

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

24th Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland: 29 November – 2 December 1999

DOC. SC24-18 (c)

Agenda item 10.3.iv

Allocations and operations of the Small Grants Fund

Future fundraising for the SGF

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to receive the report of the Subgroup on Finance relating to this item and make decisions as appropriate. In this case, the SC should take a decision on the establishment of a fundraising mechanism for the SGF.

Background

1. The issue of resources for the SGF was analysed in COP7 DOC. 15.5. entitled “Critical evaluation of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) and its future operations”. The following are extracts from that paper.

CHALLENGES FOR THE SGF IN THE FUTURE

Limited and uncertain funding base

21. In the period from 1991 to 1998, a total of SFR 3,815,821 has been allocated through the SGF to a total of 113 projects (see Table 1). In that same period, a further 122 projects were assessed as being of high priority and worthy of funding from the SGF but could not be approved due to lack of available funds.
22. Annex 2 shows the contributions received for the SGF since its inception in 1990. While the Convention should be most grateful to the many generous donors that have contributed, the fact remains that had the resources been available the SGF could have reasonably expected to have allocated a further SFR 4 million to these 122 projects, making its contribution to furthering the implementation of the Convention much more significant.
23. As shown in Annex 2, contributions to the SGF have come mainly from the agencies that are the Ramsar Administrative Authorities in donor countries, but the largest amounts were contributed by three bilateral development assistance agencies. This may indicate that any continued and significant funding for the SGF in the future should be sought from the development assistance community. NGOs have provided part of the funding, but more could be done to generate contributions from the non-governmental sector as well as from the private sector.
24. Apart from securing a higher level of funds in order to support more projects each year, another challenge is to gain some assurance that the annual amount available for allocation does not vary as greatly as it has in the first eight years of the SGF.

In 1997, when just over SFR 1 million was available, a record number of applications were received and projects funded. In 1998 the level of funding dropped by almost 40%, and it was necessary to discourage countries from submitting more than one project each. In 1999 it is impossible to predict what the funding level will be, and this uncertainty does not assist either the potential project proponents or the Bureau with their forward planning.

25. From this it is apparent that the 7th Conference of the Contracting Parties should give serious consideration to ways to secure both a higher level of funding for the SGF and a guarantee of some suitable minimum level of funds available each year.
26. Resolution VI.6 of COP6 in 1996 reiterated "its conviction expressed in Resolution 5.8 that the level of resources available to the Ramsar SGF should be increased to at least US\$ 1 million [SFR 1.4 million] annually". But the Resolution fell short of establishing some sort of mechanism for generating that level of funding. As a consequence, that level has never been secured.
28. The Bureau further urges that all developed country Contracting Parties, and other organizations able to do so, be asked to consider making longer term commitments (3 years minimum) to the SGF to allow forward projections to be given with confidence. This will help to establish at least the level of funding proposed in Resolution 5.8 and reiterated in Resolution VI.6.

The following tables summarise the operation of the SGF in its nine years of existence.

Table 1: SUMMARY OF PROJECTS FUNDED, 1991-1998

Year	No. of projects submitted	No. of countries that submitted projects	Projects considered suitable for funding	Projects funded	No. of countries that received funding	Total allocated in SFR, incl. 10% admin. charge
1991	17	17	17	7	7	200,025
1992	29	24	27	12	11	280,566
1993	35	24	28	15	14	469,880
1994	24	18	20	10	9	371,360
1995	30	22	25	11	14	346,530
1996	27	21	15	12	12	403,150
1997	83	40	55	28	28	1,064,840
1998	67	42	48	18	18	679,470
Totals	312		235	113		3,815,821

Table 2: SUITABLE PROJECTS NOT FUNDED BECAUSE OF LACK OF RESOURCES IN THE SGF, 1991-1998

Year	Number of projects NOT funded	Year	Number of projects NOT funded
1991	10 (out of 17)	1995	14 (out of 25)
1992	15 (out of 27)	1996	3 (out of 15)
1993	13 (out of 28)	1997	27 (out of 55)
1994	10 (out of 20)	1998	30 (out of 48)
			122 (out of 235)

2. Paragraph 11 of Resolution VII.5 of COP7 reads: “URGES that a mechanism be developed for receiving commitments of contributions to the SGF, if possible for a three-year period at a time, and REQUESTS the Contracting Parties that will chair the Standing Committee and the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee in the next triennium to seek to initiate this mechanism, with the assistance of the Ramsar Bureau and the Standing Committee as a whole.”
3. One way to respond to this request from the COP could be to identify a development assistance agency that would be willing to host a donors’ meeting, at which all bilateral assistance agencies, NGOs, foundations and other potential donors could be invited to discuss a proposal on the establishment of a funding mechanism for the Ramsar SGF. Such a donors’ meeting should take place either in Gland, for donors to have a better “feeling” of the Convention’s *modus operandi*, or in a centrally located place, convenient for access, such as Brussels, for example. It is suggested that the Chair of the Standing Committee and/or the Chair of the Subgroup of Finance be entrusted with the responsibility of identifying a “lead development assistance agency”, with the support of other Standing Committee members and the Bureau. It is also suggested that such a process should be launched when the Development Assistance Officer at the Ramsar Bureau is on board (provided that the establishment of this post is agreed to by the Standing Committee, as proposed), so that she/he could take the lead from the Bureau side on this matter. But in the meantime the process to identify the “lead development assistance agency” could be started.