development Advisory Committee, National Focal Points of the Ramsar Convention (especially Turkey, Democratic Republic of Congo, United Kingdom, Namibia, Germany, People’s Republic of China, Ukraine and Slovakia), government departments and development assistance agencies (especially ADB, AusAID, DANIDA, JICA, New Zealand (Min. of Foreign Affairs and Trade), BMZ, CIDA, SIDA, World Bank), other organizations (especially EU, GEF, DANCED), and for providing copies of publications for our reference and review. We would also like to extend our gratitude to DFID (UK) for their financial support of a parallel work compiling case studies on integrated management of wetlands and river basins, which also contributed relevant information for this project. We would also like to thank the following key individuals who have provided special assistance with the review: Dr. Bill Phillips, James D. McCuaig, Ross Hughes, and M. Remi Paris. Finally our thanks to other partners of the Global Environment Network and the staff at the secretariat of the Network (Global Environment Centre) in Malaysia, who have assisted us in this project.”

In addition, the Secretariat would like to thank the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and in particular Dr Brian Groombridge, for the related project they undertook and which is referred to in Section 2.1.1 of the Guidelines. Their preliminary assessment of *Shared wetlands and river basins of the world* (available from the Convention’s website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-31-58-83^18757_4000_0__) provided the basis for focused discussions on this important aspect of cooperation between Parties for the conservation and management of these shared water resources and wetland sites.

All Resolutions of the Ramsar COPs are available from the Convention’s Web site at www.ramsar.org/resolutions. Background documents referred to in these handbooks are available at www.ramsar.org/cop7-docs, www.ramsar.org/cop8-docs, www.ramsar.org/cop9-docs, and www.ramsar.org/cop10-docs.

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Getting the most out of this Handbook

The Handbooks in general

The purpose of the Ramsar Handbooks is to organize guidance material from relevant decisions adopted by the Contracting Parties over the years, according to subject themes. This helps practitioners to implement the internationally-agreed best practice in a way that is convenient to handle and more naturally matches their own everyday working environment.

The intended readership includes national and local staff of the government departments, ministries and agencies that act as Administrative Authorities for the Ramsar Convention in each country. Equally important users in many cases are managers of individual wetland areas, as some aspects of the guidance relate specifically to site management.

The Ramsar guidance has been adopted by member governments as a whole, and increasingly it addresses itself to the crucial roles of other sectors beyond the “environment” or “water” sectors. It is thus very important that these Handbooks should be used by **all** whose actions may benefit from or impact upon the wise use of wetlands.

A vital first step in each country therefore is to ensure adequate **dissemination** of these Handbooks to all who need or can benefit from them. Copies are freely available in PDF format from the Ramsar Secretariat in three languages on CD-ROM or by download from the Convention website (www.ramsar.org).

Other early steps would be, in each particular context, to **clarify** lines of responsibility and **actively check** how to align the terms used and approaches described with the reader’s own jurisdiction, operating circumstances, and organizational structures.

Much of the text can be used in a **proactive sense**, as a basis for framing policies, plans and activities, sometimes by simply importing relevant sections into national and local materials. It can also be used in a **reactive sense** as a source of help and ideas for responding to problems and opportunities, navigating subjects by the need of the user.

Cross-references, original sources, and further reading are liberally cited: the Handbooks will often not be the “last word”, but they provide a helpful “route-map” to further sources of information and support.

Strategic direction in the Ramsar Convention is provided by the Strategic Plan, the latest version of which was adopted by COP10 in 2008 for the period 2009-2015. All thematic implementation frameworks, including the Handbooks, sit within the context of the goals and strategies of this Plan and the priorities it highlights for the period covered.

In this fourth edition of the Handbooks, additions to and omissions from the text of the original guidelines, required by the results of COP8, COP9 and COP10, are shown in square brackets [...].

The Handbook series is updated after each meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and feedback on user experience is always appreciated in helping to refine each new edition.

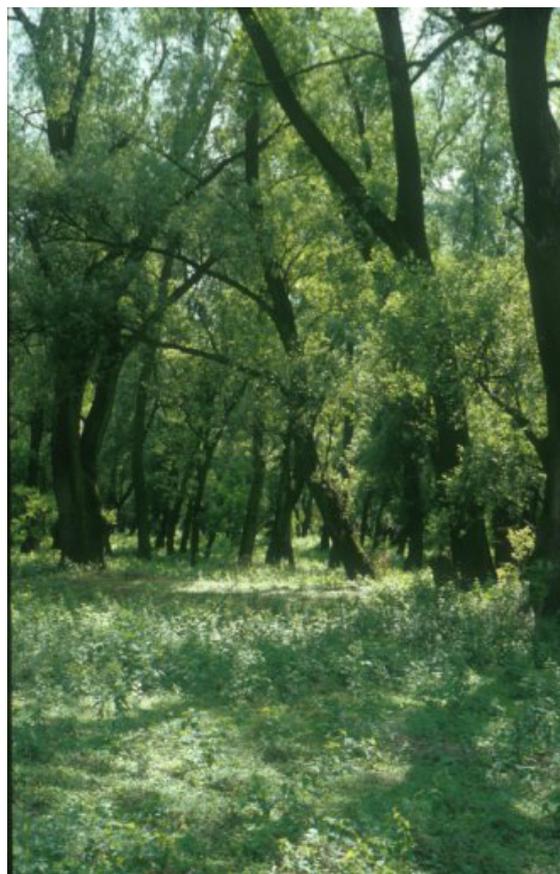
This Handbook (International Cooperation)

International cooperation, required by Article 5 of the Convention, is regarded as one of Ramsar's "three pillars" of the Convention and is the subject of Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015, which is "to enhance the conservation and wise use of wetlands using effective international cooperation through inter alia the active application of the Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention" (this Handbook).

Under this Goal there are 14 specific Key Result Areas, each intended to be achieved by the year 2015, grouped into the following five Strategies:

- 3.1 Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs
- 3.2 Regional initiatives
- 3.3 International assistance
- 3.4 Sharing information and expertise
- 3.5 Shared wetlands, river basins and migratory species

The text in this Handbook is drawn mainly from Resolution VII.19 and its Annex, with additional COP10 material from Resolution X.6 and its Annex, and the substance of it thus reflects formal decisions adopted by the Conference of Contracting Parties. The Handbook also brings together additional information relevant to this issue. The views expressed in this additional information do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ramsar Secretariat or the Contracting Parties, and those materials have not been endorsed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties.



The "Felső-Tisza (Upper Tisza)" Ramsar site in Hungary. This and the "Tisa River" Ramsar site in the Slovak Republic were jointly designated as a collaboratively-managed Transboundary Ramsar Site in November 2003.

Photos: Lesku Balázs.

Foreword

The Guidelines presented here respond to Article 5 of the text of the Ramsar Convention which requires that: "The Contracting Parties shall consult each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where the water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna". As such, they are intended to provide a framework, or frameworks, for actions to be taken by Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention in meeting this obligation.

The Strategic Plan 1997-2002 of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), adopted at the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties, in 1996, included Action 7.3.4 which directed the Standing Committee and the Secretariat to "develop, for consideration at a Technical Session of the 7th COP (1999), guidelines for Contracting Parties on how to carry out their obligations in the field of international cooperation, particularly as regards obligations concerning national funding agencies which provide assistance that may affect wetlands in developing countries". This was achieved following the process outlined in the Acknowledgements, and the Guidelines were adopted as the Annex to Resolution VII.19 of the 7th Conference of the Contracting Parties.

The Guidelines are presented under seven themes, with specific actions recommended included under each theme. It is recognized that not all of the suggested actions apply to all Contracting Parties; however, it is intended that all Contracting Parties use this framework to review their existing activities in this area and then seek to refresh, escalate or broaden their range of actions in partnership with other Contracting Parties.



Through the Ramsar Convention, more than 160 nations meet and discuss promising means of future cooperation on the wise use of wetlands, as here at the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Kampala, November 2005.

Photo: D. Peck / Ramsar.

Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Implementing Article 5 of the Convention

(adopted as the Annex to Resolution VII.19 by the 7th Conference of the Contracting Parties, San Jose, Costa Rica, 1999)

Editor's note. The Guidelines as adopted by COP7 contain some sections of text which were time-limited, notably references to the Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 and Outreach Programme 1999-2002. These sections have been updated to reflect the relevant Resolutions adopted by subsequent COPs. All updated sections are indicated by their inclusion in square brackets [...]

Relevant implementation commitments made by Contracting Parties in COP Resolutions & Recommendations

Resolution VII.19: Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention

1. RECALLING Article 5 of the Convention which obliges Contracting Parties to "consult each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where the water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna".

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties in their implementation of these Guidelines to give special attention to:
 - i. identifying shared wetlands, river basins and wetland-dependent species and supporting initiatives directed at the management of these in cooperation with other Contracting Parties and organizations, as appropriate (Guidelines, Section A, 1-3, and Section B, 1-4);
 - ii. harmonising the implementation of the Ramsar Convention with that of other appropriate regional and international environmental conventions and working cooperatively with international programmes and organizations in pursuing the actions recommended in these Guidelines (Guidelines, Section C, 1-2);
 - iii. intensifying efforts, especially the application of site twinning arrangements, which are designed to share expertise and information and provide training for those people directly involved with wetland conservation and wise use activities (Guidelines, Section D, 1-4);
 - iv. undertaking the range of actions recommended in the Guidelines to raise the level and effectiveness of international development assistance programmes directed at the long term conservation and sustainable use of wetlands (Guidelines, Section E, 1-15), in accordance with national plans and priorities;
 - v. reviewing all aspects of international trade in wetland-derived products and taking any actions needed to ensure that such harvesting is sustainable (Guidelines, Section F, 1-7), taking into account discussions in more relevant fora;
 - vi. ensuring that all foreign investment activities relating to wetlands within the country are subject to impact assessments, promoting Codes of Conduct for the business sector in this regard and considering the introduction of measures which will permit resources derived from wetland-related development activities to contribute to the long-term management of the resource (Guidelines, Section G, 1-3).

1. Introduction

1. Article 5 of the Convention states that “The Contracting Parties shall consult each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where the water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.”
2. At the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties, the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) was approved. Action 7.3.4 of the Plan directs that the Standing Committee and the Ramsar Bureau should “develop, for consideration at a Technical Session of the 7th COP (1999), guidelines for Contracting Parties, particularly as regards obligations concerning national funding agencies which provide assistance that may affect wetlands in developing countries.”

1.1 Interpreting Article 5 of the Convention

3. In these guidelines the following assumptions have been made with respect to interpreting the text of Article 5.
 - a) *“The Contracting Parties shall consult each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention . . .”* It has been assumed that this text refers to all obligations arising from the Convention text, including, but not restricted to, Article 2.6 (conservation, management and wise use of migratory waterfowl), Article 3.1 (planning and implementation of wise use), Article 4.3 (encouraging research and the exchange of data and publications), and Article 4.5 (promoting training, management and wardening).
 - b) *“... especially in the case of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where the water system is shared by Contracting Parties.”* It has been assumed that this text refers to wetlands which cross international borders, whether Wetlands of International Importance or not - this is consistent with Article 3.1 - and river basins which cross international borders, irrespective of whether or not they contain Wetlands of International Importance.
 - c) *“They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.”* It has been assumed that this text refers to cooperation between Contracting Parties in areas such as shared wetland-dependent species, bilateral and multilateral assistance, trade in wetland-derived plant and animal products, and foreign investment practices.

1.2 Guidance given by past Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

4. [Prior to the adoption of the COP7, COP8, COP9 and COP10 decisions listed at the end of this Handbook (see Appendix I), the six previous meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties adopted a number of Resolutions

and Recommendations which provide advice on aspects of international cooperation under the Convention.] These are:

Resolutions

- Implementation of Article 5 of the Convention (Resolution 4.4);
- Cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (Resolution VI.9);
- Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies: the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP (Resolution VI.10).

Recommendations

- Assistance for developing countries (Recommendation 1.2);
- Responsibility of development agencies towards wetlands (Recommendation 3.4);
- Tasks of the Ramsar Bureau in respect of development agencies (Recommendation 3.5);
- Cooperation with international organizations (Recommendation 4.11);
- Cooperation between Contracting Parties for the management of migratory species (Recommendation 4.12);
- Responsibility of multilateral development banks towards wetlands (Recommendation 4.13);
- Relationship between the Ramsar Convention, the GEF and the CBD (Recommendation 5.4);
- Inclusion of conservation and wise use of wetlands in multilateral and bilateral development cooperation programmes (Recommendation 5.5);
- Conservation and wise use of wetlands in bilateral and multilateral development cooperation programmes (Recommendation 6.16).

1.3 [Strategic Plan of the Convention - Goal 3]

[5. The Strategic Plan 1997-2002 adopted at the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties included General Objective 7 related to international cooperation. Its four Operational Objectives, were used to help identify the themes to be addressed in the Guidelines given in Section 2. General Objective 3 of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 concern international cooperation, and in the latter there are five Strategies particularly relating to various aspects of the implementation of this Goal:

- Strategy 3.1. Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs
- Strategy 3.2. Regional initiatives
- Strategy 3.3. International assistance
- Strategy 3.4. Sharing information and expertise
- Strategy 3.5. Shared wetlands, river basins and migratory species]

2. Guidelines for International Cooperation

6. Contracting Parties are urged to consider and adopt as appropriate the following Guidelines as the basis for their implementation of Article 5 of the Convention.

2.1 Managing shared wetlands and river basins

7. The Ramsar Convention has always recognized that a fundamental obligation of Contracting Parties pursuant to Article 5 was cooperation in the management of so-called shared wetlands. The concept of shared wetlands, now regularly referred to as international wetlands, is a relatively simple one, meaning those wetlands which cross international boundaries. In the past, priority has been given to encouraging the Contracting Parties with shared wetlands included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance to cooperate in their management. Article 3.1 of the Convention indicates very clearly that that cooperation should extend to all shared wetlands, whether Ramsar-listed or not.
8. As the Convention has recognized and responded to the need to manage wetlands as part of river basins, so has the interpretation of international cooperation been expanded to include those situations where a wetland in one Contracting Party is within the water catchment of another Contracting Party and where the actions of the Contracting Parties within the catchment area may result in changes to the ecological character of the wetland. If the wetland in such a scenario is Ramsar-listed, the Contracting Parties might not be able to live up to their obligations under the Convention, through circumstances beyond their control. The inability of an upstream Party to deal with a problem impacting downstream should also be considered. A similar situation can arise with coastal wetlands, where the actions or inactions of one Contracting Party may adversely impact on the wetlands of another. Land-based marine pollution is a case in point.
9. In this area of shared river basins Contracting Parties should, where appropriate, seek to harmonise their implementation of Article 5 of the Ramsar Convention with obligations arising from any watercourse agreements to which they may also be signatories. At the international and regional scale there are over 200 such agreements which already provide a legal basis for cooperation. At regional level, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 17 March 1992) sets out important principles and rules which provide a comprehensive basis for the development of new agreements.
10. As indicated above, another aspect of managing shared wetlands and river basins is that of alien or invasive species. For wetlands which cross international boundaries there is a clear responsibility on the part of all jurisdictions involved to do everything possible to restrict the spread of such invasive species, where they would have negative impacts. The same applies for shared river basins where preventing the water-borne introduction of an invasive species from one Contracting Party into an adjoining state should also be considered a responsibility under the Convention's guidelines for international cooperation. [(See pages 12-13.)]

2.1.1 Transboundary (international) wetlands

11. Under these Guidelines for international cooperation, Contracting Parties are urged to identify all their shared wetland systems (including those in the coastal zone) and cooperate in the management of these with the adjoining jurisdiction(s). This cooperation may extend to formal joint management arrangements or collaboration in the development and implementation of a

management plan for the site. While not a comprehensive global assessment, the report prepared by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) *Shared wetlands and river basins of the world* provides a preliminary basis for the identification of shared wetlands. This report indicates that of 955 Ramsar Sites considered in the analysis, 92 (9.6%) sites may be subject to impacts from adjoining jurisdictions and could therefore benefit from cooperative management approaches between countries. (This document is available from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat or from the Secretariat's website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-31-58-83^18757_4000_0.)

2.1.2 Transboundary (international) river basins

12. In the same way that Contracting Parties are urged to identify and then cooperate in the management of shared, or international, wetlands, so there is an expectation that similar cooperation will be pursued for shared or international river basins and coastal systems. The establishment of multi-state management commissions is an important concept for those countries which share river basins to consider and pursue energetically. Experience has shown these to be an effective mechanism to promote international cooperation over water resource management, which includes the wetlands forming part of these river basins. As indicated in 2.1.1 above, the WCMC report *Shared wetlands and river basins of the world* provides a preliminary basis for the identification of international river basins to assist Contracting Parties with undertaking this element of the Guidelines. This report indicates that of the 955 Ramsar Sites considered, 267 (28%) are located within international river basins.
13. For shared coastal wetlands, Contracting Parties are urged to develop frameworks of cooperation within existing Regional Seas Programmes and embodying Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) concepts. Regional Seas Programmes provide a legal framework for cooperation, including a convention and appropriate protocols. Contracting Parties are also encouraged to manage major coastal wetlands systems (such as barrier reefs and expanses of mangrove/reef/seagrass systems) within the context of LMEs. A model for this management approach is Australia's Great Barrier Reef. While not a transboundary site (nor Ramsar-listed), it is an excellent illustration of wise use in action which should be considered by those Contracting Parties responsible for managing multi-state shared coastal wetlands. Appropriately, this model takes into consideration the management of the river systems discharging into the zone of influence for the reef system and seeks to ensure that potential negative impacts from these sources are controlled. For shared coastal wetland systems this an important consideration.
14. The establishment of river basin management commissions or equivalent cooperative mechanisms for coastal wetland systems may sometimes require expert and impartial assistance as well as significant resources. The expertise can come from some established bodies, and the Ramsar Convention should promote the involvement of these in situations where it seems necessary or warranted. Contracting Parties may make use of existing organizations, created for other purposes or associated with other international or regional conventions, instead of creating new autonomous arrangements. The donor

Additional information

Managing shared wetlands and river basins

International cooperation - an essential part of the solution to the global problem of invasive species in wetlands

A keynote presentation on invasive species and wetlands was delivered at COP7 by Geoffrey Howard of IUCN's East Africa Regional Office. The document* served as a broad introduction to Contracting Parties on invasive species and their effects on wetlands and other water-dependent ecosystems. It identified those animal and plant species which have become invasive species in wetlands, summarised the various methods used to control invasives, and finally presented some approaches to dealing with invasives for the key players in wetland management - wetland managers, government organizations, NGOs, civil society and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

The material below focuses on the approaches and needs of the key groups, operating at the local, national and international level, in understanding and controlling invasive species.

Approaches and needs of wetland managers and wetland programme operatives:

- **Awareness** of invasives and the threats they pose, with special attention devoted to wetlands and water-dependent ecosystems of all types.
- **Information and training** on the general principles involved, with specialised information and training on invasive species of wetlands and their effects. Managers should be trained to recognize invasive species and be aware of the available management options.
- **Experience** in recognizing the early signs of an impending invasion supported by an understanding of the potential effects. Practical experience of control options.
- **Willingness** to be vigilant and to monitor existing and potential invasions and infestations. This is required of the wetland managers, their institutions, as well as the policy- and decision-makers who direct their activities.

Approaches and needs of countries and government organizations:

- **Awareness** of the issues and the seriousness of wetland invasions and their consequences to wetlands, people and biodiversity, as well as the costs of control, the time needed for effective control, and the risks of lack of control.
- **Mechanisms** to address potential and actual invasions and develop quarantine facilities to prevent their spread. This requires mechanisms to mobilise opinion, resources and finances to manage existing invasions as well as to reduce the risk of new wetland invasions.
- **Willingness** to recognize and act on developing and threatening invasions.
- **Policies and regulations** to implement management mechanisms for invasions to support the efforts of wetland managers.
- **Quarantine and other regulations** to prevent and limit the spread of wetland invasives once they have become established. This requires an understanding of the role of water in the dispersal and growth of wetland invasives as well as a recognition that they can spread downstream and across borders.
- **Research and monitoring** to support the efforts at control, to measure their effectiveness, to measure the effects of the invasive species on wetlands, biodiversity and people, and to estimate the costs of their control or provide information for future strategies.

Approaches and needs of NGOs and civil society:

- **Awareness and education** on the importance and effects of wetland invasives and the need for management and control.
- **Local action and community responses** to existing and potential invasives, from community action and awareness-raising to landcare and cooperative wetland management.
- **Novel solutions** to invasive control and utilisation of invasives. Many NGOs have the capacity and interest to develop new uses for invasive species. Many also have the time and capacity to develop innovative control mechanisms that are often not possible through the traditional pathways of government and established research.
- **Expertise** in control and monitoring of invasives in wetlands and their effects on people and biodiversity, including expertise developed for commercial purposes or to secure a livelihood.
- **Support to governments** in their efforts to manage invasions and prevent their occurrence.

Approaches and needs of the Ramsar Convention:

- **Cooperation with other agencies and organizations** involved in global, regional and national efforts to understand and manage invasive species in wetlands. In particular, IUCN's Global Initiative on Invasive Species, The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) of SCOPE, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, CAB International and UNEP, and the Regional Invasive Species Programme of SPREP in 24 countries of the South Pacific region.
- **Awareness-raising and the preparation of tools** for recognizing and managing wetland invasives, including the use of the Ramsar networks, and the networks of their technical partners, for disseminating this information. Raising awareness of the relationship of invasives to international trade, transport and tourism.
- **Documentation of case studies and development of international perspectives** on the sources and spread of wetland invasives, with dispersal of this information through the Contracting Parties and other Ramsar networks, and those of their technical partners.
- **Policy and legislation** development to implement management of invasives both nationally and internationally.
- **Rallying of support** to member states to manage wetland invasions and prevent new infestations.

*Available as Ramsar COP7 DOC.24 from the Ramsar Convention's website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-31-58-83^18617_4000_0__. See also Resolution VIII.18 *Invasive species and wetlands*.



Water Hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*, is considered to have caused more serious and extensive problems than any other aquatic weed. From its damaging effects in wetlands from Oceania to Asia to Africa, this plant is testimony to the destructive powers of invasive species. Mabamba Bay, Uganda. Photo: D. Peck / Ramsar.

community also needs to recognize the establishment and operations of river basin management and coastal management commissions as a priority under their programmes for sustainable development.

Section A

Guidelines related to managing shared wetlands and river basins

- A1. Contracting Parties are encouraged to identify all of their shared wetland systems and cooperate in their management with the adjoining jurisdiction(s), through actions such as formal joint management arrangements or collaboration in the development and implementation of bi- or multilateral management plans for such sites.
- A2. Likewise, there is an expectation that similar cooperation will be pursued for shared or international river basins and coastal systems through the establishment of bi- or multilateral management commissions.
- A3. Contracting Parties are urged to work closely with Regional Seas Programmes and other appropriate international and regional conventions, to promote the wise use management principles of the Ramsar Convention, and to support the establishment of equitable and sustainable management regimes for shared river basins and coastal systems.

2.2 Managing shared wetland-dependent species

Relevant implementation commitments made by Contracting Parties in COP Resolutions & Recommendations

Resolution X.22: Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

19. STRONGLY ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and other governments actively to support and participate in relevant international plans and programmes for the conservation of shared migratory waterbirds and their habitats, including inter alia the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership, AEWA, WHSRN, WCASN, and the Central Asian Action Plan for Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats;
23. URGES Contracting Parties, other governments and relevant organizations urgently to enhance their individual and collective efforts to address the root causes of the continuing decline in waterbird status, [...]
24. URGES the governing bodies of flyway initiatives to take steps to share knowledge and expertise on best practices in the development and implementation of flyway-scale waterbird conservation policies and practices, [...].

*See also Handbook
17, Designating
Ramsar Sites*

15. International cooperation in the management of so-called shared species has been a priority under the Ramsar Convention since its inception. In fact, the motivation for countries to develop and put into place a convention like Ramsar was largely provided by a desire to promote international cooperation for migratory waterbird conservation. Today, the Convention continues to promote this aspect of its charter very strongly, and as the

Additional information

The Transboundary Ramsar Sites initiative

Increasingly, Ramsar Contracting Parties are designating relevant new and existing Ramsar sites as “Transboundary Ramsar Sites” (TRSs). The information presented here on this subject is summarised from document DOC. 32 provided to COP10 (Changwon, Republic of Korea in 2008). (See also Handbook 17 *Designating Ramsar Sites*).

The educational and public relations practice of listing formally notified TRSs is based on the component parts of already designated Ramsar sites. Questions concerning the kinds of international collaborative management arrangements are left to the participating national and local authorities.

The term “Transboundary Ramsar Site” refers to a situation where an ecologically coherent wetland system extends across national borders and the Ramsar site authorities on both or all sides of the border have formally agreed to collaborate in its management, and they have notified the Secretariat of that intent. The TRS label denotes merely a cooperative management arrangement. It is not a distinct legal status for the Ramsar Sites involved, and imposes no additional obligations of any kind. The Ramsar Secretariat is not required to investigate, judge, or monitor individual entries on the TRS list.

The first TRS was designated in 2001 by notifications from Hungary and Slovakia joining the Baradla Cave System and Domica Ramsar sites in a collaborative management relationship. As at January 2010, a total of twelve TRSs have been notified, and interest among Parties continues to grow (www.ramsar.org/trs).

The objectives of the Transboundary Ramsar Sites initiative are two-fold. First, for the Parties involved, the participating authorities are making a formal statement of their commitment to supporting Article 5 of the Convention, which says that “the Contracting Parties shall consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties.”

Second, for the Convention as a whole, the listing of Transboundary Ramsar Sites provides the opportunity to highlight wetland management arrangements that involve constructive collaborative relationships amongst Parties.

Participating Parties may wish to forward to the Secretariat materials such as texts of their collaborative agreements, legal declarations, joint management plans, reports of their joint meetings, etc., for possible use on the Ramsar website as news items or as best-practice examples for the possible use of other Parties.

level of knowledge regarding migratory species grows, so too does the imperative for the Convention to take a more strategic approach to the management of shared species. It is important to recognize that it is not always the very large wetland sites that are critical for the conservation of migratory species; many small wetlands are also vital elements of migration routes and they are important, collectively, for biodiversity conservation. It also should be understood that not all shared species are migratory. There are non-migratory species which have a limited range and are found in transboundary wetlands or within adjoining countries. For

these, cooperation in the management of their wetland sites, as encouraged through Section 2.1 above, is critical.

16. In recognition of the close relationship between them, there is a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Under this, the challenge for the Ramsar Convention is to work to see protected and managed appropriately the critical habitats for the endangered migratory species which CMS endeavours to conserve through multilateral agreements among the range states. The revised Ramsar Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance (Resolution VII.11), with their newly formulated Objectives, are now clearly focused on this as one fundamental element of the vision for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.
17. With this increase in the understanding of species distribution and biology has come a recognition that the shared species are more than just the waterbirds with their very noticeable migrations. In coastal wetland environments there are many species which migrate, such as marine turtles and certain fish stocks. The Convention, in partnership with CMS, must now turn its attention to these as well as its traditional clients, the waterbirds.
18. The very forces that motivated the establishment of the Ramsar Convention and CMS also played a role in the development of the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This Plan represents a signed agreement between the governments of Canada, the United States, and Mexico (as of 1994). Through the Plan, together they seek to recover and safeguard waterfowl populations by protecting and restoring the wetland habitats upon which they depend throughout North America. As with Ramsar,



The Vallée de la Haute-Sûre forms a length of the frontier between Belgium and Luxembourg – the respective portions were designated in 2003 as Ramsar sites by those countries and, jointly, as a Transboundary Ramsar Site. A joint management committee maintains a regular dialogue between national and regional authorities to reconcile the objectives of nature conservation, water quality improvement, and economic and social development. *Photo: Michel Fautsch.*

Additional information

Managing shared wetland-dependent species

Ramsar and the Convention on Migratory Species

Marine turtles are globally threatened or endangered species that rely on coastal wetland ecosystems. Under its Joint Work Plan with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Ramsar Convention will work towards the protection of important habitats for marine turtles through the designation of these areas as Wetlands of International Importance.



The Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, in the Parc Nacional de los Roques Ramsar site, Venezuela.
Photo: Ramsar / R. LeGuen.

international cooperation has been a priority of the Plan since its inception, and the conservation partnerships it has established to achieve it, called joint ventures, are a unique hallmark of the Plan. By encouraging these three countries to take both a landscape-level and partnership approach to conservation, the Plan not only offers long-term benefits to a wide range of wetland-dependent species but also serves as a model for international cooperation to be applied in other parts of the world. The conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific [has been] being promoted under the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy (1996-2000, [and then 2001-2005]) through the establishment of networks of migratory shorebirds, cranes and Anatidae (see Recommendation 6.4). [These arrangements have, since 2006, been taken forward by the *East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership*]. Also the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) has been successful in promoting conservation of shorebirds in the Americas through local partnerships developed at sites. (See pages 18-19.)

2.2.1 Migratory waterbirds

19. For migratory waterbirds the Ramsar Convention has a responsibility as a part of international cooperation to see the important wetland habitats which form flyways recognized and managed appropriately in perpetuity. The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance is the tool which the Convention has available to work toward this goal. Contracting Parties should have as a priority the identification and designation of all sites which satisfy the waterbird criteria for identifying wetlands for inclusion in the Ramsar List. With the development and implementation of management plans for these sites, the Convention will make a significant contribution to the global efforts to conserve these species. The concept of site networks (see Section 2.4.3) is one that the Convention should promote more strongly, in order to link the managers of these sites to allow for information sharing and to promote the setting of strategic conservation objectives rather than simply addressing these on a site-by-site basis.

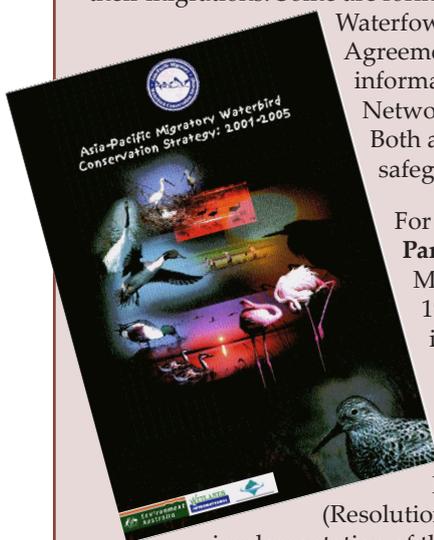
Additional information

Managing migratory waterbirds

International cooperation and the conservation of migratory waterbirds

With amazing precision, migratory birds fly hundreds, sometimes thousands, of kilometres each year, many leaving their breeding sites in the northern hemisphere in autumn to spend the boreal winter months in the southern hemisphere. Between the two areas, the migrants rely on suitable 'stopover' sites where they can rest and feed to refuel before continuing their journey. This complex lifestyle presents a special challenge to those concerned with their survival since one break in the chain of these flyways (the routes used by migratory birds) could spell disaster for whole populations of migrants. Collaborative efforts have to be made at an international level to ensure the conservation of all critical sites, which may be located in several different countries, hundreds of kilometres apart.

Over the last 20 years, a variety of innovative initiatives, complementary to the designation under the Ramsar Convention of networks of Ramsar Sites for waterbirds, have been established to safeguard critical sites for migratory birds which utilise coastal and inland wetland habitats during their migrations. Some are formal inter-governmental agreements such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), while others have involved the development of informal site networks such as the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) and the East Asian-Australasian *Flyway* Partnership. Both approaches have produced effective international mechanisms for safeguarding sites along flyways.



For the Asia and Oceania regions, the **East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership**, established in 2006 as the successor to the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbirds Conservation Strategy originally launched in 1996, provides a framework for important waterbird conservation initiatives. The original Strategy was developed through the collaborative efforts of many governmental and non-governmental organisations at a number of international conservation fora in 1994 and 1995. Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention were strongly encouraged at COP6 (through the Brisbane Initiative, Recommendation 6.3), COP7 (Recommendation 7.3), COP8 (Resolution VIII.37) and COP10 (Resolution X.22), to give their support to the implementation of the Strategy/the Partnership.

A priority of the Strategy has been the establishment of three highly successful migratory bird networks, on Cranes, Anatidae and Shorebirds, which have now been combined into the **East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network**. This international network includes 95 key wetland sites in 14 countries along the Asia-Pacific flyway (as of 2009) where efforts are made to safeguard critical stopover sites and to collect and exchange data on their migratory visitors. For further information visit <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/waterbirds/flyway-partnership/network.html>.

In 2008 under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species, an Action Plan on the Central Asian flyway was launched, containing provisions for species and habitat conservation, single species action plans and emergency measures. It will be an umbrella instrument for the creation in due course of a Central Asian Flyway Site Network.

Knowledge of migration patterns (when the species move and where) and of the key sites (breeding, non-breeding and stopover) is critical baseline information for effective conservation, yet this information is often scattered or unpublished. In support of the Asia-Pacific Strategy, the AEWA

and the Ramsar Convention, Wetlands International has begun compiling the available information into flyway atlases which cover taxonomic groups of waterbirds in geographic regions. Five atlases are available or in progress and more are planned.

For the Americas, the **Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN)** and **The North American Waterfowl Management Plan** work collaboratively in the USA, Canada and Mexico to strengthen shorebird and wetland conservation. The WHSRN, which extends to South America, is implemented through a coordinating office hosted at the Manomet Observatory (USA). Membership in this network, which includes public and private lands, is completely voluntary and as at 2009 there are 77 sites in 12 countries. For further information visit <http://www.whsrn.org/>.



The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, signed in 1986 by Canada and the United States of America, and by Mexico in 1994, is a collaborative conservation effort from thousands of partners representing a wide range of interests in the three countries. The challenge for the Plan was to coordinate and focus conservation activities in the three countries to measurably increase the populations of a highly mobile, shared migratory resource - waterbirds. While the Management Plan has been signed by the three governments, its success lies in the diverse and effective public-private partnerships which have evolved. These partnerships recognized that effective conservation efforts would have to go beyond the traditional focus on public natural resource lands to encompass whole landscapes, including private and common lands. This landscape approach to managing waterbird habitat seeks to balance conservation and socioeconomic objectives within a region, and long-term success depends on the commitment of local communities to the concept of stewardship, including planning, implementation and caretaking. The Plan was updated in 2004 and 2008, and is due to be revised in 2011/12.

Collectively, as at 2009, the partners have worked to conserve 15.7 million acres (over 6.3 million hectares) of wetland ecosystems, investing over US\$4.5 billion since 1986 in restoring, protecting, improving and managing wetland habitats for migratory birds, benefiting at the same time many other groups of animals and plants. This has been accomplished through a range of projects and joint ventures coordinated by a 21-member Plan Committee. For further information visit <http://www.nawmp.ca/>



Another formal agreement on migratory birds is the **African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**, which came into force in November 1999 and as at 2009 has 63 Contracting Parties. Under the Bonn Convention (the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals), this Agreement was spearheaded by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. It covers northern America, a large part of Eurasia and the whole of Africa (118 countries) and covers 255 species of waterbird. The Agreement has two parts both of which are legally binding. The Agreement text outlines the philosophy, legal framework and provisions, while the Action Plan describes the conservation actions to be undertaken. For further information visit <http://www.unep-aeewa.org>

The **“Wings over Wetlands” (“WOW”) African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways project**, completed in 2010 has been designed to deliver increased capacity for implementing both the Ramsar Convention and AEWA. Implemented by Wetlands International and BirdLife International, it has supported site-based conservation and wise use through demonstration projects and capacity-building through regional training boards. Two major products are a comprehensive *“Flyways Training Kit”* and an on-line *“Critical Sites Network Tool”* (CSN) to support identification and designation of key waterbird sites. The four WOW partner organizations are committed to continue their collaborative working to build on the success of the WOW project, and in June 2010 signed a formal WOW partnership agreement. For further information and to access the CSN Tool, visit: <http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/>.



Editor's addition. At COP10 in 2008, the Ramsar Parties adopted Resolution X.22 on *Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways*, in which they considered that flyway conservation should combine species- and ecosystem-based approaches and be coordinated throughout migratory ranges, noting among other things, for example, that a small number of sites are of critical importance to long-distance migrant shorebirds and that human activities at these sites can result in dramatic declines in shorebird populations. The Resolution strongly encourages Parties and other governments actively to support and participate in relevant international plans and programmes for the conservation of shared migratory waterbirds and their habitats, including the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, the western hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, the West/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and other waterbirds, and the Central Asian Action Plan for Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats. It further urges the governing bodies of flyway initiatives to take steps to share knowledge and expertise on best practices in the development and implementation of flyway-scale waterbird conservation policies and practices.

2.2.2 Other migratory species

20. As stated in the introduction to this section on shared wetland-dependent species, it is now recognized that the Ramsar Convention should be taking a more active role in the protection and management of wetland habitats for a wider range of species than simply the waterbirds. Under CMS, actions are under way [in the context of] multilateral agreements for the conservation of species such as marine turtles. The contribution of the Ramsar Convention to this can again be through the designation of critical habitats as Wetlands of International Importance and the encouragement of site networks. As with migratory waterbirds (see 2.2.1 above), the fish criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance provide one avenue for concerted action by the Contracting Parties to ensure that these critical areas on the migration routes are designated and managed appropriately.

Section B

Guidelines related to shared wetland-dependent species

- B1. Contracting Parties should give priority to the identification and designation of all sites which satisfy the waterbird criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, followed by the development and implementation of management plans for these sites. In the context of these guidelines this should apply especially for flyway and shared sites. Equally, for other wetland-dependent species shared between Contracting Parties (such as fish), the designation and management of their important wetland habitats is a responsibility in terms of international cooperation.
- B2. The concept of site networks for shared species is one that the Convention should promote more strongly, aiming to link the managers of these sites to allow for information sharing and technical and financial assistance when so required. The setting of strategic conservation objectives for networks as a whole, and for the species' populations they support, is crucial. Contracting Parties should consider nomination of sites to relevant international networks (East Asian-Australasian [Flyway Site Network] [...] and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network).

- B3. The Convention will also seek advice from the Convention on Migratory Species about wetland-dependent species and support its efforts to encourage the development [and implementation] of multilateral agreements for the conservation of these species.
- B4. Contracting Parties are urged to examine and adopt as appropriate regional models, such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the [East Asian-Australasian *Flyway* Partnership], in establishing multilateral agreements for the conservation of wetland-dependent species. Ideally, these agreements should include the partnership approaches promoted by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the [East Asian-Australasian *Flyway* Partnership] which bring together all levels of government administration, non-government organizations and the business sector.

2.3 Ramsar working in partnership with international/regional environment Conventions and agencies

Relevant implementation commitments made by Contracting Parties in COP Resolutions & Recommendations

Resolution X.11: Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

25. URGES Contracting Parties to take active steps at national level to improve regular liaison and collaboration between Ramsar Administrative Authorities and focal points and the focal points for related conventions and agreements, including as appropriate through their inclusion in National Ramsar/Wetland Committees, in order to ensure national responses to global environmental issues that will be as consistent as possible with the objectives and values of the Ramsar Convention.
21. [The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 adopted in 2008 provides direction under Strategy 3.1] on international cooperation related to international/regional environment conventions and agencies. Essentially this sets priorities for the Convention in the development of cooperation and synergy with these conventions and agencies in order to promote shared objectives and goals. The Ramsar Convention also has a unique partnership with a number of international non-government organizations (BirdLife International, [the International Water Management Institute - IWMI], IUCN- [International Union for Conservation of Nature], The World Wide Fund for Nature - WWF, and Wetlands International) and is seeking to allow for expansion in this area through Resolutions VII.3 [and IX.16]. Cooperation with these International Partners of the Convention will continue to accelerate implementation of the Convention at all levels from international to local.
- 2.3.1 Other global environment-related Conventions**
22. [Strategy 3.1 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015] and Resolutions VII.4, [VIII.5, IX.5 and X.11] refer to the development of cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the World Heritage Convention, the Man and Biosphere Programme, CMS (see 2.2 above), CITES (see 2.6.2

See also Handbook 5,
Partnerships

below), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The Convention on Wetlands has a Memorandum of Cooperation with CBD and a Joint Work Plan in which the Ramsar Convention has the role of lead partner in CBD wetland conservation issues. As indicated above, an MoU is also in place with CMS and under these Guidelines (see 2.2 above) this arrangement will be strengthened through joint actions also. Memoranda of Cooperation with the Convention to Combat Desertification and of Understanding with the World Heritage Convention were signed in December 1998 and May 1999 respectively. The Ramsar Convention will continue to develop similar arrangements with the other international conventions and, through these, to elaborate joint work plans. Section 2.6.2 of these Guidelines provides the basis for immediate cooperation with CITES.

Editor's addition. COP10 in 2008 adopted the latest in a series of Resolutions relating to partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions. This refers, *inter alia*, to the Convention's observer status in the Joint Liaison Group for the three Rio Conventions – the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) – and its membership of the Environment Management Group (EMG) of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Joint programmes of work with the CBD, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme and the World Heritage Centre are also referred to, along with encouragement to explore the development of a joint programme with UNCCD under the existing Memorandum of Cooperation with that Convention. Other institutions including UNEP, UNESCO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN-Water, the World Tourism Organization, and the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), UNEP-WCMC, the CGIAR networks and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are also mentioned, as are intergovernmental regional groups (such as, for Africa, SADC, EC, ECOWAS, IGAD, etc.).

23. At the national level, Contracting Parties need to ensure that the implementation of these conventions is harmonised and integrated wherever possible. Apart from domestic actions, each imposes obligations in terms of international cooperation and, in meeting these expectations, Contracting Parties should aim to coordinate their responses. This applies, to a greater or lesser degree, to all of the actions proposed herein and so taking an integrated approach should be more cost-effective.

2.3.2 Regional environment-related Conventions, agreements, organizations

24. As with the international environment conventions, the Ramsar Convention needs to develop partnerships with the relevant regional conventions, agreements and organizations. [Strategy 3.1] of the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan identifies several such regional conventions, agreements and organizations with which partnership actions should be a priority. Among these are the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and [regional seas conventions]. Partnership with such regional initiatives

will foster more cohesive responses to environmental challenges including wetland conservation and wise use.

Editor's addition. The Ramsar Convention has evolved its own process for nurturing regionally-based cooperation initiatives for wetland conservation and wise use (see Resolutions VII.22, VIII.30, IX.7 and X.6; and the current operational guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives, annexed to Resolution X.6, are reproduced in Appendix II of this Handbook. The Mediterranean Wetland Initiative (MedWet), involving the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, was the first such formally-endorsed Initiative, and it offers a model which continues to inspire similar moves in other parts of the world (see page 24).

2.3.3 International programmes and organizations

25. There are a large number of international programmes and organizations with which the Ramsar Convention should be working more closely. Some are operating under the aegis of the United Nations and its bodies and agencies (Commission on Sustainable Development, UNDP, UNEP, World Health Organization, etc.) and the development of a formal Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the relevant programmes of the United Nations will be pursued. Section 2.5 looks in detail at the relationship Ramsar should have with the donor community. Apart from these there are organizations and programmes such as the International Network of Basin Organizations [...] which can offer their expertise to the Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention and with which a closer working partnership would clearly be advantageous. As indicated above, the continuation of cooperative actions with the Convention's International Organization Partners (Resolutions VII.3 and IX.16 [...]) is also of critical importance, and efforts should be escalated at all levels to develop partnership approaches with these organizations. The Ramsar Convention will continue to develop partnerships with other appropriate international and regional conventions, agreements and programmes (as it has done with CBD, CMS, CCD and WHC) and through these to develop and implement joint programmes of work [see also paragraph 22 above].

Section C

Guidelines related to partnership with international/regional environment Conventions and agencies

- C1. At the national level, Contracting Parties should ensure that the implementation of environment conventions is harmonised wherever possible. This will allow each to take a more integrated approach to meeting its international and regional cooperation obligations.
- C2. The development of a formal Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the United Nations will be pursued, and the Convention [Secretariat] and Ramsar national Administrative Authorities are urged to pursue partnerships with the Convention's International Organization Partners and other relevant bodies such as the International Network of Basin Organizations [...]

Additional information

MedWet

A regional initiative for Mediterranean wetlands

The logo for MedWet features the word "MedWet" in a blue, sans-serif font. The text is tilted upwards to the right. Below the text is a stylized green wavy line that resembles a water surface or a wetland boundary.

Wetlands of the Mediterranean Basin have always been characteristic elements of the landscape, providing a livelihood to many people in the form of fishing, water use, grazing lands, recreation and hunting, and playing a vital role in their cultural life. Yet extensive degradation of these wetlands has occurred throughout history through human activities, and continues today at an accelerated pace. These ecosystems continue to play a significant social and economic role in the region and are valuable reservoirs of biological diversity.

During the 1970s and '80s, the realisation was steadily growing that human pressures on Mediterranean wetlands were reaching critical levels, with almost 50% losses during the 20th century. At the closing session of a symposium on *Managing Mediterranean Wetlands and their Birds*, in Grado, Italy, in 1991, Professor Edward T. Hollis and Dr Luc Hoffman challenged the participants to put their words into action, effectively precipitating the birth of the MedWet Initiative.

MedWet today represents a collaboration of all 25 governments of the region and the Palestinian Authority, as well as the European Commission, the Barcelona, Bern and Ramsar Conventions, and international NGOs and wetland centres. Their ambitious goal is to stop and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands.

MedWet became formally endorsed within the framework of the Ramsar Convention through Resolution VII.22 adopted by COP7 in 1999, and was the first of a number of what are now referred to as "Ramsar Regional Initiatives". It works under the guidance of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) which operates under the Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands. The MedWet Coordination Unit was established through Resolution VIII.30 adopted by COP8 in 2002. MedWet receives financial support from the Ramsar Secretariat, the Mediterranean countries, and especially the Greek government, which hosts the MedWet Coordination Unit, while its programme has been funded on a project basis by, among others, the European Commission, the GEF, national and intergovernmental donor agencies and foundations. Since its inception, MedWet has mobilised significant resources for the protection of Mediterranean wetlands by developing and applying methods and tools for their study, management and conservation. These have made full use of the extensive technical and scientific knowledge and expertise available throughout this very diverse region.

The MedWet Coordination Unit, together with the MedWet wetland centres, make up the MedWet Team, whose main purpose is the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan in the Mediterranean region. The five MedWet centres are:

- The Tour du Valat Biological Station in the Camargue, France;
- The Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (EKBY) in Thessaloniki, Greece;
- The Sede para el estudio de los humedales mediterráneos (SEHUMED), based at València University, in Spain;
- The Instituto da Conservação da Natureza (ICN) in Lisbon, Portugal;
- Agenzia regionale per la protezione ambientale della Toscana (ARPAT), Florence, Italy.,

The Initiative is complemented by a number of networks established to address a specific theme or geographical region and to bring together experts and interested parties from a broad range of scientists, NGOs, and government officials.

MedWet, as the first Regional Initiative of the Ramsar Convention, works in close collaboration with the Contracting Parties in the Mediterranean region, as well as all other interested partners from the scientific and NGO sectors. Its aim is to plan and secure the means for implementing those activities that will allow the countries to best implement the Ramsar Strategic Plan, and therefore fulfill their engagements towards the Convention by effectively protecting wetlands while securing the livelihoods of people depending on them.

For further information on MedWet contact:

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2.4 Sharing of expertise and information

2.4.1 Knowledge sharing

26. In all countries there exists knowledge and expertise in wetland management. Sometimes this resides with the indigenous people who may have relied upon the wetland ecosystems for generations, and who have applied wise use practices to sustain them for centuries. There is also that unwritten understanding which people living in association with a wetland have acquired from being a part of the same ecosystem over time, an understanding which has built an empathy and a respect for the values of the wetland. Then there is the cutting edge of new understanding born of research and the development of new technologies. This can be practical, hands-on research, more sophisticated equipment or low-cost technologies, or it can be about promoting better management practices through the application of new science in the many fields which wetland managers must now embrace.

See also Handbook 6,
Wetland CEPA

27. A key to the Ramsar Convention achieving its global mission is to find ways to increase the sharing of this knowledge resource. Through the *Convention's [CEPA] Programme* ([Resolution X.8]), Focal Points for Wetland Communication, Education and Public Awareness should be appointed, and similarly, a National Focal Point in each Contracting Party for the business of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel should be designated (Resolutions [IX.11 and X.9]). These Focal Points are expected to form global networks of expertise and review their national resources in these two fields (traditional and local knowledge and current/cooperative research findings) with a view to promoting knowledge sharing. It is also important that these focal points, Ramsar Administrative Authorities, and the Ramsar [Secretariat] take every opportunity to collaborate with those involved in implementing other conventions to foster the accelerated sharing of knowledge. The concept of national or regional data collection centres is one which is gaining increasing support in some parts of the world.

2.4.2 Training

28. Training people to implement all aspects of the Convention, and to manage wetland sites, remains a high priority. Globally, there are a range of institutions providing training in these various fields. The challenge for the Convention is to deliver the right sort of training to the people that need and desire it. The Ramsar [Secretariat] [...] assembled information on this through a Directory of Wetland Management Training Opportunities [...]. [Note: updating of this directory was effectively discontinued in 1999]. However, this does not provide the resources needed to get wetland practitioners into training programmes, or to see training programmes delivered on-site in those Contracting Parties where it is urgently needed. Another gap is that very few countries have conducted analyses to determine their priority training needs at the national, subnational and local levels. Without such reviews of training needs, there is a risk that the training provided or offered will lack relevance.
29. Recognizing the need for sharing and delivering training to people to implement all aspects of the Convention in the Asia-Pacific region and the lack of existing international mechanisms, a model of the training initiative based on the Wetlands for the Future Initiative in the Neotropics should be developed in the Asia-Pacific. Such an initiative would benefit from the establishment of a regional wetland training coordination centre in the Asia-Pacific. [The Ramsar Regional Centre East Asia (RRc-EA) in the Republic of Korea now delivers this role for part of the region.]
30. A priority under the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* is to mobilise resources for training. Site twinings and networks (see 2.4.3 below) may provide one avenue for mobilising training resources. Another is through direct approaches to the bilateral and multilateral donor community (see Section 2.5). The Ramsar Small Grants Fund has training as a priority, and with the generous support of the Government of the USA the Ramsar [Secretariat] manages the Wetlands for the Future Initiative, which focuses on training and capacity-building programmes in the Neotropical region (see pages 28-29 and 34-35).

2.4.3 Site twinning or networks

31. Under the Ramsar Convention the concept of twinning between Ramsar Sites in different Contracting Parties is encouraged as a way to promote dialogue and information sharing. The National Reports submitted for Ramsar COP7 indicate that at that time there were fewer than 25 site twinings in place involving Contracting Parties. Equally, the concept of site networks linking the wetlands used by migratory species has been encouraged under the Convention.
32. As suggested by the number of twinning arrangements in place at present, the full potential of this concept as a tool to promote international cooperation under the Convention has not been fully explored as yet, and it is a priority to do so through these Guidelines. Such arrangements should be pursued by Contracting Parties as a priority with the act of twinning or networking intended to carry with it the intent for sharing information,

expertise and resources between the sites involved. These mechanisms can provide the framework for personnel exchanges for the purposes of training as much as opportunities for knowledge sharing about species and site management.

33. Twinning and site networks can also provide a way for development assistance to be provided in a directed way, especially in north-south arrangements between sites.

Section D

Guidelines related to the sharing of expertise and information

- D1. Through the Focal Points for Wetland Communication, Education, [Participation] and Awareness and for the work of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Convention will increase its efforts to share knowledge (traditional, indigenous, and more recently derived technologies and methods) among Contracting Parties. A priority for these Focal Points should be to establish expert networks at the national level to allow for the rapid gathering and dissemination of this information.
- D2. Training of the personnel responsible for implementing the Convention and all aspects of wetland management remains a very high priority for the Convention and should be promoted through information sharing (see above), mobilising resources from the development assistance community, programmes such as the Ramsar Small Grants Fund and Wetlands for the Future in the Neotropics, and through site twinning and networking. Other Contracting Parties are urged to follow the examples of existing and successful training programme efforts for wetland practitioners.
- D3. A necessary precursor to undertaking training activities is to assess the training needs at the national, subnational and local levels to ensure relevance.
- D4. Contracting Parties are urged to give priority to site twinning and networking as a way to promote information sharing among site managers, to provide training opportunities, and where appropriate to direct development assistance.

2.5 International assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands

34. The Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention have long recognized the importance of mobilizing international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and that this forms a central element of international cooperation under Article 5. The first Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Recommendation 1.2, called on developing countries to “pay more attention to conservation measures in any request for and programming of assistance, and upon developed countries and international organizations to pay due attention to these requests in their development aid policies”. The subsequent Conferences of the Contracting Parties have approved a [number of] additional Resolutions and Recommendations (see [examples in] Section 1.2) calling for enhanced funding for wetland conservation and improved management and control of development assistance funding.

Additional information

Wetlands for the Future

An initiative to promote training in the management of wetlands in Latin America and the Caribbean



An agreement between the Ramsar Convention and the government of the United States of America (through the State Department and the Fish and Wildlife Service) established this initiative in 1995 in order to sponsor small-scale wetland training projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since that time WFF has funded over 220 projects in over 22 countries through grants ranging from several hundred dollars to a maximum of US\$20,000, with required counterpart funding representing at least 50 per cent of the total cost of the project.

With the broad aim of strengthening the capacity of institutions and individuals to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the region, the initiative has supported projects designed and implemented by NGOs, government agencies, universities, documentation centres and the individuals associated with these institutions. Some of the early examples include:

A **Fundación Proteger**-led project in **Argentina** to improve the livelihoods of local fishing communities and maintain the health of the 2,000,000 hectares of riparian wetlands in the Middle Paraná River. The project trained local fishermen, fishermen associations, NGOs, legislators, and representatives of local, provincial and national government in relevant legislation, trade union issues, and fish commercialization. The project also funded a communications campaign that included a bi-monthly newsletter, educational materials and press releases on wetland and fisheries issues.

A training program during 2001, led by **Fundación Obra Maestra, Ecuador**, for 30 local leaders around the Reserva Ecológica Cayapas-Mataje Ramsar Site on the values and functions of wetlands, mangrove ecology and conservation, response towards possible oil spills in the area, environmental law, the Ramsar Convention, and political and community leadership. The funding also allowed the purchase of a small motorboat named **Ramsar I** to carry out patrolling and surveillance activities in the reserve.



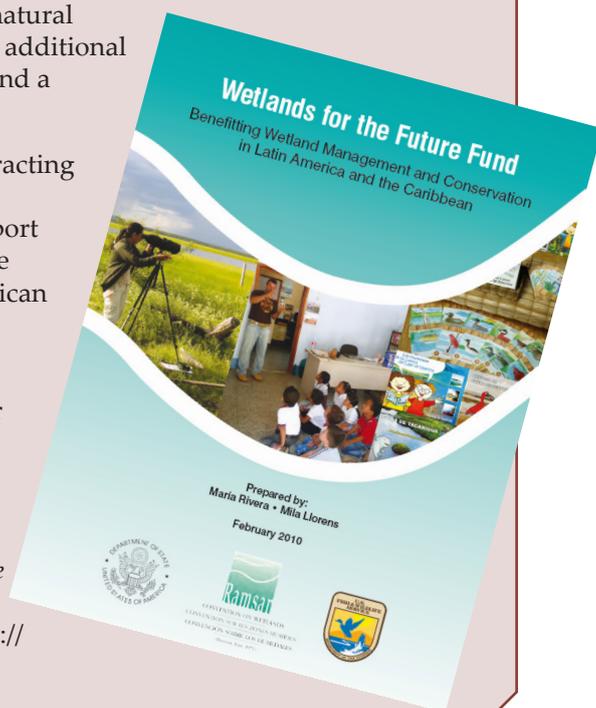
A training course during 2002, carried out by **Fundación Propetén, Guatemala**, for agro-foresters and park rangers in the Las Guacamayas Biological Station in Laguna del Tigre National Park (a Ramsar Site on the Montreux Record). Thirty-nine community leaders and park rangers graduated from the course. The programme included a range of courses such

as: community organization and development; wetland ecology; protected area legislation; forest soils and nurseries, roles and functions of park rangers; basic research and monitoring techniques.

Two related WWF projects carried out by the **Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)**, the second completed in 2003, using the Mankòtè Mangrove Ramsar Site in **Saint Lucia** as a model for the production and testing of a training module on participatory processes leading to collaborative management. Intended for use with senior level university students and for in-service training with natural resource managers, the teaching module comes with additional supportive materials including an 18-minute video and a Powerpoint presentation.

Recommendation 7.4, adopted at COP7, urged Contracting Parties and organizations concerned about wetland conservation and sustainable use to initiate and support programmes in other parts of the world similar to the Wetlands for the Future initiative, particularly in African and the francophone countries.

More detailed information on the WFF Initiative is available from the brochure produced by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat or through the Secretariat's website at <http://www.ramsar.org/WFF/>. The text of Recommendation 7.4 The Wetlands for the Future Initiative is available at http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/rec/key_rec_7.04e.pdf. See also *Wetlands for the Future Fund: Benefitting wetland management and conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Ramsar, 2010). http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/wff/wff_pub2010_e.pdf.



35. [The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015, under Strategy 3.3], provides further directions for intensifying international cooperation activities and mobilising financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

2.5.1 Enhancing environmental funding for wetlands

36. The support for wetland conservation and wise use from several of the bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies has been steadily increasing over the past five years. This comes as a result of a growing recognition of the functions, values and benefits provided by wetland ecosystems and their importance for food and water security, poverty alleviation, and the conservation of biological diversity. However, it is of concern that the budgets and geographic and thematic coverage of some development assistance agencies have been significantly reduced during this same period. (See also Ramsar DOC.20.4, presented to Technical Session V of COP7, *Mobilising financial support from bilateral and multilateral donors for the implementation of the Convention*, by Faizal Parish and C.C. Looi, available from the Ramsar Convention Bureau's website at www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-31-58-83^18639_4000_0.)

Relevant implementation commitments made by Contracting Parties in COP Resolutions & Recommendations

Resolution X.7: Optimizing the Ramsar Small Grants Fund during the period 2009-2012

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. REITERATES its conviction that the level of resources available to the Ramsar SGF should be increased to 1 million Swiss francs annually, and INVITES the developed Contracting Parties to make voluntary donations to the SGF and to seek the assistance of other organizations to meet this target in time for each annual funding cycle;
11. ENCOURAGES all potential donors who are not able to make an unrestricted voluntary contribution to the Small Grants Fund to contribute to the funding of specific projects described in the Ramsar Small Projects Portfolio, with a view to funding a maximum total number of valuable projects each year.
34. The Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention have long recognized the importance of mobilizing international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and that this forms a central element of international cooperation under Article 5. The first Conference of the Contracting Parties, in Recommendation 1.2, called on developing countries to "pay more attention to conservation measures in any request for and programming of assistance, and upon developed countries and international organizations to pay due attention to these requests in their development aid policies". The subsequent Conferences of the Contracting Parties have approved a [number of] additional Resolutions and Recommendations (see [examples in] Section 1.2) calling for enhanced funding for wetland conservation and improved management and control of development assistance funding.
35. [The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015, under Strategy 3.3], provides further directions for intensifying international cooperation activities and mobilising financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.
37. Given the recognized importance of wetlands from environmental, economic and social perspectives, a priority under the Guidelines for International Cooperation is for Contracting Parties, and their bilateral development assistance agencies, to increase allocations for wetland conservation and wise use through existing environmental and other funds. At the same time, these agencies are encouraged to investigate and consider supporting the establishment in developing countries of innovative mechanisms for long-term fund generation for wetland conservation activities such as trust funds, user-pays contribution schemes, and the like.
38. In terms of multilateral assistance, Ramsar Resolution VI.10 noted the relevance of the GEF focal areas to wetlands and called for extension and deepening of cooperation with the GEF. Subsequently, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), through Decision IV/4 of its Fourth Conference of the Contracting Parties in 1998, urged Contracting Parties to seek the support of the GEF for the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems. Eligible Contracting Parties should examine this CBD Decision in detail and prepare suitable proposals for consideration by the GEF (see page 32).
39. Contracting Parties and development assistance agencies are also encouraged to make long-term financial commitments to support the operations of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and

Wise Use (SGF). The evaluation of the SGF (Annexed to Resolution VII.5) has shown its value and effectiveness but revealed that many suitable projects each year cannot be supported due to a lack of financial resources for disbursement. (See also page 34-35.)

40. [In line with Action 15.1.4 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008] Contracting Parties should also ensure that for their bilateral donor agencies there is appropriate monitoring of expenditures occurring in order to allow them to indicate to Conferences of the Contracting Parties what level and type of assistance has been provided to developing countries and countries in transition in meeting their Ramsar obligations, and its effectiveness. Ideally, this would be provided through the introduction, where it does not exist at present, of a reporting category for wetland conservation issues into the project monitoring databases of the development assistance agencies.

2.5.2 Ensuring adequate consideration of wetlands in sectoral strategies and development programmes

41. Apart from the issue of mobilising finances, previous Ramsar Conferences of the Contracting Parties have also considered the responsibilities of the development assistance agencies in terms of considering wetland-related projects in their sectoral as well as broader strategies and policies. Recommendation 3.4 urged the development assistance agencies “to formulate and adopt coherent policies directed at sustainable utilization, wise management and conservation of wetlands; and to create special programmes to ensure the integration of these policies into all of their activities”.
42. Although it is apparent that significant progress has been made in implementing certain elements of Recommendation 3.4, such as the use of Environmental Impact Assessments, other aspects remain to be implemented fully. A continuing priority is to ensure that wetland issues are appropriately considered within sectoral strategies and the general programmes of the development assistance agencies. Activities in the agriculture, fisheries, water resources, forestry, transportation and power generation sectors can potentially impact on wetlands, and it is vital that the strategies and policies directing the allocation of these financial resources are consistent with the Ramsar principle of wise use and these Guidelines for International Cooperation.
43. In particular, Contracting Parties with development assistance agencies should ensure that the actions called for under Recommendations 3.4 and 5.5 are undertaken, namely, “to take appropriate steps for an assessment of their policies at regular intervals” (Recommendation 3.4) and “to review their development cooperation policies, in the light of the obligations and opportunities presented by Ramsar, [and] to support country-driven projects with a view to assisting developing countries to fulfill their Ramsar obligations” (Recommendation 5.5). In this regard, reviews should be undertaken by these Contracting Parties to determine the extent to which the wetland conservation and wise use principles promoted by the Ramsar Convention are adequately considered in the policies related to the agriculture, fisheries, water resources, forestry, transport and power generation sectors, and to seek the necessary introductions or amendments to these policies.

Additional information

**The Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
and the Global Environment Facility (GEF)**



The CBD has formally recognized the Ramsar Convention as its lead partner for wetland-related activities, and the two Conventions have signed a Memorandum of Understanding and developed successive Joint Work Plans that provide a framework for enhanced cooperation between the two Conventions.

In the context of the Joint Work Plan, the CBD's 4th Conference of Parties in May, 1998, adopted Decision IV/4, relating to biological diversity of inland water ecosystems. The Decision, part of which is reproduced below, encourages Contracting Parties of both Conventions to develop appropriate projects for GEF funding:

Extract from Decision IV/4

Status and trends of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and options for conservation and sustainable use

4. Encourages the implementation of the Joint Work Plan with the Convention on Wetlands in document UNEP/CBD/COP/4/Inf.8, as recommended by the Conference of the Parties in its decision III/21 and by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice in recommendation III/1, part A, section I, paragraph (b) and endorsed by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting as a framework for enhanced cooperation between the Conventions through decision IV/15;
6. Recognizing that Global Environment Facility projects are country-driven, requests the Financial Mechanism, within the context of implementing national biological diversity strategies and action plans, to provide adequate and timely support to eligible projects which help Parties to develop and implement national, sectoral and cross-sectoral plans for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity of inland water ecosystems.
7. Urges Parties when requesting support, for projects related to inland water ecosystems, from the Financial Mechanism that priority be given to:
 - (a) Identifying inland water ecosystems in accordance with Article 7 and Annex I of the Convention, taking into account the criteria for Wetlands of International Importance as adopted under the Convention on Wetlands;
 - (b) Preparing and implementing integrated watershed, catchment and river basin management plans based on an ecosystem approach including transboundary watersheds, catchments and river basins, and those which include ecosystems identified under subparagraph (a) above;
 - (c) Investigating where appropriate, the processes contributing to the loss of biological diversity of inland water ecosystems, through targeted research, such as: investigations into the impacts of harmful substances, alien invasive species and saltwater intrusions; and the identification of measures needed to address these issues where they constitute threats to inland water ecosystem biological diversity;

Full texts of Memoranda of Understanding and Cooperation with other conventions and international organizations (including the Joint Work Plan with the CBD) are available from the Ramsar Secretariat or from the Secretariat's website at www.ramsar.org/mous.

44. In such reviews of the sectoral strategies and policies of their development assistance agencies, Contracting Parties should also seek to encourage the priority consideration of projects which apply the wise use principles of the Convention through environmentally sound development activities in wetlands, such as sustainable forestry or fishery, wetland restoration, ecotourism, non-structural flood control, etc.

2.5.3 Supporting integration of wetland issues into national planning frameworks

See also Handbook
2, National Wetland
Policies

45. Article 3 of the Convention calls on all Contracting Parties to formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of wetlands. Through the *Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept* and related decisions of Conferences of the Contracting Parties, the development of a national wetland policy or strategy has been recognized as perhaps the best way of integrating wetlands into the national conservation and development agenda (Resolution VII.6 on *Guidelines for developing and implementing National Wetland Policies*).
46. In the same way, Recommendation 3.4 urged development assistance agencies “to use their influence with borrowing or recipient governments to promote the formulation and adoption of national policies for wise use and conservation of wetlands” and this should remain a priority. The formulation of wetland policies should also be an integral part of broader national planning related to social issues and economic development, and Contracting Parties are encouraged to promote such approaches. This may require assistance by means of capacity building or with direct assistance for incorporating wetland conservation and wise use considerations into sectoral development policies and the overall economic development plans for each country.

2.5.4 Improving capacity of development assistance agencies

47. One mechanism for increasing the number of wetland-related projects supported by development assistance agencies is to raise the level of awareness amongst planners and policy-makers within these organizations, of the many functions and benefits provided by wetlands. [The Convention’s Programme on communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) (Resolution X.8)] identifies these officials as a priority target group, and Contracting Parties are urged to ensure that efforts are made to provide appropriate training and resource materials for the key decision-makers within their development assistance agencies.
48. Some assistance has been forthcoming in this area with publications such as the OECD Guidelines on Aid and Environment No.9: *Guidelines for Aid Agencies for Improved Conservation and Sustainable Use of Tropical and Sub-tropical Wetlands* (see page 36). However, there remains a need to raise the general awareness and understanding of these agencies through a range of actions, many of which have been considered by previous decisions of Conferences of the Contracting Parties. Actions encouraged include internal and external training programmes “to strengthen the ecological expertise in all departments involved in development and implementation of projects affecting wetlands” (Recommendation 3.4), enhancing linkages with the Ramsar Administrative Authority within the country and “including

Additional information

The Small Grants Fund of the Ramsar Convention

Established in 1990, the Small Grants Fund (SGF) provides financial support to developing countries, and countries with their economies in transition, to further the aims of wetland conservation and wise use promoted by the Convention. Providing up to 40,000 Swiss Francs to support suitable projects, it is an effective programme for many countries requiring assistance for small-scale or emergency projects which the larger funding programmes are unlikely to support. While SGF funds do not replace the need for most countries to have access to much more substantial levels of funding, they are highly cost-effective and are intended to be catalytic in their effects, helping countries to complete the preparatory work which can lead to greater access to major project funding from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

Funds have been used to support a wide range of activities, including site restoration, training in wetland management, awareness-raising, management planning, policy development and inventory. Although applications have to be endorsed by the Administrative Authority of the Convention in each country, the projects can be designed and implemented by NGOs, other government agencies, research institutions, etc. A few specific examples, taken from the SGF reports received in 2003, include:

- **Enhancement of public education and awareness of Sam Roi Yot wetlands in Thailand.** This project strengthened the local communities' understanding of wetland functions and values in preparation for the designation of the wetlands as a Ramsar Site through training courses, youth camps, World Wetlands Day activities, and the production of posters and booklets. As part of this project, local teachers were trained in the development of a locally relevant wetland curriculum.
- **Wetlands inventory in Croatia.** Carried out to identify the most valuable wetlands in the country, the project used the CRO WET database to record relevant data collected at 3,800 sites as well as eight large wetland complexes. Additionally, a list of Croatian wetlands including general information on each site was prepared along with GIS maps. The results of the inventory process were disseminated through a leaflet, a 1:100,000 map showing wetlands, an educational poster, and a brochure, and online information on the project, including the database, is available at http://www.dzpz.hr/eng_project_crowet.htm.
- **An assessment of the ecotourism potential and products in Lake Nakuru National Park Ramsar Site.** Co-funded by Australia's **Banrock Station**, which donated its Evian Special Prize of \$10,000 from the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award in 2002, the study identified six ecotourism zones and the stakeholders who should be involved, including local communities who, until now, have received few benefits from the many visitors. It considered some of the major problems / constraints in the management and promotion of ecotourism at the lake with suggestions on how these could be overcome.



The Fund relies exclusively upon the voluntary contributions from government agencies and both national and international NGOs. Between 1991 and 2008 the Fund provided a total of 7.5 million Swiss Francs to 227 projects from 108 countries. Over this same period, 338 projects (68%) that were considered suitable for funding were not supported due to lack of funds. Options for ways and means of establishing a firm and stable base of resourcing for the SGF continue under discussion by the Convention's Standing Committee.

Operational Guidelines for the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for the period 2009-2012 are available from the Ramsar Secretariat or from http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sgf/key_sgf_guide_2009-12_e.pdf.

Each year a rigorous evaluation procedure is carried out by the Ramsar Secretariat to assess the project proposals according to the strength of the project design and proposal presentation, their relevance to the objectives of the Fund, and the capacity of the proponents to complete the project successfully. In recent years, favourably evaluated projects are summarized in an annual *Portfolio*, available from the Secretariat and from the SGF page of the Convention's website (see above), for perusal by potential donors who are thereby assisted and encouraged in selecting projects for funding. The Portfolios for 2008 and 2009 included 19 and 28 projects respectively.

representatives of ministries responsible for the granting or receipt of development assistance in the delegations to meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties" (Recommendation 5.5).

2.5.5 Enhancing capacity of recipient governments

49. Success in mobilising the flow of development assistance for wetland-related projects is in part determined by the capacities, in terms of project development and implementation, of the recipient country and its willingness to give priority to wetland projects when seeking development assistance. The issue of capacity is a complex one that has to be considered on a case by case basis. The constraints may be determined by factors such as lack of human resources or the lack of experience with project development and dealings with donor agencies. The failure to have wetland-related projects given priority within national governments is also a complex question and may relate to factors such as a lack of awareness of the true values of wetlands among key decision-makers or a failure to have wetlands considered within the mainstream of government business through instruments such as an integrated planning processes, a National Wetland Policy, or a National Ramsar Committee.
50. Previous Ramsar Conferences of the Contracting Parties have agreed that development assistance agencies should seek to "strengthen the institutional arrangements and the ecological expertise both at the national level and among regional development authorities in the project regions, in order to implement . . . policies and to train and educate personnel at project implementation level" (Recommendation 3.4). Potential recipient countries should seek training opportunities for their personnel to provide them with the necessary technical and project development skills. Section 2.4 of these Guidelines is relevant here. Recipient countries are also further urged to seek resources from donors for the development of National Wetland Policies (or similar) and for implementing national communication, education

Additional information

Guidelines for Aid Agencies for Improved Conservation and Sustainable Use of Tropical and Sub-Tropical Wetlands

Guidelines on Aid and Environment No. 9, by the OECD Development Assistance Committee

The Development Assistance Committee of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) has prepared a series of Guidelines on subjects relating to aid and environment. The guidelines relating to wetlands, the ninth in the series, provide an overview on wetland issues, as well as policy orientations for aid donors and information for those seeking an in-depth understanding of wetland issues. Recognizing the Ramsar Convention as a key convention in the conservation of wetlands, it makes frequent reference to the Ramsar principles of wise use and to materials incorporated in the Convention's resolutions and recommendations.



Following introductory material on wetlands, their importance and causes of loss, Part 1 of the text presents policy orientation for donors, identifying the recommended principles and practices for development assistance that take wetlands into account.

Donor agencies are encouraged to promote the development of National Wetland Policies and ensure that wetland conservation and sustainable use is incorporated into sectoral policies, programmes and projects. It recommends that agencies develop their own internal wetland policies that commit the agency to support wetland wise use projects and discourage support of any activities that are likely to damage wetlands in the absence of adequate compensation measures. Donor agencies are further encouraged to promote the integration of wetlands into the environmental assessment process, the adoption of mitigation measures where projects have negative impacts on wetlands, and the development of wetland-focused projects.

Part 2 of the text, covering the different types, functions and benefits of wetlands, provides the reader with a more in-depth understanding of wetland issues. Briefly describing the types and functions of wetlands, this section goes on to encourage valuation techniques which incorporate environmental economic values. It goes on to consider the direct threats to wetlands resulting from physical, biological and chemical changes through development projects, and tabulates the principal impacts and mitigation measures of a range of development project types ranging from agriculture, forestry and fishery projects to those developing hydropower, thermal and nuclear power, roads and rail, mining, etc. The final section of Part 2 offers advice to agencies on addressing the underlying issues affecting society and governance that lead to wetland loss. It identifies social, legal, economic, policy and institutional issues which need to be addressed in developing wetland-sensitive assistance programmes.

Available in PDF format from OECD's website at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/37/8/1887748.pdf> and in hard copy from:
Development Co-operation Directorate,
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
2, rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France

and public awareness programmes for wetlands consistent with the Convention's [CEPA Programme (Resolution X.8)]. Both measures should serve to give wetland-related projects higher priority for funding assistance.

2.5.6 Enhancing cooperation among development assistance agencies and with Ramsar Administrative Authorities

51. As wetland conservation and its wise use continues to be an increasingly important issue in many developing countries, development agencies should "coordinate their programmes at the international level to ensure that their independent activities do not in combination adversely affect wetlands" (Recommendation 3.4) and enhance cooperation with other development assistance agencies in sharing experiences and avoiding possible duplication of their activities in countries receiving assistance.
52. The matter of enhancing cooperation between the development assistance agency and the Ramsar Administrative Authority of the country was recognized under Section 2.5.4 above as an important aspect of raising the capacity of the former [...]. Contracting Parties are encouraged to develop a formal mechanism for consultations between their development assistance agency and the Ramsar Administrative Authority, and to ensure that National Ramsar Committees, where they exist, include a representative of the development assistance agency. The participation of a representative of the development assistance agency on the delegation to Ramsar Conferences of the Contracting Parties is also urged (Recommendation 5.5).

Section E

Guidelines related to international assistance to support wetland conservation and wise use

- E1. A continuing high priority for the Ramsar Convention is for Contracting Parties, and especially their bilateral development assistance agencies, to increase allocations for wetland conservation and wise use.
- E2. The bilateral development assistance agencies are urged to investigate and consider supporting the establishment in developing countries of innovative mechanisms for long-term fund generation for wetland conservation activities, such as trust funds and user-pays contribution schemes, together with other incentive measures for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- E3. Contracting Parties of both the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are urged to examine CBD's Decision IV/4 and where appropriate to respond to its indications in terms of seeking financial support from the Global Environment Facility for suitable proposals related to the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems.
- E4. Contracting Parties and development assistance agencies are requested to make long-term financial commitments to support the operations of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) (Resolution VII.5).
- E5. Contracting Parties should also ensure that for their bilateral donor agencies there is appropriate monitoring of expenditures which will allow them to indicate to the [...]

Conference of the Contracting Parties the level, type, and effectiveness of assistance provided to developing countries in meeting their Ramsar obligations.

- E6. In order to ensure that wetland issues are appropriately considered within sectoral strategies and the general programmes of the development assistance agencies, Contracting Parties are encouraged to undertake reviews to determine the extent to which the Ramsar wise use principles are adequately considered in the policies related to the agriculture, fisheries, water resources, forestry, transport and power generation sectors, and to seek the necessary additions or amendments to these policies.
- E7. Through their bilateral assistance programmes, and involvement with multilateral programmes, Contracting Parties should also support projects which apply the wise use principles of the Convention through environmentally sound development activities in wetlands.
- E8. As recognized by the *Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept*, it is important that Contracting Parties prepare a suitable national policy framework for implementing the Convention, and this should remain a priority for those countries seeking donor assistance. The formulation of wetland policies should also be an integral part of broader national planning related to social issues and economic development (Resolution VII.6).
- E9. [The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme of the Ramsar Convention (Resolution X.8)] identifies the key decision-makers within the development assistance agencies as a priority target group, and Contracting Parties are urged to ensure that efforts are made to provide appropriate training and resource materials for these officials.
- E10. There remains a need to raise the general awareness and understanding of wetland functions and values among the staff of the development assistance agencies. Actions encouraged include internal and external training programmes, enhanced linkages with the Ramsar Administrative Authority within the country, and the inclusion of representatives of development assistance agencies in the delegations to meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.
- E11. Contracting Parties should continue to implement Recommendation 3.4 which agreed that development assistance agencies should seek to “strengthen the institutional arrangements and the ecological expertise both at the national level and among regional development authorities in the project regions, in order to implement . . . policies and to train and educate personnel at project implementation level”.
- E12. In order to increase the level of funds flowing to wetland-related projects, potential recipient countries are encouraged, as appropriate, to seek training opportunities for their personnel in order to provide them with the necessary technical and project development skills.
- E13. Recipient countries are urged to seek resources from donors for the development of National Wetland Policies (or similar) and for implementing national communication, education, [participation] and awareness programmes for wetlands consistent with [the Convention’s CEPA Programme (Resolution X.8)]. Both measures should serve to give wetland-related projects higher national priority for gaining funding assistance.
- E14. Development assistance agencies should “coordinate their programmes at the international level to ensure that their independent activities do not in combination

adversely affect wetlands” (Recommendation 3.4) and enhance cooperation with other development assistance agencies in sharing experiences and avoiding possible duplication of their activities in countries receiving assistance.

- E15. Contracting Parties are encouraged to develop a formal mechanism for consultations between their development assistance agency and the Ramsar Administrative Authority, and to ensure that National Ramsar Committees, where they exist, include a representative of the development assistance agency.

2.6 Sustainable harvesting and international trade in wetland-derived plant and animal products

53. The Ramsar Convention promotes the conservation and wise (sustainable) use of wetlands, and this includes the harvesting of plant and animal products from these wetlands. At the local scale, such harvesting at Ramsar-listed sites should be regulated by a management plan developed in close consultation with the stakeholders (Recommendation 6.13). Article 3.1 of the Convention also urges that Contracting Parties promote “as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory”.
54. In terms of international cooperation under the Convention, trade in plant and animal products derived from wetlands which extend beyond national boundaries should therefore also be regulated to ensure that harvesting is being done in a sustainable way. If such harvesting is taking place at a Ramsar-listed site, then the Contracting Party has a clear obligation to ensure that the impact of the harvesting will not threaten or alter the ecological character of the site. This applies especially for transboundary wetland sites, shared by two or more Contracting Parties.

2.6.1 Harvesting controls and monitoring

55. Wetlands, as highly productive ecosystems, have always been exploited for their natural products. Through its Wise Use concept the Ramsar Convention recognizes that such harvesting will continue and seeks to ensure that it is done in such a way that the resource can be available to sustain future generations. There are several ways that Contracting Parties can seek to ensure that the harvesting of wetland-derived plant and animal products is sustainable. The special case of trade in protected or endangered species is considered in 2.6.2, but for other species Contracting Parties are encouraged to monitor international trade and, where it involves wetland-derived species, to implement the necessary legal, institutional and administrative measures to require that harvesting is biologically sustainable. In some instances, it may even be desirable to have mechanisms in place which direct resources from the trade in these products back to wetland conservation and wise use. Management plans for the sites where these products originate, as well as scientifically-based Species Management Plans, are also strongly encouraged.
56. Ramsar Contracting Parties also have a responsibility to ensure that wetland-derived plant and animal products being imported into their territory from another Contracting Party are being harvested sustainably, especially where these involve species listed under the Convention on International Trade

Additional information

The Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GGAP)

The Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GGAP), adopted as the Annex to Resolution VIII.17 by the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties, Valencia, Spain, 2002, have not been included as a separate volume in this 4th Edition of the Handbooks. The text below, taken from these guidelines, provides the actions relevant to international cooperation included in the GGAP.

F. International cooperation

27. Peatlands are a widely distributed wetland resource worldwide, with many extensive systems crossing geopolitical boundaries. There is much to be gained by Contracting Parties and others sharing their knowledge and expertise in the wise use and sustainable management of this key component of the world's wetlands through international cooperation, in line with the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*.
28. Furthermore, efforts towards the wise use of peatlands can contribute to the delivery of not only the Ramsar Convention but other multilateral environmental agreements, including the CBD, in particular its programme of work on the biological diversity of inland waters, and the UNFCCC.

Guidelines for Action

- F1. Peatland wise use and management issues should be fully addressed in the discussions and resolutions prepared for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and subsidiary bodies of the Ramsar Convention. These issues should also be taken into account, where appropriate, in other multilateral environmental agreements, notably CBD and UNFCCC, including consideration of joint action plans on peatlands.
- F2. International cooperation between Contracting Parties and others for global actions developed to address peatland issues should be coordinated in cooperation with peatland stakeholders and other interested parties [...].

in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) - see Section 2.6.2. The act of poaching by the nationals of one Contracting Party within the territory of another Contracting Party is counter to the spirit of Article 5 of the Ramsar Convention.

57. There are many complex issues associated with this area which are not dealt with in detail here, such as access to and ownership of genetic resources, and bioprospecting. Contracting Parties are urged to consult with the relevant focal points within their countries on these matters in developing an appropriate national response to the issues of international trade in wetland-derived products.

2.6.2 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)

58. Where Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention are also Contracting Parties of CITES, they have responsibilities under that Convention to ensure



The sustainable (wise) use of wetland-dependent species illustrates one area of cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). *Photo: Nick Davidson / Ramsar.*

that international trade in endangered or potentially endangered plant and animal species, and certain derivatives from them, are regulated and monitored. Where this applies to species derived from wetlands, Contracting Parties to both Conventions have a dual obligation to take the necessary action to guarantee that the harvesting is sustainable and in accordance with CITES rules. Under the Ramsar definition of a wetland, this would apply to animal species such as crocodiles, freshwater and marine turtles (although none can be traded commercially), fish, corals, a large number of wetland-derived plants with medicinal values, and some peat forest timbers.

59. For species listed on the CITES Appendix I, no international trade is permitted, and for those in Appendix II Contracting Parties are required to prepare scientifically-based Species Management Plans and to regulate and monitor trade in these products through legislative and administrative means.

Section F

Guidelines related to trade in wetland-derived products

- F1. Contracting Parties are urged to review all international trade in wetland-derived plant and animal products, both exports and imports, and as appropriate to implement the necessary legal, institutional and administrative measures to require that harvesting is sustainable and in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) and other relevant local regulations and international agreements.

- F2. Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention which are also Contracting Parties to CITES are urged to review their international trade in wetland-derived products, and as necessary to seek the listing of these species under the appropriate Appendix of CITES.
- F3. For wetland-derived species that are already listed under CITES, Contracting Parties should be vigilant in meeting their obligations under CITES for these species and report violations of these obligations to the Ramsar Bureau.
- F4. Where such species are being harvested at Ramsar and other wetland sites, Contracting Parties are encouraged to consider these activities within the development of management plans for these, possibly integrating them with the Species Management Plans encouraged by CITES.
- F5. Administrative Authorities of the Ramsar Convention should establish a cooperative working arrangement with their CITES equivalent (both scientific and management authorities) and seek to work together in pursuing the above actions.
- F6. In developing an appropriate national response to the issues of international trade in wetland-derived products, in addition to consultation with the CITES authorities, Ramsar Administrative Authorities are also urged to consult with the relevant focal points for the Convention on Biological Diversity, and in particular those officials involved with issues such as biotrade, sustainable use of genetic resources and bioprospecting.
- F7. Noting the adoption of *Guidelines for the development and implementation of National Wetland Policies* (Resolution VII.6) and *Guidelines for reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands* (Resolution VII.7), Contracting Parties are urged to ensure that issues of international trade in wetland-derived products are considered through these processes.

2.7 Regulation of foreign investment to ensure wetland conservation and wise use

- 60. The regulation of foreign investment is clearly a sovereign right and an issue of self-determination which must be respected by the Ramsar Convention. Through these Guidelines on International Cooperation, the Convention does not seek to restrain such investments or inhibit economic development, but rather to provide advice to Contracting Parties which will assist them to avoid activities supported by foreign investments which are counter to their obligations under the Convention. It is also important to note the potential which exists for Contracting Parties to regulate foreign investment in ways that ensure that it contributes in a positive way to the long-term sustainability of the wetland resource being utilised (see 2.7.2 below).

2.7.1 Impact assessment

- 61. Foreign investments in many countries are closely regulated by law, while in others this is not the case. Where foreign investments support actions that can impact on wetlands, Contracting Parties have a clear obligation to require rigorous assessment (environmental, economic and social) of the potential impacts of these, just as they would for domestically funded activities.

See also Handbook
16, Impact
Assessment

62. Under the Ramsar Convention, Contracting Parties are encouraged to have in place suitable impact assessment practices which can work to avoid wetland destruction or degradation from development proposals. Where such practices are not in place, their introduction should be a high priority. Administratively, it is also essential that development proposals, whether totally domestically funded, partly domestically funded, or totally foreign investment, are subjected to impact assessment.

2.7.2 Codes of Conduct for foreign interests and financial measures

63. In some countries, members of the business sector have adopted voluntary Codes of Conduct which also apply to their foreign investment activities. These are promoted by organizations such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and the Ramsar Convention should strongly endorse and promote this responsible attitude by some sectors which have in the past gained a reputation for wetland destruction. Contracting Parties need to give much greater emphasis to this aspect of foreign investment, and even to expect that investors will have such Codes of Conduct and be able to demonstrate their credentials as proponents of ecologically sustainable development activities. The Ramsar Bureau is requested to gather and disseminate models of such Codes of Conduct to all Contracting Parties for their consideration.
64. As indicated above, some countries now require of their foreign investors (and in some cases the domestic ones as well) the payment of environmental bonds or other similar endowments which support activities directed at the long-term sustainability of the resource being utilised. For example, a foreign investor may be expected as part of the conditions of approval for a wetland-related development to establish and help maintain a community education facility which can serve as a centre for training wetland managers, raising awareness about wetland values, and also generate local economic benefits for the community through tourism, etc. Under such schemes, however, there need to be safeguards in place to ensure that locally-based agents of foreign investors are not bypassing such requirements.

Section G

Guidelines related to foreign investment

- G1. Contracting Parties are urged to have in place suitable impact assessment practices which can work to avoid wetland destruction or degradation from development proposals. Administratively, it is also essential that development proposals be subjected to rigorous impact assessment which considers the full range, environmental, economic and social, of possible impacts (Resolution [X.17]).
- G2. For foreign investors, Contracting Parties should seek to promote and encourage the concept of Codes of Conduct which are designed to ensure the development activities of these companies are ecologically sustainable. To support this, the Ramsar [Secretariat] is requested to gather and disseminate suitable model Codes of Conduct.
- G3. Contracting Parties should also examine their development approval processes and consider the introduction of mechanisms which will result in resources derived from development activities being directed back to hands-on wetlands management or other activities which will ensure the long term sustainability of the site.

Appendix I

Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 for regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands

(adopted as the Annex to Resolution X.6 by the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Changwon, Republic of Korea, 2008)

The aim of regional initiatives

1. Regional initiatives under the Ramsar Convention are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern.
2. Geographical regions to be covered by specific initiatives are defined according to the wetland-related needs of the relevant actors in the region. In practical terms, a regional initiative may correspond to one of the six regional groups established by the Convention through Resolution VII.1 (1999), but it may also be more restricted in geographical focus or span several regional groups defined in Resolution VII.1, if the Contracting Parties concerned consider that to be more appropriate.
3. Because regional initiatives are intended to provide lasting, structural and operational support to facilitating and improving the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in a defined geographical region, it is important to make sure that there is support from all participating Contracting Parties or a significant number of Contracting Parties in the region concerned. Sufficient support is essential to setting up a minimal operational structure for effective work in the region.
4. Regional initiatives that are fully consistent with the aims listed above are different from regional projects. Regional projects are joint activities or programmes proposed by several Contracting Parties for a given geographical region, focusing on specific aspects, often limited in time. Regional projects can be the operational means for delivering specific aspects of regional initiatives, but should not be confused with the latter.

Coordination between regional initiatives and the Secretariat

5. The development of effective coordination between regional initiatives, acting regionally, and the Ramsar Secretariat, acting globally and being responsible to the Standing Committee and the COP, is essential.
6. The Ramsar Secretariat has no capacity to develop, coordinate or run regional initiatives; but it will endeavour to the best of its ability to assist them, including through mobilization of additional resources. The role of the Secretariat is to maintain regular links with the regional initiatives, to advise them, to make sure that global Ramsar guidelines are applied throughout the different regions, and that their strategic and operational targets are fully aligned with the Convention's Strategic Plan. The Secretariat must receive regular reports from the regional initiatives to be able to report to Standing Committee and the COP on their progress as required.
7. The complementary roles of the coordinating mechanisms of regional initiatives and the Ramsar Secretariat and their respective responsibilities may be defined in written arrangements, if agreed by all participating Contracting Parties.

8. The establishment of regional initiatives is a process over time. In order to fulfill their aims, regional initiatives depend on the services provided by professional staff who can assure a minimal coordination between the Contracting Parties and other members participating in the initiative. Contracting Parties or other members participating in a regional initiative need to provide such services, as the Ramsar Secretariat is unable to so do.
9. The regional initiatives should aim to develop the capacity to take on the additional role of coordinating and supervising regional projects that are developed under the framework of such regional initiatives. Projects and programmes to support the initiative through actions with a geographically or thematically more restricted focus, often limited in time, are likely to develop increasingly over time. They should be supervised by the coordinating bodies or mechanisms of regional initiatives.
10. Professional staff involved in regional initiatives who supervise regional projects add substantial implementation capacity for the Convention in the region.

Governance of initiatives

11. Regional initiatives need to become firmly established in their geographical region. They must establish their own governance and advisory mechanisms, involving all relevant Contracting Parties and other appropriate stakeholders, in order to provide guidance and insight.
12. In order to establish a professional coordination body or mechanism, the support of a host country or a host intergovernmental organization is essential. If established, the coordination body will be responsible to all members that constitute a regional initiative (Contracting Parties and other members), not only to the host country. Elaborating equitable and transparent governing and organizational structures is essential. They need to be laid down in commonly agreed terms of reference, rules of procedure, or operational guidance.
13. The Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee shall receive, through the Secretariat, reports on the activities of regional initiatives and shall oversee their general policies relating to the implementation of the Convention.

Substantive elements of initiatives

14. Regional initiatives should be based on a bottom-up approach. As a matter of priority, the involvement of all Contracting Parties of the specific region covered by the initiative should be sought from the start.
15. Each initiative should entail the participation, from the start, not only of the Administrative Authorities responsible for the application of the Convention in the Contracting Parties involved, but also of all other relevant stakeholders with an interest in and directly or indirectly responsible for wetland issues, including the ministries responsible for the environment and water issues, intergovernmental bodies, Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs), other NGOs, academia, local communities, and economic actors.
16. A regional initiative should base its operation on the development of networks of collaboration established upon a clearly defined framework, thus creating an enabling environment for the involvement of all stakeholders at all levels.
17. At an early stage, a regional initiative should seek collaboration with other intergovernmental or international partners and Ramsar IOPs operating in its region, by establishing complementary and non-duplicative activities.
18. The operation of a regional initiative should be focused upon making optimal use of the Ramsar tools (frameworks, guidelines, guidance, methodologies, etc.) published in the

Ramsar Handbook and Technical Reports series, and it should be based upon strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions which should be recognized as partners in the initiative.

19. The strategic and operational targets of a regional initiative should be fully aligned with the Strategic Plan of the Convention by means of policy and site technical work and activities.
20. Regional initiatives need to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar objectives. Specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders should be included in their work plans. The outcomes of such activities should be communicated to the Secretariat for use by the Ramsar CEPA Oversight Panel.

Financial and other support

21. A regional initiative requires both political support from all participating Contracting Parties and financial support from one or more Contracting Parties and other relevant partners in the region. Substantial support from a host country is especially important if a coordinating office is to be established.
22. The launching of a regional initiative needs to rely upon secured funding for planned work, activities and projects.
23. Financial support for a regional initiative from the Convention's core budget, should the COP and Standing Committee so decide, will only be provided as start-up funding, time-limited for a pre-determined period – in principle not more than the interval between two meetings of the COP. After that period, the initiative should be self-sustaining, and the Ramsar core support for it will be allocated to other initiatives instead. However, in cases where a regional centre continues to fully meet the Operational Guidelines such support may continue.
24. The Ramsar meeting of the COP allocates a specific amount of funding to the core budget line for regional initiatives for the time until the next meeting of the COP. Based on this global amount, the Standing Committee allocates specific funds to individual initiatives on an annual basis. This annual allocation will be based on individual reports to be submitted in good time in a standard format to the Secretariat. These reports will provide information on the operational readiness and the urgency of Ramsar core funding needs by the initiative during the coming year.
25. Regional initiatives need to generate their own resources and become financially self-sufficient after an initial start-up phase and in the long term. When deciding financial support from the Convention's core budget, geographically equitable distribution will be taken into account over the long term. This is not always possible during a single interval between two meetings of the COP, for which proposals must be weighed on their merits and readiness to operate.

Reporting and evaluation

26. Regional initiatives that are recognized by the COP as operating within the framework of the Convention must submit progress reports to the Secretariat, according to a standard format, in time to allow adequate reporting to the next meeting of the COP.
27. Annual reports of progress and financial status are required from regional initiatives requesting funding from the Ramsar core budget. Such reports have to reach the Secretariat in time for the preparation of the annual meeting of Standing Committee.

28. Disbursement of Ramsar funds will be undertaken at six-monthly intervals, based on a short progress report of activities and financial status to be submitted by the beneficiaries to the Secretariat.
29. Periodic assessment and review processes for the initiatives are needed and will be coordinated by the Ramsar Secretariat according to specific rules to be approved by the Standing Committee. These review procedures are meant to assure that the regional initiatives are operating within the framework of agreed work plans and following the approaches approved by the Ramsar Convention through COP decisions.



International cooperation in training in techniques of surveillance for avian influenza
(Photo: Rebecca Lee, WWT)

Appendix II

Additional relevant Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by COPs 7, 8, 9 and 10 relevant to international cooperation

- Resolution VII.3: *Partnerships with international organisations*
- Resolution VII.4: *Partnerships and cooperation with other Conventions, including harmonised information management infrastructures*
- Resolution VII.5: *Critical evaluation of the Convention's Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) and its future operations*
- Resolution VII.14: *Invasive species and wetlands*
- Resolution VII.22: *Collaborative structure for Mediterranean wetlands*
- Recommendation 7.3: *Multilateral cooperation on the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific region*
- Recommendation 7.4: *The Wetlands for the Future Initiative*
- Resolution VIII.5: *Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*
- Resolution VIII.18: *Invasive species and wetlands*
- Resolution VIII.30: *Regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention*
- Resolution VIII.37: *International cooperation on conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region*
- Resolution VIII.41: *Establishment of a Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia*
- Resolution VIII.43: *A subregional strategy of the Ramsar Convention for South America*
- Resolution VIII.44: *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Africa*
- Resolution IX.3: *Engagement of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in ongoing multilateral processes dealing with water*
- Resolution IX.5: *Synergies with other international organizations dealing with biological diversity; including collaboration on, and harmonization of, national reporting among biodiversity-related conventions and agreements*
- Resolution IX.7: *Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*
- Resolution IX.16: *The Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs)*
- Resolution IX.19: *The importance of regional wetland symposia in effectively implementing the Ramsar Convention*
- Resolution X.6: *Regional initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*
- Resolution X.7: *Optimizing the Ramsar Small Grants Fund during the period 2009-2012*
- Resolution X.11: *Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*
- Resolution X.21: *Guidance on responding to the continued spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza*
- Resolution X.22: *Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways*

The texts of all Resolutions and Recommendations can be found at www.ramsar.org/resolutions.

Relevant Resolution

Resolution VII.19

(adopted by the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, San José, Costa Rica, 1999)

Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention¹

1. RECALLING Article 5 of the Convention which obliges Contracting Parties to “consult each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where the water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna”;
2. AWARE of the previous Resolutions and Recommendations relating to international cooperation adopted by previous Conferences of the Contracting Parties, and most notably, Resolutions 4.4, VI.9 and VI.10 and Recommendations 1.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 5.4, 5.5, 6.4 and 6.16;
3. RECOGNISING that the Strategic Plan of the Convention 1997-2002, through General Objective 7, prescribes a range of priority actions relating to international cooperation;
4. RECOGNISING IN PARTICULAR Action 7.3.4 of the Strategic Plan of the Convention which directs that the Standing Committee and the Ramsar Bureau should “develop, for consideration at a Technical Session of the 7th COP (1999), guidelines for Contracting Parties on how to carry out their obligations in the field of international cooperation, particularly as regards obligations concerning national funding agencies which provide assistance that may affect wetlands in developing countries”;
5. EXPRESSING thanks to those Contracting Parties and others that contributed to the development of the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* and, in particular, the Global Environment Network for the preparation of the resource paper on development assistance presented to Technical Session V of this Conference;
6. NOTING WITH APPROVAL the success of the internship programme within the Ramsar Bureau as an illustration of international cooperation and training initiatives;
7. ACKNOWLEDGING the achievements of the Small Grants Fund (Resolution VII.5), yet EXPRESSING CONCERN that this significant mechanism for international cooperation under the Convention is unable to support all of the suitable projects submitted by eligible Contracting Parties each year; and
8. NOTING that the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* are closely linked to a number of the other decisions of this Conference and in particular to the following: partnerships with international organizations (Resolution VII.3); partnerships and cooperation with other conventions, including harmonised information management infrastructures (Resolution VII.4); the Ramsar Convention’s Outreach Programme (Resolution

1 Turkey registered a reservation concerning the content of the last part of paragraph 8 of the preamble of the Resolution and of sections 1.1(b), 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and items A2 and A3, together with the title, of the box containing Section A, of the Guidelines. Turkey declared that, consequently, it will not consider that Resolution VII.19 is a legally binding document, as far as the above-mentioned points are concerned. The full text of the declaration by the Turkish Delegation appears in paragraph 135 of the Conference Report.

VII.9); integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management (Resolution VII.18); and multilateral cooperation on the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific region (Recommendation 7.3);

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. RECOMMENDS the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (as annexed) and URGES all Contracting Parties to consider their implementation, adapting them as necessary to suit national situations;
10. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties in their implementation of these Guidelines to give special attention to:
 - i. identifying shared wetlands, river basins and wetland-dependent species and supporting initiatives directed at the management of these in cooperation with other Contracting Parties and organizations, as appropriate (Guidelines, Section A, 1-3, and Section B, 1-4);
 - ii. harmonising the implementation of the Ramsar Convention with that of other appropriate regional and international environmental conventions and working cooperatively with international programmes and organizations in pursuing the actions recommended in these Guidelines (Guidelines, Section C, 1-2);
 - iii. intensifying efforts, especially the application of site twinning arrangements, which are designed to share expertise and information and provide training for those people directly involved with wetland conservation and wise use activities (Guidelines, Section D, 1-4);
 - iv. undertaking the range of actions recommended in the Guidelines to raise the level and effectiveness of international development assistance programmes directed at the long term conservation and sustainable use of wetlands (Guidelines, Section E, 1-15), in accordance with national plans and priorities;
 - v. reviewing all aspects of international trade in wetland-derived products and taking any actions needed to ensure that such harvesting is sustainable (Guidelines, Section F, 1-7), taking into account discussions in more relevant fora;
 - vi. ensuring that all foreign investment activities relating to wetlands within the country are subject to impact assessments, promoting Codes of Conduct for the business sector in this regard and considering the introduction of measures which will permit resources derived from wetland-related development activities to contribute to the long-term management of the resource (Guidelines, Section G, 1-3).
11. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider as part of their established, or evolving, policy and legal frameworks relating to wetlands these Guidelines and the issues they address, in full (Resolutions VII.6 and VII.7);
12. INVITES Contracting Parties to provide the resources needed to expand the internship programme of the Ramsar Bureau as a high-priority training tool for the citizens of developing countries and those with economies in transition;
13. URGES Contracting Parties, international organizations, and the business sector to escalate their efforts to provide the resources needed in terms of the amounts pledged and commitment over a longer period, for instance a triennium, to allow the Ramsar Small Grants Fund to support all of the many worthy projects which are submitted each year; and
14. REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau, with assistance from Contracting Parties and the Convention's International Organization Partners, to gather and disseminate model Codes of Conduct for the business sector undertaking activities in association with wetlands.

The Ramsar Convention 'toolkit' for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, 4th ed. (2010)

Convention pillar 1: Wise Use

Handbook 1	Wise use of wetlands Concepts and approaches for the wise use of wetlands
Handbook 2	National Wetland Policies Developing and implementing National Wetland Policies
Handbook 3	Laws and institutions Reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands
Handbook 4	Avian influenza and wetlands Guidance on control of and responses to highly pathogenic avian influenza
Handbook 5	Partnerships Key partnerships for implementation of the Ramsar Convention
Handbook 6	Wetland CEPA The Convention's Programme on communication, education, participation, and public awareness (CEPA) 2009-2015
Handbook 7	Participatory skills Establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands
Handbook 8	Water-related guidance An Integrated Framework for the Convention's water-related guidance
Handbook 9	River basin management Integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management
Handbook 10	Water allocation and management Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands
Handbook 11	Managing groundwater Managing groundwater to maintain wetland ecological character
Handbook 12	Coastal management Wetland issues in Integrated Coastal Zone Management
Handbook 13	Inventory, assessment, and monitoring An Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment, and monitoring
Handbook 14	Data and information needs A Framework for Ramsar data and information needs
Handbook 15	Wetland inventory A Ramsar framework for wetland inventory and ecological character description
Handbook 16	Impact assessment Guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment

Convention pillar 2: Ramsar sites designation and management

Handbook 17	Designating Ramsar Sites Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance
Handbook 18	Managing wetlands Frameworks for managing Ramsar Sites and other wetlands
Handbook 19	Addressing change in wetland ecological character

Convention pillar 3: International cooperation

Handbook 20	International cooperation Guidelines and other support for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
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Companion document

Handbook 21	The Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2009-2015 Goals, strategies, and expectations for the Ramsar Convention's implementation for the period 2009 to 2015
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Ramsar
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4th edition

Handbook 20

International cooperation



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