

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

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Agenda item 13

Progress with the CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan and relevant issues arising at CBD COP7

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to note the progress in implementing the CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan 2002-2006, and may wish to urge Parties to help to ensure that the importance of wetland issues and the collaborative role of the Ramsar Convention are fully reflected in decisions made at CBD's COP7.

Background

1. Through CBD COP3 Decision III/21, the Ramsar Convention acts as a lead implementation partner on wetlands for the Convention on Biological Diversity. In order to develop this role, a series of Joint Work Plans have been prepared and implemented under the 1996 Memorandum of Cooperation between the two conventions.
2. The third CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan (JWP), for the period 2002-2006, was endorsed by CBD COP6 (April 2002) and Ramsar COP8 Resolution VIII.5 (November 2002). The Plan covers joint activities under each of the CBD's thematic programmes of work and on a range of cross-cutting issues such as CEPA, incentives, impact assessment, invasive species, protected areas, sustainable use and the ecosystem approach, traditional knowledge, and inventory, assessment, monitoring and indicators of common interest to the Parties to the respective conventions. This is in recognition that wetlands occur in all ecosystems that are the subject of CBD thematic programmes of work, notably inland waters and marine and coastal ecosystems but also forests, mountains, dry and subhumid lands and agricultural ecosystems.
3. The structure and implementation of the CBD-Ramsar JWP has been widely recognised as a model for the development of cooperation between environmental conventions, and a number of other bilateral work plans have now been established or are under development that are modeled on this plan. The 3rd CBD-Ramsar JWP also recognises that there are a number of topics of common interest to several conventions, and that a future challenge will be to seek closer harmonisation among all relevant conventions so as to simplify and streamline implementation at the national level.
4. Implementing such a Joint Work Plan is challenging, not least because of the different time-schedules of each convention's processes, the different structures of the secretariats, and the different *modus operandi* of the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies. Nevertheless, the approach and work under this 3rd JWP reflect significant developments in the nature of collaborative activities.

5. Since the establishment of the first CBD-Ramsar JWP, attention has moved from simple recognition of common topics of interest, through making available guidances developed under one convention to the focal points of the other, to the endorsement of guidelines by each convention process so that the same guidance can be used for national-scale implementation under both conventions – for example, the endorsement of CBD's COP6 guidance on impact assessment, interpreted for the Ramsar context, by Ramsar COP8 (Resolution VIII.9).
6. The present phase of implementation goes a significant step further, involving the collaborative development of guidelines and other materials, notably the jointly organised expert meetings to review and elaborate the CBD inland waters programme of work and development of technical guidelines for the rapid assessment of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems.
7. This note briefly highlights activities under the JWP since Ramsar COP8 and identifies key issues of common interest which will be addressed by CBD's COP7 (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 2004). The CBD and Ramsar Secretariats are compiling a full appraisal of mid-term implementation progress under the Joint Work Plan as an Information Paper for CBD COP7, and it is anticipated that this will be available by the time of the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Progress since Ramsar COP8

8. For Ramsar, coordination of the development and implementation of the Joint Work Plan is undertaken by the Deputy Secretary General, with support from the Secretariat's Senior Advisors on different aspects of the Plan. The lead focal point in the CBD Secretariat is the Environmental Affairs Officer for inland waters, David Coates.
9. During 2003, Ramsar Secretariat staff and STRP representatives have contributed to a number of CBD processes, notably through participation in the 8th and 9th meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) in March and November 2003. At SBSTTA8 the Deputy Secretary General provided support to the CBD Secretariat and SBSTTA's Working Group Chair in progressing the revised programme of work on inland waters.
10. Ramsar Secretariat staff members also contributed to the development of CBD materials to be considered at CBD COP7 through participation in expert working groups on national-scale indicators (February), sustainable use principles and guidelines (May), incentives (June), development of indicators for the WSSD 2010 biodiversity target (June), elaboration of the ecosystem approach (July), review of impacts of invasive species in inland water ecosystems (July), and protected areas (at the World Parks Congress, September), and they have contributed through teleconferences to the development of traditional knowledge recommendations for a multi-convention process to further elaborate the Ramsar COP7 guidelines for participatory management by local communities and indigenous peoples.
11. The CBD SBSTTA Chair and Secretariat staff participated in the 11th meeting of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and have identified a Secretariat focal point for contribution to the work of each of STRP's six Working Groups.

12. During 2003, under the Joint Work Plan the Ramsar Secretariat, with the assistance of the Global Environment Centre, World Resources Institute, and Wetlands International, has been further developing the project proposals for implementing the joint Ramsar/CBD "River Basin Initiative for integrating wetlands, biodiversity and river basin management", which is being designed to support Parties' implementation of the Ramsar guidelines on this topic. It is anticipated that the proposal will be submitted as a UNDP-GEF medium-sized project in early 2004, and that it will provide increased capacity for Ramsar to engage in water-related issues in relation to securing wetland conservation and wise use.

Relevant issues arising at CBD COP7 (February 2004)

13. A significant number of the issues, and their programmes of work and guidances, that will be considered at CBD COP7 are of major relevance to Ramsar Parties. In particular, COP7 will be considering for adoption elaborated and refined thematic programmes of work on a) the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems, and b) marine and coastal biological diversity.
14. The revised inland waters programme has been developed through a strongly collaborative process and designed to improve significantly the harmonised implementation of the conservation and sustainable use of inland water wetlands and water resources. SBSTTA's recommendations being considered by CBD COP7 also include adoption of interim 2010 targets for inland waters, use of Ramsar's wetland classification by CBD Parties, harmonisation of Ramsar criteria for identification of globally significant areas for inland water biodiversity, and the use of the jointly-developed rapid assessment guidelines.
15. Likewise, it is important that CBD Parties fully recognise the role of the Ramsar Convention in matters of marine and coastal conservation and sustainable use in their refined programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity. As for the inland waters programme, SBSTTA recommendations to COP7 on marine and coastal issues also address interim 2010 targets for the programme, as well as the application of rapid assessment guidelines for marine and coastal biological diversity.
16. It remains an issue, however, that whilst CBD Parties have fully recognised Ramsar's role as lead wetland implementation partner within their inland waters thematic work, there remains a reluctance to recognise Ramsar's coverage of marine and coastal issues, as well as the importance of wetlands and water resource management (and hence Ramsar's collaborative role) in other thematic programmes. It will be important to urge that these matters be properly recognised in the new programme of work on mountain biological diversity being considered by COP7.
17. A second priority issue to be addressed at COP7 is a new programme of work on protected areas. The draft programme prepared by SBSTTA9 recognises Ramsar as a key implementation partner for much of this work, but the recommendations for a COP7 decision on this programme do not yet pay sufficient attention to the role of existing global designation mechanisms (Ramsar sites, World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves) as tools for Parties' delivery of the programme's implementation.
18. Decisions to be considered by CBD COP7 also cover a significant number of other issues of relevance to the Ramsar Convention, including on communication, education and public awareness, incentives, sustainable use principles and guidelines, elaborated guidance

on the application of the ecosystem approach as an over-arching framework for the implementation of the CBD, indicators and assessment, and the development of global targets and indicators to address the CBD Strategic Plan and WSSD target to “significantly reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity by 2010”. A number of materials on these matters to be considered for adoption at COP7 are relevant to the current work of the STRP’s Working Groups, notably WG1 on inventory and assessment, WG2 on revising the wise use guidance in relation to the ecosystem approach and sustainable use, and WG6 on indicators of effectiveness of Convention implementation.

19. CBD COP7 will also further consider invasive alien species, an issue recognised by Ramsar COP8 as a major challenge for achieving wetland conservation and wise use. There remains an outstanding issue concerning whether the CBD COP6 decision on this matter, adopting guiding principles for the detection, eradication and control of invasives, was legally adopted. This may be a matter of considerable further debate at CBD COP7.
20. The Standing Committee will recall that Ramsar guidance for wetland managers on invasive species was not taken forwards to Ramsar COP8 owing to this issue of CBD adoption of its guidance. The Standing Committee may wish to determine whether it should request the Secretariat and the STRP, in the event that this matter is resolved at CBD COP7, to consider if the draft Ramsar guidance for wetland managers should be brought forward for consideration by Ramsar COP9.
21. The Ramsar Convention will be represented at CBD COP7 by the Secretary General.
22. The Standing Committee may wish to consider urging Ramsar Administrative Authorities to bring to the attention of their CBD counterparts and delegations to CBD COP7 the Ramsar-CBD collaboration in the 3rd Joint Work Plan, in light of the importance of fully incorporating the role of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in the decisions and programmes of work to be considered by CBD COP7.