



RAMSAR COP12 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 8 JUNE 2015

On Monday, 8 June, plenary met briefly in the morning, afternoon and evening to hear reports from a contact group on wetland city accreditation and several informal groups, and to adopt a revised resolution. Several informal negotiations continued throughout the day, including on the strategic plan, peatlands, disaster risk reduction, a proposed new framework for the delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance under the Convention, and on evaluating and ensuring Ramsar Sites' effective management. All informal negotiations concluded in the evening.

PLENARY

COP12 President Rucks introduced a revised draft resolution on the conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands (COP12 DR14 Rev.1), that delegates adopted without modification. Delegates watched videos on experiences from Senegal and Bolivia, and on the UAE as the host country for COP13.

CANADA offered compromise text to refer to "indigenous peoples/people and/or local communities, depending on national perspectives" in all relevant resolutions. SWITZERLAND recalled that the expression agreed at Rio+20 was "indigenous peoples and local communities." FINLAND, supported by HONDURAS, recalled CBD Decision XII/12 on the use of term "indigenous peoples and local communities." The EU proposed discussing the matter during Tuesday's plenary to allow for regional consultations.

CONTACT GROUP ON WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION

The contact group on wetland city accreditation met in the morning and afternoon. The group agreed on the aim of a wetland city to promote the conservation and wise use of any Ramsar Site or other wetland within or near city limits. On the relationship between national and local authorities pertaining to land use and spatial planning, several delegates underscored that, in some countries, cities do not have local planning powers and should not be penalized for this, in particular if they do not have an existing Ramsar Site.

Delegates debated at length on a proposed list of criteria for seeking candidature for wetland city accreditation, eventually agreeing on, *inter alia*: having one or more Ramsar sites or other "significant" wetlands fully or partly in their territory or in close vicinity, providing a range of ecosystem services to their city; having measures in place for the conservation of these wetlands and their services; having existing wetland restoration and/or management measures; considering the challenges and opportunities of integrated spatial/land-use planning on wetlands, where jurisdiction exists; having locally-adapted information for public awareness about wetlands, such as wetland education/information centers; and establishing a

local wetland city committee with appropriate knowledge and experience on wetlands, and the ability to engage stakeholders to fulfill obligations associated to accreditation.

On the procedure, delegates discussed a suggestion that city accreditation would first be discussed at the national level and then submitted to an international independent advisory committee to be approved or declined and how to ensure that a review of nominations be carried out during the second year of the triennium between COPs. They agreed that nominations from parties should be submitted within one year from the closing of the previous COP to the independent advisory committee, which would then submit a list of cities approved for accreditation to the SC for review and transmission to the COP for its awarding of certification valid for six years.

On membership of the independent advisory committee, delegates discussed the need for manageability, flexibility and representativeness, considering a proposal for the SC to choose members to ensure representation from: the STRP, ICLEI, UN-Habitat, IOPs, SC from each of the six Ramsar regions, CEPA oversight panel, the Secretary General, and a Ramsar senior advisor from the region concerned.

Delegates then discussed additional criteria on, *inter alia*: water quality; sanitation and management; sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries; and sustainable tourism. Some delegates cautioned that certain additional criteria were too prescriptive, and others not persuasive enough. The group concluded that the list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The group also discussed, among other issues, the benefits of accreditation, and its use to assist cities and parties to raise awareness and support the wise use and conservation of wetlands, as well as other sustainable development initiatives. They agreed that the costs to prepare and approve accreditation should not be borne by the core budget. The group decided to name the initiative "world wetland city."

IN THE CORRIDORS

On COP12 penultimate day, some seasoned delegates expressed frustration regarding the constant comings and goings of the several parallel informal groups, particularly as the number of draft resolutions at this meeting is much lower than at previous Ramsar COPs. Other participants raised concerns about the viability of some of the resolutions finished in haste. The well-informed pointed to shortcomings in the lead-up to the COP, as draft resolutions only benefitted from limited review by the STRP. The detail-oriented types feared that potential "time bombs" may be hidden in the resolutions that do not provide sufficiently clear guidance on implementation, noting that any doubts in that regard will not receive further guidance by the COP until 2018. As delegates left the Conrad Hotel bracing themselves for a long plenary the next day, an old-timer pondered that the prospect of a budget freeze (0% increase) will certainly add an effectiveness challenge to the next triennium.



