

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

30th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 13-16 January 2004

DOC. SC30-12

Agenda item 10.4

Fundraising for the Ramsar Convention: New Ideas, New Options

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to consider the following ideas concerning the need for fundraising for the Convention's activities and advise the Secretariat on the way forward.

I. Context

1. The Convention is currently funded exclusively through the core budget approved by the Conference of the Parties and through voluntary contributions to the Small Grants Fund, Wetlands for the Future, and other Secretariat activities. The work of the Convention, as defined by the scope of CoP Resolutions, is under-funded. If it is to implement its mandate fully, the funds available to carry out this mandate must be increased to both Contracting Parties and to the Secretariat.
2. There are at least three options to achieve such increases:
 - a) Increase the core budget of the Secretariat. A modest increase would significantly help, coupled with a review of expenditures.
 - b) Increase resources for the Secretariat outside the core budget, through fundraising efforts. This is a difficult challenge for the Secretariat, but one we must pursue.
 - c) Increase in-country resources through projects and programmes funded by bilateral and multilateral donors and partners.
3. Under component c), the Secretariat has been working to increase financial flows to wetland conservation worldwide. The Senior Trade and Development Advisor has been developing a series of projects over the past three years, several of which have been funded by bilateral or multilateral development or environmental agencies, and others are in the pipeline. Through the Conservation Finance Alliance, the Senior Advisor has also been promoting sustainable conservation finance mechanisms (see the *Conservation Finance Guide* for details on these mechanisms) to broaden the scope of fundraising options and improve the financial management of protected areas in general and Ramsar sites in particular.
4. This paper will therefore focus on option b).

II. Fundraising for what?

5. Raising money for the Secretariat in order to increase its capacity to respond to an increasing demand for support and services is clearly needed, but not easy to achieve, and no Contracting Parties have expressed their particular willingness to support these kinds of activities.
6. The Secretariat needs funding to improve the work of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) through support for delegates' participation at meetings and workshops, consultants, publications, etc. This issue is also addressed more fully in DOC. SC30-4.
7. Especially the Secretariat needs more funds for the CEPA programme. The increase in membership and the more active role played by Parties require that the Secretariat be more active in promoting the image of the Convention and its work. Recognition of this fact comes through Resolution VIII.31. Fundraising through the Evian/Danone initiative has been very helpful in achieving this objective so far.
8. The funding for the Small Grants Fund (SGF) is rather modest and, at present, even in decline. Fundraising for the SGF has unfortunately not been very successful in recent years. The Secretariat fully agrees with the Parties that the SGF is a key tool for the Convention; the question remains how to finance it.
9. Because of financial constraints, developed country CPs have not been able to allocate the expected funding to the SGF in recent years. Some CPs have suggested that the Secretariat should approach the private sector to solicit grants to the SGF. Because the private sector normally does not give unrestricted money to a fund without having a say in its use, the Secretariat believes that it is unlikely that private companies will provide significant funds for the SGF. These findings are based on intensive work done by the Secretariat with Wetlands International, approaching 26 private companies to seek financial support for the Convention. They all turned us down. Private funding is always strongly earmarked for corporate objectives.
10. As an alternative, the Secretariat also proposed the creation of the Ramsar Endowment Fund. While Standing Committee still needs to take a final decision on this matter, it seems likely that this option should not be pursued. The Secretariat feels that there are not many options left for capitalising the SGF. One way ahead might be to approach donors with a portfolio of approved projects and seek funding on a project-by-project basis.
11. Finally, the Secretariat would welcome funding or in-kind support for additional staff: a water officer and a CEPA officer. This could be done through secondment or the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programmes. These potentially seconded staff should ideally join the Secretariat with their operational funding attached to them.
12. In sum, we are looking at alternatives and new options to increase the Convention's capacity to respond to increasing and new demands.

III. Fundraising options?

13. One option would be to fundraise (with the private and/or public sector) for specific "products". This requires that we develop really good products and good packaging for

them. A product could be a specific project in a developing country or country with its economy in transition; it could be a specific set of posters for World Wetland Day; it could be a publication or any other *service* that the Convention could offer. The case of the Senior Trade and Development Advisor helping the European Commission to prepare a wetland project and charging for this service could be replicated.

14. One idea would be to work with water companies, airlines and travel companies, and tourism companies. With IUCN and UNESCO, and under the coordination of the International Chamber of Commerce, we are exploring possibilities with the Star Alliance.
15. Nevertheless, one has to be careful of the time and funding allocated to approaching private companies and make sure that there is a return on investment. As shown in the past, this is not easy to achieve. We know, however, that the Banrock Station Wine Company in Australia is, on its own, helping to achieve Ramsar objectives in Australia and other countries, e.g., Kenya.
16. The Secretariat has established a new and constructive relationship with the GEF Secretariat and has now a full observer status at the GEF Council. One idea might be to have a GEF institutional support project for the Ramsar Convention. This would require strong political support by GEF Council members and must be developed alongside the GEF proposals. Some CPs have already offered their support for this kind of initiative. With sister conventions, we are exploring ways of promoting our objectives through the GEF, but we continue to need full support from our Parties represented at GEF Council.
17. Another option is to get much closer to development cooperation agencies. Although it is not the case anymore, unfortunately, the Convention is still seen as a small specialized agreement dealing with waterbirds. Cooperation agencies do not give money for such singular organizations – so collectively we must convince them that the focus of the Convention is on sustainable development, with a water management focus. If we succeed, we will be more successful in raising money from development cooperation agencies.
18. Multilateral development agencies and regional development banks should also be more systematically approached.

IV. New ideas!

19. Raising money for the Convention (the Secretariat and field activities) is strongly needed. It is also a challenging activity for a Convention secretariat.
20. The Standing Committee and its Subgroup on Finance may wish to consider creating a working group on fundraising. The objective of this group would be to spot fundraising opportunities and inform the Secretariat. It would also be to support the Secretariat when needed: introduction to private companies, introduction to development cooperation agencies and any other partners, etc.