



**SUMMARY OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS: 8-15 NOVEMBER 2005**

The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP9) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was held from 8-15 November 2005, at the Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala, Uganda. The theme of the Conference was “Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods.”

Nearly 1000 participants representing 120 Contracting Parties, as well as a number of observer states, UN agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, attended the meeting. COP9, the first Ramsar COP held in Africa, 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, mitigation and adaptation; wetlands and poverty reduction; cultural values of wetlands; and the emergence of avian flu. The COP also adopted the Convention’s budget and Work Plan for the 2006-2008 triennium, and reviewed its Strategic Plan 2003-2008. During COP9, there were two technical sessions on the wise use of wetlands in integrated water management and culture and knowledge in wetland management as well as an informal Ministerial Dialogue, organized by the Government of Uganda. Participating ministers adopted the Kampala Declaration, which emphasizes the role of the Convention in arresting continuing loss and degradation of wetland ecosystems.

**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.

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. This shift in focus reflects the increasing recognition of the importance of wetlands as ecosystems that contribute to both biodiversity conservation and human well-being. Wetlands cover an estimated nine percent of the Earth’s land surface, and contribute significantly to the global economy in terms of water supply, fisheries, agriculture, forestry and tourism.

The Ramsar Convention is the only environmental treaty dealing with a particular ecosystem, and currently has 147 Parties. A total of 1524 wetland sites covering 129.2 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;

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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, a Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and the Ramsar Bureau, which carries out the functions of a Secretariat.

There have been eight meetings of the COP since the Convention's entry into force: COP1 in Cagliari, Italy (24-29 November 1980); COP2 in Gröningen, the Netherlands (7-12 May 1984); COP3 in Regina, Canada (27 May-5 June 1987); COP4 in Montreux, Switzerland (27 June-4 July 1990); COP5 in Kushiro, Japan (9-16 June 1993); COP6 in Brisbane, Australia (19-27 March 1996); COP7 in San José, Costa Rica (10-18 May 1999); and COP8 in Valencia, Spain (18-26 November 2002).

**COP7:** At COP7, 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.

**COP8:** With over 1000 participants, COP8 was the largest COP in the Convention's history. Focusing on "Water, wetlands, life and culture," 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. They also approved the Convention's budget and Work Plan for 2003-2005, and its Strategic Plan for 2003-2008.

## COP9 REPORT

The opening ceremonies for the ninth Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP9) to the Ramsar Convention were held on Tuesday evening, 8 November 2005. Antonio Fernandez de Tejada, representing Spain, COP8's host country, handed over the Ramsar flag to Kahinda Otafiire, the Ugandan Minister of Lands, Water and the Environment. Commending the Government of Uganda for hosting the first Ramsar COP in Africa, Fernandez de Tejada drew delegates' attention to new challenges facing the Convention and called for boosting international cooperation for the conservation of wetland ecosystems. Otafiire outlined Uganda's progress towards conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, and assured delegates that the theme of COP9 and the aims of the Convention would be upheld during the Conference.

Highlighting the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), Ramsar Secretary General Peter Bridgewater noted that the rate of wetland degradation surpasses that of other ecosystems, and outlined two major tasks for the Conference: identifying problems and promoting the Convention. He stressed the need to balance the desire to add more sites to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance with ensuring

their representativeness and effective management. He called for synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, better environmental governance frameworks and capacity building.

Bakary Kante, Director, Division of Environmental Conventions, UNEP, delivered an address on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer. He highlighted: enhanced cooperation between UNEP and the Ramsar Convention; wetlands' contribution to poverty reduction, disaster prevention and mitigation; and opportunities created by market approaches to ecosystem services.

Speaking on behalf of Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs), Achim Steiner, Director General, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), congratulated Uganda on its achievements in wetland conservation and called for greater coherence among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and broader stakeholder engagement.

A civil society representative reported on the Civil Society Forum held on 4 November 2005. She stressed the importance of wetlands for poverty reduction and their ability to provide support services for sustaining livelihoods. She also proposed developing legally binding mechanisms to hold Parties responsible for arrears in annual dues payments, and called on Parties to make information accessible to civil society organizations and local communities.

Speaking on behalf of donor countries, Kathelyne Craenen (Belgium) noted that wetland conservation continues to be a lower priority on the donor agenda. She requested that wetlands be put on national and international investment agendas and called on Parties to advocate for the wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Youth representatives presented their concerns and proposals, asking delegates to ensure that information is easy to understand and to remember that youth will be impacted by COP9 decisions.

Philippe Jacob, Secretary General, Danone Group, presented the triennial Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards in the categories of science, management, and education, respectively to: Shuming Cai, Chinese Academy of Sciences, China; SH. A. Nezami Baloochi, Department of Environment, Province of Gilan, Iran; and a shared award between Reiko Nakamura, Ramsar Centre, Japan and the Wetlands Centre, Australia.

## OPENING PLENARY

On Wednesday morning, 9 November, Antonio Fernandez de Tejada, Spain, officially opened COP9, inviting delegates to consider the agenda and other organizational matters. Delegates elected Kahinda Otafiire (Uganda) as COP9 President, and Tony Slatyer (Australia) and Flavio Cházaro (Mexico) as Vice-Presidents. Delegates adopted the agenda without amendment (COP9 Doc. 1, Rev. 2), and the rules of procedure (COP9 Doc. 2), with minor amendments.

The COP then established a Credentials Committee comprised of delegates from each of the six Ramsar regions, namely: Benin (Africa), Thailand (Asia), Switzerland (Europe), Peru (the Neotropics), Canada (North America), and New Zealand (Oceania). Delegates also established a Finance Committee, chaired by Trevor Swerdfager (Canada), with, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, China, Colombia, Japan, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Russian Federation,



Switzerland, the UK, and the US designated as members. The Secretariat noted that the Committee is open to all Parties and observers.

President Otafiire presented the list of registered observers (COP9 Doc. 31), stating this list would remain open as new observers are registering daily. Argentina objected to registering the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum as UK-based, as this non-governmental organization (NGO) relates to the Falkland/Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and rejected all references to these as UK territories. The UK reiterated its position on the sovereignty of the Islands.

#### **REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE AND THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL**

On Wednesday, Gordana Beltram (Slovenia), Standing Committee Chair, presented the report on the Committee's work during the 2003-2005 triennium (COP9 Doc. 3), highlighting work related to: preparation for COP9; review of work by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP); financial matters relating to the implementation of the Convention; and creating synergies between the Convention and other MEAs. She called for greater attention to social and economic considerations related to wetland ecosystems in the Committee's future work. The report was adopted with minor amendments.

Max Finlayson (Australia), STRP Chair, presented the report on the STRP's work during the 2003-2005 triennium (COP9 Doc. 4). In providing technical advice for COP9, Finlayson highlighted the Panel's work in preparing the following documents: additional scientific and technical guidance for implementing the Ramsar wise use concept (COP9 DR1); a Conceptual Framework for Ramsar's wise use concept (Annex A); a revised Strategic Framework and Guidelines for further development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Annex B); an Integrated Framework for Ramsar's water-related guidance (Annex C); ecological "outcome-oriented" indicators for assessing the Convention's implementation effectiveness (Annex D); and an Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring (Annex E).

During the ensuing discussions, countries expressed general support for the frameworks prepared by the STRP. They also agreed to establish a contact group to consider Annexes A and B of the resolution on additional scientific and technical guidance for implementing the Ramsar wise use concept (COP9 DR1).

#### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

On Wednesday, Secretary General Bridgewater reported on the implementation of the Convention at the global level over the 2003-2005 triennium (COP9 Doc. 5 and Doc. 6) and highlighted the prospect of reaching 160 Contracting Parties by COP10. Bridgewater noted that the Secretariat has managed to balance the Convention's budget since COP8, but underscored the need to work "smarter, not harder" in the 2006-2008 triennium. Noting that 110 Parties had submitted national reports, a smaller number than desired, he stressed the need to simplify the national reporting format and continue regular communication between the Secretariat and Parties.

On the Strategic Plan 2003-2008, Bridgewater highlighted the need to focus on key issues in order to increase the percentage of attainable targets. He also highlighted six imperatives

extracted from Parties' national reports: understanding new international institutional frameworks and how Ramsar fits into them; reinforcing and developing the Convention's strong scientific basis; effectively managing the List of Wetlands of International Importance; promoting integrated management approaches; developing a communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) programme that responds to the needs of local people; and ensuring the Convention is effectively managed intersessionally through the Standing Committee and the Secretariat.

#### **REGIONAL OVERVIEWS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Delegates reviewed implementation of the Convention and draft resolutions on the COP9 agenda in regional group meetings held on Thursday, 10 November. On Friday evening, 11 November, the groups met to approve appointments to the Standing Committee.

**AFRICA:** Chaired by Fanuel A. Demas (Namibia), the Africa Regional Group's discussions focused on making the most of the first Ramsar COP held in Africa. Ghana urged Parties to strengthen the region's position and representation by fulfilling their credential requirements and paying their dues, as the region has the largest outstanding portion, and participating in the STRP and other Committees. On the draft resolutions, delegates called for inclusion of Africa-focused proposals in several resolutions, including on: engagement in multilateral processes on water; natural disaster prevention; and the Ramsar Endowment Fund. Regarding Ramsar sites no longer meeting criteria for listing, the Secretariat noted that, as drafted, more than half of the African Ramsar sites may be removed from the List with possible contractual ramifications for Parties.

**THE AMERICAS:** The Americas Regional Group, chaired by John Bowleg (Bahamas), reviewed regional positions on several draft resolutions. On scientific and technical aspects, Peru, supported by Canada, opposed language on water rights. Several delegates expressed concern with the draft resolution on [transboundary] [transnational] Ramsar sites, citing, *inter alia*, sovereignty issues. On natural disaster prevention, Cuba suggested language referring to the impact of extreme climatic events and the US emphasized pre-disaster management and prevention. The group opposed the draft resolution on wetlands of the Antarctic proposed by Switzerland.

**ASIA:** The Asia Regional Group, co-chaired by Yasaman Rajabkhan Shalmany (Iran) and Djismun Kasri (Indonesia) considered various draft resolutions. On the revised Strategic Framework and guidelines for future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance, one delegate noted that the guidelines should not deviate from national laws. The group approved the suggested amendments concerning ecological indicators. On designation and management of [transboundary] [transnational] Ramsar sites, delegates could not form a common position on use of terms "transboundary" or "transnational."

On streamlining the implementation of the Strategic Plan, many countries said its targets are unrealistic. Regarding the revised modus operandi of the STRP, several Parties suggested country rotation in selecting experts. Many countries supported the Convention's work on wetlands and poverty reduction and natural disaster prevention. Regarding an information text on managing wetlands and waterbirds in response to avian flu, some



countries said the focus should be on waterbirds only, while others noted that some of the recommendations in the text are beyond the scope of the Convention.

On Friday morning, 11 November, the group considered financial and budgetary matters. Several Parties underscored the need for a strong Secretariat and adequate budget to implement the Strategic Plan. Parties also highlighted the need for mechanisms to resource the Small Grants Fund (SGF) and to fund regional projects.

**EUROPE:** Europe Regional Group Chair Gordana Beltram (Slovenia) opened the discussions on draft resolutions. On cultural values of wetlands, delegates favored recognizing cultural values in addition to the already established ecological character in identifying Wetlands of International Importance. The group supported the draft resolution on natural disaster prevention. Delegates also discussed priorities for the STRP's programme of work for 2006-2008, noting that immediate priority tasks should be covered by the STRP's core budget. The group also supported the revised draft resolution proposed by Switzerland on synergies between the Convention and the Antarctic Treaty, welcoming its extension to address the Arctic region.

**OCEANIA:** Navu Kwapena (Papua New Guinea) chaired the Oceania Regional Group, represented by Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji as an observer. Parties' discussions included cultural criteria, national reporting, avian flu, and the wetlands of the Antarctic.

#### TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Two technical sessions were held in parallel on Saturday afternoon, 12 November, to share experiences and views on the wise use of wetlands in integrated water management and culture and knowledge in wetland management. On Monday, 14 November, delegates heard reports of the technical sessions presented by Kemi Awoyinka, Wetlands International, and Tobias Salathé, Ramsar Secretariat.

#### WISE USE OF WETLANDS IN INTEGRATED WATER

**MANAGEMENT:** Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson briefed participants on Ramsar-related outcomes of the 13th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13). Steve Mitchell, South Africa, presented Southern and Eastern Africa's experience in integrated water resources management (IWRM). Mamoru Shigemoto, Japan, described actions to rehabilitate wetlands in the Tokyo Bay through application of IWRM and integrated coastal zone management approaches. On the EU Water Framework Directive, Bart Fokkens (the Netherlands) highlighted its complementarity and mutual supportiveness with Ramsar, while Gerhard Sigmund (Austria) outlined the situation in Austria and the Danube River basin.

On managing water for wetlands and agriculture, David Molden, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) highlighted food security and water resources linkages and the challenges faced in achieving poverty alleviation targets. Ger Bergkamp (IUCN) outlined research on determining values of wetland ecosystems and how to incorporate these values into decision making.

#### CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE IN WETLAND

**MANAGEMENT:** Secretary General Bridgewater stressed that it is more important to use culture in the management and wise use of wetlands than to use it as a criterion for site designation. Thymio Papayannis, Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos, reviewed activities of the Mediterranean Wetlands (MedWet) Cultural Working Group and, discussing changing cultural landscapes, noted loss of traditional activities. He emphasized incorporating cultural aspects into wetland management, while respecting social specificity of culture. Traditional elders from the Paroo River area in Australia highlighted aboriginal values identified in a cultural mapping project and the importance of building relationships among relevant stakeholders. Sansanee Choowaew, Thailand, emphasized a culture-based approach to managing wetlands, and highlighted, *inter alia*, joint efforts between temples and local communities, and marking temples as wildlife refuges. Mónica Herzig, Mexico, highlighted local community involvement in the planning process, and said culture is a broad term and a systematic approach has yet to be developed. Maria José Viñals, Spain, discussed progress made in the Mediterranean region for incorporating cultural values in wetland management through: restoring cultural heritage; increasing wetland awareness; conserving cultural landscapes; and valuing cultural tradition.

#### SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

During the course of COP9, delegates heard several special presentations on wetland-related issues and activities.

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF UGANDA:** Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni addressed the COP on Monday afternoon, 14 November. President Museveni highlighted threats to wetland ecosystems, which cover 13 percent of the country's land area and include the headwaters of the River Nile, and outlined possible solutions. He identified as threats: deforestation and silting of wetland ecosystems; conversion of wetlands into agricultural lands, including pastures, farms and rice paddies; international environmental NGOs for their opposition to energy plans, which he said leads to over-reliance on firewood; and predominance of the rural population and agriculture in Uganda. He noted as solutions: universal education; reforestation programmes, which generate income for local communities; electrification through hydro, geothermal and solar energy projects; and industrialization.

**MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT:** On Saturday, 12 November, Rebecca D'Cruz, Synthesis Team Co-Chair, presented the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) synthesis report on "Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Wetlands and Water." She stressed that ecosystem services are vital to human well-being, lamenting that many of these services are overused, mismanaged or degraded, and highlighted policy choices available to reduce wetland degradation while maintaining benefits. Distinguishing between free and economically valued services, she said many of the social and economic benefits have not been taken into account by decision makers. She said economic instruments promote conservation and wise use, and noted difficulties in valuation due to differing cultural values. Noting accelerated wetland degradation, D'Cruz highlighted a reduction of human well-being, especially in developing countries, coupled with an increased demand for



wetland services. She said policy decisions must address trade offs between current and future use, and emphasized cross sectoral and ecosystem approaches. She noted the report would help set the future agenda for Ramsar, and could be used to raise awareness on wetlands.

**WETLAND CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE IN UGANDA:** On Wednesday, 9 November, Paul Mafabi, Uganda National Wetlands Programme, provided an overview of wetland conservation and sustainable use over the last 15 years in Uganda, noting that wetland management began with a ban on wetland drainage. He said that wetland issues were incorporated into a poverty eradication plan in 2000, and that a wetlands sector strategic plan was created in 2001. In describing current achievements, Mafabi highlighted: an increased level of awareness; best use practices; creation of policy and legal frameworks; and the creation of inventories, which have provided vital information for decision making. Mafabi also highlighted specific challenges for wetland policy, including the need to improve enforcement mechanisms. He underscored the need to: develop a solid knowledge base; create political and public interest by using the right arguments; build capacity at all levels for implementation; and adopt realistic policies and laws. Mafabi closed by highlighting the importance of ensuring institutional sustainability, and stressed that wetland ecosystems can play a vital role in peoples' livelihoods and contribute to their income, and that wetland ecosystem services can "pay their own way."

**COP9 RESOLUTIONS**

COP9 delegates considered 27 draft resolutions beginning on Wednesday, 9 November. These resolutions were submitted by Parties or prepared in advance by the Standing Committee and the STRP. Twenty-five draft resolutions were adopted by the conclusion of the meeting on Tuesday, 15 November. The draft resolution on wetlands of the Antarctic was withdrawn, and the draft resolution on [transnational] [transboundary] Ramsar sites was deferred to COP10. The following is a summary of the resolutions, including highlights of the negotiations and substantive amendments. Unless otherwise mentioned, the resolutions were adopted during the closing plenary on Tuesday, 15 November.

**ADDITIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RAMSAR WISE USE CONCEPT:**

On Wednesday, 9 November, STRP Chair Max Finlayson (Australia), introduced the Panel's main outputs contained in the draft resolution on additional scientific and technical guidance for implementing the Ramsar wise-use concept and its Annexes A-E (COP9 DR1, Annexes A-E), concerning various aspects of this guidance. Following extensive discussions in plenary, a contact group on Annexes A and B was established, and informal consultations were held on Annexes C, D and E. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at:

- <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1720e.html>;
- <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>;
- <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html>; and
- <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands and their ecological character:** The COP considered Annex A of the draft resolution in plenary on Wednesday, establishing a contact group, which convened throughout the COP to reach consensus on the issue of ecological character.

On Saturday, 13 November, in the contact group, delegates discussed ecosystem services and whether to refer to ecosystem "services" or "benefits." The contact group updated definitions of "ecological character," "change in ecological character of wetlands," and "wise use." Delegates reached consensus on these definitions. The COP considered and adopted Annex A with amendments to wetland ecosystem terminology including "ecosystem benefits/services," as well as the deletion of the MA table on ecosystem benefits.

**Strategic Framework and guidelines for the list of Wetlands of International Importance:** The COP considered Annex B on Wednesday, and a contact group was established. In the contact group on Friday, several Parties examined Criterion 1 for designating Ramsar sites, and debated whether to add a new criterion on cultural values, with most opposing. On Saturday, delegates suggested using the term "near" instead of "most" natural wetlands, and on Monday, after lengthy debates, delegates reached compromise text regarding artificial wetlands.

**An integrated framework for the Ramsar Convention's water-related guidance:** On Tuesday, 15 November, the Secretariat introduced Annexes C, Ci and Cii, which contain an integrated framework and guidelines for the Convention's water-related ecosystems. The COP adopted the annexes with minor amendments.

**Ecological "outcome-oriented" indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention:** On Tuesday, 15 November, the Secretariat introduced Annex D, containing suggested amendments following informal discussions with interested Parties raised in the plenary session under Agenda item IX (Report of the STRP Chair). The COP adopted the annex as amended.

**An integrated framework for wetland inventory assessment and monitoring:** On Tuesday, 15 November, the Secretariat introduced Annexes E and Ei containing a framework and guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity. The COP adopted the annexes without amendment.

**Final Resolution:** In this final resolution, the COP:

- approves the Annexes A and B of the resolution;
- welcomes the frameworks, guidelines and other advice provided as annexes C, D, and E;
- urges Parties to make good use of them as appropriate;
- urges Parties to draw these frameworks, guidelines and other advice to the attention of all relevant stakeholders; and
- instructs the Secretariat to disseminate widely the frameworks and guidelines annexed to the resolution, including through amendment and updating of the Ramsar "Toolkit of Wise Use Handbooks."

The final text of Annex A requests the STRP to report to COP10 on the harmonization of definitions and terms related to ecosystem benefits/services. The definition of ecological character, including the phrase "at a given point in time," underscores that the concerned Party provide the ecological



character of a site at the time of designation to the List. A change in ecological character of a listed site should be assessed against the baseline status presented in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) and the time of designation for the List. "Ecological character" is defined as the human-induced adverse alteration of any ecosystem component, process and/or ecosystem benefit/service.

Annex B defines wetlands using Article 1.1 of the Convention, which includes artificial ones. It highlights artificial Ramsar sites as having international importance for biodiversity. It notes, however, this should not justify the destruction or modification of "near-natural" wetlands. The annex also states that a wetland should be considered of international importance if it has a unique example of a "near" natural wetland type or if it regularly supports one percent of the population of a wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

Annex C and its appendices contain an Integrated Framework for the Convention's water-related guidance, with additional guidance on the analysis of case studies in river basin management and guidelines for the management of groundwater to maintain the ecological character of wetlands.

Annex D contains seven initial ecological "outcome-oriented" indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of selected aspects of the Convention. The approach is outlined as part of the integrated updating of monitoring and reporting processes under the Convention, including the intention to simplify the National Report Format for COP10. The initial indicators are:

- the overall conservation status of wetlands;
- the status of the ecological character of Ramsar sites;
- trends in water quality;
- the frequency of threats affecting Ramsar sites;
- wetland sites with successfully implemented conservation or wise use management plans;
- overall population trends of wetland taxa;
- changes in threat status of wetland taxa; and
- the proportion of candidate Ramsar sites designated so far for wetland types/features.

The annex also outlines indicators recommended for further consideration by the STRP.

Annex E outlines an Integrated Framework for wetland inventory assessment and monitoring and Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity, and were prepared by the STRP and the Secretariat, and developed jointly for the Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) under the CBD/Ramsar Third Joint Work Plan and in response to the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and CBD COP6 Decisions VI/5 on inland waters and VI/6 on marine and coastal biological diversity.

**FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONVENTION:** This draft resolution (COP9 DR2) was first considered in plenary on Thursday, 10 November. The Secretariat introduced the draft resolution, noting that the STRP has identified its immediate and high priority tasks as contained in Annex 1, explaining that all tasks would be consolidated with those agreed under the revised Strategic Plan 2003-2008 into the Work Plan for 2006-2008. The EU requested inclusion of inland waterways in Annex 1.

Regarding Annex 2 on a schedule of actions for scientific and technical implementation of the Convention 2006-2011, Argentina requested removing reference to the defense and military sector. Delegates debated whether the task on wetlands and agriculture should be made an immediate priority.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1721e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1725e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In this final resolution (COP9 DR2 Rev.1), the COP approves the immediate and high priority actions for the STRP for 2006-2008 and the schedule of actions for scientific and technical implementation of the Convention for 2006-2011. The COP requests the Secretariat to consolidate these actions and the schedule with the annex to the revised Strategic Plan 2003-2008 to form the Convention's Work Plan 2006-2008.

The COP also urges Parties, donors, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), IOPs, national NGOs, and others to use this programme in deciding priorities for their financial and other support towards the future scientific and technical implementation of the Convention.

#### **ENGAGEMENT OF THE CONVENTION IN ONGOING MULTILATERAL PROCESSES DEALING WITH WATER:**

On Thursday, Bridgewater introduced the draft resolution (COP9 DR3), stressing that it does not seek to transform Ramsar into a Convention on water but rather a Convention that understands its role in addressing water issues. He also noted the relevance of Ramsar's work to the ongoing implementation cycle on water, sanitation and human settlements under the CSD, and the upcoming Fourth World Water Forum.

In the ensuing discussions, the resolution received broad support. Japan cautioned against exceeding the scope of the Convention. A reference to the Global Water Partnership in the preamble was proposed, and lack of data on wetland ecosystems' demand for water was highlighted.

The COP considered and adopted the draft resolution on Tuesday with several editorial amendments and the addition of reference to "an ecosystem approach" in IWRM.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1721e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR3 Rev.2), the COP affirms that the conservation and wise use of wetlands is critical for the provision of water for people and nature, and that wetlands are a source of, and depend on, water. It calls on Parties to bring Ramsar's water-related resolutions and guidelines to the attention of water management authorities for their integration into national IWRM plans.

The resolution instructs the Ramsar Secretariat to cooperate with the Fourth World Water Forum Secretariat and other relevant global and regional water initiatives to ensure that wetland ecosystems goods and services are recognized as a key element for effective management of water resources while maintaining the ecosystem functioning of wetlands. It further instructs the Secretariat to provide input to the CSD at its session in 2008, and report thereon to COP10.

**CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF FISH RESOURCES:** During informal consultations on this issue (COP9 DR4) on Thursday and Friday, several Parties requested



amendments to references concerning ecologically damaging fishing gear and practices. Some delegates highlighted the lack of accurate data on fisheries in wetland ecosystems and others urged greater assistance of IOPs in such data collection. The contact group agreed on a revised resolution, which was presented during the closing plenary on Tuesday and adopted by the COP.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1721e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In this final resolution (COP9 DR4 Rev.1), the COP acknowledges that “fisheries resources” instead of “fish” are a vital source of food and income and can assist in the further reduction of poverty. This term was replaced throughout the text of the resolution. It confirms that this resolution covers issues in inland, coastal, and marine wetland fisheries within the scope of Article 1 and Ramsar sites within the scope of Articles 1 and 2.1 of the Convention. It further:

- urges Parties to apply, as appropriate, the recommendations annexed to the resolution when addressing issues of the sustainable use of fisheries resources in relation to the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- encourages Parties to liaise with relevant partners to undertake inventories, assessments and monitoring of fisheries resources; and
- encourages Parties to assist fishers in gaining access to environmentally friendly technologies for fisheries and related activities.

**SYNERGIES WITH OTHER BIODIVERSITY-RELATED PROCESSES:** On Friday, the Secretary General introduced the draft resolution (COP9 DR5). Many delegates welcomed national reporting synergies, some proposing common modules and formats, and one urging synergies for indicators, data collection and information sharing. Delegates debated which international processes and institutions the Secretariat should collaborate with. An informal group was established to consolidate amendments.

On Tuesday, the Secretariat outlined the amendments to the revised draft resolution, explaining that its annex had been changed to an information document (COP9 Doc. 32). The US stipulated harmonization of national reporting should be subject to the mandate of each individual Convention, and Parties agreed that the Secretariat liaise with the UNFCCC and UNCCD Joint Liaison Group. The COP adopted the resolution with these amendments.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In this final resolution (COP9 DR5 Rev.1), the COP requests the Secretary General to:

- continue to be fully involved in, and report to the Standing Committee on, proceedings of the Biodiversity Liaison Group established under the aegis of the CBD;
- cooperate closely with relevant conventions as appropriate, including UNFCCC and UNCCD, and seek to reduce duplication;
- consider how best to simplify and reduce duplication in reporting under relevant resolutions of previous COPs,

- and to make further recommendations on streamlining and simplifying reporting requirements; and
- continue working with UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions and Secretariats of other biodiversity-related MEAs subject to each Convention's mandate, bearing in mind their contracting Parties.

It further urges Parties to develop means at the national level of improving the liaison between the Convention's administrative authorities and focal points for other related conventions and agreements and to report to the Secretariat on progress in harmonizing information management and reporting.

**[TRANSBOUNDARY] [TRANSNATIONAL] RAMSAR SITES:** On Friday, the Secretariat introduced the draft resolution (COP9 DR6), noting that historically it has been the Parties' prerogative to designate Wetlands of International Importance in their territories only. Delegates could not reach consensus on use of terms “transboundary” versus “transnational,” and agreed during the plenary session on Monday to further consider the issue at COP10 and, in the meantime, consult with IUCN on legal, immigration and other implications of establishing transboundary sites.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**GUIDANCE FOR ADDRESSING RAMSAR SITES OR PARTS OF SITES WHICH NO LONGER MEET THE CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:** This agenda item (COP9 Doc. 15) was introduced on Friday, 11 November, with a draft resolution (COP9 DR7) prepared by the Secretariat. Malawi called for assistance and measures to rehabilitate sites, rather than simply deleting them. On Monday, delegates considered the revised draft resolution and adopted it with a reservation by India that the resolution's guidance should not impinge on the sovereign rights of a Contracting Party.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR7 Rev.1), the COP adopts the guidance contained in the annex to the resolution on addressing issues of Ramsar sites or parts of sites that cease to fulfill or never fulfilled the criteria for designation. The COP requests Contracting Parties to apply the guidance and procedures set out in the annex when contemplating the deletion of a site from the List of Wetlands of International Importance. The resolution urges Contracting Parties to provide developing countries with assistance, including capacity building, in order to help reverse the factors leading to consideration of deletion or restriction of a site. It also instructs the Secretariat, with the advice of the STRP, to report to COP10 on these matters, and urges Parties to provide the Secretariat with information on their experiences and lessons learned in their application of this resolution.

**REGIONAL INITIATIVES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION:** On Wednesday, several Parties highlighted the importance of regional initiatives in the implementation of the Convention (COP9 DR8). Iran highlighted the role of the newly established Central and West Asia Regional Center. On Friday, the Secretariat introduced



a revised draft resolution, amended with comments received from Parties. Several Parties requested references to specific initiatives, *inter alia*: the Plata Basin Initiative, the High Andean Initiative, the Nile Basin Initiative, and the Black Sea Wetlands Initiative. Nepal requested the Secretariat to further develop the Himalayan Initiative for COP10. On financial implications, the EU requested clarification on the purpose of funding, India called for additional financial and budgetary support, and the Secretariat expressed concern over lack of resources for new initiatives, noting core budget funds could “kick start” some initiatives. On Tuesday, the plenary adopted the resolution with several amendments.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1720e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR8 Rev.2), the COP endorses seven regional initiatives listed in Annex I.A, and recognizes the potential of four others contained in Annex I.B, which are subject to further development and consideration by COP10. It agrees to contribute financial support for seven regional initiatives listed in Annex I.C in the 2006-2008 triennium, and authorizes the Standing Committee to approve interessionally qualifying initiatives that have zero implications for the Convention's core budget. The resolution also renews its cooperation with the Government of Greece on its hosting the MedWet Coordination Unit in Athens, and adopts the budget for the operation of the MedWet Committee and Coordination Unit, as contained in Annex II of the resolution.

**STREAMLINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE CONVENTION 2003-2008:** On Thursday, the Secretary General introduced the draft resolution (COP9 DR9), noting it provides a basis for the Secretariat and the Standing Committee to test a new approach in setting up priorities for the 2006-2008 Work Plan. Delegates stressed targets should be realistic and recognize Parties' abilities and limited resources. They highlighted: the need to simplify the Plan for better monitoring at regional and national levels; setting clear directions for all organizations working on wetland conservation; new ways to develop future strategic plans; and use of the Plan as guidance for prioritizing implementation at the national level.

On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced the revised draft, noting the annexed Framework will undergo review, editing and change during the 2006-2008 triennium. The EU proposed language specifying the Framework is a “working tool” and that the Standing Committee will carry out the review. New Zealand called for design of a simplified COP10 national reporting format harmonized with other relevant conventions and agreements. Delegates debated including as a Key Result Area assessment of the UNFCCC implementation on wetlands, agreeing this would be considered by the Standing Committee. The COP adopted the resolution with these amendments.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1721e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR9 Rev.1), the COP accepts the annexed Framework for the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 in the 2006-2008 period. The resolution instructs the Standing Committee to: develop and implement a comprehensive, inclusive process for development of the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan for COP10; use

the Framework to design a simplified COP10 National Report Framework, taking into account the resolution on synergies with other conventions and collaboration and harmonization of national reporting, and urges Parties, the Standing and STRP Committees, the Secretariat and IOPs to use the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan and its appendices as a renewed challenge to promote, implement and monitor the Convention's performance, including through the application of “outcome-oriented” indicators for the Convention's implementation. The Framework outlines the Convention's goals and the Key Result Areas and Key Performance Indicators.

**THE ROLE OF THE CONVENTION IN NATURAL DISASTER PREVENTION, MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION:** On Friday, Bridgewater noted the relevance of this draft resolution (COP9 DR10) following the Asian tsunami and recent hurricanes. Proposals included: paragraphs on impacts of extreme climatic events and mobilizing resources to restore affected wetlands; renaming the resolution to reflect the role of Ramsar in mitigating impacts associated with natural phenomena; reference to “affected people” instead of “local communities and indigenous people”; and paragraphs emphasizing pre-disaster planning.

On Tuesday, delegates reviewed the revised draft resolution. Wetlands International, supported by Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica and the Netherlands, proposed changing the resolution's title to reflect natural phenomena induced or exacerbated by human activities. Japan supported deleting a paragraph on establishing mechanisms for emergency assessment. Switzerland, supported by Belgium and Albania, proposed reference to ecosystem “services” instead of “benefits.” Suriname suggested including both services and benefits. Armenia proposed a separate clause specifying the human activity of drainage as exacerbating natural phenomena. With the amendments by Wetlands International, Japan and Armenia, the resolution was adopted.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In this final resolution (COP9 CR10 Rev.1), the COP recognizes the important role of Ramsar in disaster avoidance and mitigation and post-disaster restoration, and the significance of synergies with other MEAs and agencies focusing on natural disasters. It also bears in mind the impacts on wetlands of extreme climatic events and the need for financial resources for, *inter alia*, prevention and early warning.

The resolution:

- underlines the devastating impacts of natural disasters on the delivery of ecosystem services/benefits;
- urges maintenance and restoration of wetlands to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters;
- encourages Parties and river basin authorities to ensure wetland ecosystems are managed and restored in order to, *inter alia*, contribute to wider strategies aimed at mitigating climate change and desertification;
- requests the Secretariat in collaboration with Parties and other partners to develop and act on decision support tools for all affected ecological zones;
- requests affected Parties to monitor and assess impacts of natural disasters on the ecological character of wetlands and





on the livelihoods of affected people dependent on these wetlands;

- encourages establishing multi-hazard analyses defining sensible areas for development and appropriate contingency planning that recognizes pre-disaster planning;
- calls on Parties to work together urgently on recovery of coastal wetlands and associated livelihoods in countries affected by the Asian tsunami;
- requests the Secretariat and donors to recognize the need for prioritization in the search for funds, resource mobilization and international cooperation;
- instructs the STRP, working with relevant agencies and IOPs, to develop a set of restoration guidelines that may be implemented following natural disasters;
- instructs the Secretariat, through the CEPA Programme, to develop materials that highlight lessons learned regarding appropriate pre-disaster measures; and
- instructs the Secretariat, working with relevant international organizations, especially the joint UN Environment Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNEP/OCHA) Environment Unit, to develop guidance on a set of responses which can be initiated following the onset of a natural disaster affecting wetlands.

**USE OF THE TERM AND STATUS OF THE “RAMSAR SECRETARIAT”:**

The COP considered the draft resolution concerning the use of the term “Ramsar Secretariat” (COP9 DR11) in plenary on Friday. Many Parties recognized that the resolution would harmonize terminology with similar MEAs. The COP considered and adopted amendments on the recognition of the Ramsar Convention as an IGO and on reporting outcomes of consultations with appropriate bodies to the Standing Committee. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin’s* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR11 Rev.2), the COP decides that in its external relations the Bureau may use the descriptor “the Ramsar Secretariat” in its official statements and documents. It reaffirms that use of “Secretariat” shall not affect the Bureau’s functions provided for in the Convention text. It further instructs the Secretary General to consult with appropriate bodies regarding transformation of the status of the Secretariat to an IGO, while still maintaining its links with IUCN and the host country. Finally, it requests the Secretary General to report on the outcome of these consultations at the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee.

**REVISED MODUS OPERANDI OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL:**

The COP considered the draft resolution on revising the modus operandi of the STRP (COP9 DR12) on Friday. STRP Chair Finlayson introduced the draft resolution, which received general support, with several Parties stressing stronger national focal point’s engagement. Parties debated appointment of experts, several delegates saying nominees should not be limited to “globally-recognized” experts and urging equitable regional representation. One urged allowing Parties to propose high priority thematic work areas and another suggested the Panel identify capacity needs for the 2006-2008

triennium. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin’s* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR12 Rev.1), the COP reaffirms the critical importance of the work and advice of the STRP to the Convention. It approves the annexed revised STRP modus operandi and establishes an STRP Oversight Committee, reporting to the Standing Committee and comprised of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP and the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General. It also agrees that the Standing Committee will continue to have overall responsibility for STRP work, with the STRP Chair reporting to each Standing Committee meeting on the Panel’s progress and advising on adjustments to the programme. The COP further:

- confirms as immediate priorities the development and engagement of the STRP national focal points in all stages of STRP work;
- recognizes the urgent need to ensure funding;
- agrees to a revised list of bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in the STRP meetings; and
- emphasizes the value of STRP member participation in COP and Standing Committee meetings.

The annexed revised modus operandi includes: the establishment and responsibilities of the STRP Oversight Panel; criteria and characteristics of candidate STRP members and the composition of the Panel; the procedure for identification and appointment of candidates, Chair and Vice-Chair; rules in relation to observer organizations; and ensuring continuing national and regional applicability and continuity of Panel membership.

**FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS:** Delegates heard the financial report and proposed budget for the 2006-2008 triennium (COP9 DR13) in plenary, submitted by the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee and the Finance Committee Trevor Swerdfager (Canada). On issues for the 2006-2008 triennium, Swerdfager underscored the need to further discuss budget allocations, including the proposed four percent increase. Delegates requested the budget be maintained with zero increase in the next triennium, with others noting their flexibilities.

On Friday, the Finance Committee met in the afternoon to further consider the budget for 2006-2008. The EU proposed balancing budget lines, particularly between regional initiatives and the STRP, stressing the need for more scientific and technical services to the Convention. Several Parties expressed flexibility with a budget increase of less than four percent, and others supported an increase but opposed shifting budget lines between regional initiatives and the STRP.

On Monday, the Finance Committee Chair Swerdfager reported to plenary on progress made in discussing financial and budgetary matters. He noted that there is a shortfall in each fiscal year’s budget. Discussions focused on identifying reductions to balance the budget in areas, including the Ramsar sites database, communication, regional initiatives and CEPA operating costs.



During the closing plenary on Tuesday, Swerdfager presented the resolution on financial and budgetary matters for adoption. He outlined the resolution as well as the newly attached annexes, noting that Annex II contains the core budget for 2006-2008, based on the COP agreeing to a four percent increase.

Argentina, with Brazil, accepted the budget but requested to record their concerns over the increase in the report of the meeting. Delegates agreed to remove Annex III (Annual Contribution Arrears) from the draft resolution, and make it an information document for the COP. The African Group supported the budget and said the reallocation of the funds would allow the STRP to fulfill its tasks. One Party requested reflecting in the report that STRP funds allocated in the budget shall not be cut in the future. The Secretary General said that elements of STRP funds are combined and they do not indicate any cut.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at:

<http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>, <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html>, <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1725e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR13 Rev.2), the COP approves the budget for the 2006-2008 triennium as attached in Annex I to enable the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention. The forecast income for 2006-2008 represents a four percent increase per year, based on the COP9 budgeted Party allocations for 2005. The total incomes for the three years are: 4,054,390 Swiss francs for 2006; 4,206,277 Swiss francs for 2007; and 4,365,094 Swiss francs for 2008. The COP decides that the Terms of Reference for the Financial Administration of the Convention shall be applied in toto to the 2006-2008 triennium.

The COP also:

- urges the Secretary General, in managing the budget, to attempt to refill the Reserve Fund established by Resolution VI.17;
- decides that the Subgroup on Finance, as established by Resolution VI.17, shall continue to operate under the aegis of the Standing Committee and with the roles and responsibilities specified in that resolution;
- authorizes the Standing Committee to change budgetary allocations between budget lines in light of significant positive or negative changes during the triennium to the rates of inflation and interest income projected in the budget;
- decides that the contribution of each Contracting Party to this budget shall be in accordance with the scale of assessments for the contribution of Member States to the UN budget as approved by the UN General Assembly for 2006 (Annex II) and yet to be approved for the years 2007 and 2008;
- calls upon all Parties to pay their contributions promptly by 1 January of each year; and
- urges those in arrears to settle them as expeditiously as possible.

**EVALUATION OF THE RAMSAR ENDOWMENT FUND AS A MECHANISM TO RESOURCE THE SMALL GRANTS FUND:** In plenary on Friday delegates considered the draft resolution on evaluation of the Ramsar Endowment Fund (COP9 DR14). During plenary on Monday, the Secretariat introduced a revised draft resolution. Highlighting funding

constraints, Iran, supported by Israel, requested that the decision mention the Asia region specifically. Bridgewater said that the region's concerns would be recorded in the COP9 report, and the draft resolution was adopted without amendment. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR14 Rev.1), the COP rescinds its decision in Resolution VIII.29 to establish a Ramsar Endowment Fund to resource the Small Grants Fund (SGF), and urges the Standing Committee to actively pursue alternative funding mechanisms. The COP further instructs the Secretary General to submit proposals to the Standing Committee at its 34th meeting for improving the status and resourcing of the SGF, with a focus on ensuring that dedicated sources of funding are developed, and calls on development assistance agencies and other organizations within the Asia region to support the establishment of such a mechanism. The COP also requests the Standing Committee to bring to COP10 new proposals for establishing a more vigorous mechanism to support the SGF, including the possible development of regional support funds.

**WETLANDS AND POVERTY REDUCTION:** On Friday, the Secretariat introduced the draft resolution on wetlands and poverty reduction (COP9 DR15), which received strong support from Parties. During the plenary on Tuesday, Bridgewater introduced a revised resolution. One Party suggested, opposed by several developing countries, including the term "extreme" before poverty. Ghana, Sudan, Nepal and Indonesia supported the words "poverty reduction" for the title of the resolution. Wetlands International, supported by the Netherlands and Switzerland, recommended new text concerning reviewing and improving existing finance mechanisms as well as encouraging new thinking in finance institutions for wetland management to help address poverty reduction. Bridgewater suggested this term be solved in DR1 Annex A, which will then set precedent for all other resolutions. The draft resolution was adopted as amended.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at:

<http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR15 Rev.1), the COP urges Parties to take action to contribute to poverty reduction, especially in the following areas: human life and safety; access to resources; ecological sustainability; governance; and economics. It further urges Parties to take or support action to:

- raise awareness of the links between wetland degradation and poverty;
- give priority or support to conservation and wise use of water and wetlands in national poverty reduction strategies;
- create new partnerships between local communities, developers and conservationists;
- review and improve existing financing mechanisms, as well as promote new sustainable financing mechanisms for wetland management; and
- ensure gender equality in sustainable wetland management strategies.

The COP also encourages Parties to work with UNEP, UNDP, the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs, the IOPs, national and international NGOs and others to enhance



sustainable livelihoods utilizing a wise use approach towards wetlands and build capacity for communities in relation to activities designed to increase food security, diversify economies and add value to wetland products.

**THE STATUS OF SITES IN THE RAMSAR LIST OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:** On Friday, Bridgewater introduced this draft resolution (COP9 DR16), noting a considerable increase in the quality and number of sites and highlighting a greater diversity in the types of designated wetlands. Parties provided updated information concerning Ramsar site designations since COP8, planned extensions to existing Ramsar sites, and future designations of new or extended sites. The Africa region requested the Secretary General to consider options for assisting and encouraging Parties in their actions in response to threatened changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites. Following a proposal by WWF, supported by several Parties, delegates agreed to request that Greece provide information on its efforts to restore the ecological character of seven Ramsar sites included in the Montreux Record of Ramsar sites, where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur, with a view to removing these sites from the Record.

On Monday, the Secretariat introduced various amendments to the draft resolution. Delegates agreed to a suggestion by Portugal to include a table on missing information from RIS in the annex. A paragraph expressing concern over the number of third party reports received by the Secretariat was deleted, following a suggestion by Argentina. The resolution was adopted with these amendments. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1722e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR16 Rev.1), the COP notes an almost 20 percent increase in the number of Ramsar sites since COP8, but highlights concern that updated RIS are missing for 41 percent of sites. It encourages Parties to report changes in the status of sites in a timely manner, including their possible inclusion in the Montreux Record, and requests the STRP to prepare a set of measures to, inter alia, using the revised RIS format.

The resolution congratulates several Parties for reporting on changes in ecological character and boundary issues, and recommends that Parties listed in the annex do so as a matter of priority. It further instructs the Secretariat to consider options for assisting and encouraging Parties in their actions in response to change or likely change in ecological character of Ramsar sites.

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION PARTNERS:** On Saturday, 12 November, Parties welcomed inclusion of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) as a new IOP, and encouraged extending the listing to other organizations, especially those specializing in water management. The draft resolution (COP9 DR17) was adopted without amendment.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR17), the COP reconfirms IOP status for Birdlife International, IUCN, Wetlands International and WWF, and formally confirms IOP status for the IWMI. It also encourages other organizations to consider applying for IOP status and requests the Standing Committee to review IOP performance in supporting Convention implementation and to report back to the COP.

**REVIEW OF COP DECISIONS:** The COP considered the draft resolution on the review of COP decisions (COP9 DR18) on Saturday, 12 November. On Monday, a revised resolution was introduced by the Secretariat. One delegate stressed the review should be restricted to COP decisions only, not to Convention text, and urged Terms of Reference be developed and a timetable set to complete the review before COP10. Another suggested STRP's participation in the review, while another said it should be reflected in the budget. The COP adopted the revised resolution with these amendments.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html>, and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR18 Rev.1), the COP instructs the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the STRP to review the decisions taken since COP1 to identify areas of conflicting advice or policy, redundancy and differing interpretation or conflict, and for the Standing Committee to present the review results to COP10. It also instructs the Secretariat to develop Terms of Reference and, if appropriate, identify potential service providers for review by the Standing Committee at its 34th session. It further agrees that the review should focus on COP resolutions and recommendations and not on the text of the Convention.

**CEPA OVERSIGHT PANEL:** On Saturday, delegates addressed the draft resolution on establishing an oversight panel for communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities of the Convention (COP9 DR19) in plenary. Iran, supported by many, proposed setting priorities on communication, education and capacity building, and adding language to the terms of reference on identifying gaps between capacity-building opportunities and needs for wetland professionals and stakeholders. Canada expressed concern over budget implications. On Monday, Mexico requested an explicit reference to the Panel reporting to the Standing Committee. The resolution was adopted as amended.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR19 Rev.1), the COP recognizes that financial restrictions have inhibited full implementation of CEPA. The COP: instructs the Standing Committee at its 34th meeting to establish an Oversight Panel to monitor and report on CEPA Programme implementation and to set priorities for communication, education and capacity building in collaboration with the Wetlands International CEPA Specialist Group and the Ramsar Advisory Board on Capacity Building, and to report to COP10 on the Panel's activities; and requests the Secretariat to liaise with the Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie in order to share all relevant information on the Ramsar Convention.

An attached annex includes the Terms of Reference for the Panel, which outlines its functions, composition and modus operandi. The functions state that the Panel will clarify the broad role of the two national CEPA focal points, identify gaps between capacity building opportunities and needs for the range of wetland stakeholders, and advise the Standing Committee on the form and function of the next CEPA Programme for 2009-2014.



The modus operandi states that the Panel will play a liaison role with other MEAs and operate as much as possible through electronic means, and that CEPA focal point representatives should seek input from government and NGO CEPA focal points.

**REGIONAL WETLAND SYMPOSIA:** The COP considered the draft resolution on importance of regional wetland symposia in implementing the Convention (COP9 DR20) in plenary on Saturday. Several Parties advocated using the Asian Wetland Symposia (AWS) as a model for other regions, with others proposing the organization of subregional meetings to prepare for regional fora, with one Party supporting the resolution as long as there were no financial implications. The COP adopted the revised resolution on Monday morning in plenary with minor amendments. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR20 Rev.1) the COP encourages all Contracting and non-Contracting Parties in the Asia Region to give full recognition to the effectiveness of the AWS. It endorses the continuation of the periodic AWS; requests Parties to facilitate participation in the AWS by a wide range of stakeholders, noting that this will not have any financial implications for the core budget; requests the Secretariat and Standing Committee to encourage linkages between Ramsar regional meetings, including subregional meetings; and recommends that Parties, international NGOs, and other relevant scientific and technical organizations consider the usefulness of establishing similar periodic regional scientific and technical fora where they do not already exist.

**INTEGRATED, CROSS-BIOME PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WETLANDS, ESPECIALLY IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES:** On Saturday, Samoa, with the endorsement of the Oceania region, introduced the draft resolution (COP9 DR21), noting it would assist small island developing states (SIDS) in fulfilling obligations under various agreements. Cuba noted reservations regarding use of the term "cross-biome." On Monday, the resolution was adopted without minor editorial amendments.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR21 Rev.1), the COP notes the ecosystem approach adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), is mindful of resource constraints of developing countries, and SIDS in particular, notes WWF's development of a prototype cross-biome programme integrating the CBD's work programmes, and acknowledges the related work of UNEP's "Hilltops to the Oceans" initiative and Pacific-Asia Biodiversity Transect (PABRITA).

The resolution welcomes the initiatives of WWF, UNEP and PABRITA as tools to assist Parties to take a holistic, cross-biome approach to wetlands management, instructs the STRP to consider the relevance and applicability of the tools and approaches, and invites WWF to prepare an information paper on the subject and, if appropriate, for the CBD Secretariat, to submit this paper to CDB COP-8 as a contribution towards achieving greater harmonization between the two Conventions. It also

reiterates efforts and capacity-building requirements of Parties, particularly SIDS, with implementing integrated management approaches, and requests donors to give priority to training and capacity building in the field. Finally, it encourages Parties to include within planning the development of site networks of protected areas, to ensure that the ecosystem services/benefits delivered by various biomes are recognized and incorporated into management regimes and land- and water-use activities.

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE CULTURAL VALUES OF WETLANDS:**

First introduced to plenary in conjunction with the resolution on additional scientific and technical guidance for implementing the Ramsar wise use concept, the COP formally considered the draft resolution (COP9 DR22) on Tuesday. However, the issue had been addressed in regional meetings and a contact group, which met throughout the COP.

During contact group discussions on Saturday, delegates agreed that cultural values should be considered when designating Ramsar sites, while some supported the addition of a criterion on cultural values. On Monday, delegates agreed to language on measures being consistent with rights and obligations under other international agreements.

The COP considered and adopted the resolution on Tuesday, with amendments on local communities and indigenous peoples, and relevant cultural characteristics for designation of sites, and the deletion of a complementary criterion taking into account cultural values.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1721e.html>; <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR22 Rev.2), the COP:

- encourages Parties to identify case studies of wetlands with significant cultural values and make them widely known;
- agrees that in the application of existing criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, a wetland may also be considered of international importance when, in addition to relevant ecological values, it holds examples of significant cultural values;
- emphasizes that measures taken with respect to this resolution in accordance with the Ramsar Convention are consistent with Parties' rights and obligations under other international agreements;
- identifies cultural characteristics as relevant in the designation of Ramsar sites, including: sites that provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge; sites that have exceptional cultural traditions that have influenced the ecological character; and sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities and indigenous peoples;
- requests the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multidisciplinary working group on the cultural values of wetlands; and
- further requests the Secretariat to analyze activities carried out to incorporate cultural values in the work of the Convention during the 2006-2008 triennium, and report to the Standing Committee and to COP10.

**RAMSAR SITES AND SYSTEMS OF PROTECTED**

**AREAS:** On Saturday, Nigeria introduced its proposed resolution (COP9 DR24), noting it represents an example of



harmonization between Ramsar and CBD reporting requirements. Delegates disagreed on the issue of references to the IUCN protected area categories, with the US and others proposing them, and Brazil opposing. An informal contact group was established on Saturday, and a compromise was reached on Monday evening.

On Tuesday, the Secretariat submitted the draft resolution for adoption by the COP. The US requested, and delegates agreed to, deleting two bracketed preambular paragraphs referring to the outcomes of the Vth World Parks Congress. The draft resolution was adopted as amended.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR24 Rev.1), the COP agrees to include as extra data fields in the approved RIS protected area categories, if any, for the site, as established by each Contracting Party, and/or IUCN categories (1994 version), if appropriate, and any other relevant designations. It calls upon Parties to integrate efforts aimed at broader protected areas system development in designating future Ramsar sites, including through World Heritage sites nominations and identification of Biosphere Reserves.

It further encourages coordinating approaches with the CBD, through, *inter alia*, criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, and implementing the CBD's programmes of work on marine and coastal biodiversity and protected areas.

#### MANAGING WETLANDS AND WATERBIRDS IN RESPONSE TO HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI):

On Thursday, the Secretariat circulated an information text on avian flu for consultations. Delegates discussed this issue in regional meetings on Thursday. On Saturday afternoon, the contact group, chaired by David Stroud (UK), met to further consider a draft resolution (COP9 DR25). Participants agreed to add a new operative paragraph underlining the importance of developing and implementing national contingency or action plans. In deleting the paragraph on developing guidelines for landscape planning, the group added paragraphs requesting the STRP to provide relevant input related to practical measures to reduce the risk of disease transmission between wild and domesticated birds to agencies developing contingency and wetland management plans and to assist in sharing information.

On Monday, the contact group met in the evening to consider the resolution's first revision. Several amendments were suggested, including: adding the word "captive" before the word "birds;" deleting a paragraph on providing information on instances of waterbird mortality to national authorities; and requesting a report on the Secretariat and STRP's work with relevant agencies at COP10.

During the closing plenary on Tuesday afternoon, Chair Stroud submitted a second revision for consideration by the COP. In response to the Russian Federation's concern about the phrase "considerable misinformation" regarding the risks posed by avian flu, the Secretary General suggested to replace it with "misunderstanding in some countries." The Convention on Migratory Species praised the COP's work on avian flu. In

response to Peru's intervention, delegates agreed to change the title of the draft resolution to "HPAI and its consequences for wetlands and waterbirds and their management and conservation for the benefit of human well-being." The draft resolution was adopted as amended.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1723e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR25 Rev.2), the COP calls for fully integrated approaches to address avian flu, and requests the Convention's continued participation in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza. The COP also: underlines the importance of developing and implementing national contingency or action plans related to the potential risk of disease transmission, and the need for national preparedness to instances of detection of HPAI in birds in wetlands; requests the Secretary General to explore possibilities of establishing partnerships to support the development of long-term funding for monitoring schemes; and urges the STRP, with the Task Force, to provide relevant input on practical measures to reduce the risk of disease transmission between wild, captive and domesticated birds, to those agencies developing contingency and wetland management plans related to avian flu.

#### IMPROVING MANAGEMENT OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION:

On Monday, Canada introduced a proposed draft resolution (COP9 DR26), noting it seeks to establish a Management Working Group to review the Convention's decision-making mechanisms and generate recommendations for COP10. Several Parties stressed the need for the group to be small-scale, self-financing and time-bound, and have equitable regional representation. Delegates discussed the composition of the group and its status, as well as specific tasks assigned to it. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of these discussions can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1724e.html>.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP9 DR26 Rev.1), the COP establishes an *ad hoc* Management Working Group to examine and review the Convention's various management structures and systems, and report to COP10 its recommendations on:

- improving the existing Terms of Reference and/or operating procedures of the Standing Committee, the Subgroup on Finance, the STRP, regional meetings and the Secretariat;
- establishing any new management structures; and
- strengthening linkages between the Contracting Parties and IOPs.

It also identifies the composition of the Management Working Group as follows: Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Standing Committee and the STRP established at COP8 and COP9; Chairs of the Subgroup on Finance for COP8 and COP9; Secretary General *ex officio*; any other interested Parties or IOPs, and an appropriate expert on organizational review, to be determined by the Working Group, subject to there being no implications for the Convention's budget.

**THANKS TO THE HOST COUNTRY:** On Tuesday, 15 November, delegates adopted a resolution (COP9 DR28) thanking the host country. In this resolution, the COP congratulates Uganda for its pioneering efforts in wetland wise use and conservation and sustainable natural resources



management, draws attention to the Kampala Declaration, expresses gratitude to the Government and people of Uganda, NGOs and the private sector and local staff.

#### **DATE AND VENUE OF COP10**

On Tuesday, 15 November, Bridgewater introduced the agenda item on the date and venue of the next COP (COP9 Doc.27), noting the Republic of Korea had offered to host Ramsar COP10.

The Republic of Korea's Environment Minister Lee Jaeyong and Tae Ho Kim, Governor of Gyeongsangnam-do Province, extended the country's invitation to host COP10 in the city of Changwon, Gyeongsangnam-do Province, in 2008. Supporting the bid, Japan noted currently 17 out of 43 Asian countries are not signatories to the Ramsar Convention, representing the largest gap in the world, and that hosting COP10 in Asia will offer an opportunity to further promote the Convention in the region. The COP accepted Republic of Korea's bid by acclamation.

#### **ELECTION OF PARTIES TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE**

On Monday, 14 November, the COP elected Parties to the Ramsar Standing Committee. The following countries were selected to represent Ramsar's six regions in the Committee: Samoa for Oceania; US for North America; Bahamas, El Salvador and Ecuador for the Neotropics; Austria, Czech Republic, Georgia and Slovenia for Europe; Benin, Gabon, Kenya and Malawi for Africa; and China, Iran and Thailand for Asia. Uganda and the Republic of Korea will serve on the Standing Committee as the COP9 and COP10 host countries.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

**MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE:** On Saturday, 12 November, COP9 President Otafiire chaired an informal Ministerial Dialogue on the sidelines of COP9, attended by ministers and high-level representatives from 19 countries. The meeting: endorsed the outcomes of CSD-13 and the 2005-2015 "Water for Life" Decade; focused on Convention implementation; urged support of regional initiatives; and considered and agreed the Kampala Declaration.

**THE KAMPALA DECLARATION:** In the Declaration, the ministers, *inter alia*, emphasize: active community participation in wetlands supporting livelihoods, calling on the private sector and civil society to promote and sustain the wise use concept; innovative economic incentives in promoting wetland wise use and conservation; and further research and exchange of information on avian flu in relation to wetlands. They also: undertake to address the World Summit on Sustainable Development's (WSSD) Johannesburg Plan of Implementation's 2010 biodiversity loss goal and to strengthen the List of Wetlands of International Importance as a contribution to the global network of protected areas initiated at the WSSD; affirm the need for synergies between the Ramsar Convention and other relevant conventions; call for cross agency and cross donor cooperation; urge development and implementation of transboundary and cross national systems and approaches to wetland ecosystems; and urge the Secretariat and IOPs to liaise

with development partners and multilateral organizations to identify sustainable funding mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention in Africa.

#### **CLOSING PLENARY**

Delegates convened for the closing plenary on Tuesday evening, 15 November, adopting the report of the meeting without amendment.

Noting COP9 was a "Children's COP" because of the presence of youth throughout the meeting, Secretary General Bridgewater said his expectations for the COP had been fulfilled and that he was satisfied with the meeting's outcomes. He thanked the Standing Committee, the Secretariat, the Government of Uganda and particularly the Ministry of Water, Land and the Environment, and finally, the delegates.

Iraq announced its intention to become a Ramsar Contracting Party before COP10, and to designate the eastern part of the Mesopotamian marshes as its first Ramsar site. Grenada said it also hopes to join the Ramsar Convention before COP10.

Romania submitted its bid to host Ramsar COP11. Ghana congratulated Uganda on successfully hosting COP9, and encouraged other African countries to follow its lead in hosting a Ramsar COP.

An NGO representative urged Parties to engage NGOs at the national level in order to achieve the shared objective of ensuring the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

An indigenous peoples representative expressed concern over low participation by indigenous peoples at COP9, highlighting their important role in conserving wetlands. He also stressed the need to ensure their full participation in law and policy making for wetlands.

Birdlife International, on behalf of the IOPs, commended the COP's attention to tackling poverty, the Convention's governance, and rapid responses to avian flu and natural phenomena. He highlighted identified priorities for action before COP10, including IWRM, dealing with changing ecological character and outreach. He called for raising awareness about the Convention at all levels to achieve a greater political impact. He said that Ramsar was legitimate in the eyes of the world and that, while IOPs are global, they act locally as well, through distributed networks, technical programmes and civil society engagement.

COP9 President Otafiire congratulated participants on a successful COP and noted additional Ramsar sites recently designated by Uganda. The meeting was gavelled to a close at 7:20 pm.

#### **A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP9**

*"The times they are a changin'" Bob Dylan*

Opening the COP with this 1960s song by Bob Dylan seemed fitting for a Convention that has undergone a remarkable transformation in its 34-year-long history. From a North-centric convention focused on the technical and scientific aspects of the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl, the Ramsar Convention has become one that actively addresses a broad range of often political issues related to conservation and wise use of wetlands throughout the world, from cultural diversity to water management to ecosystem services. COP9, the first



Ramsar COP held in Africa, is indicative of this evolution to accommodate broader concerns such as poverty alleviation. In addition, COP9 served to underscore Ramsar's drive to become a more active player in the international agenda, reflected in the adopted resolutions addressing avian flu, natural disasters and water issues.

This brief analysis focuses on the key theme of COP9, that of streamlining the Convention, highlighting its most hotly debated issues, and looks ahead to the Convention's future.

**STREAMLINING THE CONVENTION**

In his opening statement, Ramsar Secretary General Peter Bridgewater referred to "quality, not quantity," a theme that was echoed throughout the conference. While the Convention's Strategic Plan includes listing 2,500 Ramsar sites by the year 2010, many believe that the rush to list too many sites may take energy away from the management of already existing sites, which could result in many listed sites lacking adequate management plans, and becoming less attractive to donors. COP9 attempted to find a way to expand the number of Ramsar sites without compromising their effective management.

The Secretariat also attempted to streamline the organization of the COP itself. COP9 was two days shorter than COP8 and adopted far fewer resolutions, 25 rather than 45. The number of resolutions at this COP was partly due to preparatory work by the Secretariat to consolidate submissions by Parties, but some delegates felt that the "streamlining" was superficial, noting that this consolidation resulted in a "mega-resolution" on additional scientific and technical guidance, which ended up consuming a great deal of time.

Unlike COPs for other conventions, where budget issues plague debates and often stall progress, budget discussions at COP9 were relatively straightforward with no late-night negotiating sessions. For instance, currency conversion issues, which have posed problems for some other Conventions, were not a problem here as contributions are paid in Swiss francs. Instead, the budget debate focused on how to allocate funds, with regional initiatives coming into play.

The functioning of the Convention is being streamlined and decentralized through regional initiatives and national focal points, which have become more prominent. Ramsar has a historically small and centralized Secretariat with a narrow mandate, so addressing issues at the regional level frees up some of the burdens on the Secretariat and allows for more focus on specific issues and needs of different regions. The recent opening of the Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands Western and Central Asia shows that Ramsar is mature and robust enough to incorporate this evolution and that Parties are serious about decentralization. Many other initiatives are formally recognized by the COP as having potential, such as the Himalayan Initiative and the Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative, and others were proposed for future consideration.

**EMERGING ISSUES: RISING TIDES**

Ramsar's broadening scope has resulted in increased calls to include emerging issues on the agenda. This was particularly prominent at COP9, as demonstrated by the emergency resolution on avian flu and Ramsar's active involvement in the recently established Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza,

under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). One delegate pointed out that the avian flu resolution would give more prominence to Ramsar's bird experts who might be able to access funding to study links between migratory patterns of birds and avian flu. He suggested that while billions of dollars are being put into developing drugs to combat human strains of avian flu before it has even reached humans, much more could be done stop the flu at its source. In a gesture of support, the CMS Executive Director Robert Hepworth dropped in on his way to the CMS COP to be held next week in Nairobi.

In a year marked by tsunamis, hurricanes and droughts, a draft resolution on natural phenomena and the acknowledgement of wetlands as buffers against flooding and mitigation against other natural disasters indicated Ramsar's broadening agenda and increasing importance. Investing in conservation, management and wise use of wetlands can save millions of dollars in rebuilding efforts. For example, according to scientific estimates, had the wetlands surrounding New Orleans not been degraded, the city itself would not have flooded to the extent it did during Hurricane Katrina, and millions of dollars would have been saved in reconstruction.

In addition, there is a greater acknowledgement of the "benefits/services" that wetlands provide and that investing in them makes sense. In COP9's host city Kampala, for example, officials have saved money by investing in wetlands to provide water purification services rather than building an expensive water purification plant. Another local example of an ecosystem service provided by wetland biodiversity is the iconic African bird, the Marabou stork, which acts as a Kampala street cleaner.

The fact that more delegates from water ministries are attending Ramsar COPs and that the International Water Management Institute was added to the list of International Organization Partners, highlights Ramsar's role in addressing water issues in that water supplies are dependent upon the protection and sustainable use of wetland and related ecosystems.

Another emerging issue that was hotly debated in the corridors, and eventually dropped, was a Swiss proposal to extend the effects and benefits of Ramsar to the wetlands of the Arctic and the Antarctic, in the hope that it would lead to increased coherence in international action on Polar wetlands. The Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty strongly opposed this proposal, feeling the Consultative Group on the Antarctic was still in its infancy, and that the international community has not been effective in managing the region. The issue will likely emerge again at future COPs now that attention has been called to the fact that wetlands not only exist in these areas, but may be in need of greater international attention.

**CULTURE: ROUGH WATERS**

COP9 was the first COP where everyone agreed that culture must be discussed. This resulted in an agreement to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on cultural values of wetlands. Prior to the adoption of this resolution, however, delegates debated the role culture should play in determining site designation. Politicized issues such as trade and conflict with national interests crept into the debate on whether culture should be a separate criterion for designating a site, with a number of European delegates strongly supporting this proposal, and others advocating that Ramsar is primarily an ecologically-based



convention. Officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs, who wished they had been in Valencia to help stop the Convention from going into “dangerous waters” and to “steer the culture issue in the right direction,” showed up in Uganda, mainly to avoid the subsidization in agriculture and fisheries that they felt the culture-related protectionist measures by governments could bring about. In the end, delegates concerned with trade implications insisted on adding language on consistency with obligations under other international agreements to the resolution on culture, an implicit reference to the WTO which takes into account concerns that protecting culture could have impacts on trade.

#### **NAVIGATING RAMSAR'S FUTURE BEFORE DOCKING AT COP10**

COP9 proved to be less contentious than COP8, where delegates debated at length such issues as agriculture, invasive species and the report of the World Commission on Dams and negotiated the Convention's Strategic Plan. This time, COP9 addressed a broad range of issues that show the increased ability of Ramsar to respond to broader sustainable development goals and targets. It was noted for example that, at COP9, there was less talk of waterfowl than at any other COP. Ramsar's contributions to achieving Millennium Development Goal 7 on environmental sustainability, the upcoming 4th World Water Forum, achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target, and implementation of decisions from the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on water and sanitation were recognized in the Framework for Implementing the Strategic Plan.

Since it is not a UN convention, Ramsar avoids some of the bureaucratic red tape that often bogs down other conventions, with one impressed delegate pointing out that COP9 participants refrained from “engaging in endless dialectic” much to the chagrin of “contact groupies.” This should hopefully enable the Convention to continue to address broader issues and link wetland ecosystems with human well-being – an issue that will no doubt be examined in more depth at COP10.

The fact that some contentious issues were not discussed or were deferred to COP10 does not mean that these issues will continue to be sidelined in the future. History shows that emerging issues may need to “simmer,” allowing Parties to warm up to them. For instance, water issues were first addressed at COP6, but have only now gained the full attention of all delegates at COP9. One likely issue to rise again to the surface is transboundary Ramsar sites, which was deferred to COP10. Culture was more comprehensively addressed during this COP than at previous ones, so while progress may seem slow at times, there is no doubt that Ramsar's methodical and scientific approach has proven to be effective.

Now that a Ramsar COP has been held in Africa, the impetus may exist for more countries in the region to further engage in the Convention. The Oceania Region is diving deeper into the process, and Asia is gearing up to host COP10. At COP9, several developing countries announced that they will soon ratify the Convention. As noted by the Secretary General, there could very well be 160 Ramsar Contracting Parties by the next COP. This not only signals the increasing importance of the Convention, but also demonstrates developing countries' recognition of

the role of wetlands, and their desire to play a more integral role in the process. With this steady growth in the number of Parties and sites as well as its geographical, cultural and topical diversification, the Convention's transformation into a modern and mainstream sustainable development agreement seems to have “whet” the appetite of the Parties.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**EIGHTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES (CMS):** The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS will convene from 16-25 November 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya, with the theme “On the Move to 2010.” For more information, contact: UNEP/CMS Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2401; fax: +49-228-815-2449; e-mail: [secretariat@cms.int](mailto:secretariat@cms.int); internet: [http://www.cms.int/bodies/COP/cop8/cop8\\_mainpage.htm](http://www.cms.int/bodies/COP/cop8/cop8_mainpage.htm)

**SEVENTH GULF WATER CONFERENCE:** This meeting will be held from 19-23 November 2005, in Kuwait City, Kuwait. This conference aims to review and assess the progress made in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries towards the adoption and implementation of comprehensive policies and strategies for integrated water resources management and their active implementation. For more information, contact: Muhammad Al-Rashed, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and Water Sciences; tel: +965-483-6100; fax: +965-483-4712; e-mail: [gwater7@kisir.edu.kw](mailto:gwater7@kisir.edu.kw); internet: [http://www.kisir.edu.kw/conference\\_details.asp?ID=29](http://www.kisir.edu.kw/conference_details.asp?ID=29)

**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON WETLAND MANAGEMENT:** This workshop will take place from 21-23 November 2005, in Venice, Italy, with focus on practical implications of international conventions on wetland management. For more information, contact: Dwight Peck, Ramsar Secretariat; tel: +41-22-999-0170; fax: +41-22-999-0169; e-mail: [peck@ramsar.org](mailto:peck@ramsar.org); internet: [http://ramsar.org/wn/w.n.italy\\_servolo.htm](http://ramsar.org/wn/w.n.italy_servolo.htm)

**XII WORLD WATER CONGRESS:** This conference will be held from 22-25 November 2005, in New Delhi, India. The theme is “Water for sustainable development – towards innovative solutions.” For more information, contact: G.N. Mathur, Member Secretary, Adhering Committee of International Water Resources Association; tel: +91-11-2611-5984; fax: +91-11-2611-6347; e-mail: [info@worldwatercongress.org](mailto:info@worldwatercongress.org); internet: <http://www.worldwatercongress.org>

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON RECENT ADVANCES IN WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT (RAWRDM-2005):** This meeting will take place from 23-25 November 2005, in Roorkee, Uttaranchal, India. For more information, contact: Deepak Khare, Indian Institute of Technology; tel: +91-1332-285393; fax: +91-1332-271073; e-mail: [kharefwt@iitr.ernet.in](mailto:kharefwt@iitr.ernet.in); internet: <http://www.iitr.ernet.in/departments/WRT/rawrdm.pdf>

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE WORLDWIDE WATER CRISIS:** This meeting will take place from 24-25 November 2005, in Seville, Spain. This dialogue will address water management and armed conflicts, and water as a fundamental human right. For more information, contact: Green





Cross Spain; tel: +34-91-399-0501; fax: +34-91-399-0865; e-mail: central@greencrossspain; internet: http://www.greencrossspain.org/doc/Crisismundialagua.pdf

**INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OF THE MEKONG RIVER BASIN:**

This conference will be held from 29-30 November 2005, in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Participants will address how *inter alia*: sufficient cooperation can be obtained to yield sustainable water resources development; and IWRM can be successfully implemented to yield clear sustainable development outcomes. For more information, contact: Secretariat, Mekong River Commission; tel: +856-21-263-263; fax: +856-21-263-264 e-mail: iwrm.forum@mrcmekong.org; internet: http://www.mrcmekong.org/waterforum.htm

**SECOND MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE'S (UNECE) WORKING GROUP ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT:**

This meeting will take place from 8-9 December 2005, in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting will meet to discuss flood protection, prevention and mitigation and implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. For more information, contact: UNECE; tel: +41-22-917-2373; fax: +41-22-917-0107; e-mail: water.convention@unece.org; internet: http://www.unece.org/env/water/welcome.html

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER RESOURCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY:**

This conference will occur from 26-28 December 2005, in Alexandria, Egypt. Participants will discuss: water supply and demand, river basin management, droughts, flood hazards and disasters, scarcity, security and sufficiency, ecology and ecosystem assessment, and management and planning of regional water resources. For more information, contact: Conference Secretariat; tel/fax: +20-50-2255566; e-mail: ewra2005@ewra.com; internet: http://www.ewra.com/pages/2005/contents.htm

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN LAKES, LAGOONS AND WETLANDS OF THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION:**

This conference will be held from 4-7 January 2006 in Cairo, Egypt. For more information, contact: Conference Organizers; Dr Mahmoud H. Ahmed, National Authority for Remote Sensing & Space Sciences; tel: +20 (0) 2622 5815; fax: +20 (0) 2622 5800; or Dr. Roger Flower and Caroline Chambers, University College London, tel: +44 207 679 5545; fax: +44 207 679 4293; e-mail: info.ecollaw2006@geog.ucl.ac.uk; internet: http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/melmarina/ecollaw2006/

**THIRD GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON OCEANS, COASTS AND ISLANDS:**

This conference will meet from 23-27 January 2006, in Paris, France. The Forum also seeks to improve global, regional, and national policies related to oceans, coasts and islands. For more information, contact: Global Forum Secretariat; tel: +1-302-831-8086; fax: +1-302-831-3668; e-mail: johnston@udel.edu; internet: http://www.globaloceans.org/

**WETLANDS, WATER AND LIVELIHOODS**

**WORKSHOP:** This workshop will meet from 30 January - 2 February 2006, in St. Lucia, South Africa. This workshop hopes to strengthen partnerships among government, non-government, academic and private environment and development/aid

agencies in sharing knowledge and experiences in the integration of livelihoods, poverty and environment issues. For more information, contact: Maria Stolk, Wetlands, Water and Livelihoods Workshop Secretariat, Wetlands International; tel: +31-317-478854; fax: +31-317-478850; e-mail: wetlands.livelihoods@wetlands.org; internet: http://www.wetlands.org/news&/NewsItems/WWLWorkshop\_files/second\_ann.htm

**SHARING THE FISH CONFERENCE 2006:** This conference will be held from 23 February - 2 March 2006, in Perth, Australia. This conference will focus on resource allocation and the sustainability of fisheries and will provide a neutral forum for the multi-disciplinary discussion of the elements of effective allocation of fisheries resources to ensure their sustainability. For more information, contact: Conference Secretariat; tel: +61-8-9387-1488; fax: +61-8-9387-1499; e-mail: info5@eventedge.com.au; internet: http://www.fishallocation.com.au/

**FOURTH WORLD WATER FORUM: LOCAL ACTIONS FOR A GLOBAL CHALLENGE:**

The Fourth World Water Forum will take place from 16-22 March 2006, in Mexico City, Mexico. This conference aims to raise awareness on water issues all over the world. For more information, contact: Secretariat of the 4th World Water Forum; tel: +52-55-5174-4480; fax: +52-55-5174-4722; e-mail: feedback@worldwaterforum4.org.mx; internet: http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx

**EIGHTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:**

COP-8 will take place from 20-31 March 2006, in Curitiba, Brazil. For more information, contact: the CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; internet: http://www.biodiv.org

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON WATER AND LAND MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE:**

This symposium will meet from 4-8 April 2006, in Adana, Turkey. The symposium will seek to identify best management practices to harmonize the sustainable use of water for agricultural production and livelihoods with well-functioning ecosystems. For more information, contact: Attila Yazar, Cukurova University; tel: +90-322-3386516; fax: +90-322-3386386; e-mail: symp2006@cu.edu.tr; internet: http://symp2006.cu.edu.tr/

**22ND INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON WORLD DAMS CONGRESS:**

This meeting will be held from 18-23 June 2006, in Barcelona, Spain. This meeting will address: technical solutions to reduce time and costs in dam design and construction; management of the downstream impacts of dam operation; and flood and drought evaluation and management. For more information, contact: ICOLD Secretariat; tel: +34-93-4016-478; fax: +34-93-4017-357; e-mail: secretariat@icold-barcelona2006.org; internet: http://www.icold-barcelona2006.org

**TENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION:**

Ramsar COP10 will be held in Changwon, Gyeongsangnam-do Province, South Korea in 2008. For more information, please contact: Ramsar Secretariat; tel +41 22 999 0170; fax: +41 22 999 0169; e-mail: ramsar@ramsar.org; internet: http://www.ramsar.org