

RAMSAR COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 12 JULY 2012

COP 11 met in plenary throughout the day. The plenary addressed the reports of the Credentials Committee and the discussions, conclusions and recommendations of preceding sessions. The plenary discussed the draft resolution on the institutional host of the Ramsar Secretariat. The plenary then commenced adopting conference resolutions and recommendations, including on: financial and budgetary matters; adjustments to the strategic plan 2009-2015 for the 2013-2015 triennium; the status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance; partnerships and synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other institutions; wetlands and health - taking an ecosystem approach; an integrated framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication; ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015; and adjustments to the *modus operandi* of the STRP for the 2013-2015 triennium. The plenary also began consideration of the revised draft resolution on wetlands and sustainable development. The contact group on climate change and wetlands also met.

PLENARY

REPORTS: Credentials Committee: Credentials Committee Chair Erick Fernando Cabrera Castellanos, Guatemala, presented the committee's report, which was adopted.

Report on the Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations in the Preceding Sessions: Ramsar Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson presented reports on, *inter alia*, updates from: the Committee on Finance and Budget; the Friends of the Chair Group on institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat; and the contact group on climate change and wetlands.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Institutional Host of the Ramsar Secretariat:

The revised documentation for this issue (COP11 DR.1 Rev.1) was introduced by COP 11 President Mihail Făcă.

PERU, SOUTH AFRICA, Cameroon, for the AFRICAN GROUP, BRAZIL, PANAMA, CHILE, COLOMBIA and NICARAGUA preferred a final decision be taken at COP 12, with PERU, SOUTH AFRICA and COLOMBIA saying that the decision to stay with IUCN would be an interim decision.

VENEZUELA, for the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), and COSTA RICA, with PANAMA, opposed the draft resolution, and COSTA RICA, PANAMA and SOUTH AFRICA questioned the basis for consensus.

The AFRICAN GROUP stressed the need for a high-level segment, synergies with other MEAs and organizations, and working on this issue at COP 12. BRAZIL reiterated the Rio+20 decision to strengthen UNEP.

DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, and NEW ZEALAND supported the revised draft resolution, with EU Member States and Croatia, NEW ZEALAND, the US, AUSTRALIA and JAMAICA underscoring the need to take a conclusive decision at this COP.

PANAMA asked the COP 11 President to refer to rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure (Aim to seek consensus) and 57 (Convention prevails in the event of conflict between provisions).

Deputy Secretary General Davidson and President Făcă explained that based on rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure and Article 8.1 of the Convention, the support of at least two thirds of all parties is required to change institutional host. They stressed the aim is to reach consensus but that voting is a possibility in the Convention, and noted that if consensus is not reached or a vote is not taken, the *status quo* will remain, leaving out the important discussions on strategies to improve the Convention. The issue will be reopened on Friday.

Financial and Budgetary Matters: Finance and Budget Committee Chair Tiina Niikkonen, Finland, reported that the budget proposed in the revised resolution (COP11 DR.2 Rev.1) provides for zero annual increase in the 2013-2015 core budget. She highlighted that provisions were made for investment in information management, but that Secretariat salaries were frozen at their 2012 level due to the global economic crisis. She stated that contractual obligations for the Secretariat will be met. She suggested that the Secretariat and the new SC seek and implement actions against parties with outstanding contributions for more than three years. Niikkonen explained the Committee recommends that the Reserve Fund should be from 6-15% of the annual core budget of the Convention. She noted that the Committee did not consider the requests of some parties for additional language capacity in the Convention, because the core budget cannot accommodate additional activities, and suggested the Secretariat and new SC could consider this issue.

CAMEROON highlighted the need to bring greater visibility to the Convention. NORWAY urged parties to increase voluntary contributions. GUATEMALA proposed the creation of a Global Ramsar Fund to bolster the budget. DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, stated that the budget should not set a precedent for the Convention in future years and called for fundraising and voluntary contributions to the non-core budget.

Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

Adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 for the 2013-2015 Triennium: The Secretariat introduced the revised draft (COP11 DR.3 Rev.1). NEW ZEALAND requested deletion of a reference to types of "threatened" wetlands in the Ramsar List. The LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES, opposed by the US, requested inserting "especially states under foreign occupation and least developed states," with reference to under-represented wetland types.

DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, proposed adding references to environmental flows, ecological integrity, and education, and retaining the target of 2,500 designated Ramsar Sites covering 250 million hectares. JAMAICA proposed deleting the number target, suggesting that a global percentage of wetlands be identified as a target for Ramsar Site designation. SWITZERLAND, COLOMBIA and NEW ZEALAND preferred keeping the number target, with SWITZERLAND cautioning that small sites may be ecologically important, and that target numbers are useful in representing the case for wetlands.

Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

The Status of Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance: The Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.4 Rev.2). AUSTRALIA proposed clarifying the introduction to the list of sites with reports of human-induced negative changes, by indicating when information has been received from sources other than contracting parties. ARGENTINA highlighted that Article 3.2 of the Convention does not make reference to third party reports.

SENEGAL proposed requesting international organization partners to support parties in updating Ramsar Information Sheets. Secretary General Tiéga underscored the importance of Ramsar Advisory Missions. Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

Partnerships and Synergies with MEAs and Other Institutions: The Secretariat highlighted amendments to this item (COP11 DR.6 Rev.1). To the list of partners in Annex 1, IRAN, DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, and CONGO, suggested adding the UN Forum on Forests, the Arctic Council Working Group on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, and the International Tropical Timber Organization, respectively.

SWITZERLAND, with CONGO, suggested maintaining reference to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), while CANADA emphasized that GEF is one among other financial institutions. JAMAICA proposed adding reference to strengthening partnerships with sub-regional groups. DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, requested deleting the paragraph on the assessment by the Secretariat of the contribution of partnerships to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.

Delegates adopted the draft resolution as amended.

Wetlands and Health - Taking an Ecosystem Approach: The Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.12 Rev.1), noting that the new text includes proposals to: mention a "tripartite strategic alignment" between the FAO, World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organization; incorporate relevant Rio+20 outcomes; and recognize links between altered hydrological conditions and negative health outcomes.

IRAN proposed highlighting the importance of coastal wetlands, and to recognize the negative impact of reclamation action, especially on coral reefs. The UNITED ARAB EMIRATES opposed singling out particular types of habitat or ecosystems, and proposed mentioning oil pollution. The Secretariat cautioned against adding new language at this stage, and IRAN agreed to leave out mention of coral reefs.

NEW ZEALAND proposed mentioning that "some," not "most," instances of altered hydrological conditions will need to be addressed by regional and global cooperation. Supported by CANADA, she said that a reference to "enhanced sustainable water management systems" went beyond the mandate of Ramsar.

Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

An Integrated Framework for Linking Wetland Conservation and Wise Use with Poverty Eradication: The Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.13 Rev.1).

FRANCE, CANADA, PERU and THAILAND proposed minor textual amendments. INDIA requested changing "the poor" to "those below poverty line," and SENEGAL "poverty

eradication" to "poverty alleviation." The Secretariat explained that "poverty eradication" was language decided at COP 10 and is consistent with Rio+20 outcomes, and SENEGAL agreed to retain it.

Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

Ensuring Efficient Delivery of Scientific and Technical Aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015: The Secretariat introduced the amended draft resolution (COP11 DR.16 Rev.1). JAPAN asked for clarification on who would provide review specifications to the Secretariat, with PANAMA suggesting the SC. The US, with CANADA, proposed the SC's Management Working Group lead the review, and to fund implementing the resolution from the STRP line item. CANADA proposed requiring assessment of the financial implications of the review's recommendations.

Delegates adopted this resolution as amended.

Adjustments to the *Modus Operandi* of the STRP for the 2013-2015 Triennium: The Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.18 Rev.1), highlighting, *inter alia*, text on: strengthening regional and sub-regional scientific networks and enhancing the participation of STRP National Focal Points (NFPs); assessing and considering strategic funding opportunities; and capacity building for NFPs.

CANADA proposed adding a reference to the Partnership Coordinator's role in fundraising. Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

Wetlands and Sustainable Development: The Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution submitted by Iran (COP11 DR.21 Rev.1), noting the addition of a paragraph acknowledging the role of politicians in the allocation of resources for the implementation of MEAs, and urging parties to arrange high-level segments at future COPs. JAPAN, the US, URUGUAY and DENMARK, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, requested deletion of the paragraph on high-level segments. The US, with URUGUAY, said the high-level segment is mentioned in DR.1 on institutional hosting of the Secretariat, and emphasized the additional costs and difficulties to COP host countries. SOUTH AFRICA proposed maintaining the paragraph in brackets, pending agreement on DR.1. CONGO proposed the Convention be modified to create a ministerial body. Cameroon, for the AFRICA GROUP, supported maintaining the text on a high-level segment.

The Chair suggested that delegates seek consensus informally and proposed reopening the discussion on Friday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Refreshed delegates returned from their field trips to plunge into the revised draft resolutions. Following a slow start, with debate about the institutional host of the Ramsar Secretariat still proving contentious, the delegates quickly worked to adopt eight resolutions. The budget was adopted by consensus with zero increase in assessed contributions, with one delegate calling it "inevitable due to the international economic crisis." Another hoped future increases would be forthcoming, and others lamented the potential impact "reduced resources will have on activities on the ground."

One delegate noted that "COP 11 still has much work before we can conclude on Friday." With 13 resolutions still outstanding, including some of the most contentious issues - such as institutional host of the Ramsar Secretariat and inclusion of REDD+ in the draft resolution on climate change - some worried about the possibility of a late night. The Secretariat, however, reassured the plenary that "everything looked on track."

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP 11 will be available on Monday, 16 July 2012 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/ramsar/cop11/>