

## RAMSAR COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS SATURDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2008

Ramsar COP 10 delegates met in plenary in morning and afternoon sessions to address draft resolutions. Regional groups convened in the evening to elect new representatives to the Standing Committee. Contact group and informal working group sessions were held during lunchtime and in the evening on: the budget, legal status of the Secretariat, wetlands and climate change, biofuels, and extractive industries.

### PLENARY

**DRAFT RESOLUTIONS:** Unless otherwise stated, revised draft resolutions will be prepared to reflect amendments made in plenary or during informal consultations.

**Private-Sector Partnerships:** Delegates continued considering COP 10 DR 12. ARGENTINA requested deleting reference to poverty as a root cause of environmental degradation. ARGENTINA, BRAZIL and CHILE suggested text on ensuring proper consultation with parties. CHILE also emphasized the shared responsibility of the business sector in the maintenance and management of water resources. MAURITIUS highlighted the relationship between tourism development and coastal wetlands.

**Wetlands and Climate Change:** Delegates considered COP 10 DR 24. SWITZERLAND and NORWAY proposed text on the protection of mountain wetlands and their regulatory function for water storage. ECUADOR emphasized coastal and mountain wetland restoration. The EU suggested reference to: the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation by providing connectivity, corridors and flyways; payments for ecosystem services; and the CBD *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change.

ARGENTINA, ECUADOR, CHINA and BRAZIL requested deleting reference to: maintaining wetland ecological character in climate change mitigation and adaptation policies; and policies for reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries. BRAZIL and VENEZUELA called for language consistent with the UNFCCC.

JAPAN, CHINA and CUBA requested clarification on the impact of wind and tidal power generation and detrimental effects on wetlands. NEW ZEALAND stressed the need to enhance synergies with other MEAs, in particular with the CBD and UNFCCC. CANADA, THAILAND, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and the GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT CENTER emphasized the implementation of the Ramsar Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands. WWF and WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL highlighted peatlands' potential for carbon storage.

**Wetlands and Biofuels:** Delegates considered COP 10 DR 25. The EU proposed referencing the CBD decision on agriculture, biofuels and biodiversity. AUSTRALIA cautioned against policies for sustainable biofuel production and use that could constitute artificial trade barriers. MALAYSIA requested deleting reference to the conversion of peat swamp forests to palm oil production in Southeast Asia. COSTA RICA proposed language on: reducing negative impacts of biofuel production on indigenous communities; reducing production of biofuels that require peatland drainage; and sharing responsibility for water management for high value conservation. INDIA proposed that parties consider formulating appropriate land use policies taking into account negative impacts on wetlands.

The US proposed deleting language reflecting the food versus biofuel debate and instead suggested text stating that the growing global demand for food and fuel may lead to pressure to convert wetlands and other threatened ecosystems. WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL advocated taking a precautionary approach toward wetland conversion. An informal working group was established to continue discussions on this issue.

**Wetlands and Extractive Industries:** On COP 10 DR 26, the EU proposed reference to post-extractive measures for wetland restoration or creation. ARGENTINA suggested text on wetland ecosystem services evaluation consistent with WTO regulations. On recognizing increasing global demand for resources, AFRICA suggested distinguishing renewable and non-renewable resources, and inclusion of baseline information in national wetland inventories.

**Partnerships and Synergies with MEAs:** On COP 10 DR 11, the EU and AUSTRALIA suggested reference to improved harmonization of reporting requirements. AFRICA preferred using regional partnerships to enhance working relationships with other financial institutions.

**Formats and Guidance for Data and Information Needs:** Delegates considered three draft resolutions on: a framework for data information needs; data needs for core inventory and describing wetland ecological character; and detecting, reporting and responding to changes in wetland ecological character (COP 10 DR 14, 15 and 16). AFRICA suggested harmonizing reporting formats with the CBD and Agenda 21. INDIA called for a simplified format to accommodate limited country capacity. ECUADOR stressed continuity of data collection and analysis.

JAPAN said reporting should not lead to additional financial burdens. WWF proposed references to the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool. WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL urged parties to provide funding for continuing the International Waterbirds Census.

**Environmental Assessments:** On COP 10 DR 17, AFRICA added reference to capacity building, and TURKEY suggested

that the resolution “invite” rather than “urge” parties to include the guidance in sustainable development frameworks. The resolution was adopted as amended.

**Changwon Declaration:** The REPUBLIC OF KOREA presented the draft Changwon declaration on human well being and wetlands (COP 10 DR 32). The EU suggested deleting reference to water as a source of energy production. AFRICA stressed that the declaration should go beyond transmitting information but rather translate policies into action. The US proposed to “welcome” or “take note” of the declaration, rather than “adopt” it.

**Application of Response Options from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment within the Ramsar Wise Use Toolkit:** On COP 10 DR 18, the EU suggested including reference to the process for establishing an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and proposed instructing the STRP to prepare further advice to parties on interrelated comprehensive assessment of water management in agriculture.

**Wetlands and River Basin Management:** Delegates considered COP 10 DR 19. The EU proposed disseminating the guidance to other relevant agreements and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention. SWITZERLAND, opposed by BRAZIL, proposed language inviting the Secretariat to further cooperate with the UNECE Water Convention.

TURKEY and BRAZIL, opposed by GERMANY, requested deleting reference to the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, since it has not yet entered into force. IRAQ said this Convention would provide a basis for dispute resolution. On valuation and payment for ecosystem services, ARGENTINA requested language consistent with WTO provisions, while SWITZERLAND clarified that these services do not fall under WTO provisions.

**Biogeographic Regionalization in the Strategic Framework:** On COP 10 DR 20, INDONESIA requested that information be made available on all relevant ecosystems and not only on marine ecosystems.

**Guidance on Responding to Avian Influenza:** On COP 10 DR 21, JAPAN proposed language on: disclosing relevant information and information exchange between countries; and strengthening surveillance of waterbirds in their habitats. Cautioning against negative impacts, the EU said such surveillance should be within normal legal frameworks and should minimize impacts on the populations concerned. The US proposed reference to lessons learned and the better management of response practices. AFRICA asked for language reflecting that avian influenza is not directly caused by waterbirds.

**International Cooperation for the Conservation of Waterbird Flyways:** On COP 10 DR 22, KAZAKHSTAN, IRAN and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, proposed reference to the Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other Waterbirds. AFRICA proposed language on taking into account people’s livelihoods and mainstreaming waterbirds into national environmental reporting. Germany, for the TRILATERAL WADDEN SEA COOPERATION, supported by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA and AUSTRALIA, proposed annexing, to the resolution, the outcome of the International Symposium on East Asian Coastal Wetlands, which was held immediately prior to COP 10. CHINA and JAPAN opposed this, noting that the report should be a separate document. After some debate, the Secretariat said that the revised text will include reference to the annexed report in a preambular paragraph instead of in operative paragraphs.

**Wetlands and Human Health and Well Being:** Delegates considered COP10 DR 23. The EU suggested deleting a disease list arguing that such a list could never be comprehensive. BRAZIL suggested amending the resolution’s title to include

sustainable development. AFRICA proposed replacing the term “ecological character” with “ecological integrity.”

**Wetlands and Urbanization:** Delegates considered COP10 DR 27. THAILAND suggested reference to capacity building and resource mobilization. VENEZUELA proposed CEPA as a tool for enhancing community participation.

**Wetlands and Poverty Reduction:** On COP 10 DR 28, THAILAND called for careful assessment of the compatibility between poverty reduction measures and Ramsar principles. BRAZIL suggested replacing reference to poverty reduction with poverty eradication for consistency with the MDGs. AFRICA proposed including payment for ecosystem services, and encouraging parties to document and submit to the Secretariat best practices on wetland wise use and its contribution to poverty reduction. JAPAN cautioned that the establishment of early warning systems and contingency plans for disaster risk reduction are beyond the Convention’s scope.

**Functions of Agencies and Related Bodies in National Implementation:** On COP 10 DR 29, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, NEW ZEALAND and AUSTRALIA proposed text on the roles of the Administrative Authority and daily contact, and on the interrelationship of responsibilities among different entities at the national level and the Convention’s bodies. AFRICA emphasized the need for providing capacity building initiatives in the development of tools for NFPs. WWF, on behalf of IOPs, stressed institutional capacity building at the subnational level.

**Small Island States and Ramsar:** On COP 10 DR 30, Mauritius proposed reflecting the effects of ecotourism development on coastal wetlands.

**Enhancing Biodiversity in Rice Paddies:** On COP 10 DR 32, NORWAY and SWITZERLAND, opposed by BRAZIL, AUSTRALIA and PARAGUAY, suggested deleting reference stating that the resolution is not intended to support agricultural policies that are inconsistent with trade-related agreements.

The EU and the INTERNATIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE proposed referencing negative impacts of inappropriate expansion and development of rice paddies on wetland habitats. THAILAND suggested that the STRP investigate the impacts of the recent increase in global demand for food commodities. Regarding wise use, ECUADOR and VENEZUELA proposed language on reducing the use of agro chemicals and pesticides. AUSTRALIA cautioned against introducing such language.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

COP 10 gathered momentum on Saturday as its two Vice-Presidents rushed through 21 draft resolutions, although not without creating some collateral damage in the form of numerous informal groups that met late into the evening. Some delegates were surprised that plenary discussions on wetlands and climate change, and wetlands and extractive industries, went rather smoothly in spite of dire expectations, although discussions in the informals were reportedly contentious.

As the informal working group on biofuels reconvened in the evening to embark on the arduous task of paragraph-by-paragraph negotiations, some hoped for a simple resolution that would avoid touching on too many sensitive issues which could resurface in plenary. With delegates requesting references to precisely those issues that have bogged down negotiations in other forums, such as positive impacts of biofuels, carbon balances and impacts on carbon storage capacity, one delegate said “here we go again – Sisyphus is back!” The budget negotiations were punctuated with arguments; the detailed budget floated by the Chair, prompting one seasoned budget negotiator to opine “it seems that this issue is not going to be easily resolved.”