

Agenda item 9

Draft Strategic Plan 2009-2014

Action requested: The Subgroup on the Strategic Plan and the Standing Committee are requested to review the latest revised draft of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 and to advise on its further development for consideration by the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee and COP10.

Note by the Ramsar Secretariat

1. At its 35th meeting the Standing Committee considered the approach to developing the next Strategic Plan (2009-2014) and took a number of Decisions (listed below) concerning its structure, content and further development, as follows:

Decision SC35-16: The Standing Committee decided that the basic framework of the Strategic Plan should be in line with the proposals for this in paragraph 5 of DOC. SC35-9; that the plan should be specific about its audience and how the plan will be used; that some vision of the world by 2014 should be included, in order to provide the global context of the Plan (e.g., trends in global policy and governance and trends in state of wetland ecosystems); that major issues specific to the Plan period should be recognized, such as global responses to the 2010 biodiversity target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, and global responses to climate change; that a short summary of implementation achievements and progress during the 2002-2008 period should be included; and that there should be convergence and linkages clearly established between the Strategic Plan and other Convention planning and reporting documents, e.g., the budget, Secretariat Work Plan, STRP Work Plan, and National Report Format, with an attempt, where possible, to indicate costs of delivery of the Strategic Plan.

Decision SC35-17: The Standing Committee also decided that the Strategic Plan's five-goal structure should be retained but that, as currently worded, some of these goals are not goal statements, and need to be reworded; and that the language of the top-level section heading of the Plan concerning "Conservation and wise use of wetlands and water resources" also needs rewording to reflect the Convention's business more clearly.

Decision SC35-18: The Standing Committee agreed that the Strategic Plan's mission statement should not be amended.

Decision SC35-19: The Committee instructed that the Plan be as strategically-focused and as short and succinct as possible; that the new Strategic Plan should be less complex and detailed than the current (2002-2008) Strategic Plan; that the model of the structure and level of detail of Convention's Work Plan 2006-2008 should be followed; and that the Strategic Plan should identify and point at where more detailed sources of information

exist, such as in Work Plans, action plans, etc., concerning different aspects of implementation.

Decision SC35-20: Concerning time-lines for the Strategic Plan, the Standing Committee decided that the Secretariat should prepare a first draft to be circulated for comment to all members of the Subgroup in mid-2007; that following their comments a second draft should be prepared in early autumn 2007 for circulation to all Standing Committee members and observers; and that a third draft should then be provided to the Subgroup prior to, and for consideration at, the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee in early 2008.

2. Following SC35, the Secretariat prepared a first draft, responding to these matters, which was circulated to all members and observers for comment during summer 2007. In the light of comments received and related issues identified through aspects of the work of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the Secretariat has prepared the second draft provided below for consideration by the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan and the 36th meeting of the Starting Committee as a whole. Owing to the timing of the change-over of Secretaries General of the Convention in August 2007 it has not been possible for a second draft to be prepared for comment by early autumn 2007, as was envisaged in Decision SC35-20.
3. Concerning aspects of what should be included in this new Strategic Plan (Decision SC35-16):
 - i) the Secretariat suggests that the summary of achievements and progress 2002-2008 should logically be added subsequently, following receipt and analysis by the Secretariat of the COP10 National Reports from the Parties;
 - ii) concerning clearly indicating convergence and linkages between the Strategic Plan and other Convention planning and reporting documents, e.g., the budget, Secretariat Work Plan, STRP Work Plan, and National Report Format, the Secretariat notes that for the 2009-2011 triennium and subsequently it is this new Strategic Plan which should establish the framework for each of the other planning and reporting frameworks, rather than the other way round; and
 - iii) concerning making an attempt, where possible, to indicate costs of delivery of the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat considers that it is extremely difficult to make any realistic assessments for each Strategy, particularly given the fact that much of the implementation activity and the costs for the Strategies are the responsibilities of each Contracting Party.

Draft Strategic Plan 2009-2014

The purpose of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan 2009-2014 is intended to provide guidance, particularly to the Contracting Parties but also to the Standing Committee, the Secretariat, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the International Organization Partners (IOPs), as well as the Convention's many other collaborators, on how they should focus their efforts for implementing the Convention on Wetlands over the next two triennia.

History of the Ramsar Convention's Strategic Planning

1st Strategic Plan (1997-2002)

The Ramsar Convention's first Strategic Plan, for the period 1997-2002, was negotiated by a wide array of stakeholders during 1995 and adopted by a Resolution of the Parties at the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP6) in Brisbane in 1996. It was a groundbreaking document, the first plan of its kind for a global environmental convention, and it was seen at the time as a model for emulation by the other major environmental instruments.

Anchored by a clear Mission Statement – an earlier version of the Convention's present statement – the 26-page Plan articulated eight General Objectives that would contribute to fulfilling that mission, and then broke those eight down into 27 Operational Objectives. The Plan then itemized 125 Actions that would work towards meeting those Operational Objectives and identified the bodies within the Ramsar community that would be responsible for carrying them out, i.e., the Parties, the Standing Committee, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the Secretariat, and the International Organization Partners.

In the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 it was explicitly acknowledged that each Contracting Party would be free to choose the extent to which it would implement the Plan, the level of resources that it would allocate to doing so, and the pace of its actions, but nonetheless it was agreed that the adoption of the Plan represented a strong commitment on the part of all of the Parties to achieve the Convention's mission across a broad array of concerns and activities. Strategically, a very wide net was cast, but the hierarchical construction of the Plan gave it a certain sense of prioritization amongst so many areas of concern.

2nd Strategic Plan (2003-2008)

The second Strategic Plan, for 2003-2008, adopted by a Resolution of COP8 (Valencia, 2002), organized the work and aspirations of the Convention under five broad General Objectives and specified 21 Operational Objectives that were intended to achieve them. Within these Operational Objectives there were 177 actions to be undertaken, again with roles assigned to each of the Convention bodies. The list of actions was remarkably thorough.

Subsequently, however, many Parties expressed the feeling that the Plan was in fact too thorough, and that a more rigorous prioritization, as well as a tighter focus upon the most pressing issues, would serve the Convention better than an exhaustive list of desirable actions would.

3rd [draft] Strategic Plan (2009-2014)

Accordingly, with the advice of the Parties at COP9, subsequent Standing Committee meetings, and the SC Subgroup on the Strategic Plan, the draft Strategic Plan for 2009-2014 sets out five “Goals” – essentially the same five Operational Objectives as previously (wise use of wetlands, development of the Ramsar List, international cooperation, implementation capacity, and membership in the Convention) – but within those, it is now much more tightly focused upon 25 “strategies” that represent a general consensus of the most important priorities for most Parties.

Use of the Strategic Plan

As before, the [draft] Strategic Plan 2009-2014 calls for actions to be undertaken by the Secretariat and the International Organization Partners, but it is to the Parties themselves that most of the strategies are chiefly addressed. It is understood that the Parties differ substantially in their situations – in their economic and personnel capacities to carry out activities; in the conservation status and trends of their different types of wetlands; in the public awareness and political will of their electorates; in the abilities of their national Ramsar focal points, the Administrative Authorities, to influence the national and local governments; and in their existing legal and institutional frameworks – and that therefore every Party will examine the Strategic Plan closely and determine its own responses.

It cannot be said of any such Plan that “one size fits all” at the global level; each Party will wish to establish its own priorities within the Plan’s agreed priorities, develop its own work plan for implementing them, and consider its own use of its resources. And when later reporting upon its successes and, perhaps, its shortcomings, each Party will wish to explain its results in implementing the Convention in terms of its own decisions and circumstances.

As they tailor the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 to their own needs and capacities, Parties will also recall that, though this new Plan helps them by articulating a shorter and more focused list of priority actions agreed by the COP, there are many other goals and actions that the Parties have committed themselves to working towards in the previous Resolutions and guidelines adopted by the COP. Parties should feel free to continue working towards those additional commitments whenever appropriate and feasible.

Implementation of the Convention at national level

It has become increasingly clear in recent years that one of the greatest obstacles to improving the implementation of the Convention and achieving its mission is the fact that the people who are knowledgeable about wetlands and the Ramsar Convention and dedicated to the wise use of wetlands are not always in a position to ensure that national commitments will be carried out.

More than ever, it is essential that designated Ramsar authorities in national governments redouble their efforts to ensure that personnel in other sectors of government are made aware of the national commitments to wetland conservation and wise use and the rationales for them. Non-governmental organizations, and particularly the International Organization Partners, can also be instrumental in helping to spread that word amongst government officials at national, state, and local levels.

Similarly, it is increasingly important for Parties to broaden their representation in Ramsar implementation, and frequently to raise the level of that representation, to involve those other sectors of government more closely in working towards the Convention's mission. In some Parties, the Ramsar authorities may come from essentially a niche office in some larger agency, possibly an agency not directly involved with environmental policy-making. In those cases Parties should take steps to include higher-level decision-making officials in their wetland policy-making deliberations.

The importance of having active, broad-based National Ramsar Committees or National Wetland Committees for this purpose cannot be emphasized too strongly. Active NRCs composed of officials from all relevant sectors who are sufficiently highly placed to be able to implement the Committee's decisions, and ideally including representatives of academia and the NGOs where appropriate, can significantly widen the sense of commitment and ownership and multiply all of the factors for success.

Convention implementation achievements and progress during the 2002-2008 period

[summary of achievements and progress to be added following analysis of COP10 National Reports]

Key issues for the future of the Convention

What is the broad context for the problems and challenges we continue to face in striving to secure future sustainable use of wetland ecosystems (both inland and coastal) and their services to people?

In the 1960s the driving force behind the establishment of the Ramsar Convention was concern over the continuing destruction of wetlands and the impact of this destruction on populations of waterbirds. Yet, almost 35 years on, in 2005 the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) concluded that "degradation and loss of wetlands (both inland and coastal) is continuing more rapidly than for other ecosystems".

It is clear that the underlying problem remains – economic development and consequent land-use change often remain higher priorities than ecosystem maintenance, despite the fact that these are closely interlinked and that continuing to destroy ecosystems and their services is essentially "biting the hand that feeds us".

Amongst key issues that are driving continued change, deterioration and loss of wetlands and their services, are:

- the availability of water to wetlands, in relation to wetlands' key roles in the global hydrological cycle;
- increasing demands for water abstraction, particularly for irrigated agriculture;
- the impacts of a changing, and increasingly extreme and unpredictable climate, and the important role of wetlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- the lack of a good understanding of the value of wetlands and their services (wetland valuation) to underpin sound decision-making and trade-offs.

There is, therefore, a key urgency for national environmental governance to shift from sectoral, demand-driven approaches to an ecosystem-based approach to policy and decision-making that affects the wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character. The context underlying this is provided in the sections which follow.

The future implementation of the Convention to address such drivers requires that Ramsar Contracting Parties and their appointed Administrative Authorities responsible for leading national implementation engage with and work in close partnership with other sectors of government, focal points of other MEAs, and civil society in order to ensure that the role and importance of wetlands to their businesses is fully recognized when there are hard choices to be made.

The Ramsar Convention works increasingly closely with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through a joint work plan and acts as the CBD's lead implementation partner for wetlands so as to support joint achievement of an ecosystem-based approach to future sustainability of water and wetlands. Yet much of this collaboration to date with CBD, and with other biodiversity and environment conventions and agreements, such as the Convention on Migratory Species and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), has been through global-scale mechanisms – secretariats, scientific subsidiary bodies, etc. – and there is an urgent need for closer communication and collaboration between convention national focal points to achieve joint on-the-ground implementation.

The implications of Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) for the future implementation of the Ramsar Convention

The work and findings of the MA, and in particular its synthesis report to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and Water, has proved to be valuable in helping to shape the future implementation of the Convention. In particular, the MA's Conceptual Framework for ecosystems and human well-being, with its focus on "ecosystem services" and drivers of change to them, was recognized and adopted by the Parties at Ramsar COP9 (2005) as providing a conceptual framework for the delivery of the Convention's core mission of the conservation and wise use of wetlands (Resolution IX.1 Annex A). In particular, the MA Conceptual Framework provides the structure for determining where and when to apply the different components of the suite of wise use guidelines adopted by the Ramsar Parties over the years and compiled in the Convention's Wise Use Handbooks.

The MA confirmed that the ecosystem services provided by wetlands are extremely important and valuable to people worldwide – arguably with a total value in the region of US\$ 14 trillion annually. Amongst the many different services delivered by and through wetlands, there are major values of a range of hydrological services – notably water supply, water treatment, and flood control – and there is also the major value of the amenity and aesthetic services provided by wetlands.

Both the MA and the Ramsar Convention have stressed that the global hydrological cycle is fundamental to the maintenance of the ecological character of wetlands. By their very definition, if there is no water, there will be no wetlands.

But the fundamental role of wetlands in the hydrological cycle remains much less well appreciated. Wetlands significantly influence the functioning of the hydrological cycle, the supply of water to people, and the uses they make of it, e.g., for irrigation, energy, transport and

drinking. Almost all of the world's consumption of freshwater is drawn either directly or indirectly from wetlands, so it also follows that without wetlands there will not be the water we need, in the places and quality in which we need it.

Despite their increasingly recognized high economic value, however, wetlands are still viewed by many decision-makers as being of little value, and so there is still far too little priority given to maintaining through their wise use their capacity to continue to deliver their wide and valuable range of services. As implied above, the Ramsar community has not yet been very successful in transmitting this message at national and basin levels through engaging with the sectors with decision-making powers that drive change and loss of wetlands.

Yet there are frequently significant losses of value of ecosystem services when a naturally-functioning wetland is converted to other land uses. Such conversions are often for a single sectoral purpose such as intensive agriculture, aquaculture, or fishery, and whilst there may be economic benefits to be gained by that sector, they are frequently at the expense of those peoples and communities who have traditionally depended on the services from the wetland.

Economic valuation of the full range of the ecosystem services provided by wetlands is, however, a developing science, and there is a widely recognized need for more and better valuations of wetlands, in order to better inform decision-making on any proposals for their conversion. In recognition of this urgent need for better using and recognizing wetland ecosystem value, in 2006 Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) jointly developed and published guidance on methods for wetland valuation (Ramsar Technical Report 3, 2006).

The MA reported that both inland and coastal wetlands (and their biodiversity) are being lost at a faster rate than terrestrial systems, with for example freshwater wetlands and mangroves each continuing to be destroyed at an alarming rate of 2.5% loss per year. Clearance and drainage for agriculture have been the principal causes of inland wetland loss worldwide, and expanding human use of fresh water means that less and less water is now available to maintain the ecological character of many inland water systems.

In essence, the MA stressed that this situation has arisen because we have given a global priority to enhancing the "provisioning services" of ecosystems (notably agricultural production), but at the expense of maintaining the many "regulating" and "supporting" services provided by ecosystems. In seeking to deliver such provisioning services, our decision-making and implementation of management of water resources have created major problems for the maintenance of the ecosystem services from rivers and other wetlands.

The ever increasing demands for upstream water are likely to put even more pressure in the future on the well-being of our world's increasingly urbanized and downstream population. Thus the declining ecosystem services from such wetlands threaten the well-being of individuals, local communities, entire states and the global community, and it is especially poorer people in less developed countries who are being most affected, since they are often most heavily dependent on wetlands for their livelihoods.

One particularly significant finding of the MA concerns the future fate of wetland ecosystems under various sectoral and cross-sectoral scenarios for future decision-making, especially in relation to achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This suggests that if we continue to take a sectoral focus on, for example, climate change mitigation, or one or more of

the MDGs such as food security or sanitation, our stock of wetlands and their continued delivery of ecosystem services key may continue to deteriorate. Shifting to a more cross-sectoral, ecosystem-based approach, however, focusing on optimizing multiple goals (including the delivery of commitments to the CBD and the Ramsar Convention), will lead not only to significantly better maintenance of wetlands and their services but will also contribute to achieving a number of the MDGs such as those on improved water supply and sanitation and on poverty reduction.

But this MA analysis, and the more recent (2007) UNEP 4th Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4), also points up that under all such scenarios the major challenge will remain how to respond to the predicted continuing increase in demand for food production

The Ramsar Convention and water management issues

Since its inception, Ramsar has stressed the “fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes” (preamble to the Convention text). The Convention is recognized as the only global environmental treaty dealing with integrated management of important water-related ecosystems and water allocation, one which provides mechanisms for applying integrated ecosystem-based approaches at all scales.

Since 1996 the Convention has had an increasing voice on water and ecosystem issues. At COP6 (Brisbane, 1996), Ramsar Contracting Parties adopted Resolution VI.23 entitled *Ramsar and water*, which highlighted the “important hydrological functions of wetlands, including groundwater recharge, water quality improvement and flood alleviation, and the inextricable link between water resources and wetlands”; recognized freshwater quality and quantity as vital for maintaining coastal and marine ecosystem services, for example, fisheries; and set out a range of actions to allow countries to address the looming problems of water scarcity, deteriorating water quality, and related breakdown of wetland ecosystems

Since then, the Convention has progressively developed a major suite of water management-related implementation guidance for countries, including an overall framework for using the different aspects of the water-related guidance. All this guidance is provided in the 17 Ramsar Wise Use Handbooks, 3rd edition (2007), available on CD-ROM and from the Ramsar Web site.

Water-related handbook guidance to date covers: River basin management; Water allocation and management for maintaining wetland ecosystems; Groundwater management; Agriculture, water and wetlands; Integrated Coastal Zone Management; and International cooperation (including for shared water resources). Importantly, the most recent river basin management guidance (adopted at COP9 in 2005) incorporates a “critical path” approach to water and wetland management planning and implementation.

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is preparing further water-related guidance for Ramsar COP10 (2008), including further elaboration and consolidation of “critical path” river basin management guidance and incorporating further guidance on environmental water requirements. This will be supported by river basin management case studies to be published as a Ramsar Technical Report, with further Ramsar Technical Reports due on wetlands and water quality; environmental water requirement methodologies for estuaries, rivers, and non-riverine wetlands; and wetlands, water and agriculture.

Securing water for maintaining wetland ecosystem services – the challenges and opportunities

From the MA's and other recent findings it is clear that we know what we need to do: maintain wetland ecosystems for their key water services, and restore degraded wetlands to reinstate their key services to people.

We also know a lot about how to do it: there is an increasing understanding of environmental water requirements and restoring degraded systems, and the governments of the world have agreed and adopted a wealth of guidance, such as that in the Ramsar Wise Use Handbooks, that supports taking these responses. Yet both inland and coastal wetlands and their services continue to be degraded and lost faster than even other ecosystems. So what is still preventing us from achieving better sustainability of water use and wetlands?

The challenges are many, and they centre round issues of the water governance practiced in many parts of the world. Water demands are still increasing rather than decreasing, with allocations still frequently being demand- rather than supply-driven. Such water allocation and wetland management decisions still tend to be made sectorally rather than cross-sectorally through fully integrated river basin management mechanisms, such that it is often the more powerful sectors or stakeholders that benefit, whilst the poorest and most at risk continue to lose out, especially when water is scarce.

Such a situation is hard to reconcile with the concurrent efforts to deliver poverty reduction strategies in the developing world. Water allocations also continue to be made in the absence of knowledge of how much water is available, or how much is needed to maintain wetlands for their water, and frequently to be short-term reactive decisions rather than decisions based upon long-term strategies.

There are a number of currently practiced water management responses to maintaining water for ecosystems that appear to be promising. These include the establishment of legislative frameworks within which allocations are required for wetlands and other ecosystems, establishing environmental water requirements (environmental flows), developing and implementing tools for payments for ecosystem services, transactional approaches to water for ecosystems, and introducing 'caps' on further water allocations in water-scarce basins.

Yet, whilst all these seem attractive in appearing better to secure water supply for wetlands, they may at best provide some degree of temporary solution rather than addressing the underlying issue of water governance. Indeed, promoting such approaches may make it even harder to achieve such shifts in governance subsequently. Even with such mechanisms in place, when it comes to the crunch of less water being available than can meet the demands of all users, water for ecosystems generally continues to be the loser even with agreed allocations when water for direct use by people is scarce. Water laws also still generally create an adversarial situation in which ecosystems must demonstrate and justify their needs against other competing needs.

Since maintaining (and restoring) wetlands is essential for securing their vital services for human well-being and poverty reduction, water resource management and spatial planning governance and practice need to be much more based on an integrated ecosystem-based approach, thus ensuring that "integrated water resource/river basin management" really is delivered through integration across sectors. There is a need to achieve more high-level understanding and commitment to implement new forms of water and land-use governance based on this paradigm.

In parallel there is also a need for better encouragement and empowerment to local people and communities to value and maintain their healthy wetlands for water.

Such issues of water, wetlands and human health are a particular focus of attention during Ramsar's 10th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties, with the theme of "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People". In support of these debates, this was also the theme for World Wetlands Day 2008, and the Secretariat has issued a range of fact-sheets and information materials for WWD2008 on different aspects of wetlands and human health. In addition, a substantial technical report on "Wetlands and Human Health" is being prepared by the STRP for publication in 2008 – it will cover the benefits of wetland ecosystem services for human health, the many health impacts of disrupted ecosystem services and degraded wetlands, global trends affecting wetlands and human health, and promising responses and interventions.

Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2009-2014

The Strategic Plan 2009-2014 contributes to:

- implementation of the Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties;
- achievement of Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 7 (Ensuring Environmental Sustainability) by 2015;
- the programme of the 5th World Water Forum in Turkey 2009;
- achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity targets, and assessment of this target through the Convention's ecological outcome-oriented indicators of effectiveness;
- achievement of the 2012 target for Marine Protected Areas;
- providing responses to the key issues of climate change; and
- implementation of decisions from the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD13) policies on water and sanitation.

WHAT ARE WE ABOUT? – THE MISSION OF THE CONVENTION

“Wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.”

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE? – OUR GOALS

Implementing the Convention

GOAL 1. Wise Use. To work towards the wise use of all wetlands by ensuring that all Contracting Parties develop, adopt and use the necessary and appropriate instruments and measures.

Delivers Articles 3.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 of the Convention.

OUTCOME SOUGHT:

The wise use principle being implemented in all Parties, including more participative management of wetlands, and conservation decisions being made with an awareness of the importance of the ecosystem services provided by wetlands.

GOAL 2. Wetlands of International Importance. To develop and maintain an international network of wetlands that are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life by ensuring that all Contracting Parties appropriately implement the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*.

Delivers Articles 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2 of the Convention.

OUTCOME SOUGHT:

Parties designating and managing Ramsar sites within their territories with a view to supporting an international network of Wetlands of International Importance, fully implementing their reporting commitments under Articles 3 and 8.2, and using the Montreux Record as part of the Convention's governance process.

GOAL 3. International cooperation. To achieve international cooperation in the conservation and wise use of wetlands through the active application of the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention*.

Delivers Article 5 of the Convention.

OUTCOME SOUGHT:

Parties developing their coherent national approaches to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in such a way as to benefit from developing effective partnerships with related conventions and international agencies and with other Parties to the Convention on Wetlands.

Managing the Convention

GOAL 4. Institutional capacity and effectiveness. To progress towards fulfillment of the Convention's mission by ensuring that it has the required mechanisms, resources, and capacity to do so.

Delivers Articles 6, 7, and 8 of the Convention.

OUTCOME SOUGHT:

Increasing success of the Convention in achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands, as measured by agreed effectiveness indicators, and increased recognition of the Convention's achievements by other sectors of governments and civil society.

GOAL 5. Membership. To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

Delivers Articles 2.4 and 9 of the Convention.

OUTCOME SOUGHT:

All countries eligible for accession to have joined the Ramsar Convention by 2014.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS? – STRATEGIES & KEY RESULT AREAS

GOAL 1. Wise Use

To work towards the wise use of all wetlands by ensuring that all Contracting Parties develop, adopt and use the necessary and appropriate instruments and measures.

STRATEGY 1.1 Wetland inventory and assessment

Describe, assess and monitor the extent and condition of wetlands and wetland resources at relevant scales, in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention, in particular in the application of the wise use principle. (CPs, advised by STRP and assisted by IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Parties to have completed national wetland inventories in line with the Ramsar *Framework for Wetland Inventory* and as far as possible to have disseminated comprehensive national wetland inventories, including information on wetland importance, potential Ramsar sites, wetlands for restoration, location of under-represented wetland types, and the ecosystem services provided by wetlands.
- An easily accessible Web-based metadatabase in place, managed by the Secretariat, populated with information on all national wetland inventories, and linked to national and other international relevant databases.

STRATEGY 1.2 Global wetland information

Develop a global wetland information system, through partnerships, to increase accessibility of data and information on wetlands including *inter alia* for research and assessment and further identification and designation of Ramsar sites. (CPs, Secretariat, advised by STRP and assisted by IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Global wetland distribution and status data and information available through Web-portal mechanisms.
- Ramsar sites data and information services reviewed, restructured and further developed for Web-accessibility.
- Global wetland observing system(s) reporting on changes in wetland status.

STRATEGY 1.3 Policy, legislation and institutions

Develop and implement policies, legislation, and practices, including growth and development of appropriate institutions, in all Contracting Parties to ensure that the wise use principle of the Convention is being effectively applied. (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- National Wetland Policy or equivalent instruments fully in place alongside and harmonized with other strategic and planning processes by all Parties, including poverty reduction strategies, water resources management and water efficiency plans, and national strategies for sustainable development.
- Parties to have Strategic Environmental Assessment in place for policies, programmes and plans impacting on wetlands.

STRATEGY 1.4 Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services

Increase recognition of and attention in decision-making to the significance of wetlands for reasons of biodiversity conservation, water supply, coastal protection, flood defense, climate change mitigation, food security, poverty reduction, cultural heritage, and scientific research, by developing and disseminating methodologies to achieve wise use of wetlands. (CPs, Secretariat, STRP, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Development and implementation of wetland programmes and projects that contribute to poverty reduction objectives and food and water security plans at local and national levels.
- An analysis of the ecosystem services (and their values) of wetlands (especially Ramsar sites) achieved for all Parties.
- The social and cultural heritage value of wetlands fully taken into account in wetland wise use and management.

STRATEGY 1.5 Integrated Water Resources Management

Ensure policies and implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), applying an ecosystem-based approach, are included in the planning activities in all Contracting Parties and in their decision-making processes, particularly concerning groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, coastal and marine zone planning, and adaptation/mitigation responses to climate change. (CPs, STRP, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Parties to have made available the Ramsar guidance on water allocation and management for ecosystems to support decision-making on water resource management, as a contribution to achieving the WSSD target on water resources management and water efficiency plans.
- Plans for the role of wetlands in mitigation and adaptation to climate change in progress or completed.
- The Convention's role in encouraging IWRM planning established as part of international environmental governance.

STRATEGY 1.6 Wetland restoration

Identify priority wetlands and wetland systems where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial and yield long-term environmental, social, or economic benefits, and implement the necessary measures to recover these sites and systems. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Parties to have identified priority sites for restoration; restoration projects underway or completed in at least half the Parties.
- New case studies and methods added to Ramsar wetland restoration pages on the Web site.

STRATEGY 1.7 Invasive species

Develop guidance and promote procedures and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive species in wetland systems. (CPs, STRP, other agencies, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Parties to have identified more comprehensively the problems posed by invasive species in wetland ecosystems within their territories.
- Eradication or management policies in place in all wetlands affected by invasive species and their results measured and reported.
- Comprehensive and up-to-date global guidance on invasive species available to all stakeholders.

STRATEGY 1.8 Private sector

Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Significant progress in the private sector applying the wise use principle (Ramsar Handbooks 1 to 6) in their activities and investments affecting wetlands.
- Increased private sector engagement in the wise use of wetlands and in the management of Ramsar sites.
- Awareness-raising material made available to the public to enable wetland-friendly consumer choices.

STRATEGY 1.9 Incentive measures

Promote incentive measures that encourage the application of the wise use principle. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Area

By 2014:

- Better design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of positive and negative incentive measures on wetlands in place in all Parties.

GOAL 2. Wetlands of International Importance

To develop and maintain an international network of wetlands that are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life by ensuring that all Contracting Parties appropriately implement the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*.

STRATEGY 2.1 Ramsar site designation

Apply the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Handbook 14). (CPs)

Key Result Area

By 2014:

- All Parties to have prepared, using the *Strategic Framework*, a national plan and priorities for the designation and management of Ramsar sites, including where appropriate for transboundary wetlands in collaboration with neighboring Parties.

STRATEGY 2.2 Ramsar site information

Ensure that the Ramsar Sites Information Service, including the Ramsar Sites Database, are available and enhanced as a tool for guiding the further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance and for research and assessment, and is effectively managed by the Secretariat. (CPs, STRP, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Area

By 2014:

- The Ramsar Sites Information Service to have improved its functionality and accessibility to stakeholders as part of a global wetland information system, including through links between the Database, the Ramsar Web site, and other interactive on-line systems, as well as through the regular publication of special reports and other outputs.

STRATEGY 2.3 Management planning – new Ramsar sites

Encourage the philosophy that all new Ramsar sites should have effective management planning in place before designation, as well as resources for implementing such management. (CPs, IOPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Area

By 2014:

- Adequate management planning processes established and submitted with all or most new site designations or a commitment made to work towards that goal.

STRATEGY 2.4 Ramsar site ecological character

Maintain the ecological character of all designated Ramsar sites, through planning and management. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Progress in developing effective management plans for all Ramsar sites within each Party's territory.
- Management objectives, as part of management planning, for ecological character maintenance established for all Ramsar sites.
- Zoning measures to be put in place for larger Ramsar sites, wetland reserves, and other wetlands (Recommendation 5.3 and Resolution VIII.14) and strict protection measures to be enacted for certain Ramsar sites and other wetlands of small size and/or particular sensitivity.
- Cross-sectoral site management committees in place for Ramsar sites, involving relevant government agencies, local community representatives, and other stakeholders, including the business sector in place.

STRATEGY 2.5 Ramsar site management effectiveness

Review all existing Ramsar sites to determine the effectiveness of management arrangements, in line with the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*. (CPs, STRP)

Key Result Area

By 2014:

- All Parties, using the *Strategic Framework*, to have reviewed all existing Ramsar sites and confirmed that all Ramsar sites fulfill the provisions of the *Strategic Framework* or to have identified those sites that do not do so for remedial actions.

STRATEGY 2.6 Ramsar site status

Monitor the condition of Ramsar sites and address negative changes in their ecological character, notify the Ramsar Secretariat of changes affecting Ramsar sites, and apply the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Parties with Ramsar sites whose ecological character has changed, is changing or is likely to change owing to human-induced actions to have reported this to the Ramsar Secretariat, in line with the requirements of Article 3.2 of the Convention.
- For all sites on the Montreux Record that have not been the subject of a Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM), intended to provide advice on the steps needed to remove those sites from the Record, Parties to request such a Mission.
- Implementation of relevant STRP ecological outcome-oriented indicators of effectiveness of the Convention.

GOAL 3. International cooperation

To achieve international cooperation in the conservation and wise use of wetlands through the active application of the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention*.

STRATEGY 3.1 Synergies with MEAs and IGOs

Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other intergovernmental agencies (IGOs). (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan and CMS/AEWA Joint Work Plan being implemented and participation continued in the CBD Biodiversity Liaison Group.
- Joint activities developed with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as appropriate, including through participation in the Joint Liaison Group.
- The Action Plan of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to have fully incorporated Ramsar issues and mechanisms and being implemented by relevant Parties.
- Additional partnership approaches initiated with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the

- UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other relevant United Nations agencies, as well as through UN Water.
- Harmonized information management and reporting systems available and widely used at national level with the appropriate MEAs.

STRATEGY 3.2 Regional initiatives

Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Area

By 2014:

- Development of viable regional arrangements under the Convention, applying the *Guidance for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands* (Resolution VIII.30), resulting in the establishment of new regional initiatives and/or centres, where appropriate, and the strengthening of existing initiatives.

STRATEGY 3.3 International assistance

Promote international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, while ensuring that environmental safeguards and assessments are an integral component of all development projects that affect wetlands, including foreign and domestic investments. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Parties with bilateral donor agencies to have encouraged those agencies to give priority for funding for wetland conservation and wise use projects in relation to poverty reduction and other relevant international targets and priorities.
- Proposed grants, loans, and development projects from international development agencies, including banks, financial institutions and private investors and developers, to include environmental safeguards and environmental assessments of possible impacts.

STRATEGY 3.4 Sharing information and expertise

Promote the sharing of expertise and information concerning the conservation and wise use of wetlands. (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Less time required from Parties on managing information for national reports, but better quality and more timely reports produced.
- Increased flow of information made available by the Parties (e.g., Ramsar-related policies, Ramsar site management plans, Ramsar site monitoring, etc.) to the Secretariat for dissemination via the Ramsar Web site and other means.

STRATEGY 3.5 Shared wetlands, basins and species

Promote inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species. (CPs, Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Parties to have identified their shared wetlands; where appropriate, Parties to have identified collaborative management mechanisms with one another for those transboundary wetlands.
- Where appropriate, Parties with shared basins and coastal systems to be part of joint management commissions or authorities.
- Regional site networks and initiatives in place for additional wetland-dependent migratory species, as exemplified *inter alia* by the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, and the Central Asian Flyway Initiative.

GOAL 4. Institutional capacity and effectiveness

To progress towards fulfillment of the Convention's mission by ensuring that it has the required mechanisms, resources, and capacity to do so.

STRATEGY 4.1 CEPA

Support, and assist in implementing at all levels the Convention's Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme (Resolution X.***) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through communication, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA). (CPs, Secretariat, training centres, IOPs, Advisory Board on Capacity Building)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Parties to have established national (or subnational, catchment or local level, as appropriate) Ramsar CEPA action plans.
- All Parties to have established at least one wetland education centre at a Ramsar site.
- All Parties to have established practices that ensure the participation in the development and implementation of wetland management plans of stakeholder groups with cultural or economic links to wetlands or those communities that depend on the wetlands for their livelihoods.
- At least half of the Parties to have assessed their national and local training needs with respect to the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- The Advisory Board on Capacity Building to have provided practical advice to Parties to assist them in their training and broader capacity building planning and implementation activities.

STRATEGY 4.2 Convention financial capacity

Provide the financial resources required for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Adequate resources and supporting financial policies in place to enable the Convention to discharge its responsibilities and priorities, as determined by the Conference of the Parties, in an effective manner.

- Clear and unambiguous budgetary preparation and management for the Convention, with the Secretariat putting the budget allocated by the Conference of the Parties to practical use in the most effective manner possible.

STRATEGY 4.3 Convention bodies' effectiveness

Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Secretariat are operating at a high level of effectiveness to support the implementation of the Convention. (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- All Contracting Parties to have designated CEPA and STRP National Focal Points (by 2011), and to have kept the Secretariat updated in a timely manner on any changes in Administrative Authority focal points and daily contacts.
- National Reports used to evaluate and report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan at each meeting of the COP.
- The bodies of the Convention to have adequate funding and logistic support to deliver their *modi operandi* and work plans, as adopted by the Conference of the Parties.
- The Secretariat, with the advice of the Standing Committee, fully managing its staffing priorities and capacities to respond to key issues of wetland conservation as they emerge.

STRATEGY 4.4 Working with IOPs and others

Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs) and others. (Secretariat, IOPs)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- By COP11, each IOP and the Secretariat to have established a programme of joint work in support of the Convention and their own objectives, including, where relevant and appropriate, joint actions by several IOPs; and by 2014 to have reviewed and as necessary revised these programmes.
- Support for the Convention's scientific, technical and policy work integrated into the ongoing programmes of the IOPs.

GOAL 5. Membership

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

STRATEGY 5.1 Membership

Secure universal membership of the Convention and provide an appropriate level of service. (CPs, Secretariat)

Key Result Areas

By 2014:

- Achieve membership in the Convention of at least 170 Parties by COP11 and of all eligible nations by COP12.

- Strive to make resources available to provide servicing for Parties, especially recently acceded Parties, to assist them in implementing this Strategic Plan.