

## SUMMARY OF THE ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS: 6-13 JULY 2012

The eleventh conference of the contracting parties (COP 11) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat was held from 6-13 July 2012 at the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest, Romania, on the theme “Wetlands: Home and Destination.” Over 2000 participants representing the 162 parties to the Convention, as well as the international organization partners (IOPs) of the Ramsar Convention, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended the meeting.

COP 11 adopted 22 resolutions, including on: institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat; the status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance; regional initiatives; partnerships and synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other institutions; tourism, recreation and wetlands; climate change and wetlands – implications for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; and agriculture-wetland interactions – rice paddy and pest control. The COP also adopted the Convention’s budget for 2013-2015 and the Strategic Plan 2013-2015. The main debate during COP 11 was the issue of the institutional hosting of the Secretariat, and after intense negotiations, the COP decided to renew confidence in IUCN as the host of the Secretariat.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (also known as the Ramsar Convention) was signed in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971, and came into force on 21 December 1975. The Convention provides a framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

**CONVENTION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE:** Originally emphasizing the conservation and wise use of wetlands primarily to provide a habitat for waterbirds, the Convention has subsequently broadened its scope to address all aspects of

wetland conservation and wise use, thereby recognizing the importance of wetlands as ecosystems that contribute to both biodiversity conservation and human well-being. Wetlands cover an estimated 9% of the Earth’s land surface, and contribute significantly to the global economy in terms of water supply, fisheries, agriculture, forestry and tourism.

The Convention currently has 162 parties. A total of 2040 wetland sites covering over 193.4 million hectares are included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. Parties to the Convention commit themselves to: designate at least one site that meets the Ramsar Criteria for inclusion in the Ramsar List and ensure maintenance of the ecological character of each Ramsar site; include wetland conservation within national land-use planning in order to promote the wise use of all wetlands within their territory; establish nature reserves on wetlands and promote training in wetland research and management; and consult with other parties about Convention implementation, especially with regard to transboundary wetlands, shared water systems, shared species and development projects affecting wetlands.

Contracting parties meet every three years to assess progress in implementing the Convention and wetland conservation, share knowledge and experience on technical issues, and plan for the next triennium. In addition to the COP, the Convention’s work is supported by a Standing Committee (SC), a Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the Ramsar Bureau, which carries out the functions of a Secretariat.

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**PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE COP:** There have been ten meetings of the COP since the Convention's entry into force: COP 1 in Cagliari, Italy (November 1980); COP 2 in Groningen, the Netherlands (May 1984); COP 3 in Regina, Canada (May-June 1987); COP 4 in Montreux, Switzerland (June-July 1990); COP 5 in Kushiro, Japan (June 1993); COP 6 in Brisbane, Australia (March 1996); COP 7 in San José, Costa Rica (May 1999); COP 8 in Valencia, Spain (November 2002); COP 9 in Kampala, Uganda (November 2005); and COP 10 in Changwon, Republic of Korea (October-November 2008).

**COP 7:** At COP 7, delegates focused on the interrelations between human societies and wetland habitats. They considered the Convention's implementation in each region and adopted 30 resolutions and four recommendations on policy, programme and budgetary issues. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ramsar Bureau and the UNESCO World Heritage Center.

**COP 8:** COP 8 focused on the role of wetlands in water provision, as well as their cultural and livelihoods aspects. Delegates adopted more than 40 resolutions addressing policy, technical, programme and budgetary matters, including: wetlands and agriculture; climate change; cultural issues; mangroves; water allocation and management; and the Report of the World Commission on Dams. Delegates also approved the Convention's budget and Work Plan for 2003-2005, and its Strategic Plan for 2003-2008.

**COP 9:** COP 9 adopted 25 resolutions on a wide range of policy, programme and budgetary matters, including: additional scientific and technical guidance for the implementation of the Ramsar Wise Use Concept; engagement of the Convention in ongoing multilateral processes dealing with water; the Convention's role in natural disaster prevention, and climate change mitigation and adaptation; wetlands and poverty reduction; cultural values of wetlands; and the emergence of avian influenza. The COP also adopted the Convention's budget and Work Plan for the 2006-2008 triennium, and reviewed its Strategic Plan 2003-2008. An informal Ministerial Dialogue adopted the Kampala Declaration, which emphasizes the role of the Convention in arresting continuing loss and degradation of wetland ecosystems.

**COP 10:** COP 10 adopted 32 resolutions, including on: wetlands and climate change; wetlands and biofuels; wetlands and extractive industries; wetlands and poverty eradication; wetlands and human health and well-being; enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems; and promoting international cooperation on the conservation of waterbird flyways. The COP also adopted the Convention's budget for 2009-2013 and the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.

### COP 11 REPORT

The COP 11 convened on Friday evening, 6 July, with a ceremony opened by Magor Csibi, Director, WWF Romania. Ramsar Standing Committee Chair Yeon-chul Yoo (Republic of Korea) handed over the Ramsar flag on behalf of the COP 10 Presidency to Corneliu Mugurel Cozmanciuc, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Romania, who welcomed delegates to Romania.

The opening plenary convened on Saturday morning, 7 July, with SC Chair Yeon-chul Yoo, on behalf of the COP 10 Presidency, presiding.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** Delegates adopted the agenda (COP11 Doc.1 Rev.1) and rules of procedure (COP11 Doc.2). Adoption of Rule 5 (on notification of the COP agenda) and Rule 26 (on the Conference Committee, other committees and working groups) was postponed after a discussion on, among others, the possibility for closed Conference Committee meetings. On Sunday, 8 July, the Secretariat introduced amendments to Rules 5 and 26 (COP11 Doc.2 Rev.1 Add.1), and they were adopted as amended.

On Saturday, the COP elected Rovana Plumb, Minister of Environment and Forests, Romania, as COP 11 President, and Mihail Făcă, State Secretary, National Environmental Protection Agency, Romania, as an alternate. With Făcă presiding, the plenary elected Mohamed Saif Al Afkham (United Arab Emirates) from the Asia region, and Nancy Céspedes (Chile) from the Neo-tropical region, as Vice-Presidents.

The COP appointed representatives to the Credentials Committee from each region: Sidi Mohamed Abdou Ould Lehlou (Mauritania) from Africa; Eiji Hatano (Japan) from Asia; Helle Liemann (Denmark) from Europe; Erick Fernando Cabrera Castellanos (Guatemala) from the Neo-tropics; Rowena Watson (US) from North America; and Georgina Usher (Australia) from Oceania.

The COP also established a Finance and Budget Committee, chaired by Tiina Niikonen (Finland). The COP appointed, in addition to the members of the SC Subgroup on Finance, representatives from: Switzerland and Denmark for Europe; Japan for Asia; South Africa for Africa; Antigua and Barbuda for the Neo-tropics; Canada for North America; and Fiji for Oceania. In the afternoon, the COP agreed to admit the list of registered observers (COP11 Doc.38 and Add.1).

On Sunday, the COP elected parties to the Ramsar SC for the coming triennium. The following parties were selected to represent Ramsar's six regions: Fiji, for Oceania; Canada, for North America; Cuba, Guatemala and Chile, for the Neo-tropics; Denmark, France, Croatia and Finland, for Europe; South Africa, Burundi, Tunisia and Guinea, for Africa; and the Republic of Korea, Cambodia and the United Arab Emirates, for Asia.

On Friday, 13 July, the COP also elected parties as alternates to the SC for the coming triennium: Palau, for Oceania; Mexico, for North America; Costa Rica, Jamaica and Argentina, for the Neo-tropics; the Czech Republic, for Europe; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Namibia, for Africa; and Nepal, Japan and Iran, for Asia.

### REPORTS

#### Report of the Chairperson of the Standing Committee:

On Saturday, SC Chair Yeon-chul gave an overview of the SC's activities for the period 2008-2012 (COP11 Doc.5). The Committee held five meetings during which it: reviewed the Secretariat's work and budget; considered reports on work recommended by the STRP Oversight Committee and the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel; and discussed draft resolutions.

**Report of the World Wetlands NGO Conference:** On Saturday, Petruta Moisi, EcoCounselling Centre Galati, Romania, on behalf of the World Wetland Network, reported on the recommendations of the World Wetlands NGO Conference, which took place just prior to COP 11, drawing attention to the draft resolutions on: sustainable tourism, stressing the need to balance tourism and local demands on wetland resources; institutional arrangements for the Secretariat, which should bring clear benefits and more involvement of civil society; and agriculture and pesticide use, expressing concern for the potential increased use of genetically modified organisms to control pests.

**Report of the Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP):** On Saturday, Heather MacKay, STRP Chair, briefed delegates on the Panel's work from 2009-2012 (COP11 Doc.6). She highlighted new communication tools, collaboration with other organizations and conventions, and revisions to the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) and Strategic Framework. She emphasized the need to focus on implementation, and highlighted challenges related to the work and capacity of STRP national focal points (NFPs) and the limited capacity of STRP members to respond to intersessional requests. In the ensuing discussion, Denmark, Romania, South Africa and Switzerland thanked the STRP for its work. South Africa called for solutions to the challenges presented by the STRP Chair. Iran emphasized improving the relationship with other scientific bodies.

**Report on the Implementation of the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Programme 2009-2015:** On Saturday, Sandra Hails, Ramsar Secretariat, presented the "Overview of the Implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme" (COP11 Doc.14), describing the main challenges and achievements over the last triennium. She highlighted the need for: designation of separate general, CEPA and STRP NFPs by parties; improved communication between the CEPA and STRP communities; and development of national CEPA action plans. She noted the role of the four Ramsar regional centres and the successful activities surrounding the Fortieth Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention and the annual World Wetlands Day.

She announced a new tool, "Enhancing Wise Use: A Framework for Capacity Development" (COP11 Doc.34), and the upcoming discussion at COP 12 on further implementation of Resolution VII.8 (Guidelines for Establishing and Strengthening Local Communities' and Indigenous People's Participation in the Management of Wetlands) and VIII.36 (Participatory Environmental Management as a Tool for Management and Wise Use of Wetlands).

In response to the CEPA Report, Iran stressed the need to enhance the capacity of regional centres and NGOs for training. South Africa, supported by India, Nepal and Uganda, underscored the importance of raising awareness among politicians and high-level stakeholders, with South Africa linking this discussion to the issue of institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat (COP11 DR.1).

**Report of the Secretary General and Overview of the Implementation of the Convention at the Global Level:** On Saturday, Ramsar Secretary General Anada Tiéga presented the "Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the

Convention at the Global Level" (COP11 Doc.7), including progress, achievements, challenges and ways forward for the next triennium.

On the wise use of wetlands, Tiéga recommended that parties develop national inventories of the ecosystem services provided by wetlands, in terms of their importance for water, biodiversity, energy production, jobs and mitigation of climate change. He noted that parties have reported a 7% increase in national wetland policies since COP 10, but said this is insufficient and some policies need to be updated to include climate change considerations.

On Ramsar Sites, Tiéga highlighted the need for all sites to have a management plan. He urged parties to involve key stakeholders, include CEPA in their work and make better use of the Montreux Record, noting it currently lists 48 sites.

On international cooperation, he mentioned the Secretariat's contribution to international processes including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), among others. He highlighted the role of the recently hired Partnership Coordination Officer in strengthening collaboration.

On institutional capacity, he noted the need to find a balance between growing expectations and limited Secretariat capacity, highlighting that unpaid contributions from 2011 and earlier, currently total CHF 237,000.

On membership, Tiéga announced that Ramsar now has 162 parties, and welcomed new parties Grenada, Turkmenistan, Bhutan and Laos.

In response to the Secretary General's report, Costa Rica and Iran stressed the importance of Ramsar's technical assistance to parties. Costa Rica, Peru and Cuba called for increasing and strengthening strategic alliances and synergies with other instruments and organizations, with Peru highlighting the historic Memorandum of Understanding between the CBD and Ramsar.

Uruguay requested two of its Ramsar Sites be withdrawn from the Montreux Record. South Africa underscored the importance of capacity building for NFPs and requested that the core budget include funding for meetings and delegate support. Wetlands International stressed the urgent need to update the Ramsar Sites Information Service, currently managed by Wetlands International, noting this redevelopment is part of the non-core budget. India highlighted the lack of monitoring at many Ramsar Sites and the need for clear performance indicators.

On Sunday, Claudia Fenerol, Ramsar Secretariat, described Ramsar partnership activities, highlighting the launch of a Ramsar website on partnerships. She described new partnerships signed with the World Bank, including the Global Partnership for Oceans, Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services, and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands initiative.

In response to the presentation, Iran and the Arab League urged increasing support for partnerships at the regional level, with Cameroon requesting an inventory of partnerships in Africa. Switzerland and Japan requested more evidence of concrete outcomes. Cuba emphasized the importance of Rio+20 in shaping future partnerships. Senegal and Congo

highlighted the need for a Global Environment Facility (GEF) focal point for wetlands to ensure project financing at local, national, subregional and transboundary levels. Benin stressed the potential for private sector partnerships. Ramsar Secretary General Tiéga reiterated a programme-based approach to partnerships to ensure their sustainability.

**Financial Report for 2009-2012 by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee Subgroup on Finance and Proposed Budget for the Triennium 2013-2015:** On Sunday, Tiina Niikonen, Chair, SC Subgroup on Finance, presented the documentation on financial and budgetary matters (COP11 Doc.15) and background on the proposed budget for 2013-2015 (COP11 Doc.16), noting the draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters (COP11 DR.2). She explained that for the first time the COP will approve a combined budget, which includes the core budget funded by parties' contributions and the non-core element to be financed by additional voluntary contributions.

Secretary General Tiéga emphasized the need to ensure resources are available to the Secretariat to enable it to fulfill its mandate and to reverse the declining trend in voluntary contributions.

South Africa preferred looking into ways to improve Secretariat efficiency over increasing the core budget by 2% *per annum*.

### **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

Special presentations in plenary covered a variety of issues related to implementation and emerging issues, including:

- wetland conservation and sustainable use in Romania, on Saturday, 7 July (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1734e.html>);
- outcomes of Rio+20 and their implications for the Ramsar Convention, on Sunday, 8 July (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1735e.html>);
- sustainable tourism and the value of wetlands, on Monday, 9 July (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1736e.html>);
- The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), Tuesday, 10 July (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1737e.html>); and
- water security and importance of wetlands and natural infrastructure in water resource management, Tuesday, 10 July (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1737e.html>).

### **COP 10 RESOLUTIONS**

#### **INSTITUTIONAL HOSTING OF THE RAMSAR**

**SECRETARIAT:** This item (COP11 DR.1 and Doc.17) was first introduced in plenary on Sunday, by COP 11 President Făcă, who noted that without consensus on whether IUCN or UNEP should host the Ramsar Secretariat, a decision would require a two-thirds majority. President Făcă proposed an indicative vote to assess whether there was enough support to adopt the UNEP option if the issue went to a vote. Finland, South Africa, Costa Rica, Sudan, India, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Senegal opposed an indicative vote as it was not part of the Rules of Procedure. Denmark and Japan supported an indicative vote as a "friendly instrument" to work towards consensus and avoid a formal vote.

COP 11 President Făcă then proposed voting on whether to hold an indicative vote. Sixty-one parties voted in favor of the indicative vote, 44 parties opposed and 10 parties abstained. The COP then proceeded to the indicative vote. The results were: 66 parties in favor of IUCN as host; 26 parties in favor of UNEP as host; and 18 parties abstaining.

On Monday, 9 July, objections to the indicative vote process resulted in continued discussions of the draft resolution to allow interventions from parties that did not have a chance to speak on Sunday.

During discussions on Sunday and Monday, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Finland, Panama, Uruguay, Peru, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, Venezuela, the Republic of Korea, Chile, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, the Central African Republic, Namibia, Seychelles, Cameroon, Kenya, Comoros, Djibouti, Honduras, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Ecuador and Nicaragua supported UNEP as the Secretariat host. Switzerland also favored UNEP, but proposed to keep the Secretariat in Gland, Switzerland. Parties identified reasons for UNEP as host, including: the decision at Rio+20 to strengthen UNEP; the need to improve the political status and international visibility of the Ramsar Convention; and the need to enable synergies with other MEAs.

Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Tunisia, Turkey, the US, the Czech Republic, Costa Rica, France, Austria, Algeria, Libya, Cambodia, Benin, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Azerbaijan, Slovakia, Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Lesotho, Croatia, Hungary, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Iceland, Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Poland, Georgia, Portugal, Nepal, Moldova, Samoa, Bahamas, Saint Lucia, Latvia, the Marshall Islands and Mali preferred that IUCN remain the Secretariat's host, with some noting that IUCN had done a good job hosting the Secretariat over the past forty years.

Parties said moving the Secretariat to a new institutional host would increase the costs of the hosting arrangements, result in the loss of institutional knowledge and capacity, distract attention from the work of the Convention, and require a considerable investment of time and energy. Costa Rica, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, noted that any decision on hosting arrangements could be reconsidered in the future, if necessary.

The United Arab Emirates, Lesotho, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan also preferred that IUCN remain the institutional host, but requested the inclusion of Arabic as an official language in the Convention. Fiji preferred IUCN, questioning whether UNEP would support an Oceania regional office. The Netherlands supported staying with IUCN until a World Environment Organization is established, at which point a transfer could be considered. Senegal supported staying with IUCN but suggested exploring practical ways to include a ministerial segment at COPs.

Guatemala, China, Congo, the Philippines, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Germany, Mauritius and Laos maintained open positions. Australia preferred a consensus decision. The US, the Russian Federation and Uganda highlighted the need for COP 11 to take a decision on this matter, as the issue has been under negotiation for seven years.

On Tuesday, 10 July, COP 11 President Fâcă calculated that the UNEP option still did not have enough support in the event of a vote and established a Friends of the Chair group, chaired by Jamaica and Senegal, to develop revised text based on the IUCN option, but that addressed 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.

On Thursday, 12 July, COP 11 President Fâcă presented the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.1 Rev.1) produced by the Friends of the Chair group. 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. The African Group stressed the need for a high-level segment, which was bracketed in the revised draft resolution, synergies with other MEAs and organizations, and working on this issue at COP 12. Denmark, for the European Union (EU) Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, and New Zealand supported the revised draft resolution, with the EU Member States and Croatia, New Zealand, the US, Australia and Jamaica emphasizing the need to take a conclusive decision at this COP.

Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson and President Fâcă 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 the 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.

On Friday, 13 July, COP 11 President Fâcă noted continued disagreement on the revised draft resolution and established a new Friends of the Chair group, moderated by Cameroon, to seek consensus. Late in the afternoon, Cameroon introduced consensus text (COP11 DR.1 Rev.2), which renews confidence in IUCN, but takes on board issues raised by parties. He emphasized that adopting the resolution at COP 11 does not mean the issue cannot be further considered at another time. Delegates adopted the resolution. Nicaragua, for a number of Neo-tropical countries, underscored that this issue should be reconsidered in the future in the context of the implementation of the decision at Rio+20 to strengthen UNEP.

**Final Resolution:** In this resolution (COP11 DR.1 Rev.2) the COP, *inter alia*:

- decides to renew confidence in IUCN and continue its hosting arrangement for the Secretariat;
- invites IUCN to continue improvement of this cooperation in order to reinforce the efficiency of the Secretariat's functioning, the status of staff as well as issues of common interest related to the host country;
- requests the SC to establish a mechanism of the parties that will facilitate negotiations between the Secretariat and

the Director-General of IUCN, evaluate the work already achieved, and seek ways to improve the current operations of the Secretariat and enhance the implementation of the Ramsar Convention;

- calls upon parties to cooperate with the Secretariat to enhance collaboration and coordination between IUCN and the Convention;
- instructs the SC through an appropriate Working Group to develop strategies that explore: accommodation of UN languages into the Convention; elevation of Ramsar visibility and stature, including through enhancing high-level political engagement in the work on the Convention at national, regional and global levels, such as a ministerial segment at the COP; enhancement of synergies with MEAs and other international entities; and increased involvement in UNEP's initiatives and programmes regarding biodiversity-related MEAs and enhanced cooperation and synergies between Ramsar and UNEP; and
- requests the Working Group to provide each SC meeting with a progress report including any implications, such as financial ones, and recommendations, and that the SC submits this report and its recommendations to COP 12.

**FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS:** On Saturday, the COP established a Committee on Finance and Budget to consider this item (COP11 DR.2). The Committee was composed of the members of the SC Subgroup on Finance, plus one additional party from each Ramsar Region, and chaired by Chair of the SC Subgroup on Finance, Tiina Niikkonen. Annex 1 of the draft resolution contained two combined (core and non-core) budget alternatives for the 2013-2015 triennium, one with static contributions and the other with a 2% *per annum* increase. The Committee met six times to discuss the details of the budget.

On Thursday, Chair Niikkonen reported to plenary that the revised resolution (COP11 DR.2 Rev.1), recommended a 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 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 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 with minor amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In the final text (COP11 DR.2 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves a combined budget for the 2013-2015 cycle consisting of a zero percent increase in the core budget, funded by contributions from parties, as well as a non-core unfunded element to be financed by voluntary contributions;
- requests the Secretariat to contact parties with outstanding contributions in excess of three years and to work with them

- to initiate a plan for making payments;
- encourages parties and others to increase additional voluntary contributions to fund the non-core element of the 2013-2015 combined budget, which includes, *inter alia*, the work of the STRP, the Ramsar Sites Information Service, Ramsar Advisory Missions, Regional Initiatives and Centres, and the Small Grants Fund;
- requests the Secretariat to continue to develop new approaches and tools to secure voluntary financial contributions for priority projects; and
- decides the Reserve Fund should not be lower than 6% of the annual core budget of the Convention and not greater than 15%.

The annexes to the resolution include the: Combined Budget for 2013-2015; Illustrative Core Budget Contributions by Contracting Party; and Analysis of 2013-2015 Budgeted Non-Core Expenditures.

**ADJUSTMENTS TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2015 FOR THE 2013-2015 TRIENNIUM:** This issue (COP11 DR.3) was first addressed on Sunday, and was considered twice in plenary. Deputy Secretary General Davidson noted that the adjustments proposed are minor refinements to the Ramsar Strategic Plan and aim at highlighting the contribution of the Convention towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Denmark, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, Japan, Australia, Chile, India, Switzerland, South Africa, Colombia, Peru, Libya, Cameroon and Burundi supported the adjustments but suggested several editorial changes.

On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced a revised draft (COP11 DR.3 Rev.1) incorporating the comments submitted by the parties. 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.

The 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.

**Final Resolution:** In this resolution (COP11 DR.3 Rev.1), the COP recognizes the contribution of the Convention towards the achievements of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and adopts the adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 for the 2013-2015 triennium as set out in the annex to the resolution. The adjustments include, *inter alia*, addition of new key result areas related to:

- recognition by national actors of the benefits of maintaining wetlands as natural infrastructures;
- increased sharing of Convention implementation experiences through the Ramsar website;

- the establishment by all parties of an operational national Ramsar/Wetlands committee or equivalent body; and
- preparation of capacity building training material.

The Resolution also includes a table showing how the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 contributes to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

**STATUS OF SITES IN THE RAMSAR LIST OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:** This resolution (COP11 DR.4 Rev.1, and Doc. 8 and 30) was first discussed on Sunday. The issue was addressed twice in plenary and the resolution was adopted as amended on Thursday.

Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Peru suggested Annex 2 (Ramsar Sites with human-induced negative changes having occurred, occurring or likely to occur) be separated into reports by third parties and contracting parties. The Russian Federation called for removal of Russian Federation Ramsar Sites from Annex 2 and Poland requested removal of Biebrzanski National Park. Denmark, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, linked the current discussion to the one on streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites (COP11 DR.8).

On Thursday, delegates discussed a revised draft (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 IOPs to support parties in updating RIS. Secretary General Tiéga underscored the importance of Ramsar Advisory Missions. Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

**Final Resolution:** In the final text (COP11 DR.4 Rev.2) the COP: congratulates parties for the designation of a total of at least 217 Ramsar Sites covering over 14.6 million hectares since 2010; notes there remain significant gaps in the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the global network of Ramsar Sites and that the total of 2026 sites on the Ramsar List, as of late June 2012, falls below the target of 2500 sites by the year 2010 that the parties established in the "Strategic Framework and guidelines for the development of the Ramsar List" (2005). The COP requests the Secretariat and the STRP to streamline the lists of Article 3.2 cases and the Montreux Record, resulting in one single list of Ramsar Sites with human-induced negative changes in ecological character, and report back through the SC to COP 12.

The resolution includes annexes listing: Ramsar Sites for which no RIS and/or adequate map has been submitted; parties from which one or more updated RIS are needed as a matter of priority; Ramsar Sites with reports of human-induced negative changes having occurred, occurring or likely to occur, where information was first received from the Administrative Authority and from sources other than parties.

**REGIONAL INITIATIVES 2013-2015 IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION:** This item (COP11 DR.5 and COP11 Doc.13) was first considered in plenary on Monday, with Tobias Salathé, Ramsar Secretariat, noting the draft resolution proposes continuing current procedures, in particular: use of adopted 2009-2012 Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives; annual reporting

and submission of work plans to the SC; and SC annual assessment of regional initiative compliance with the Operational Guidelines.

During discussions, 22 delegations intervened to support the draft resolution. However, delegates were divided about supporting a temporary moratorium on new regional initiatives for 2013-2015, with those in favor emphasizing the issue of self-sustainability of the initiatives.

Argentina and Jamaica requested deletion of independent evaluations of regional initiatives. Switzerland requested clarification on who would carry out the evaluations, with Senegal requesting the Secretariat should perform them.

With reference to Doc.13, Argentina said requiring regional initiatives to have independent financial systems is not part of the Operational Guidelines. Secretary General Tiéga responded that these requirements should be seen as a constructive way to increase the capacity of regional initiatives to raise funds and ensure their sustainability.

On Friday, the Secretariat presented a revised draft resolution (COP 11 DR.5 Rev.1). Senegal reiterated his request that the evaluations be carried out by the Secretariat. France, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, requested the word “independent” be deleted. Chile, on behalf of nine Neo-tropical countries, and supported by Jamaica, Panama and China, requested deleting reference to the moratorium on new initiatives in 2013-2015.

The EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia requested a deadline for the support to regional initiatives be maintained, with Chile and Panama preferring to indicate that regional initiatives having received support for three years may have a three-year phasing-out period. The EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, opposed by Senegal and Argentina, suggested deleting a paragraph requesting the Secretariat to provide support to regional initiatives. Colombia requested encouraging parties and other relevant international and regional bodies to identify particularly important regional basins such as the Amazon. Other delegations suggested minor textual amendments.

After informal consultations among delegations having expressed conflicting views, consensus was reached in the afternoon on: deleting the moratorium, providing support from the core budget for a period up to six years, and a phasing out period; and the Secretariat providing support to regional initiatives through official channels and guidance on finance and administration. The draft resolution was adopted with the amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.5 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*: approves the continued validity of the Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention; instructs the regional initiatives to submit annual reports and annual workplans; decides that financial support can be continued for a period up to six years; and invites regional initiatives to sign hosting agreements with their host organizations or countries within year one of their establishment.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES WITH MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS:** This item (COP11 DR.6 Rev.1 and Doc. 7, 18 and Add.1, 19, 20 and 36) was first considered

in plenary on Monday, with Deputy Secretary General Davidson explaining that the main changes in the revised draft resolution refer to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The item was considered twice in plenary, with the Secretariat introducing a revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.6 Rev.2) on Thursday, which, following discussions, was adopted as amended.

During discussions, Senegal suggested referring to regional and subregional organizations in enhancing the regional role of the Convention. Jamaica proposed adding reference to strengthening partnerships with subregional groups. Birdlife International, for the IOPs, supported by Switzerland and opposed by China, proposed welcoming the role of the IOPs in reporting on the effectiveness of the Convention. Argentina suggested referring to Resolution X.12 (Principles for Partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the Business Sector), calling for party involvement when activities take place in their territory.

Denmark, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, proposed, *inter alia*, including reference to the resolutions of the fifth Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) on collaboration between AEWA and Ramsar. Switzerland proposed including reference to the UN Economic Commission for Europe’s Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UN Water Convention) in welcoming further cooperative relationships. To the list of partners in Annex 1, Iran, the 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 GEF, while Canada emphasized that the GEF is one among other financial institutions.

Colombia proposed a midterm evaluation of the contributions of Ramsar’s collaboration with other instruments to the implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan. South Africa proposed the Secretariat and STRP explore further ways to participate in IPBES. 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.

**Final Resolution:** In the final text (COP11 DR.6 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- requests the Secretariat to continue cooperating with relevant conventions through participation in the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the three Rio Conventions—UNFCCC, CBD and UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)—and membership in the UN Environment Management Group;
- requests the Secretariat to: remain involved in the work of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) of the CBD and to report to the SC on progress achieved, and facilitate participation of the STRP Chair in the work of the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions;
- welcomes the 5th CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan 2011-2020 and the revised CMS/Ramsar Joint Work Plan;
- requests the Ramsar Secretariat to liaise with the AEWA Secretariat to strengthen implementation of joint activities;

- urges parties and the Secretariat to address the outcomes of Rio+20, particularly the call to enhance policy coherence at all levels, improve efficiency and enhance coordination and cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs;
- accepts the invitation by IPBES for the STRP Chair to participate as an observer in the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, and requests the Secretariat and STRP Chair to engage in the IPBES process and explore future collaboration;
- invites IPBES to address the science-policy linkages relating to the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- requests the Secretariat review memoranda of cooperation to reinvigorate those most likely to be beneficial to the work of the Convention and encourages the Secretariat to establish and strengthen partnerships with intergovernmental regional groups to enhance the role of the Convention in those regions;
- requests the Secretariat to develop closer consultative relationships with financial institutions, other environmental funding organizations and other institutions, with a view to mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Convention;
- urges the Secretariat to continue valuable collaboration with the IOPs in the context of Joint Work Plans; and
- encourages the Secretariat to collaborate with the secretariats of other biodiversity-related MEAs in order to improve the streamlining of reporting.

**TOURISM, RECREATION AND WETLANDS:** This item (COP11 DR.7) was introduced in plenary on Monday, and a revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.7 Rev.2) was adopted on Friday. Delegates initially discussed and proposed references to: recreation; the Rio+20 outcome document; indigenous peoples; public-private partnerships; social and cultural values; local community involvement; fair and equitable sharing of benefits; conservation and management of ecosystems; guidelines and definitions for sustainable tourism from the CBD; promoting jobs and livelihoods; and more. The revised resolution was adopted with minor textual amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP11 DR.7 Rev.2), the COP encourages, *inter alia*:

- improved integration and recognition of wetland values and wetland wise use approaches into tourism and recreation policies and planning, including national tourism strategies;
- closer collaboration between the tourism and wetland conservation and wise use sectors;
- development of technical tools for managing recreational issues in wetlands;
- support for the participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and public-private partnerships in tourism;
- social inclusion and equitable sharing of the benefits of tourism; and
- sharing of best practices in sustainable tourism within and around wetlands.

The resolution contains two annexes: Annex 1, containing tourism-related definitions and concepts; and Annex 2, reviewing issues for stakeholders to address.

**STREAMLINING PROCEDURES FOR DESCRIBING RAMSAR SITES AT THE TIME OF DESIGNATION AND SUBSEQUENT UPDATES:** This issue (COP DR.8 and Annexes 1 and 2, and Doc.22) was first considered on Tuesday,

and was considered twice in plenary. The resolution was adopted on Friday.

During the initial discussions, the Russian Federation requested extending the deadline for adoption of the new RIS format to January 2015. Uganda suggested mandating the STRP and the 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 the Secretariat to resolve the lack of digital boundaries. The revised resolution was adopted with minor amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP11 DR.8 Rev.1 and Annexes 1 Rev.1, and 2 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the “RIS – 2012” revision as annexed to the resolution;
- adopts the “Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands – 2012” revision as annexed to the resolution;
- agrees that this “RIS – 2012” revision format and its accompanying “Strategic Framework – 2012” revision will formally enter into use in January 2015;
- instructs the Secretariat to upgrade the Ramsar Sites Database to allow on-line electronic submissions of RIS;
- requests the Secretariat to work with other organizations to ensure that Ramsar site status data are fully integrated into other appropriate databases, international processes and assessments;
- requests the STRP, in the context of its work plan for 2012-2015 and, resources permitting, to undertake further work related to the RIS and associated guidance, including, *inter alia*, further developing the RIS and providing guidance concerning identification, boundary-setting and management issues as well as zoning; and
- requests the STRP and the Secretariat to collaborate in considering the implications of CBD Decision X/31 (Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems) in the context of supporting the application of the Convention’s Criteria for the selection of Wetlands of International Importance.

**AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR AVOIDING, MITIGATING, AND COMPENSATING FOR WETLAND LOSSES:** This item (COP11 DR.9 and Doc. 24 and 27) was first addressed in plenary on Tuesday. Royal Gardner, Ramsar STRP, highlighted that the framework serves as a roadmap for existing guidance in different documents. The issue was addressed twice in plenary and an informal group was established.

During discussions, 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.

On Friday, the Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.9 Rev.1 and Rev.1 Add.1), noting various options and proposals within the text, including removal of Figure 3 from the annex. France, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, noted that not all parties are in a position to do comprehensive mapping and called for confirming long-term monitoring.

The US called for referencing “systematic assessment of potential negative impacts or changes to ecological character of wetlands.” In response to the EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, the US clarified intent is not to assess mapping but a systematic approach to assessing impacts and changes to ecological character in order to help prioritize areas for conservation. Mexico called for reference to Convention Article 3.1 and “in compliance with national legislation.”

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.9 Rev.1 and Rev.1 Add.1), the COP:

- reaffirms the commitment to avoid negative impacts on the ecological character of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands and, where avoidance is unfeasible, to apply appropriate mitigation and/or compensation, including through wetland restoration;
- urges parties to implement Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) with all related sectors and conduct long-term monitoring of mitigation; and harmonize the Framework within the local policies and regulations;
- calls upon the Secretariat to communicate the Integrated Framework to the Secretariat of the CBD, as part of its attempt to refine the CBD’s voluntary guidelines on environmental impact assessments and SEAs at CBD COP 11; and
- instructs the Secretariat to disseminate the Framework, including through amendment and updating of the Ramsar Wise Use Handbooks.

**WETLANDS AND ENERGY ISSUES:** This resolution (COP11 DR.10 and Doc.28) was first discussed on Tuesday and considered twice in plenary.

During discussions, 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.”

In discussing a revised text on Friday, Canada suggested referring to “avoiding, mitigating and compensating” negative impacts on the ecological character of wetlands.

EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia proposed referring to CMS Resolution 7.5 on wind turbines and migratory species and the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats Guidelines for consideration of bats in wind farm projects in noting recent decisions of other MEAs. He also proposed “encouraging” parties to identify the capacity needed to address the potential impacts of the energy sector, and “encouraging” parties to implement appropriate training and capacity-building programmes “if necessary,” and requesting

the STRP to monitor information “funding permitting.” He further proposed referring to “involving all relevant sectors” in systematic approaches for planning and decision-making.

Argentina proposed referring to national sovereignty and national priorities in emphasizing the importance of early notification of proposed exploration and extraction activities.

The revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.10 Rev.1) was adopted with amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In this resolution (COP11 DR.10 Rev.1), the COP:

- welcomes the “Guidance for addressing the implications for wetlands of policies, plans and activities in the energy sector” annexed to the resolution;
- invites parties to undertake development of ecological impact criteria to be applied in selection of energy generation sites in relation to wetlands;
- invites parties, as necessary and appropriate, to adopt and apply such criteria to guide energy development planning in order to minimize impacts on the ecological character, functions and biodiversity of wetlands;
- invites the STRP, in carrying out Task 6.2 (wetlands and biofuels) of its work programme, to take into account the documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/14 and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/INF/32, related to gaps in tools and approaches and uncertainty surrounding the sustainability of biofuels, as potential contributions for further refinement of the Guidance and for addressing sustainable biofuels issues in relation to wetlands by parties; and
- invites the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention to bring this resolution to the attention of the UN Secretary-General as well as the UN High-Level Panel in charge of developing the “Sustainable Energy For All” Initiative.

**PRINCIPLES FOR THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF URBAN AND PERI-URBAN WETLANDS:**

This issue (COP11 DR.11 and Doc.23) was first considered in plenary on Tuesday. 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 that 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 subregional and transboundary management. The Philippines mentioned integrated river basin management and natural and man-made calamities, including climate change.

On Friday, the Secretariat introduced the revised draft decision (COP11 DR.11 Rev.1) highlighting, *inter alia*, changes to the annexed principle for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands, on wetland restoration and creation. South Africa suggested referring to both NFPs and STRP NFPs for advising the Secretariat on issues concerning urban and peri-urban wetlands. New Zealand supported the proposed changes on the practical principle on wetlands restoration and creation. Japan and France, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia,

suggested textual amendments to the paragraph on meetings of local and regional governments on the margins of COP meetings. The resolution was adopted with the amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In this resolution (COP11 DR.11 Rev.1), the COP adopts the “Principles for the sustainable planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands” annexed to the resolution. The COP also requests: the Secretariat and the STRP to strengthen collaboration with UN-Habitat, Ramsar Regional Initiatives, the IOPs and other appropriate stakeholders to promote the wise use of wetlands; the Convention to establish a wetland city accreditation; and the STRP to develop, resources permitting, further practical guidance for mainstreaming wetlands issues into urban planning. The annex to the resolution contains policy and practical principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands, and opportunities and priorities for the future development and integration of guidance on this issue. Practical principles included in the annex address: wetland restoration and recreation; understanding the value of wetlands; stakeholder engagement; and integrated planning.

**WETLANDS AND HEALTH - TAKING AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH:** This item (COP11 DR.12) was first considered on Tuesday, with Pierre Horwitz, Ramsar STRP, highlighting a need for Ramsar to work with the health sector. The plenary considered this issue twice with a revised draft (COP11 DR.12 Rev.1) introduced on Thursday, which incorporated text from the Rio+20 outcome, and recognized links between altered hydrological conditions and negative health outcomes, among other text changes.

During discussions on Tuesday, Iran proposed including the health impacts of regional wetlands degradation in arid and semi-arid areas, and China emphasized the need for disease prevention, as well as control. The US recommended providing more information to the public about the relevance of wetlands to human health. New Zealand and Canada proposed deleting a reference to water management systems, with New Zealand saying this went beyond Ramsar’s mandate. Delegates adopted the resolution on Thursday, as amended.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.12 Rev.1), the COP urges parties to, *inter alia*:

- adopt an ecosystem approach to health, also encouraging national and international organizations to help build the capacity of wetland managers to do so, and to build disease consideration and management into their plans; and
- address current gaps in understanding of wetland wildlife health and impacts of disease on biodiversity.

The COP also requests the STRP, resources permitting, to, *inter alia*:

- advise on including health costs and benefits in economic models that seek to value the contributions that wetland management makes to human health and well-being;
- in partnership with organizations, identify indicators of wetland ecosystem services and health relationships, including early warning indicators of disease emergence; and
- get wetland managers’ and stakeholders’ feedback on the Ramsar wetland disease manual, including whether its coverage should be expanded to cover plant and human diseases associated with wetlands.

Annex 1 to the resolution, on “The contributions of wise use and wetland management to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” includes a matrix indicating how actions undertaken under Ramsar may contribute towards achievement of the MDGs. Annexes 2 and 3 provide summaries of “key messages” for policy-makers and wetland managers, on wetlands, human health and wildlife diseases.

**AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR LINKING WETLAND CONSERVATION AND WISE USE WITH POVERTY ERADICATION:** Delegates first considered this issue (COP11 DR.13) on Tuesday and the resolution was adopted on Thursday. During the discussions, 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 (SDGs). 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. The resolution was adopted with amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP11 DR.13 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- welcomes the “Integrated Framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication,” annexed to the resolution, as a tool to assess wetland ecosystem services and livelihoods interlinkages;
- requests the Secretariat to assist parties in assessing contributions made towards achieving the MDGs through implementation of the Ramsar Convention, and to engage in the process and development of the SDGs;
- requests the STRP, resources permitting, to provide advice on mainstreaming the Framework into national policies and programmes; and
- further requests the STRP to help develop a structured guide to available guidelines and tools for addressing poverty eradication in relation to wetlands.

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND WETLANDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS:** The draft resolution (COP 11 DR.14 and Doc.32) was first considered on Monday. A contact group on this met throughout the week and an interim revised text was made available to the COP on Thursday. Plenary considered the issue again on Friday. Discussions mainly focused on the mandate of the UNFCCC on climate change and the extent to which the resolution would refer to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+).

During the discussions on Monday, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, Libya, Switzerland, India and Jamaica supported the draft resolution and proposed amendments. The Philippines requested additional text on risk reduction. Brazil and Colombia called for language consistent with the UNFCCC. Canada and the US cautioned against duplication of efforts with the UNFCCC, and Canada suggested a reference to social vulnerability. Norway stressed the importance of referencing REDD+ in the resolution.

Australia called for text on building resilience in wetlands. Austria, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, requested text, *inter alia*, on awareness of wetlands degradation and the need for parties to improve, not just maintain, the ecological character of wetlands. Argentina requested text on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the deletion of references to “wet carbon” and “blue carbon.” Thailand stressed the important role of wetlands in mitigation.

On Friday, the plenary considered the revised draft resolution, as submitted by the contact group. The group informed the plenary that Brazil could not support the consensus in the group and had developed a non-paper. Plenary discussed the revised draft resolution.

Brazil, supported by Venezuela, proposed strengthening text on the need to maintain the UNFCCC as the main forum on climate change and not to duplicate efforts on the meaning and scope of concepts. He also opposed text on encouraging parties, the private sector and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for incentives and funding mechanisms for climate change mitigation and adaptation to support the wise use and restoration of wetlands, and encouraging parties to review or develop energy policies that recognize the potential impacts of energy generation on wetlands.

China proposed referencing REDD+ in a more general manner, since it is being discussed more in principle under the UNFCCC; suggested deleting reference to Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol; and supported Brazil in highlighting that the UNFCCC is the forum to discuss funding for climate change efforts and on the issue of energy policies. Chile supported Brazil’s comments on the UNFCCC competencies.

The United Kingdom, for EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia, supported by Switzerland, Norway and the Republic of Korea, underscored that the draft resolution builds on Resolution X.24 (Climate Change and Wetlands) and is not meant to “cut across” discussions in other fora, urging the plenary to adopt it. Iceland supported the revised resolution.

After informal deliberations, the UK introduced the compromise text: including reference to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in affirming the UNFCCC is “key reference for the terms mitigation, adaptation, carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage”; deleting recognizing that other Conventions refer to these terms within their mandates; including reference to consistency with national legislation and circumstances in encouraging parties, the private sector and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for incentives to support the wise use and restoration of wetlands; deleting reference to funding mechanisms for climate change mitigation and adaptation in exploring opportunities and incentives; and deleting reference to energy policies. The plenary adopted the resolution as amended.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.14 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- welcomes the progress made since Ramsar COP10 (2008) with respect to knowledge and awareness of the importance of the carbon sequestration and storage function of wetlands (including, *inter alia*, inland peatlands and coastal wetlands), and recognizing that the continuing degradation and loss of these wetlands releases large amounts of stored carbon;

- notes concern that the importance of wetlands in managing greenhouse gas emissions could be more widely recognized by climate change response strategies and mechanisms;
- notes the ongoing discussions on issues relating to “reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries” under the UNFCCC; and further noting its importance in helping achieve the objectives of the Ramsar Convention; and encourages parties to promote the importance of wetlands in ongoing discussions on this issue;
- urges parties to maintain or improve the ecological character of wetlands, including their ecosystem services, to enhance the resilience of wetlands, to promote the ability of wetlands to contribute to nature-based climate change adaptation and to sequester and store carbon as important responses for climate change mitigation, and to reduce or halt the release of stored carbon that can result from the degradation and loss of wetlands;
- urges parties to develop and implement policies that promote opportunities to take advantage of the regulatory services already provided by wetlands to the global climate system, while at the same time contributing to improving human livelihoods, eradicating poverty, and meeting biodiversity goals, and to communicate progress to the Secretariat, including, *inter alia*, through their national reports;
- requests the STRP, in conjunction with the Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Initiatives and Regional Centres, to collaborate with relevant international organizations and conventions, within their respective mandates, to further investigate the potential contribution of wetland ecosystems to climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- requests the Secretary General to bring this resolution to the attention of the BLG, and invites the Executive Secretary of the CBD to bring this resolution to the attention of the JLG.

**AGRICULTURE-WETLAND INTERACTIONS: RICE PADDY AND PEST CONTROL:** This item (COP11 DR.15 and Doc.31) was first addressed in plenary on Tuesday. Rebecca D’Cruz, Ramsar STRP, noted 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 the 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 US suggested adding, among alternative management systems to pesticide usage, rice varieties that provide resistance to pests, and use of lower risk pesticides.

On Friday, the Secretariat presented the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.15 Rev. 1), noting, *inter alia*, a change in the title. The US, supported by Japan and Costa Rica, suggested adding “within the context of considering potential negative impacts on biodiversity” when referring to the use

of pest resistant rice varieties. Japan, supported by China, requested deleting reference to the information document (COP 11 Doc.31) as not scientifically valid. She also suggested, *inter alia*, removing the word “natural” to qualify rice paddies. New Zealand suggested reference to other Conventions working on chemicals. Costa Rica requested encouraging parties to protect wetlands where native rice species are present. Switzerland requested reference to the work of the CMS Bird Poisoning Working Group. The EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia suggested deleting the paragraph on integrated pest management. He further suggested deleting “excessive” when referring to the impacts of the excessive pesticide use not being adequately addressed. Japan opposed the deletion but agreed on the use of “unsustainable” instead of “excessive.” Brazil suggested referring to “unsustainable rice production practices” in relation to biodiversity impacts. The COP adopted the resolution with the amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In this resolution (COP11 DR.15 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*: recalls the recognition by the Rio+20 Conference of the necessity to promote more sustainable agriculture and the need to maintain natural ecological processes; notes that rice paddies are fundamental to many developing countries for the achievement of economic and social development and food security; recognizes the relevance of the work of the Guidelines in Agriculture, Wetlands and Water Resources Management Interactions project; and recognizes that irrigated rice fields are major wetlands types under Ramsar.

The resolution: calls on parties to ensure that groundwater recharge and flood control services provided by rice paddies are fully considered in Integrated River Basin Management processes; encourages parties to review and formulate policies for the regulation of the use of pesticides to avoid negative impacts on wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services; requests rice and pesticides industries to address inadequate and inappropriate practices; and encourages parties and the STRP to conduct further study on the impacts of the use of pesticides.

**ENSURING EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO THE CONVENTION FOR 2013-2015:** This draft resolution (COP11 DR.16 and Doc. 26), proposing a review of scientific and technical advice, was first discussed on Tuesday and adopted on Thursday.

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.

During the discussion on a revised text on Thursday, 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.

**Final Resolution:** In this resolution (COP11 DR.16 Rev.1), the COP:

- agrees that a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention will be undertaken for consideration by COP12;
- agrees that the review will be undertaken by members of the SC and any other interested parties and IOPs, and that, *inter alia*: the review committee should include expertise of the Ramsar Convention, other international science platforms, and the operational needs of parties, in particular the needs of local wetland managers and policy makers; the review committee should engage widely with parties and present a clear assessment of the present situation and recommendations that will be submitted to the SC for consideration during the 2013-2015 triennium; and the cost and duration of the review should be taken into consideration; and
- requests the Secretariat to support the establishment of the review committee and its work, as needed, and according to clear specifications to be provided to the Secretariat.

**FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONVENTION FOR 2013-2015:** This item (COP11 DR.17) was introduced in plenary on Tuesday and was considered twice in plenary.

In initial discussions, India requested 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 RIS, supported by Chile, and also suggested 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 NFP capacity building and prioritizing engagement with IPBES. Argentina called for avoiding duplication of work on sustainability criteria for biofuels.

During discussions of the revised resolution (COP11 DR.17 Rev.1) on Friday, the Secretariat clarified that the final content of the annexes will be adjusted for consistency with other adopted resolutions. Delegates agreed to, *inter alia*: retain as a top priority the task on economics of wetland ecosystem services/benefits; retain tasks on re-engineering agricultural landscapes and wetlands and biofuels; and not merge the task on REDD+ for forested wetlands with that on carbon sequestration in wetlands. The revised resolution was adopted as amended.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.17 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the full list of tasks in Annex 2 as the basis for the programme of scientific and technical work for Convention bodies for the 2013-2015 period, and also approves the tasks listed in Annex 1 as the top priority tasks for implementation;
- urges parties and invites donors and others to use this list when deciding priorities for their financial and other material support towards the scientific and technical implementation of the Convention;
- instructs the STRP to develop its work plan from the tasks identified in the annexes, including an assessment of which tasks could be undertaken on a collaborative basis with other MEA subsidiary bodies;

- requests the STRP to develop a format to aid in the implementation of the STRP's work plan at the national level; and
- instructs the Secretariat and STRP to develop indicators for measuring the outcomes of Ramsar Site management efforts.

Annex 1 provides a summary list of proposed top priority scientific and technical tasks for the 2013-2015 triennium. This is drawn from Annex 2, which provides a summary of the full list of tasks, divided into six broad themes: CEPA; strategic, emerging and ongoing issues; wetland inventory, assessment, monitoring and reporting; Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites); Ramsar, wetlands and other sectors (human health, climate change, water resource management, agriculture, poverty eradication and urbanization and tourism); and wetlands and ecosystem services/benefits.

**ADJUSTMENTS TO THE MODUS OPERANDI OF THE STRP FOR THE 2013-2015 TRIENNIUM:** Delegates first considered this resolution (COP11 DR.18), on Tuesday. The issue was addressed twice in plenary and the revised draft resolution was adopted on Thursday.

During discussions, 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. Canada proposed adding a reference to the Partnership Coordinator's role in fundraising.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.18 Rev.1), the COP:

- agrees that 13 expert members will be appointed to the STRP by the STRP Oversight Committee, with one appointed member having CEPA expertise, one with socio-economic science expertise, and at least one member, and preferably two, appointed from each of the six Ramsar regions;
- affirms that the primary roles and responsibilities of the STRP and its members are to, *inter alia*, establish the scope, deliverables and approach to delivery for each task assigned to it by the COP, and review (including with STRP NFPs) and approve all scientific and technical materials prior to any transmittal of them to parties, including to the COP;
- urges the 18 parties that do not currently have an appointed STRP NFP to make such an appointment without delay; and
- requests the STRP and Secretariat to identify opportunities and mechanisms for, *inter alia*, holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP NFPs and other wetland experts in order to strengthen regional and subregional scientific networks.

The resolution contains an annex listing bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in the meetings and processes of the STRP.

**ADJUSTMENTS TO THE TERMS OF RESOLUTION VII.1 ON THE COMPOSITION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE AND REGIONAL CATEGORIZATION OF COUNTRIES UNDER THE CONVENTION:** This item (COP11 DR.19) was first introduced on Tuesday and was addressed by plenary twice. During discussions, 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 its inclusion in the Europe regional categorization. Iran requested recording his reservation about the list of countries in the Asia regional categorization.

On Friday, the Secretariat introduced a revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.19 Rev.1), incorporating comments made by parties. EU Member States at COP 11 and Croatia proposed that the decision on appointing alternate members should be left to each region. Argentina and Jamaica suggested some textual amendments. The resolution was approved with the amendments.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.19 Rev.1), the COP adopts the text in the annexes and confirms that this text supersedes that adopted as Resolution VII.1. Annex 1 covers the composition, role and responsibilities of the SC and regional categorization of countries under the Convention, including a paragraph establishing that regions can decide to appoint an alternate member or members *pro rata* with their approved members, with full power to represent those members if they are unable to participate in a meeting of the SC. Annex 2 (Allocation of Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties to the six Ramsar regional groups) records the reservation by Iran concerning the regional categorization. Annex 3 includes the tasks of parties elected as regional representatives in the SC and Annex 4 contains an indicative schedule for SC intersessional meetings.

**PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT BY THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS TO ENSURE THE MAINTENANCE OF THE BENEFITS PEOPLE AND NATURE GAIN FROM WETLANDS:** This item (COP11 DR.20) was first introduced on Tuesday by Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland). The issue was addressed twice in plenary.

During discussions, the Philippines requested the inclusion of the precautionary principle, and Argentina requested 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 IOPs and others to provide information on multinational companies, and encouraging parties to seek the Secretariat's advice on international investments adversely affecting wetlands.

The Secretariat introduced the revised draft resolution (COP11 DR.20 Rev.1) on Friday. Switzerland proposed referencing IOPs in language on helping to inform, and, opposed by India, called for deleting the amendment on international investments, noting transfer of technology cannot be guaranteed by governments. India clarified that the text "invites" technology transfer, and is not compulsory. Turkey expressed its reservation on the paragraph related to the management, development, protection and use of transboundary watercourses, emphasizing that transboundary issues can only be addressed by those riparian states directly affected.

**Final Resolution:** In the resolution (COP11 DR.20 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- encourages parties to seek to ensure that government funding through different investment channels includes measures to prevent and mitigate adverse environmental or social impacts on the wise use of wetlands;

- calls upon parties to encourage private companies in their national territories to draft, endorse and apply standards of sustainable business conduct that ensure the integrity and the ecosystem services of wetlands;
- urges parties to ensure environmental and social considerations are taken into account and precaution is applied to party investment activities that may have adverse environmental impact on the integrity and ecological function of wetlands;
- encourages parties to develop public-private partnerships to invest in wetland conservation, wise use, restoration and rehabilitation;
- invites parties to exchange appropriate information with other parties related to their investments and implementation of other activities on transboundary sites such as shared wetlands and river basins, where the exchange of information is relevant to the effective implementation of the Convention;
- encourages parties to inform the Secretariat regarding decisions, policies or guidelines of multinational corporations that relate to Ramsar Sites; and
- requests the STRP to review available guidance and provide advice to the COP on: assessing, avoiding, mitigating and compensating for harmful investment decisions, ensuring transparency and responsibility in investment decisions, and investments in wetland conservation, wise use and restoration, including those derived from public-private partnerships.

#### **WETLANDS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

This draft resolution (COP11 DR.21), submitted by Iran, was first considered on Tuesday. South Africa requested inclusion of a paragraph proposing 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, given as an appendix to the draft resolution. The US suggested mentioning the cultural values of wetlands, including to indigenous peoples. The Secretariat prepared a revised version incorporating these changes, which delegates considered again on Friday. Colombia raised a concern about the mention of wetlands in relation to REDD+ in the annex, and Brazil emphasized the UNFCCC as the relevant venue for this discussion, requesting his reservation be recorded in the COP 11 report. Delegates adopted the resolution with the exclusion of the paragraph on the high-level segment, as similar language had by then been agreed in the resolution on institutional hosting of the secretariat.

**Final Resolution:** This resolution (COP11 DR.21) invites parties to act upon the points in the annex document (the Tehran Declaration), and to disseminate it widely to other organizations and stakeholders.

The declaration, agreed by ministers and heads of delegations at the Global Forum on Wetlands for the Future held in Iran in 2011, recognizes the importance of wetlands for biodiversity, water storage and water delivery, and mentions the Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Targets. The declaration, *inter alia*, urges parties to seek to include wetlands in the REDD+ mechanism; reiterates the significance of incorporating the economic values of wetlands in development projects; reaffirms participatory

management of wetlands; and reiterates the importance of capacity building, sharing of data and experiences, and facilitating the transfer of technology and best practices.

#### **THANKS TO THE HOST COUNTRY, ROMANIA:**

During the closing plenary, the COP adopted a resolution (COP 11 DR.22) that thanks Romania for hosting COP 11.

#### **CLOSING PLENARY**

The closing plenary convened on Friday, 13 July, in the afternoon.

**CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE:** Credentials Committee Chair Erick Fernando Cabrera Castellanos (Guatemala) presented the committee’s report (Annex to the Draft Conference Report Part V, 12 July), which was adopted.

**REPORT ON THE DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PRECEDING SESSIONS:** Ramsar Deputy Secretary General 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.

**DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COP:** Secretary General Tiéga informed delegates that Uruguay has offered to host COP 12. The Uruguayan Ambassador to Romania, Pedro Mo Amaro, gave a presentation about his country and the proposed venue of Punta del Este. Delegates approved Uruguay as the venue for the next COP.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Observers from NGOs, IOPs and UNEP then made statements. NGOs expressed concern about the lack of opportunity for NGOs to speak in the plenary, emphasized NGOs’ role as local custodians of wetlands, and asked that mechanisms for NGO intervention be considered.

IOPs expressed concern about the COP 11 decision to freeze the budget of the Convention, saying this was at odds with the COP’s request to increase the profile of the Convention, and called on all delegates to increase voluntary contributions. He welcomed the adoption of the new RIS as a significant improvement in marking wetlands of international importance, adding that IOPs remain “deeply concerned” about the ongoing degradation of Ramsar Sites.

UNEP reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention and welcomed increasing involvement with the Convention and its Secretariat.

Secretary General Tiéga presented a certificate to Herb Raffaele, Chief of International Conservation at the US Fish and Wildlife Service, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Ramsar Convention.

**ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF COP 11:** Delegates then adopted the Report of COP 11 (Report of the Meeting I-V), subject to the incorporation of editorial amendments and approval of the final day’s report by Secretary General Tiéga and Deputy Secretary General Davidson.

Corneliu Mugurel Cozmanciuc, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Romania, made closing remarks emphasizing the importance of wetlands and sustainable development.

COP 11 President Mihail Făcă thanked participants for a successful COP and, on behalf of the Ramsar Secretariat, expressed renewed commitment to implementing COP resolutions for the benefit of wetlands and people. He gavelled the meeting to a close at 8:39 pm.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF RAMSAR COP 11

### LEAVING BEHIND THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

The Ramsar Convention, in its 41st year, can look back over a steady expansion in its constituency. Originating in the birding community, the creation of Ramsar was a strategy born of the Cold War era. “In 1971, there was some mystery about countries behind the Iron Curtain,” said a veteran of many COPs. “Many felt that joining together was the only way to represent joint interests and gain cooperation.” This early pragmatism about the welfare of birdlife extended to concern for their habitats, to include, over the years, other sectors such as fisheries and agriculture.

While some bemoaned the limited attention to waterfowl—the focus of Ramsar in 1971—most took the view that some expansion is inescapable. In Bucharest, when not negotiating the institutional host of the Secretariat, delegates spent much of their time addressing cross-cutting issues, including climate change, and sustainable development and poverty eradication in the context of wetlands.

This brief analysis of COP 11 will examine the process and decisions taken at the meeting on the evolution of the Convention. The analysis will focus in particular on the outcome of the decision on the institutional host of the Ramsar Secretariat, its potential impact on synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements, and substantive outcomes advancing wetlands management at the international level.

### IN OR OUT OF THE UN FAMILY?

Many delegates were quick to highlight that a resolution on the institutional host of the Ramsar Convention—an issue that dominated all seven negotiating days—was long overdue. The issue was first raised at COP 9 in 2005 due to concerns about the status of Ramsar’s staff, who lacked UN privileges, the Secretariat’s ability to enter into legal agreements regarding the use of donor funding, and IUCN’s legal and financial liability for Ramsar actions. Studies comparing the situation of the Ramsar Secretariat with those of the CMS, CITES, CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC took place in the triennium between COP 9 and COP 10, but were inconclusive, noting that each entity had slightly different hosting arrangements. A further option, of registering the Convention and Secretariat as an independent international organization separate from IUCN, was considered to lack sufficient economies of scale to be viable.

What gave the issue a decided push at COP 10 in 2008, say insiders, was the commitment of the EU to work towards upgrading UNEP as a UN specialized agency or World Environmental Organization, and general interest in promoting synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). UNEP, meanwhile, is thought to have tacitly welcomed the addition of Ramsar to the flock.

Most important, in the views of some, is the issue of perceived status. “UNEP, although politically straitjacketed and under-funded, is nevertheless viewed as a global authority,” said one. Many delegates expressed the view that fundraising may be easier, and that some co-benefits would be derived from administratively joining the family of other conventions. “The fact that Ramsar is hosted by IUCN is entirely an accident of history,” said one observer, noting that the Convention pre-dates the creation of UNEP by just one year. Others expressed a degree of “CBD envy,” stating that Ramsar, as the oldest of the biodiversity conventions, should at least be as well supported as the Rio Conventions, rather than less so.

Given all that, why did COP 11 not decide on a move to UNEP? Observers point to several issues. The EU, as a traditional champion of environmental multilateralism, failed to gain consensus for upgrading of UNEP as a specialized agency at Rio+20. Also there was a feeling among delegates supporting IUCN that the issues raised by proponents of UNEP could and indeed have been addressed, through an “IUCN+ option” addressing the need for greater visibility, possibly through a high-level ministerial segment, as well as synergies with other MEAs, with many noting that the staffing issues have largely been resolved with the support of IUCN and Switzerland. Others were wary of possible impacts on the status of Ramsar regions, which differ from those of UNEP. Secretary General Anada Tiéga is also due for retirement early in this triennium, so it may be prudent to avoid too much upheaval within a short time span. Furthermore, not all parties arrived well informed about the options, so have shied away from decisive action that may prove difficult to reverse. Hence, the *status quo* prevailed.

The COP 11 decision to remain with IUCN makes Ramsar the last of the biodiversity conventions to remain outside the UN family. CITES and CMS, which also began under IUCN’s wing, have long since flown the coop. Many delegates consider there is an inescapable logic to Ramsar eventually moving to UNEP, with the possibility to work more closely with the other biodiversity conventions, promote synergies and avoid overlap. However many hesitated to make the move at this time believing the “IUCN+ option” a worthy compromise in the meantime. In their view, there is little harm in letting the issue simmer over the next triennium. As one official said, “Leave it in the *bain marie!*”

### MOVING FORWARD

While issues of hosting and status dominated the agenda, others believe the issue was merely a distraction to Ramsar’s real work. “We are losing the birds, we are losing the wetlands—that’s where we should be focusing our attention at this meeting,” said one participant, in a remark echoed by many COP attendees.

Despite the “distraction,” COP 11 saw a definite impetus towards greater stringency in assessing the impacts of the Convention. “It’s not enough to keep designating Ramsar sites,” said one observer. “We need to ask ourselves whether this is making a difference to wetland health.” Parties emphasized the need to take stronger action to arrest decline and degradation of wetlands, and the need to complete assessment of the extent of global wetlands.

Among the quieter achievements of COP 11 is the adoption of revisions to the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) and the associated Strategic Framework guidance document. The adopted resolution promises to revolutionize the Convention's information management systems by enabling Ramsar sites to be reported in greater detail and submitted electronically. By streamlining the description and submission of the RIS by parties, and enabling data sharing online, the Convention will make accessible the wealth of information reported by parties on wetland habitats and species while improving Secretariat efficiency—a move that was warmly welcomed by IOPs in their closing remarks.

Other wins for wetlands conservation include the resolution on wetlands and health, with its ecosystem approach to health and associated Ramsar Wetland Disease Manual, and the resolution on tourism, recreation and wetlands. The latter focused on the issue of participation in tourism decision making, and in encouraging integration of wetlands in national tourism strategies. “This is really trying to influence implementation of policies in sectors other than conservation, and it's what we need to do if wetlands are to be maintained,” said an observer.

In this context, the introduction of a high-level ministerial segment, is not only a question of Ramsar's status *vis-à-vis* other conventions, as one delegate explained—it is a way to gain greater support back in home capitals for implementation. “Focal points often lack the political clout to ensure effective cooperation—so involving our ministers is a way to give it some momentum when the big meeting is over,” he said. A developing country delegate noted that progress at home depended on gaining the support of colleagues working in different areas, including parks and wildlife, fisheries, forestry and coastal zone development, as well as on mobilizing funding from the private sector for activities. While she considered support from the Secretariat to be quite small, “just information and some guidance,” she added that the Ramsar designation nevertheless is valuable, as it provides a signal of a site's ecological value and need for environmental protection.

A blow to Convention implementation, however, was the zero increase core budget adopted by the COP, a reality for many MEAs due to the global financial situation, and which Ramsar could not escape. This will impose further constraints on an already overtaxed Secretariat.

### **JOCKEYING FOR SPACE IN THE MEA ARENA**

Despite the push to seek greater synergies with other conventions, COP 11 was also marked by protracted discussions of the policy limits of wetland management, especially in the international arena. “This is modern conservation,” said one observer. “In wetland management, there is no possibility now of leaving out the difficult and knotty issues of justice, benefit sharing and poverty.” Nor will there be any return to those halcyon days of envisioning a globally connected birdwatchers' paradise.

COP 11 saw ongoing negotiation of complicated cross-cutting issues, including a number of debates on controversial issues in other international processes, such as integrated pest management in relation to rice paddies, and references to Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, which were excised from resolutions. Meanwhile an ecosystem approach to animal

and human health, energy development planning in relation to wetlands, and REDD+ made it into resolutions despite some controversy over the last point. Some delegates noted the inclusion of REDD+ was only marginal, confined as it was to the preamble text on climate change and without use of its acronym.

While Ramsar is sincerely trying to synergize with the UNFCCC, several delegates noted there is a stronger push to delineate the boundaries between the two Conventions. “Certain parties try to make the UNFCCC special because they are comfortable with what they are or aren't required to do under that Convention, and they don't want other processes placing new obligations on them,” explained one observer. Ramsar COP 10 and CBD COP 10, in 2008 and 2010 respectively, had produced stronger language on climate change mitigation and adaptation than what came out of Ramsar COP 11. This will be an area to watch at CBD COP 11 in India this October.

Increasingly, Ramsar will jockey for space alongside the “brown” issues of energy and climate, and must take part in the hard political bargaining required to ensure the adequate representation of wetland interests in the gladiators' arena of multilateral environmental negotiations.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**62nd Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee:** The CITES Standing Committee provides policy guidance to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of the Convention and oversees the management of the Secretariat's budget; coordinates and oversees, where required, the work of other committees and working groups; carries out tasks given to it by the Conference of the Parties; and drafts resolutions for consideration by the Conference of the Parties. **dates:** 23-27 July 2012 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** <http://www.cites.org/eng/com/sc/index.php>

**Southern Indian Ocean Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs):** This workshop aims to facilitate the description of EBSAs through the application of scientific criteria adopted at CBD COP 9 as well as other relevant compatible and complementary nationally and intergovernmentally-agreed scientific criteria, as well as the scientific guidance on the identification of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. **dates:** 30 July-3 August 2012 **location:** Mauritius **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=EBSA-SIO-01>

**IUCN World Conservation Congress 2012:** The Congress theme will be Nature+, a slogan that captures the fundamental importance of nature and its inherent link to every aspect of people's lives, including: nature+climate, nature+livelihoods, nature+energy and nature+economics. **dates:** 6-15 September 2012 **location:** Jeju, Republic of Korea **contact:** IUCN Congress Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-999 0336 **fax:** +41-22-999-0002 **email:** congress@iucn.org **www:** <http://www.iucnworldconservationcongress.org/>

**CBD COP 11:** The 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is organized by the CBD Secretariat. The High-Level Segment will be held

from 17-19 October 2012. The provisional agenda includes consideration of: the status of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their Utilization; progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; issues related to cooperation, outreach and the UN Decade on Biodiversity; in-depth review of the programme of work on island biodiversity; ways and means to support ecosystem restoration; marine and coastal biodiversity; biodiversity and climate change; and other substantive issues arising from COP 10 decisions, including dryland, forest, inland waters, mountain, and agricultural biodiversity, protected areas, sustainable use of biodiversity, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, biofuels and biodiversity, invasive alien species, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, incentive measures, and biodiversity and development. **dates:** 8-19 October 2012 **location:** Hyderabad, India **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/cop11/>

**Sixth Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Water Convention:** The sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses will mark the 20th anniversary since its adoption. The MOP will adopt a work programme for 2013-2015 and will address the future evolution of the Convention becoming a global instrument with a forthcoming entry into force of the amendments opening it to countries outside the UNECE region. **dates:** 28-30 November 2012 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Cammille Marcelo, Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-1606 **fax:** +41-22-917-0621 **email:** cammille.marcelo@unece.org **www:** <http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop6.html>

**Meeting to Negotiate the Institutional and Legal Framework for the Central Asian Flyway:** This meeting, held back-to-back with the first meeting of signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU), will consider options for a legal and institutional framework for the Central Asian Flyway (CAF). **dates:** 12-13 December 2012 **location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates **contact:** UNEP/CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2426 **fax:** +49-228-815-2449 **email:** secretariat@cms.int **www:** <http://www.cms.int/species/CAF/meetings.htm>

**International Water Summit:** The inaugural International Water Summit will be hosted by Masdar and held alongside the 2013 World Future Energy Summit. The aim of the International Water Summit is to provide an opportunity for participants to network with global politicians, experts from the international water community and leaders from the public and private sectors, and collaborate in the development of solutions for some of the world's most water-scarce regions. The Summit is part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. **dates:** 15-17 January 2013 **location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates **www:** <http://www.internationalwatersummit.com>.

**CITES COP 16:** The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES will convene on the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the treaty. **dates:** 3-14 March 2013 **location:**

Thailand **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-3417 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** <http://www.cites.org/>

**CMS COP 11:** The next meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties will be held in the period October - December 2014. **dates:** to be announced **location:** Paraguay **contact:** UNEP/CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2426 **fax:** +49-228-815-2449 **email:** secretariat@cms.int **www:** <http://www.cms.int/>

**Sixth Meeting of the Parties (MOP 6) to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA):** The dates and location of AEWA MOP 6 will be decided by the AEWA Standing Committee. **dates:** 2015 **location:** to be announced **contact:** AEWA Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2414 **fax:** +49-228-815-2450 **email:** aewa@unep.de **www:** <http://www.unep-aewa.org/>

**Ramsar Convention on Wetlands COP 12:** Ramsar COP 12 will be held in Uruguay during the first half of 2015. **dates:** 2015 **location:** Punta del Este, Uruguay **contact:** Ramsar Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-999-0170 **fax:** +41-22-999-0619 **email:** ramsar@ramsar.org **internet:** <http://www.ramsar.org>

## GLOSSARY

AEWA	Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
BLG	Biodiversity Liaison Group
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IOPs	International Organization Partners
IPBES	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
NFP	National Focal Point
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
RIS	Ramsar Information Sheets
SC	Standing Committee
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change