

## RAMSAR COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2008

Ramsar COP 10 delegates met in plenary in morning and afternoon sessions to consider revised draft resolutions. Delegates adopted many resolutions, including on the Ramsar Strategic Plan, regional initiatives, avian influenza, and partnerships and synergies with MEAs. An informal working group on wetlands and climate change met throughout the day.

### PLENARY

**REPORTS ON PROGRESS:** Luis Vayas (Ecuador), Co-Chair of the contact group on legal status of the Secretariat, reported that the group had agreed to establish an intersessional *ad hoc* working group to further consider the matter, noting that a revised draft resolution had been prepared containing objective, terms of reference, meeting calendar and composition of the group. The chairs of the informal groups on wetlands and biofuels, wetlands and climate change, and rice paddies reported that revised draft resolutions had been prepared, noting that a number of outstanding issues required further consideration.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS: Wetlands and Climate Change:** Max Finlayson, STRP, presented on wetlands and climate change (COP 10 DOC 25), noting that the draft resolution on wetlands and climate change links climate change to biodiversity, water and land management, and emphasises the value of restoration and wise use of wetlands. On the impacts of climate change, he stressed, in particular, that climate variability due to climate change will exacerbate existing pressures on many wetlands species.

**River Basin Management:** STRP Chair Heather Mackay presented on the prospects and challenges for integrated water management in the next decade. She discussed water equity in the context of integrated river basin management, and emphasized the need for mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of costs and benefits of ecosystem goods and services. Highlighting challenges for the future, she mentioned: the need for policy coherence by ensuring that multiple policies are not in conflict; diagonal coherence, which entails taking actions that have wider, indirect benefits; ensuring that water laws address wetland systems in the

hydrological cycle; and flexible and adaptable institutions with a mandate to work across sectoral boundaries.

**5th World Water Forum:** TURKEY provided an overview of the 5th World Water Forum, which will be convened from the 16-22 March 2009 in Istanbul, Turkey.

**REVISED DRAFT RESOLUTIONS:** The following revised draft resolutions were adopted, some with editorial amendments: facilitating the work of the Ramsar Convention and its Secretariat (COP 10 DR 5 Rev.1); a framework for Ramsar data and information needs (COP 10 DR 14 Rev.1); a framework for processes for detecting, reporting and responding to change in wetland ecological character (COP 10 DR 16 Rev.1); application of Millennium Ecosystem Assessment response options in the Ramsar Wise Use Toolkit (COP 10 DR 18 Rev.1); wetlands and river basin management: consolidated scientific and technical guidance (COP 10 DR 19 Rev.1); wetlands and urbanization (COP 10 DR 27 Rev.1); and wetlands and poverty eradication (COP 10 DR 28 Rev.1).

**Status of Ramsar Sites:** On COP 10 DR 13 Rev.2, a number of countries raised issues related to listings of transboundary sites, with some opposing references to bilateral disputes cited in the report. In response, the Secretariat suggested that the following countries consult informally and submit revised text: Iraq, Iran and Turkey; Ukraine and Romania; and Slovenia and Croatia. ARGENTINA noted its active role in conserving the High Andean wetlands, which was applauded by WWF. CHINA requested to be deleted from Annex I, which lists countries from which information sheets or updated sheets are needed as a matter of priority.

AUSTRALIA highlighted its buyback of irrigated water from the Murray-Darling Basin, which includes many Ramsar sites, and his country's contribution to developing a long-term response to managing the Coorong and Lower Lakes site. The INLAND RIVERS NETWORK welcomed Australia's efforts and encouraged it to continue buying back water. CHILE asked to be included in a paragraph acknowledging specific countries that have designated new sites since COP 9. BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL expressed surprise that L'Albufera de València site in Spain had been removed from the draft resolution and expressed hope that the Standing Committee would reach a satisfactory conclusion on this issue. A revised draft resolution will be prepared.

**Strategic Plan:** Regarding the designation of at least one Ramsar site, SAMOA preferred language requiring parties to “designate as far as possible” or “consider the designation of” one Ramsar site from among the underrepresented sites. On the Convention’s financial capacity, JAPAN emphasized maximizing the use of existing financial resources. A revised draft resolution will be prepared.

**Regional Initiatives:** After informal consultations on COP10 DR 6, facilitated by Hungary, delegates agreed on revised text authorizing the Standing Committee to examine and approve, in between COP meetings, new initiatives selected from those which fully meet the operational guidelines. Regarding the operational guidelines stipulated in the annex, language was accepted on the importance of ensuring support from all parties or a significant number of parties in the regions.

Text on the need for support of a host country or intergovernmental organization in order to establish a professional coordinating body or mechanism was also approved, as well as a periodic assessment and review process to be coordinated by the Secretariat. The draft decision was adopted with these amendments.

**Ramsar Small Grants Fund:** On COP 10 DR 7 Rev.1, BRAZIL requested that Ramsar Signature Initiatives, once developed, be submitted for the COP’s approval. JAPAN called for reference to other international financial mechanisms, such as the GEF, which could be an avenue for SGF funding. The draft resolution was adopted in light of the proposed amendments.

**CEPA:** On COP 10 DR 8 Rev.1, AUSTRALIA said contracting parties should seek to develop and implement their CEPA Action Plans, as integrated components of environment, biodiversity, wetland and water management, education, health, and poverty reduction policy instruments, should be mainstreamed into relevant programmes at a decentralized level, where appropriate.

The draft resolution was adopted, taking into account Australia’s suggestion.

**Partnerships and Synergies with MEAs:** On COP 10 DR 11 Rev.1, ECUADOR indicated that reference to encouraging the Secretariat to work closely with the private sector is outside of the scope of the resolution on partnerships with MEAs, and noted that such issues could be integrated into the resolution on partnerships with the private sector. AUSTRALIA proposed that evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention should occur at least once in every reporting cycle, and requested the Secretariat and the STRP to provide advice on how reporting on these indicators could be integrated into the reports of contracting parties.

SWITZERLAND proposed reference to the 2011 International Year of the Forests, as declared by the United Nations General Assembly. WWF suggested reformulating the scope of IOP representatives in assisting national and regional implementation of the Convention to be restricted to the context of joint-work plans prepared by the Secretariat. The resolution was adopted with the proposed changes.

**Changwon Declaration:** On COP 10 DR 32 Rev.1, the Secretariat noted that the Declaration would be “welcomed” rather than “adopted.” BRAZIL, supported by AUSTRALIA, stressed that language must be consistent with what is agreed in the informal working group on climate change. IRAQ suggested referring to pressures from “land use changes” and

water overuse, but agreed to “poor land use” at Secretary-General’s Tiéga’s suggestion.

JAPAN requested language reflecting that human well being depends on many environmental services, some of which can be attributed to wetlands; and proposed deleting a paragraph on developing indicators for COP 11 concerning dissemination and uptake of the Changwon Declaration. Alternate President Kim Chan-woo suggested improving the paragraph, rather than deleting it. A revised draft declaration will be prepared.

**Conservation of Waterbird Flyways:** On COP 10 DR 22, a new paragraph was included on encouraging parties that have not yet joined flyway initiatives such as the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement. The resolution was then adopted.

**Avian Influenza:** On COP 10 DR 21 Rev.1, WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL, supported by the UK, requested language: stating that wild birds should not automatically be assumed to be the source of infection; and on appropriate management responses when infection is confirmed on wetlands. The resolution was adopted, subject to incorporating these changes.

### **INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON WETLANDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Delegates continued discussing COP 10 DR 24 Rev.1 and had extensive debate over references to the role of wetlands in climate change mitigation. One delegate stressed that such references must be consistent with language used in other processes, particularly with regard to respecting the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” of developed and developing countries. Several delegates also emphasized synergies with other process such as the CBD and UNFCCC, and using language already agreed in these processes.

A revised draft resolution will be prepared with some text remaining in brackets, including several options on references to the role of wetlands in mitigation, as well as to land use change and reducing emissions for deforestation in developing countries.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Delegates were on a roll after a day off and made steady progress managing to adopt half the draft resolutions, without too much headache. However, the Secretariat had their work cut out for them, keeping up production of the ever increasing revised documents. One satisfied delegate was overheard remarking, as he made his way to the farewell gala dinner, “Looks like we might just avoid an all night vigil tomorrow.”

Climate change devotees were confined to a remote meeting room, where they spent most of the day attempting to hammer out an acceptable compromise on climate change and wetlands, in line with the well known principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities.” Most were confident that agreement would be reached. “One day left,” several delegates were heard saying during the dinner, with some referring to the conference and others to the long awaited US election outcome.

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of Ramsar COP-10 will be available on Friday, 7 November 2008, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/ramsar/cop10/>