

RAMSAR COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 10 JULY 2012

COP 11 met in plenary throughout the day. The plenary continued consideration of the draft resolutions, opening all remaining draft resolutions, as well as continuing discussion on the institutional host of the Ramsar Secretariat. Special presentations on the value and economics of water and wetlands, and on water security and the importance of wetlands and natural infrastructure in water resource management also took place. The contact group on climate change and wetlands also met.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON THE ECONOMICS OF ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY (TEEB): Andrew Farmer, Institute for European Environmental Policy, presented progress on the TEEB of Water and Wetlands study, noting critical issues to be addressed, *inter alia*: accounting for water and wetlands in local decision making; assessing ecosystem service benefits; and reforming harmful subsidies. Farmer emphasized that protection of wetland ecosystems helps meet future costs of water management and poverty alleviation objectives.

He stated that a mix of qualitative, quantitative and monetary insights is useful for measuring ecosystem services. He announced a TEEB synthesis report is being prepared for CBD COP 11.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON WATER SECURITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS AND NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: Michael Scoullous, Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean, explained that water security includes the quantity and quality of water for direct use and productive purposes, and reducing water-related risks. He highlighted the role of wetlands in providing important "infrastructure" services for water security and the need for combined integrated water resources and coastal zone management. TURKEY underscored the relationship between hydropower and water security issues.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Institutional Host of the Ramsar Secretariat: Before lunch, COP 11 President Făcă reopened this item (COP11 DR.1). He reported on Conference Committee discussions, noting that because many parties favored maintaining IUCN as host, the UNEP option would not have the two-thirds majority required in a formal vote. He suggested a Friends of the Chair group, co-chaired by Jamaica and Senegal, work on revising the IUCN hosting option to include the key points raised by those favoring the UNEP option, *inter alia*: adding Arabic as an official language; increasing Ramsar Convention visibility; holding high-level segments at COP meetings; and fostering synergies with other MEAs and UNEP.

In the evening, Ainsley Henry, Jamaica, reported on the Friends of the Chair meeting. He informed delegates that: South Africa had asked that their preference for the UNEP hosting option be recorded, but would not block consensus; the proposal for a high-level segment of the COP was mentioned; and two preambular

paragraphs and two operative paragraphs were drafted. The Secretariat said the additional paragraphs would be translated and posted online in an Add.1 document.

CUBA requested inclusion of their intervention, which had highlighted the number of parties who have not yet expressed a preference or are not present at this COP, in the Friends of the Chair report. He also emphasized that some parties require additional information, and the importance of using the next triennium for providing further information on options.

Streamlining Procedures for Describing Ramsar Sites at the Time of Designation and Subsequently: David Stroud, Ramsar STRP, introduced this item (COP DR.8 and Annexes 1 and 2, and Doc.22), describing the revised format and related strategic framework and guidelines as a "revolution" in the understanding of Ramsar sites, data access and sharing, and Secretariat efficiency.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION requested extending the deadline for adoption of the new format to January 2015. UGANDA suggested mandating the STRP and Secretariat to work on definition of wetlands boundaries. TURKEY requested deletion of reference to Resolution VII.19 (Guidelines for International Cooperation Under the Ramsar Convention). PANAMA, supported by PERU, suggested including social data, indicators and monitoring. CYPRUS, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, proposed mandating the STRP and Secretariat to resolve the lack of digital boundaries. The Secretariat will produce a Rev.1.

An Integrated Framework for Avoiding, Mitigating and Compensating for Wetland Losses: Royal Gardner, Ramsar STRP, introduced this item (COP11 DR.9 and Doc.s 24 and 27), highlighting that the framework serves as a roadmap to existing guidance in different documents.

SWITZERLAND, with CHINA, proposed a WWF amendment on strategic planning to map potential areas for conservation. MALAYSIA said further discussion is needed on compensation, and AUSTRALIA expressed concern on boundaries of Ramsar Sites.

MEXICO opposed reference to "no net loss," with ARGENTINA expressing concern on offsets and compensation. NEW ZEALAND proposed deleting figure 3 (decision-making framework) and CANADA deleting parts of it. An informal working group will address these issues.

Wetlands and Energy Issues: Heather MacKay, STRP Chair, introduced this item (COP11 DR.10 and Doc.28), which, *inter alia*, emphasizes the importance of energy provision and wetland ecosystem services to human and economic development, and provides guidance on policy-making consistent with wise use.

DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, and the US suggested including "ecological impact criteria" for energy use. SWITZERLAND requested including the Hydropower Sustainable Assessment Protocol. INDIA noted impacts of biofuel plantations on wetlands. JAPAN referenced tidal power plants, the CONGO mangroves, and PANAMA

capacity building. COLOMBIA highlighted impacts of hydrocarbon transportation on wetlands. BRAZIL requested deleting reference to “footprints.” The Secretariat said it would develop a Rev.1.

Principles for the Planning and Management of Urban and Peri-Urban Wetlands: Rob McInnis, Ramsar Secretariat, introduced this item (COP11 DR.11 and Doc.23). COLOMBIA proposed text on safeguarding environmental flows. UGANDA called for guidelines on mainstreaming wetland issues into urban planning. Tunisia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by FRANCE, proposed the COP 12 consider a “Ramsar City/Town” label to recognize model approaches to protecting wetlands.

NEW ZEALAND highlighted engagement with local communities and FRANCE requested referencing indigenous peoples, using Rio+20 language. CHILE and SOUTH AFRICA highlighted the role of local government and BENIN the need for sub-regional and transboundary management. The PHILIPPINES mentioned integrated river basin management and natural and man-made calamities, including climate change. The Secretariat will produce a Rev.1.

Wetlands and Health - Taking an Ecosystem Approach: Pierre Horwitz, Ramsar STRP, introduced this item (COP11 DR.12), highlighting a manual for identifying, preventing and controlling diseases of domestic animals and wildlife in wetlands, and the need for Ramsar to work with the health sector.

IRAN proposed including impacts of regional wetlands degradation in arid and semi-arid areas on human health. AUSTRALIA proposed adding “resources permitting.” CHINA emphasized the need to prevent, in addition to control, disease. The US proposed informing the public about the importance of wetlands to human health. The Secretariat will prepare a Rev.1.

An Integrated Framework for Linking Wetland Conservation and Wise Use with Poverty Eradication: Ritesh Kumar, Ramsar STRP, introduced the item (COP11 DR.13). AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND requested that work on this issue be undertaken “resources permitting,” and NEW ZEALAND noted implementation should be discretionary. NORWAY suggested text on Sustainable Development Goals. The Secretariat will prepare a Rev.1.

Agriculture-Wetland Interactions - Rice Paddy and Pesticide Usage: Rebecca D’Cruz, Ramsar STRP, introduced this item (COP11 DR.15 and Doc.31), noting continued negative impacts of pesticides in rice paddies.

SWITZERLAND, DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, INDIA and BRAZIL supported the draft resolution. JAPAN questioned the transparency of the draft resolution’s preparation and, supported by CHINA, THAILAND, SRI LANKA and REPUBLIC OF KOREA, requested reference to: traditional rice cultivation systems as examples of wetland wise use; assessment of impacts of pesticide use policies; and a review by STRP of impacts of agricultural practices on rice paddies. SRI LANKA, with COSTA RICA, suggested referring to “agrochemicals” rather than pesticides. The Secretariat will prepare a Rev.1.

Ensuring Efficient Delivery of Scientific and Technical Aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015: STRP Chair MacKay introduced the proposal for a review of the scientific and technical advice (COP11 DR.16 and Doc. 26).

DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, LIBYA, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA and PANAMA requested, *inter alia*: ensuring balanced committee membership; engaging parties; and defining the review timeline. DENMARK, CHILE and AUSTRALIA called for efficiency and minimizing review costs, with PANAMA asking for clarity on costs. The Secretariat will prepare a Rev.1.

Future Implementation of Scientific and Technical Aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015: STRP Chair MacKay introduced this item (COP11 DR.17). INDIA requested, *inter alia*, strengthening the STRP at the regional level. NEW ZEALAND proposed specific implementation targets and NORWAY highlighted national implementation.

DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, suggested prioritizing the Ramsar Information Sheet, supported by CHILE. He suggested, *inter alia*, recognizing linkages between climate change and water storage capacity of wetlands, and the potential for adaptation through wetland restoration.

AUSTRALIA suggested shortening the list of priority tasks to match available resources. SOUTH AFRICA supported National Focal Point capacity building and prioritizing engagement with IPBES. ARGENTINA called for avoiding duplication of work on sustainability criteria for biofuels. The Secretariat will produce a Rev.1.

Adjustments to the Modus Operandi of the STRP for the 2013-2015 Triennium: Deputy Secretary General Davidson introduced the item (COP 11 DR.18). STRP Chair MacKay drew attention to adjustments to the *modus operandi* for the STRP adopted in Resolution IX.11.

DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, requested text on funding opportunities, AUSTRALIA on communication and adoption of STRP outputs, and SOUTH AFRICA on capacity building for STRP NFPs. CANADA suggested inviting IPBES to observe STRP activities. The Secretariat said a new STRP online portal will be launched this year. The Secretariat will develop a Rev.1.

Adjustments to the Terms of Resolution VII.1 (Composition, Roles and Responsibilities of the SC and Regional Categorization of Countries Under the Convention): Deputy Secretary General Davidson introduced this item (COP11 DR.19). Costa Rica, for the NEO-TROPICS GROUP, SOUTH AFRICA and SENEGAL suggested participation of alternates in the SC meetings in case primary members cannot attend. AZERBAIJAN, supported by DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, requested inclusion in the Europe regional categorization. IRAN requested recording his reservation about the list of countries in the Asia regional categorization. Davidson said the Conference Committee will consider the points raised.

Promoting Responsible Investment by Government and the Private Sector to Ensure the Maintenance of the Benefits People and Nature Gain from Wetlands: Sibylle Vermont, Switzerland, introduced the item (COP11 DR.20). The PHILIPPINES requested the inclusion of the precautionary principle, and ARGENTINA that “responsible investment” be changed to “investment for sustainable development.” AUSTRALIA supported the intent of the draft resolution, but not additional reporting requirements.

BRAZIL called for amendments on, *inter alia*, the invitation to International Organization Partners and others to provide information on multinational companies, and encouraging parties to seek Secretariat advice on international investments adversely affecting wetlands. The Secretariat will develop a Rev.1.

Wetlands and Sustainable Development: Delegates considered a draft resolution submitted by Iran (COP11 DR.21). SOUTH AFRICA proposed inclusion of a paragraph on a high-level segment of the COP. BENIN, supported by CONGO, proposed asking parties to “act” rather than to “reflect” on text from the 2011 Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future. The US suggested mentioning the cultural values of wetlands, including to indigenous peoples. The Secretariat will produce a Rev.1.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With the COP President identifying a “time crisis,” delegates began the morning working rapidly to open the remaining draft resolutions, establishing informal groups to resolve areas of disagreement rather than engaging in extensive plenary debate. Some delegates welcomed what they called “the new efficient pace,” but others lamented that observers were no longer allowed to intervene, saying that submitting amendments to the Secretariat in written form, “limited the richness of debate and the possibility for creative solutions.” However, at the end of the day, the COP was moving “full speed ahead,” having opened all of the draft resolutions. This left the Secretariat with the unenviable task of preparing revised versions of most draft texts, while delegates enjoy field trips to wetland sites offered by their Romanian hosts on Wednesday.