

## RAMSAR COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS

### FRIDAY 31, OCTOBER 2008

Most regional groups reconvened to coordinate their positions in the morning, and delegates met in plenary and contact group sessions in the morning and afternoon. In plenary, delegates heard a special presentation on interactions between human health and wetlands, and considered draft resolutions. Contact groups on the budget and the legal status of the Ramsar Secretariat met in morning and evening sessions.

#### PLENARY

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON HUMAN HEALTH AND WETLANDS INTERACTIONS:** Rebecca D’Cruz, STRP Vice-Chair, discussed how current and continuing pressure on wetlands and negative impacts on human health are due to changing and decreasing water quality in wetlands. D’Cruz highlighted the need for wetland managers to engage actively with the health sector at the local and national levels, and emphasized identifying and implementing interventions that benefit human health and wetlands concurrently.

**DRAFT RESOLUTIONS: Regional Initiatives:** Herb Raffaele, Chair of the Standing Committee’s Subgroup on Finance, introduced this item (COP 10 DR 6), observing that regional initiatives present an opportunity to expand the Convention’s reach and to work more effectively within regions.

On political and financial support from contracting parties and other relevant governments in a region, delegates debated specific language and agreed to meet informally to produce revised text.

On secured funding for planned work, TANZANIA and CAMEROON stressed the need for a fundraising mechanism to seek funding for regional initiatives in addition to core funding. AUSTRALIA and SWITZERLAND proposed a standardized reporting format. SAMOA and AUSTRALIA called for balanced distribution of regional initiatives, and advocated additional funding to support regional initiatives. BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, PANAMA and PARAGUAY underlined the need for continuing support for ongoing initiatives in the new triennium.

**Ramsar Small Grants Fund (SGF):** Herb Raffaele introduced this item (COP 10 DR 7), noting that the resolution calls for the establishment of a low-cost small projects portfolio (SPP), which will compile project proposals that have been evaluated and approved but not funded due to lack of funds. Raffaele also noted that donors could select SPP projects for funding, thereby increasing SGF voluntary contributions.

INDONESIA emphasized the obligation of developed country parties to make voluntary donations to the SGF. SAMOA emphasized the needs of small island developing states, and JAPAN stressed the need for monitoring and evaluation of projects approved by the SGF. At Japan’s request, Raffaele distinguished between signature and regional initiatives, noting that the latter are long-term, broad scale efforts within a region, while the former are specific regional activities. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA committed to donate US\$100,000 to the SGF, and pointed out that contributions to the Ramsar Carbon Offset Fund will finance wetland management in developing countries.

**COP Cycle:** Delegates considered (COP 10 DR 3), which provides for extending the COP cycle from three to four years, and for regionally rotating meetings of the Standing Committee, the STRP and CEPA. The majority of parties opposed extending the COP cycle. SWITZERLAND said extending the interval would allow more time for implementation, but emphasized that additional costs should not be incurred, and also cautioned against taking decisions regionally.

NEW ZEALAND opposed the devolution of decision making. Barbados, for the AMERICAS, said extending the interval would require two intersessional regional meetings, and would also inhibit the COP’s ability to respond to emerging issues. Samoa, for OCEANIA, and CHINA said a four year cycle would incur additional costs and administrative burdens, and reduce international visibility, with CHINA noting that it would send a signal that Ramsar is unimportant.

JAPAN proposed deleting paragraphs on regional rotation of meetings, citing high cost implications, while the US pointed to benefits, including exposure to other regions. GEORGIA offered to host the 2009 Standing Committee meeting.

Noting overwhelming opposition to extending the COP cycle, the Secretariat said the issue could be revisited at COP 11, if parties wished. COSTA RICA, URUGUAY, TANZANIA, MALAWI and ARGENTINA opposed this, stressing that the matter should be considered closed. The Secretariat said that the meeting report would note that the resolution was not adopted, and urge parties to consider hosting Standing Committee meetings, resources permitting, and delegates agreed.

**Transition Committee of the Management Working Group:** This draft resolution (COP 10 DR 4) was adopted, with an amendment proposed by Ecuador specifying that each IOP would be represented by one representative in the transition committee.

**Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA):** Many parties expressed support for the CEPA draft

resolution. AUSTRIA suggested a reference to the incorporation of previous work. On integrating CEPA action plans into policy instruments and programmes, UGANDA suggested additional reference to poverty eradication. A revised draft resolution will be prepared.

**Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention:** On this item (COP 10 DR 10), the UK, on behalf of the EU, proposed reflecting the importance of voluntary contributions for STRP activities in language urging parties, donors, intergovernmental agencies, IOPs and others to use the programme to prioritize their financial and other support.

Regarding STRP tasks, AUSTRALIA highlighted the importance of detecting, reporting and responding to changes in ecological character, and their relation to the task on guidance for describing ecological character. VENEZUELA proposed an additional thematic work area relating to wetlands and urbanization, while INDONESIA suggested considering poverty reduction as a high priority task.

On wetlands and climate change mitigation and adaptation, and on biofuels and wetlands, BRAZIL cautioned against duplicating the efforts of other processes and favored deleting references to these topics. TANZANIA emphasized future priorities and integrating language on economic sector issues for wetlands, wetlands and poverty reduction, and wetlands and tourism. A revised draft resolution will be prepared.

**STRP Modus Operandi:** STRP Chair Heather MacKay briefed delegates on the proposed refinements to the STRP *modus operandi* (COP 10 DR 9). INDONESIA requested that the STRP include a thematic expert on socioeconomic issues. In response, the Secretariat cautioned against the STRP Oversight Committee appointing thematic experts in areas outside of its priority work areas, noting that the STRP will continue to collaborate with IOPs to seek expertise for such issues. BRAZIL proposed involving parties directly in approving the STRP's work. The Secretariat suggested postponing a decision on this, pending clarification of the proposal's implications.

**Private-Sector Partnerships:** Secretary-General Anada Tiéga introduced proposed principles for partnerships between the Ramsar Secretariat and the business sector (COP 10 DR 12), which aim to promote joint activities for wetland conservation and wise use through increased commitment by the private sector. Germany, on behalf of the EU, proposed adding reference to the Business and Biodiversity Initiative launched at CBD COP 9. TANZANIA called for tripartite partnerships, whereby the Secretariat could provide technical support, and emphasized the need to include access and benefit-sharing measures.

THAILAND suggested that the STRP prepare a handbook on the development of public-private partnerships. NEW ZEALAND proposed the inclusion of an additional objective to facilitate improved environmentally sustainable business practices.

INDONESIA suggested that the STRP develop guidelines on the wise use of wetlands for the private sector, including the optimization of sustainable production, and requested that CEPA strengthen cooperation with the private sector. Discussions will continue on Saturday.

**Reports of the Contact Group Chairs:** Finance and Budget Committee Chair Rafaëlle reported broad support for a four percent increase in the budget, which the group agreed should be spent on hiring an additional staff member to focus on partnerships, and on enhancing support for the SGF and regional initiatives.

Reporting on the legal status contact group, Co-Chair Luis Vayas, Ecuador, said the group had agreed that an intersessional working group or task force should be established to continue addressing the issue.

## REGIONAL GROUPS

**ASIA:** Chair Shueng briefed delegates on the outcome of the finance and budget committee, explaining that, although several regional groups supported a four percent increase, no consensus was reached. The Asian group did not reach consensus because JAPAN opposed the four percent increase.

**AMERICAS:** On the Secretariat's legal status, delegates considered Uruguay's proposal for a short-term approach to solve specific problems, followed by a mid-term strategy aimed at defining the Secretariat's legal status. Delegates noted that subregional initiatives should be properly integrated within regional initiatives. ECUADOR and CHILE requested clarification on the use of signature initiatives in the draft resolution on the SGF. URUGUAY indicated its interest in hosting COP 11.

**EUROPE:** Delegates supported establishing contact groups on wetlands and climate change, as well as on wetlands and biofuels. SWITZERLAND said the resolution on wetlands and biofuels should send a strong signal to other processes addressing biofuels that they should also consider impacts on wetlands. On enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies, the NETHERLANDS said that EU countries will seek to achieve a better balance between negative and positive impacts, in particular taking into account the role of rice paddies in food production.

**OCEANIA:** Regarding frequency and timing of COPs, some participants expressed concern that a four year cycle may result in regional and Standing Committee meetings becoming mini COPs. On the budget, the group did not reach agreement on which option it preferred. On the proposed Secretariat staff position on partnerships, delegates preferred to see more details prior to taking a decision, with some expressing concern that resources would have to be diverted from critical programmes such as CEPA or regional initiatives. The possibility of a government secondment to fill this position was also raised.

## CONTACT GROUP ON THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE SECRETARIAT

The group met in the evening to discuss a Co-Chair's draft, including annexed terms of reference (TOR) for an *ad hoc* working group on administrative reform. Delegates discussed whether the TOR should include references to work undertaken so far and formal legal advice from the UN, and whether they should address both the Convention and the Secretariat. A revised text will be prepared.

## IN THE CORRIDORS

The day revealed few surprises as delegates settled into a somewhat familiar routine in Changwon. The "shooting down" of a proposal to extend the COP cycle to four years was not unexpected, as one delegate explained: "if we go to a four year COP cycle then we'll relinquish the tiny semblance of visibility that we have."

However, some delegates were already predicting that tomorrow's debates would be more lively and contentious, with a morning presentation on wetlands and climate change, which could lead to interventions by parties with firm views on the issue. Given that some delegates are already revisiting the well-trodden terrain of "mandate issues," one delegate wondered whether a discussion on climate change would be possible without getting bogged down over questions of "duplication."

Another group of delegates expected heated debate on the status of sites on the Ramsar list, with NGOs flexing their muscles to name and shame those parties not living up to their commitments.