



## SUMMARY OF THE TWELFTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION: 2-9 JUNE 2015

The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP12) was held from 2-9 June 2015, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, under the theme “Wetlands for our Future.” Over 800 participants representing the 168 parties to the Convention, as well as the International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Ramsar Convention, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended the meeting.

COP12 adopted 16 resolutions by consensus, including the Strategic Plan 2016-2024, a new framework for the delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention, peatlands, disaster risk reduction, and a wetland city accreditation of the Ramsar Convention. In the face of dramatic loss and degradation of wetlands, and notwithstanding organizational difficulties, the meeting was considered successful in charting the way for the Convention to link up to other international processes, as well as guide work on the ground.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (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.

**CONVENTION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE:** Originally emphasizing the conservation and wise use of wetlands primarily to provide habitats for waterbirds, the Convention has subsequently broadened its scope to address all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, thereby recognizing the importance of wetlands as ecosystems that contribute to both biodiversity conservation and human well-being. Wetlands cover an estimated 9% of the Earth’s land surface, and contribute significantly to the global economy in terms of water supply, fisheries, agriculture, forestry and tourism. The Convention currently has 168 parties. A total of 2,208 wetland sites covering

over 210 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; 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 (SC), a Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the Ramsar Bureau, which carries out the functions of a Secretariat.

**PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE COP:** There have been eleven meetings of the COP since the Convention’s entry into force: COP1 in Cagliari, Italy (November 1980); COP2 in Groningen, the Netherlands (May 1984); COP3 in Regina, Canada (May-June 1987); COP4 in Montreux, Switzerland

### IN THIS ISSUE

A Brief History of the Ramsar Convention . . . . .	1
COP12 Report . . . . .	2
Reports . . . . .	3
Special Presentations. . . . .	4
Resolutions . . . . .	4
Closing Plenary . . . . .	14
A Brief Analysis of Ramsar COP12 . . . . .	14
Upcoming Meetings . . . . .	16
Glossary . . . . .	18

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © is written and edited by Soledad Aguilar, Jennifer Lenhart, Elisa Morgera, Ph.D., Asterios Tsioumanis, Ph.D., and Tristan Tyrrell. The Digital Editor is Angeles Estrada. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James “Kimo” Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the European Union, the Government of Switzerland (the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)), and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2015 is provided by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, SWAN International, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into French has been provided by the Government of France, the Wallonia, Québec, and the International Organization of La Francophonie/Institute for Sustainable Development of La Francophonie (IOF/IFDD). The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD or other donors. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications with appropriate academic citation. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11D, New York, NY 10022 USA.



<http://enb.iisd.org/mobi/>

(June-July 1990); COP5 in Kushiro, Japan (June 1993); COP6 in Brisbane, Australia (March 1996); COP7 in San José, Costa Rica (May 1999); COP8 in Valencia, Spain (November 2002); COP9 in Kampala, Uganda (November 2005); COP10 in Changwon, Republic of Korea (October-November 2008); and COP11 in Bucharest, Romania (June 2012).

**COP8:** COP8 focused on the role of wetlands in water provision, as well as their cultural and livelihoods aspects. 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. Delegates also approved the Convention's Work Plan for 2003-2005 and its Strategic Plan for 2003-2008.

**COP9:** COP9 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, and climate change mitigation and adaptation; wetlands and poverty reduction; cultural values of wetlands; and the emergence of avian influenza. The COP also adopted the Convention's Work Plan for the 2006-2008 triennium, and reviewed its Strategic Plan 2003-2008. An informal Ministerial Dialogue adopted the Kampala Declaration, which emphasized the role of the Convention in arresting the continued loss and degradation of wetland ecosystems.

**COP10:** COP10 adopted 32 resolutions, including on: wetlands and climate change; wetlands and biofuels; wetlands and extractive industries; wetlands and poverty eradication; wetlands and human health and wellbeing; enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems; and promoting international cooperation on the conservation of waterbird flyways. The COP also adopted the Convention's Strategic Plan 2009-2015.

**COP11:** COP11, under the theme "Wetlands: Home and Destinations," adopted 22 resolutions, including on: institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat; tourism, recreation and wetlands; climate change and wetlands; and agriculture-wetland interactions, rice paddy and pest control. The COP also adopted adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 for the triennium 2013-2015.

## COP12 REPORT

On Tuesday, 2 June, Ramsar Standing Committee (SC) Chair Doina Catrinoiu, Romania, handed over the Ramsar flag on behalf of the COP11 Presidency to Eneida de León, Minister of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment, Uruguay. Rodolfo Nin Novoa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uruguay, welcomed COP12 participants, highlighting that more than 12% of the host country's territory are wetlands. He underscored the importance of the resolutions to be adopted by COP12, in particular a new strategic plan, in light of the decisions to be taken later in 2015 by the UN General Assembly on the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). Susana Hernandez, Mayor of Maldonado, Uruguay, stressed that while wetlands were not valued in the past, their importance is now widely recognized.

SC Chair Catrinoiu reported on the work undertaken during the intersessional period, including on sustainable development, sustainable management of wetlands, and climate change. She explained that the COP12 theme "Wetlands for our Future" points to the importance of wetlands contributing to the SDGs, and recommended sending a message to the 2015 Paris Climate Conference on the need for a low-carbon future.

Inger Andersen, Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), pointed to relentless pressure on wetlands that has led to recent estimates of dramatic wetland loss, resulting in impacts on biodiversity and human well-being. She emphasized the urgent need for change to achieve Aichi Target 14 (ecosystems restoration) and address the global water crisis, and for the Ramsar Convention to "act as the big sister" of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and show the way in catalyzing change on a massive scale.

Jane Madgwick spoke on behalf of the five IOPs: Wetlands International, WWF, IUCN, Birdlife International and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). She underscored the need to mainstream the wise use of wetlands into development planning to reduce the impacts of floods and drought, and the importance of peatlands for climate change mitigation and adaptation. She urged parties to further work on a set of indicators of wise use of wetlands under the Ramsar strategic plan, also as an input to ongoing discussions on the SDGs' indicators. She then highlighted draft resolutions on peatlands and climate change, protection of the water requirements of wetlands, wetlands and disaster risk reduction, and wetland city accreditation.

Christopher Briggs, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, stated that the variety of wetland types and the richness of the services they provide are not fully recognized or appropriately used. He highlighted that 40% of wetland habitats have been lost over the last 40 years, and 76% of all wetland species are threatened. He stated that there is a need for all stakeholders to work together through a strategic plan that addresses the drivers of wetland loss and builds towards the SDGs, recognizing that wetlands are the source of water and sustainable development, including for future generations.

Eneida de León reported on Uruguay's national policies over the last three decades to promote the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands. SC Chair Catrinoiu welcomed the incoming Ramsar Deputy Secretary General Ania Grobicki, who emphasized links with the SDGs. Jorge Rucks, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment, Uruguay, called for a holistic vision for wetlands conservation that includes consultation and partnerships based on clear rules, transparency and mutual trust.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** Delegates adopted the agenda (COP12 Doc.1 Rev.1) without modifications. On a query from South Africa regarding the late posting of the annotated agenda (COP12 Doc.1bis), Secretary General Briggs explained that this was the first time an annotated agenda was produced

for the process and invited feedback. SC Chair Catrinoiu introduced the rules of procedure (COP12 Doc.3), noting that the SC recommended their further discussion. Delegates agreed to rely on the rules of procedure adopted at COP11 (COP12 Doc.27), and to work on proposed amendments in a contact group. Cameroon proposed clarifications on the roles of officers. Senegal suggested altering the periodicity of COP meetings to two years. Following informal consultations, on Tuesday, 9 June, plenary considered and adopted a set of revised rules of procedure for the next triennium (COP12 Doc.3ter).

The COP elected Jorge Rucks, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment, Uruguay, as COP12 President, and José Luis Remedi, Director of Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uruguay, as an alternate. Plenary elected Scott Johnston (US) from North America and Eleni Rova (Fiji) from Oceania as Vice-Presidents.

## REPORTS

**Report of the SC Chair:** On Wednesday, 3 June, SC Chair Catrinoiu provided an overview of SC activities for the period 2012-2015 (COP12 Doc.5 Rev.1), stressing the need to strengthen parties' implementation capacity at all levels to achieve the four main goals of the proposed strategic plan.

**Report of the Secretary General:** On Wednesday, 3 June, Secretary General Briggs presented his report and offered a general overview of the implementation of the Convention, based upon available reports, including regional implementation reports (COP12 Doc.8). He remarked that implementation is "best described as work in progress," but highlighted that a sense of urgency among parties is increasing. He emphasized, *inter alia*: data gaps about the state of wetlands; the need to reach out to the water and sanitation sector, to the agricultural sector, and into the governance of transboundary aquifers; ongoing work with Danone and IUCN on water management good practices for water companies; and the need to renegotiate the 2009 Services Agreement with IUCN. He invited parties to consider the concept of a global wetlands restoration partnership to bring together existing initiatives.

In response to a question from Uganda, Briggs recognized the complexity of land tenure issues and conflicting user rights in the context of wetlands restoration. Denmark and Pakistan asked for more information on synergies with other MEAs, and Briggs described ongoing collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on the Aichi targets and as part of the Joint Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, as well as efforts to include wetlands activities within Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects. On a question by Iran and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on how to track resolution implementation by parties and the Secretariat, Briggs responded that the primary responsibility for implementation falls upon parties and national stakeholders, with the Secretariat providing information and support for effective implementation. On a suggestion by South Africa, Briggs commented on a new project to disseminate best practices and examples on wetlands' wise use and restoration in three languages, and highlighted the

opportunities for parties to train in satellite imagery analysis for wetlands management and monitoring.

Birdlife International supported a global wetlands restoration partnership and recalled CBD Decision XII/19 (ecosystem conservation and restoration), which referred to the work of the Ramsar Convention and initiatives that support the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, including options to build a "Caring for Coasts" Initiative, as part of a global movement to restore coastal wetlands. IUCN raised several points of clarification on the portions of the report on the relationship with IUCN, noting that the biannual meetings with the Secretariat mandated by COP11 have worked well. Briggs clarified that some issues in the report are of historical nature, welcoming continued dialogue with IUCN in the context of the review of the Services Agreement. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported on collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat, and announced the launch of the UNEP Sourcebook of Opportunities for Enhancing Cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at National and Regional Levels, and the imminent finalization of the memorandum of cooperation with the Ramsar Secretariat.

Redmanglar Internacional lamented the low participation of indigenous peoples at COP12, stressing the need to recognize their contribution via community management to the conservation of wetlands, and suggested adopting the same terminology as the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Convention's resolutions. Aguará Popé underscored the need to further engage civil society and NGOs in decision-making, awareness-raising activities, and Ramsar Site nominations, and urged for closer collaboration between civil society and parties to achieve effective implementation at the local level.

**Report on CEPA Programme:** On Wednesday, 3 June, Camilla Chalmers, Ramsar Secretariat, reported on the implementation of the Convention's communication, education, participation, capacity building and awareness (CEPA) Programme 2009-2015 (COP12 Doc.18). She highlighted the main achievements since COP11, focusing on, *inter alia*: increased impact of World Wetlands Day; CEPA effectiveness at the regional and national levels; and national-level best practices.

**Report of the STRP Chair:** On Wednesday, 3 June, STRP Chair Royal Gardner, US, reported on the STRP's primary focus on nine priority tasks (COP12 Doc.6), reminding delegates that the Panel is made up of volunteers and supported by the IOPs and party representatives, and has close links with the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). He referenced reports from Birdlife International and UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), which show that over 70% of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) have not been designated as Ramsar Sites despite meeting the necessary criteria, and that there is a global increase in vertebrate species in Ramsar Sites, which is contradicted in some regions. He also underscored that the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-4) demonstrated that wetland species outside of Ramsar Sites are in decline.

Chile opined that the lack of translation of STRP documents in all of the Convention's official languages prevents national experts from benefiting from the STRP's work and welcomed the regional webinars. Bangladesh thanked the STRP for providing expertise with regards to an oil spill in the Sundarbans, for which the monitoring of possible impacts is ongoing. Iran asked how the Convention bodies link to one another in order to achieve common objectives, with Secretary General Briggs responding that specific plans for each body will be considered in 2016, following the adoption of the strategic plan. The CBD encouraged COP12 to agree on a regularly updated State of the World's Wetlands report, and to mandate the STRP to respond to the outcomes of the UN General Assembly on the SDGs in relation to Target 6.6 on water-related ecosystems and its indicators.

### SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Special presentations in plenary covered a variety of issues, including:

- "Wetlands in Uruguay" on Wednesday, 3 June (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1741e.html>);
- "Innovative Public-Private Partnerships" on Wednesday, 3 June (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1741e.html>);
- "Can the SDGs help save wetlands?" on Thursday, 4 June (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1742e.html>); and
- "International Water Governance: nothing fishy about it," on Saturday, 6 June (summary available at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol17/enb1744e.html>).

### RESOLUTIONS

On Monday, 8 June, plenary was informed of divergence of views with regard to how to refer to indigenous peoples and local communities in several draft resolutions. Canada proposed to refer to "indigenous peoples/people and/or local communities, depending on national perspectives." Switzerland recalled that the expression agreed at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was "indigenous peoples and local communities." Finland, supported by Honduras, recalled CBD Decision XII/12 on the use of term "indigenous peoples and local communities." On Tuesday, 9 June, Canada reported that, following informal negotiations, delegates agreed to use COP11 agreed language on "indigenous peoples and local communities."

**FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS:** On Thursday, 4 June, SC Finance Subcommittee Chair Elizabeth Roberts, Canada, delivered a presentation to plenary on the execution of the budget for the triennium 2012-2015 and on options to be adopted for the 2016-2018 budget period (COP12 Doc.4 and 15). Discussions continued throughout the week in the Subcommittee, whose meetings were open to other interested delegations and which finalized a draft recommendation based on a 0% increase in the budget, which was adopted by plenary on Tuesday, 9 June.

In plenary, parties discussed the options for budget increases, requesting information on the different scenarios presented. On a question by Senegal, Secretary General Briggs clarified that the

core budget scenarios include one permanent regional officer for Africa, while regional officers for the other regions are not part of the core budget scenarios presented. On a question from Iran, Roberts explained that the budget spending criteria are approved by the SC and based on: staff needs to provide required support to parties, resolutions taken by parties, and the strategic plan. On a question from Senegal, Briggs clarified that Ramsar advisory missions have not been approved by the SC to be included in the proposed core budget, but relate to existing funds. He also responded to Colombia and Sweden that the Small Grants Fund and improvements to the Ramsar database have not been approved by the SC to be included in the proposed core budget, and would require additional support from donors. He concluded that parties will ultimately decide on budget scenarios with a 0%, 2% or 4% increase and define which activities to include.

Commenting on the high costs of translations, Iran and Honduras suggested that parties provide translations in kind, while Chile underscored that having translations in the core budget is a priority for Latin America. Switzerland recommended that COPs should be financed by the core budget, as in other MEAs, reducing financial burdens on the host country and donors.

During plenary on Tuesday, 9 June, the UK requested adding new language instructing the Secretariat to ensure that: COP13 is prepared in such a way to enable negotiation of draft resolutions to commence as early as possible; and draft resolutions are translated into all official languages in a timely manner. With these and other minor corrections, the budget was adopted.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR1 Rev.4), the COP, *inter alia*:

- notes that reserve funds were used to sponsor eligible COP12 delegates, but this should not create a precedent or be repeated in the future;
- requests the Secretary General to secure funds to repay those used from the reserve fund and to ensure sufficient funding for sponsoring eligible delegates at COP13;
- requests the SC to review the operation of the Small Grants Fund during the triennium to decide whether to continue or cease the programme at the next COP;
- requests the Secretary General to refrain from using consultants on a regular basis as a way of delivering core secretariat functions; and
- requests the Secretary General to ensure the consideration of draft resolutions starts early in the week at COP13, and are translated into all official languages during negotiations in a timely manner to enable full and effective participation by all delegations.

The resolution includes four annexes. Annex I includes a combined budget for 2016-2018 of US\$6.4 million annually, including core (US\$5 million) and non-core activities (US\$1.4 million). Among the core activities it includes basic secretariat functions. The activities to be funded by additional voluntary contributions (non-core funding), which are prioritized in Annex III, include: Ramsar advisory missions; the STRP 2016-2018 programme of work; pre-COP regional meetings and COP meeting costs, as well as sponsorship for delegates; introduction

of the Arabic language as an official language and translation; the regional initiative networks and centres support; the Small Grants fund; the Ramsar CEPA programme; and the online system for national reports. Annex II lists parties' estimated assessed contributions for the period, and Annex IV includes the staff requirements adopted for the Secretariat from the core budget for 2016-2018.

**RAMSAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021:** This item (COP12 DR2) was considered in plenary on Thursday, 4 June, and then in an informal group from 5-8 June. A revised draft was adopted in plenary on Tuesday, 9 June. Discussions focused on aligning the strategic plan with the CBD Strategic Plan and other relevant international processes.

Bolivia called for a more holistic view of wetlands, noting their services and cultural values, including for indigenous peoples and for water access. Latvia, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) Member States present at the meeting, suggested improving synergies between the Ramsar Convention and other MEAs and, supported by Panama, carrying out additional work on indicators. South Africa, speaking on behalf of the African Group, suggested "urging," rather than "encouraging," parties to establish their national targets and plans, and allocate national budget resources to implement the strategic plan. Senegal also recommended: providing greater support at the regional level for the development of national strategic plans; requesting the SC to further support wetland restoration; strengthening bilateral cooperation; and setting measurable interim targets.

The EU suggested extending the strategic plan's timeline to 2024, which was supported by Switzerland and Norway who favored allowing for a mid-term review; improving linkages with the CBD in reference to the Aichi targets; and referring to forestry and agricultural systems, as well as under-represented ecological regions, within the targets. Malaysia, India, Mexico, Norway and Japan called for greater synergy with the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020, the Aichi targets, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

Malaysia suggested that national wetland inventories (target 8) be initiated, but not expected to be completed. India proposed including the provision of adequate funding to support international cooperation (target 17). Canada sought explicit reference to the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) in the context of international cooperation. Norway recommended: a more positive and inspiring vision; more focused and measurable targets; more emphasis on the role of wetlands for sustainable development and the provision of ecosystem services; and a list of priority actions. Mexico suggested including methodologies in target 13 (scientific and technical guidance).

Turkey objected to several references to transboundary cooperation for wetlands, noting that this is a bilateral issue that should not include third parties. Chile expressed concern about percentage targets, underscoring the need to allow for different countries' implementation capacities. New Zealand preferred referring to countries' monitoring progress in implementation and reporting "as appropriate," to allow for different types of

processes. Brazil requested further reference to sustainable fisheries as a key sector. Nicaragua, Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba, Colombia and Venezuela suggested references to the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and to their role in wetland protection, management and monitoring, while Japan proposed a reference to the active participation of local people in target 5 on effective planning and management. Bolivia requested references to the rights of Mother Earth and the recognition of the intrinsic value of nature. Argentina, supported by the Dominican Republic, questioned the reference to the "eradication" of invasive species in target 4, noting difficulties in successful implementation and monitoring.

On Tuesday, 9 June, Finland noted, *inter alia*, that there was consensus to extend the time frame of the strategic plan to 2024; and that a new target was added under goal 3 (wisely using all wetlands) to ensure that the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities relevant for the wise use of wetlands is documented and respected, and relevant international obligations are fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities. Nicaragua, on behalf of many Latin American countries, requested reference to "living in harmony with nature" in relation to the importance of wetlands. Nicaragua also emphasized, among others: the adoption of the strategic plan as the commitments by parties towards the sustainable use of wetlands; the need for optimal use of existing resources, as well as financial support; the necessity to identify all available funding sources to ensure the sustainability of the adopted goals on wetlands; and the need to identify ways to ensure that the STRP offers support to parties and provides advice on ways to protect vulnerable ecosystems against climate change. Ukraine suggested changing the vision of the strategic plan to "the world's wetlands are in a healthy status providing sustainable services for people and nature." Finland, Colombia, Latvia, Chile and Bolivia opposed the proposed change, noting extensive discussions on the issue during the informal group's meetings.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP20 DR2 Rev.3) the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the Strategic Plan 2016-2024 as the basis for the implementation of the Convention during this period, instructing the Secretariat to disseminate it to stakeholders concerned with its implementation;
- urges parties, the STRP, the CEPA Oversight Panel, the Secretariat and invites IOPs and other stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- urges parties to integrate and harmonize national implementation of the Strategic Plan with implementation of NBSAPs, monitor progress in the implementation, aligned with the reporting requirements to the CBD, and communicate progress and difficulties to their regional representatives in the SC;
- requests the Secretariat to submit to IPBES a request for a thematic assessment on the current status and trends of wetlands, explore further how the Convention can contribute

- to the work of IPBES, and, together with the SC, develop the COP13 national report template for consideration at SC51;
- decides to undertake a review of the new Strategic Plan at COP14 and to establish the modalities and scope for this review at COP13; and
- instructs the Secretariat to convene a small, regionally-representative expert group back-to-back with the meeting of the CBD's *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Indicators in Switzerland in July 2015 to develop options for additional indicators for the Strategic Plan, and further instructs the SC, as a high priority, to refine the potential indicators and present the proposal to COP13 for approval.

The COP also encourages parties to, among others:

- promote and strengthen active participation of indigenous peoples and local communities;
- allocate from national budgets financial resources for the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2024;
- provide information on the wise and customary use of wetlands by indigenous peoples and local communities; and
- develop and submit to the Secretariat on or before December 2016, their own quantifiable and time-bound national and regional targets in line with the targets set in the Strategic Plan.

The resolution contains three annexes. The first contains the Strategic Plan 2016-2024, including: its vision that “wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits are recognized and valued by all”; the importance of wetlands and recent trends; review of progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015; priority areas of focus; partnerships and cooperation; resource mobilization; capacity building; three strategic goals and one operational goal with 19 corresponding targets; and monitoring and evaluation. The second annex contains the Ramsar goals, with their respective tools, actors, baselines and indicators, to: address the drivers of wetland loss and degradation; effectively conserve and manage the Ramsar Site network; wisely use all wetlands; and enhance implementation. The third annex reflects synergies between CBD Aichi targets and the Ramsar targets.

**ENHANCING THE CONVENTION’S LANGUAGES, VISIBILITY AND STATURE, AND INCREASING SYNERGIES:** On Thursday, 4 June, the draft decision on enhancing the Convention’s languages, visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other MEAs and other international institutions (COP12 DR3) was first introduced, with discussions in plenary continuing on Friday, 5 June. Following informal consultations, a final decision was adopted on Tuesday, 9 June. Discussions focused on: introducing Arabic as a new official language; introducing a high-level segment at future COPs; and increasing synergies with other MEAs.

On languages, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the African Group, China, Japan, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and others supported the inclusion of Arabic as an official language for the Convention. The EU suggested, *inter alia*, that: financial considerations should be taken into account;

concerned parties should ensure availability of funding; and the SC Management Working Group should monitor progress in the phased approach to language integration.

On visibility, China, Colombia, Senegal and others supported including a high-level segment at future COPs to improve the visibility of, and increase political support for, the Ramsar Convention. Cameroon, with Burkina Faso, stressed that a ministerial segment may help reach agreement on issues that COPs are unable to. Benin noted that high-level segments could ensure greater respect for wetlands and timely payment of contributions. The Dominican Republic recommended considering other MEAs’ experiences on whether COP high-level segments increase visibility or produce concrete results. Switzerland cautioned about additional costs and suggested giving high-level segments a theme to incentivize ministers’ participation. Japan suggested holding a high-level segment at alternate COPs to enhance cost effectiveness.

The EU, with the US, the African Group, Argentina, Mexico and Uruguay, suggested that the organization of high-level segments should be decided by the host country of each COP. The UAE noted that a decision on a high-level segment at COP13 should be reached by SC51.

On synergies, Canada considered it premature to call for implementing the recommendations of the UNEP project on cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions, as these had not yet been issued. Norway, with Switzerland, supported improving synergies with other MEAs and IPBES to make use of the best available knowledge, while underscoring the need for national-level action. Mexico suggested organizing a side event on Ramsar at CBD COP13. Turkey pointed to COP12 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to be held in Ankara later in 2015 as an opportunity to increase cooperation between the two conventions.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR9 Rev.3), the COP, *inter alia*:

- requests the SC to submit its recommendations to COP13 on a strategy to accommodate Arabic into the Convention, subject to the availability of resources;
- invites parties to consider a high-level ministerial segment when hosting a COP, as a means to improve visibility, political support and the Convention’s impact, and take into account other events to enhance cooperation and collaboration with biodiversity-related MEAs;
- invites parties to raise the Convention’s visibility at national, local, subnational, and regional levels, *inter alia*, through inviting ministers for roundtables or as keynote speakers;
- calls upon parties to develop networking mechanisms, such as Ramsar National Wetlands Committees, and to collaborate with national ministries, departments and agencies, and global and regional bodies;
- requests the STRP, in collaboration with partners, to explore how to contribute on wetland monitoring or indicator frameworks for relevant SDGs and targets; and
- approves the IOP status for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT).

In addition, the COP requests the Secretariat to:

- develop a strategy for SC51, with the SC monitoring progress and advising as necessary, for the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the Convention;
- build an online and publicly accessible library of translated Ramsar documents, with parties and regional centres' assistance and guided by the Management Working Group, and report on progress to COP13;
- work with UNEP on their memorandum of cooperation and report to the SC on progress;
- continue the partnership to promote awareness of, and capacity building for, ecosystem-based solutions for water management for sustainable development, under the Joint Work Plan between the CBD and the Ramsar Convention;
- continue cooperation between IPBES and the STRP; and
- estimate the costs of working with relevant partners and for strengthening parties' access to such data and monitoring tools.

**RESPONSIBILITIES, ROLES AND COMPOSITION OF THE SC AND REGIONAL CATEGORIZATION OF COUNTRIES:**

On Saturday, 6 June, plenary took up the draft resolution on the SC's responsibilities, roles and composition, and regional categorization of countries under the Convention (COP12 DR4). Discussions continued in a Friends of the President group, with a revised decision adopted by plenary on Tuesday, 9 June.

Denmark, supported by many, called upon: the Secretariat to report on progress in implementing previous COP resolutions and a work plan on COP12 resolutions; and the incoming SC to take on board a 360 degree evaluation. Canada recalled Resolution XI/19 allowing countries to participate in neighboring regional groups where appropriate. Argentina supported the renaming of the Neotropics region to Latin America and the Caribbean. South Africa, on behalf of the African Group, called for equal voting across all regions.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR4 Rev.3), the COP requests the SC to focus on COP12 decisions and all preceding COP decisions, *inter alia*, by:

- strengthening transparency within the Convention to enhance information sharing and communication as well as facilitating its decisions, guidance and implementation in cooperation with parties, IOPs and stakeholders;
- improving existing management between IUCN, the SC and the Secretary General so that the Secretariat effectively serves parties;
- overseeing COP13 preparation between the host country and the Secretariat;
- guiding the Secretariat's fundraising activities to implement the new Strategic Plan, the STRP activities and CEPA, Ramsar Advisory Missions and other approved non-core budget activities; and
- guiding the Secretary General's development of a strategy for the potential integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the Convention.

In addition, the COP, *inter alia*:

- requests the Secretary General to develop a work plan based on COP12 decisions to be submitted to the SC before the end of October 2015 and presented by the Secretary General at SC51 for its consideration;
- decides that the current Executive Team (Romania, South Africa, and Canada) continue its tenure and requests the incoming Executive Team to explore means of implementing the recommendations stemming from the 360 degree evaluation in advance of SC51 and report on the findings, recommendations and their implementation at SC51; and
- confirms that this updated text and its annexes supersede those adopted as Resolution XI.19.

The resolution contains four annexes on: the responsibilities, roles and composition of the SC and regional categorization of countries under the Convention, with the Neotropics region renamed Latin America and the Caribbean; the allocation of parties and non-parties to the six Ramsar regional groups, with different numbers of votes for each region; the tasks of parties elected as regional representatives in the SC; and an indicative schedule for SC intersessional meetings for the 2016-2018 triennium.

**NEW FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVICE AND GUIDANCE:**

On Friday, 5 June, COP12 considered the draft resolution on a proposed new framework for the delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention (COP12 DR5). Following interventions from delegates, an informal group met throughout the day on Monday, 8 June, and a revised text was returned to plenary on Tuesday, 9 June, where it was adopted with a minor modification. Discussions focused on the composition and priority activities of the STRP.

Argentina, the EU, Brazil, Switzerland and others supported restructuring the STRP, in particular for a stronger regional balance. Several delegations proposed extending the maximum number of terms for STRP members to two or three triennia, with New Zealand also proposing that at least six members be retained between triennia. Panama suggested that members could return to the STRP in a different capacity, as they would be selected for their own expertise and not be representing their government or organization. Chile proposed that new experts could be included in the STRP, if they fill knowledge gaps.

The EU favored a detailed agenda and work plan with priorities and, with Panama, sought clarification on the Secretariat's role. Iran called on the Ramsar Secretariat to ensure a stronger link between the STRP and national focal points. Switzerland advised on keeping the framework in line with the strategic plan. The US, supported by Mexico and Senegal, underscored that COP12 should establish clear priorities and supportive mechanisms to enable the STRP to achieve its work plan goals. The Philippines proposed as a priority action for the STRP to update Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 18 (managing wetlands). Uganda, on behalf of the African Group, and Malaysia suggested referring to "extractives industries," rather than just the mining sector, in order to include forestry, in addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation. Uruguay recommended considering the economic and non-economic services provided

by wetlands and the inclusion of non-monetary evaluation methods. Colombia proposed referring to IPBES and encouraged parties to standardize and validate national- and regional-level methodologies on valuing wetlands' environmental goods and services.

Japan proposed adding the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the list of observer organizations, and Colombia proposed the Amazon Cooperation Treaty. Brazil encouraged further engagement with parties in scientific matters. India underscored the need for specific fundraising for the STRP. Bolivia, supported by Uruguay and Colombia, called for recognizing indigenous peoples and local communities as important expert groups, and suggested their participation in an inter-scientific dialogue.

The UK on behalf of the EU, supported by Jamaica, South Africa on behalf of the African Group, and Switzerland, thanked former Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson for his commitment to greatly strengthening the scientific and technical development of the Convention.

On Tuesday, 9 June, the EU requested to delete "three or six" in reference to the number of proposed STRP member reappointments, which contradicted earlier text, and advised on updating the text to align with the new strategic plan. Turkey asked for a statement to be included in the COP12 report, reiterating his position with regard to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes under the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), to which it is not a party.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR5 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*, decides to:

- restructure the STRP to further help parties respond to challenges of wetland conservation and wise use for the 2016-2018 triennium and beyond;
- prioritize as thematic work areas for the STRP for 2016-2018 triennium: best practice methodologies/tools to monitor Ramsar Sites; best practices for developing and implementing management plans, action plans and other tools; methodologies for the economic and non-economic valuation of wetland goods and services; balancing wetland conservation and development; and innovative methodologies for wetlands restoration with respect to climate change;
- recognize the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities as one of the knowledge bases of the STRP; and
- replace the STRP Oversight Committee with the SC Management Working Group.

The COP also requests the STRP and the Secretary General to finalize the production of the current version of the State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People and explore modalities for its subsequent improvement and updating as a periodic flagship report of the Convention.

The resolution contains annexes with a list of observers invited to STRP meetings and processes, priority thematic work areas for 2016-2018, and details of how the STRP works, including that the 18-member Panel will have six scientific members (academic community)

and twelve technical expert members (practitioners), with the latter comprising six regional expert representatives and six other experts on issues identified for action. Observers will be one representative for each IOP, a small number of experts from scientific and technical organizations and networks recognized by the COP, and the chairs of scientific and technical subsidiary bodies and relevant secretariat staff of other MEAs. Membership to the STRP will normally be for one triennium, but members can be reelected for a maximum of three terms, and at least six members of the outgoing STRP will be retained to ensure continuity.

**STATUS OF RAMSAR SITES:** On Friday, 5 June, plenary took up the draft resolution on the status of Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance (COP12 DR6), which was addressed informally over the weekend. A revised draft was adopted in plenary on Tuesday, 9 June.

Senegal expressed his commitment to restore the ecological and economic functions of Ndiaël with a view to withdrawing it from the Montreux Record by 2018-2020. Ukraine reported on the impact of unrest in Crimea on managing and reporting on Ramsar Sites. Belarus and Argentina noted delays in updating the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS). Jamaica noted efforts to mitigate negative impacts through the construction of coastal protection barriers. WWF asked about the status of the Poyang Lake Control Project, underscoring its importance as a bird wintering habitat, with China stating the proposal has yet to be approved.

Belarus, Brazil and Uganda pointed to BirdLife International's IBAs database to aid assessments. Brazil, with New Zealand, Australia, Mexico and Uruguay, expressed caution on the use of the IUCN World Heritage Outlook, to gather timely information on Ramsar Sites that are also World Heritage Sites, requesting that the Secretariat provide options for its use to COP13. Switzerland and Argentina suggested that the STRP also review the matter in the context of increasing synergies. Mexico and the UK underlined the need to raise the political profile of the Montreux Record at the national level to stimulate further action. Uganda suggested a review of the effectiveness of the Montreux Record questionnaire before it is redesigned. Colombia called for balancing conservation with indigenous peoples' rights. The DRC called for balancing wetland conservation and development.

Following informal consultations, on Tuesday, 9 June, in plenary Senegal, supported by the DRC, Peru and Benin, proposed eliminating references to the use of BirdLife International's IBA database as a tool for assessment of status and threat levels of Ramsar Sites. Consensus was reached on retaining broader reference to "tools available from all IOPs." Ukraine wished to include more specific reference to Ramsar Sites in conflict areas as recipients of Ramsar Advisory Missions. Senegal suggested also including the option to remove sites from the Montreux Record as a response to actions that change the ecological character of Ramsar Sites in a positive manner.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR6 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:



- recognizes that for 1,238 Ramsar Sites, representing 57% of 2,188 Sites, either lack Ramsar Information Sheets or have not submitted or updated adequate maps, and urged action from relevant parties;
- reaffirms the commitment by parties to implement the terms of Article 3.2 on reporting changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites;
- encourages parties to consider whether a Ramsar Site would benefit from listing on the Montreux Record, and to use the redesigned questionnaire to determine the inclusion or removal of a listed site;
- calls upon the Secretariat to investigate the potential value and feasibility of gathering satellite data on changes to Ramsar Sites;
- encourages the consideration of tools by all IOPs when updating Article 3.2 files of wetlands in danger of negative changes to their ecological character due to human activities; and
- requests Ramsar Advisory Missions to be sent to evaluate Ramsar Sites in zones of armed conflict, and inform all parties involved in the conflict of the findings of the missions.

#### RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP

**FRAMEWORK:** On Thursday, 4 June, plenary took up the draft resolution on resource mobilization and partnership framework, and the proposal to add WWT as an IOP (COP12 DR7). The draft resolution was discussed in a contact group. A revised resolution was adopted in plenary on Tuesday, 9 June.

The African Group, supported by many, favored adding WWT as an IOP, with Chile and Argentina requesting a decision by parties to determine the maximum number of IOPs that may be added. Plenary decided to reflect this in the resolution on languages and synergies.

Japan, supported by Chile, noted that allocation of national budgets to wetland management depends upon the individual countries' economic situation. Brazil, supported by Chile, Cuba, Argentina and Uruguay, urged for specific reference to developed countries in the call for increased contributions and cooperation for the successful implementation of the strategic plan. The US, with Switzerland, suggested including fundraising targets and timetables in the revised draft resolution and associated workplan. The EU underscored the importance of domestic resource mobilization and called for incorporating wetlands into NBSAPs to allow for funding from the GEF. Iran highlighted the importance of directing national budgets to reduce the effects of development projects on wetlands.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR4 Rev.3), the COP, *inter alia*, requests the Secretariat to:

- prioritize fundraising to fund non-core budget activities from all sources, with a view to increase non-party contributions, and to report regularly to the SC, including on funds raised;
- identify potential partners, donors and other financing organizations and make that information available to parties, in particular developing countries, and to facilitate capacity building to assist parties to engage in partnerships; and
- strengthen partnerships with other MEAs to enhance synergies and share resources, avoid duplication and enhance

implementation, and provide a plan on how to increase cooperation with other MEAs to SC51.

In addition, the COP:

- requests the SC, with the assistance of the Secretariat and the STRP, to respond to the invitation from CBD parties to provide advice, as appropriate, concerning funding of national and transboundary wetlands initiatives that may be referred to the GEF through the CBD COP;
- encourages parties to incorporate national wetland priorities into their NBSAPs as part of the process for national wetlands priorities to receive financial support through the GEF;
- encourages parties to consider allocating, from national budgets, financial resources for the implementation of the new Strategic Plan and to explore funding opportunities to enhance national implementation of the Convention, taking into account national circumstances and priorities;
- encourages developed countries and others, and invites donor agencies, to explore new and additional financial resources to enhance the implementation of the new Strategic Plan;
- requests parties and invites NGOs and financial institutions to provide voluntary contributions to support the new Strategic Plan and other Convention activities; and
- encourages parties to channel financial resources to on-the-ground projects that provide concrete results in terms of Convention implementation.

**REGIONAL INITIATIVES 2016-2018:** On Friday, 5 June, plenary considered the draft resolution on regional initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Convention (COP11 DR8). Further to informal consultations, plenary adopted a revised resolution on Tuesday, 9 June, with minor amendments.

Panama, supported by Uganda for the African Group, suggested the Secretariat be responsible for the promotion of regional initiatives. Hungary, on behalf of the EU, proposed that regional initiatives receiving funding should demonstrate effectiveness, with Mexico suggesting funded activities contribute to the strategic plan. Senegal noted legal and financial discrepancies concerning regional initiatives. The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) noted they will submit a review of the guidelines for the Ramsar regional initiatives at SC51.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR8 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- instructs the SC to undertake a review of the Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention, and adopt the necessary amendments no later than SC52;
- approves the validity and use of the 2013-2015 Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives until the amendments are adopted by the SC;
- instructs all endorsed regional initiatives to continue to report on their success in fulfilling the Operational Guidelines to the SC; and
- decides to include financial support in the Convention core budget to support running costs of operational regional initiatives during the period 2016-2018.

The COP also instructs the Secretariat to:

- publicize regional initiatives as an operational means to provide support for the implementation of the Convention's objectives;
- support and advise regional initiatives to reinforce their capacity and effectiveness;
- assess the achievements of regional initiatives in delivering technical, administrative and collaborative benefits to the parties in their regions; and
- formulate recommendations for improving the Operational Guidelines to support regional implementation.

**CEPA PROGRAMME 2016-2021:** On Friday, 5 June, plenary considered a draft recommendation on the CEPA Programme 2016-2021 (COP12 DR9). Following informal consultations, a revised draft resolution was adopted by plenary on Tuesday, 9 June. Discussions focused on: communication, education, and capacity-building efforts.

The US considered the annexed action plan ambitious, and suggested guiding CEPA actions and activities by parties through the SC, and creating a group to set priorities and monitor CEPA activities in the future. The Dominican Republic, India and Panama cautioned about budgetary implications, with Chile suggesting grouping actions within the programme. Many countries suggested greater links between CEPA and the strategic plan. The EU also proposed strengthening: monitoring and evaluation of processes; national participation; and connection with the STRP.

Colombia called for a systematic analysis of wetland management processes, products and players, and for reference to traditional practices by ethnic groups, and participation by local and vulnerable populations for better wetland management. Norway suggested prioritizing World Wetlands Day as a communication tool. Iran proposed that the Secretariat promote knowledge sharing among CEPA focal points. Peru noted populations around wetlands are mostly rural and speak indigenous languages, thus requiring specific communication strategies. Thailand proposed that regional centers support translation. Brazil favored "encouraging," rather than "urging," translation of guidance into local languages.

Guatemala lamented little reference to the intrinsic value of wetlands and to the sharing of knowledge and cultural values. Lebanon highlighted the importance of CEPA in identifying new Ramsar Sites, recognizing that many wetlands are on private lands. Samoa wished to include public appreciation of wetlands as an effectiveness indicator.

On Tuesday, 9 June, in plenary, Finland suggested changing the duration from 2016-2021 to 2016-2024, in line with the new strategic plan, and harmonizing language on funding pertaining to resource mobilization. On CEPA's overarching goal, Finland proposed, supported by Canada, Colombia and Iran: "People taking action for the conservation and wise use of wetlands." Brazil, supported by Panama, suggested removing brackets surrounding text on "ecosystem functions and services" in Annex 1, to be consistent with the new strategic plan.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR9 Rev.3), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the CEPA Programme 2016-2024, to provide guidance to parties, the Secretariat and stakeholders to develop actions to engage and enable the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- urges parties to nominate government and NGO focal points for the CEPA and ensure they are members of National Ramsar/Wetlands Committees where these exist;
- calls upon parties with wetland CEPA action plans to evaluate the effectiveness of those plans, including how people value wetlands, the challenges they face, and the steps they can take to conserve and use wetlands sustainably, and to amend their priority actions where necessary;
- urges the Secretariat to provide technical support for CEPA national focal points by establishing a network for knowledge sharing;
- encourages parties to support the development of wetland education centres as places for learning and training about wetlands, and to support their participation in global networks;
- encourages parties to utilize and support Ramsar Regional Centres in wetland training in their respective regions for their staff and other stakeholders;
- invites parties with other national and local languages to consider translating key Ramsar guidance and guidelines, capacity-building and educational materials into those languages and make them available through, for example, Ramsar Regional Centres and the Convention website, and invites IOPs and Regional Centres to contribute to such translations; and
- requests the Secretary General to improve the official Ramsar website in cooperation with the SC and others to serve the purpose of the different targeted audiences.

The resolution contains three annexes on: the visions, goals and targets of the Convention's programme 2016-2024; the roles and responsibilities of CEPA national focal points; and possible target groups and stakeholders of the CEPA Programme 2016-2024.

**RAMSAR WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION:** Plenary addressed the draft resolution, proposed by the Republic of Korea and Tunisia, on city accreditation (COP12 DR10) on Friday, 5 June, with discussions continuing in a contact group. A final resolution was adopted by plenary on Tuesday, 9 June. Discussions focused on, *inter alia*: the naming of the city accreditation; whether it should only apply to cities with Ramsar Sites or also cities with other "significant" wetlands; discussion on its voluntary nature and legal status of accredited cities; and a list of criteria for cities seeking accreditation.

Uganda suggested better defining the benefits of city accreditation. The Republic of Korea, with China, underscored that wetland city accreditation could engage local citizens in wetlands conservation. Brazil suggested also including "wetlands sponsors" in local management. The EU, supported by Norway, Colombia, Malaysia and others, stressed the need to further examine financial implications and funding opportunities. Many underscored that wetland city accreditation should be voluntary. China, supported by the UAE, suggested calling the initiative "wetland city accreditation of the Ramsar Convention." WWF

and ICLEI - Local Governments For Sustainability supported the draft resolution, noting that 80% of the world's population will live in cities and urban areas by 2030.

Sweden, on behalf of the EU, underscored the need to accredit not only cities with Ramsar Sites but also cities with non-designated wetlands, calling for less restrictive criteria, with Mexico pointing to sustainable use of wetlands in that regard. Thailand suggested making use of the CBD's City Biodiversity Index as a self-assessment guideline. Senegal did not favor accreditation to be valid for six years, and suggested also including "villages and other human settlements." Japan asked if the city accreditation could be assigned to more than one city when large Ramsar Sites border several cities. The Dominican Republic queried if cities in close proximity to Ramsar Sites would automatically be accredited.

In the contact group, delegates debated a proposed criteria list for candidates seeking accreditation, the accreditation procedure, the appointment of an independent advisory committee, the costs to prepare and approve accreditation, the benefits of the initiative, as well as its name.

On Tuesday, 9 June, in plenary, the US expressed concern about prescriptive language. Iran, supported by Burkina Faso, Benin, Uganda, Cameroon, Gabon and others, opposed the name proposed in the revised draft resolution "world wetland city," cautioning that it would reduce visibility of the Convention. The UAE, supported by Tunisia, noted that the contact group had considered several proposals and eventually preferred a "global title," with Tunisia underscoring that the Ramsar logo will be used and clearly reflected in the accreditation. Colombia, supported by Brazil and Uruguay, offered as a compromise "Ramsar world wetland city accreditation." Following informal consultations, parties agreed to name the initiative "Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention."

**Final Resolution:** In the final text (COP12 DR10 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the establishment of a voluntary city accreditation system, "Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention";
- decides to review implementation progress and financing of the accreditation system at COP13;
- invites parties to propose for accreditation those cities in their territory that are located close to Ramsar Sites and/or other significant wetlands that satisfy the criteria outlined in the annex;
- instructs the Secretariat to develop a global online network of accredited cities; and
- invites IOPs and other partners to promote the Ramsar Convention's branding through the Wetlands City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention, and promote local efforts to gain and maintain this branding, including through participation in and support for local management committees.

The resolution contains an annex addressing a list of criteria for cities seeking accreditation; the accreditation procedure; and the appointment of an independent advisory committee to review applications from parties, decide whether to accredit proposed cities, and report its decisions to the SC for transmission to the

COP. On criteria, cities seeking accreditation should, *inter alia*: have one or more Ramsar Sites or other significant wetlands in their territory or in close vicinity; have a management plan prepared using a participatory approach; and have established an information centre. The annex clarifies that accreditation: is valid for six years with possibility for renewal; and seeks to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands in cities, as well as to generate sustainable socio-economic benefits for the local population.

**PEATLANDS:** A draft resolution on peatlands, climate change and wise use: implications for the Ramsar Convention (COP12 DR11), submitted by Denmark and supported by Finland, was taken up by plenary on Friday, 5 June. The draft was addressed in a Friends of the President group and informally. A revised draft resolution was adopted in plenary on Tuesday, 9 June, with minor editorial amendments.

Norway read a statement by the Nordic Council of Ministers of the Environment recognizing peatlands' importance for preserving biodiversity and limiting human-induced climate change, stressing multiple benefits arising from peatlands restoration, and committing to incorporate peatland restoration into the future climate agreement. Switzerland requested reference to the Nordic statement in the resolution text, with Colombia noting that inserting a mention of peatlands in the negotiating draft of the new climate agreement would be complex.

Denmark emphasized links with CBD Aichi Target 15 (restoration of degraded ecosystems). Belarus and China suggested underscoring the importance of sharing best practices. New Zealand and the US supported work on peatlands and carbon sequestration, while suggesting further clarification on the respective roles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Ramsar Convention. Panama supported the STRP's work in developing guidelines for peatlands inventories, while Chile cautioned that the STRP should consider the complex nature of different types of peatlands. China, supported by Argentina and Panama, proposed that the STRP also develop an inventory of peatland sites as wetlands of international importance.

The Russian Federation suggested referring to the key findings of the Global Assessment on Peatlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change, that was taken into account by CBD COP9. Canada proposed references to, *inter alia*: peatland restoration, in addition to conservation; peatlands' role as a vital ecological reserve; and wetlands management to increase resilience to climate change and extreme climatic events. Indonesia proposed reference to peatlands aiding natural disaster risk reduction. Cameroon requested consideration of the role of mangroves.

Brazil expressed opposition to sectoral approaches to climate change, arguing in particular that mitigation should primarily be a question of reducing fossil fuel consumption by developed countries, and suggested eliminating references to mitigation and adaptation as ecosystem services provided by peatlands. Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela supported this, expressing concern about prejudging ongoing negotiations under the UNFCCC. Brazil and Venezuela also requested eliminating

language on: REDD+, supported by Bolivia; land-related portions of a new climate agreement, supported by Colombia; and agriculture and land use in relation to climate change. Mexico supported the consideration of mitigation and adaptation as ecosystem services provided by peatlands, and, supported by Colombia, the inclusion of a mention of peatlands in both tropical and temperate regions.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution on peatlands, climate change and wise use: implications for the Ramsar Convention (COP20 DR11 Rev.3), the COP encourages parties to, *inter alia*:

- consider, as appropriate, limiting activities that lead to drainage of peatlands, urging greater international cooperation, technical assistance and capacity building;
- designate, as appropriate, as Wetlands of International Importance at least one peatland area; and
- utilize national and regional inventories to map the distribution of peatlands with a view to determining the extent to which they sequester carbon.

In addition, the COP, among others:

- requests the Secretariat, working with the STRP, IOPs and other stakeholders, to compile best practices in peatland restoration techniques and share them through the Ramsar official website;
- encourages Ramsar bodies to collaborate with relevant international conventions and organizations, including UNFCCC bodies, on the relationship between peatlands and climate change; and
- invites the Ramsar Administrative Authorities to bring this resolution to the attention of the national focal points of other MEAs.

The COP furthermore requests that the STRP consider in conjunction with parties and IOPs:

- developing guidelines for inventories of peatlands, and for the further application of Criterion 1 for the selection of Wetlands of International Importance (representative, rare or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type);
- evaluating the progress made with the implementation of the “Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands”; and
- advising COP13 on practical methods for rewetting and restoring peatlands.

**WATER REQUIREMENTS OF WETLANDS FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE:** On Friday, 5 June, plenary took up the draft resolution on ensuring and protecting the water requirements of wetlands (COP12 DR12), which was proposed by Mexico, who advised that the integration of water protection into national policies allows for synergies between international commitments, national agencies and related initiatives. Discussions continued informally, until a revised draft was adopted in plenary on Tuesday, 9 June.

Peru suggested that the STRP should contribute to, but not draft, an action plan. Japan and Chile suggested keeping requests to the STRP in line with its mandate, with Canada also suggesting a stronger role for the CEPA programme in drawing up action plans. The EU sought stronger support for collaboration among regional initiatives. Switzerland requested greater reference to biodiversity. Brazil acknowledged the

benefits of properly managed hydroelectric systems, supported by Peru, and the importance of water for agriculture. The African Group proposed reference to a certain volume of water “of adequate quality, quantity and timing,” and sought clarification on the use of the term “preventive action.”

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution on ensuring and protecting the water requirements of wetlands (COP12 DR12 Rev.4), the COP, *inter alia*:

- stresses that knowing wetlands’ water requirements will favor the integration of biodiversity values into development planning processes and strategies, contribute to the sustainable management of water in agricultural areas, and maintain the impacts of natural resource use within ecological limits;
- encourages parties to increase their efforts to address water requirements of wetlands, in particular identifying opportunities to anticipate the negative impacts of human activities on the amount of water devoted to wetlands; and
- requests the STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel to consider drawing up guidelines for the elaboration of national action plans, to conserve the water necessary to maintain the wise use of wetlands, and invites parties to adopt national action plans.

An annex includes sections on: water required for the conservation and wise use of wetlands; several challenges to guaranteeing that wetlands have all the water they need; the need for global action and its strategic guidelines; and initiatives undertaken by the Mexican government to guarantee water required by wetlands.

#### **WETLANDS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:**

On Saturday, 6 June, plenary considered the draft resolution on wetlands and disaster risk reduction (COP12 DR13), submitted by the Philippines. Discussions continued informally. Plenary adopted a revised resolution on Tuesday, 9 June. Discussions centered on different approaches and forms of disasters.

Benin for the African Group, supported by Brazil, requested references to coastal erosion in the list of disasters. The UAE and Iran recommended adding dust and sandstorms, and the Dominican Republic suggested including hurricanes and storms. Guinea proposed focusing not only on coastal wetlands, but also inland ones. Colombia recommended encouraging parties to: not only reduce vulnerability of people, but also of ecosystems; allow for the effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in national plans and programmes; allow for the effective participation of wetland-dependent displaced persons in strategies for disaster risk reduction; and ensure consistency between ecosystem-based approaches and traditional approaches to disaster risk reduction.

Many suggested referencing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and Canada suggested a reference to the Caring for Coasts Initiative. New Zealand suggested encouraging parties to ensure disaster risk reduction plans do not compromise the ecological character of Ramsar Sites. Thailand and Switzerland requested reference to the need to consider biodiversity safeguard measures. Japan suggested “recovering and maintaining ecosystems’ functions” to focus

on the positive impacts of ecosystem-based management. El Salvador suggested reference to other mechanisms of wetland management in the context of institutional collaboration.

The EU cautioned against the STRP reviewing resolutions from previous COPs. Mexico suggested referring not only to preparedness and early warning, but also to contingency measures. Uruguay called for the inclusion of innovative approaches and territories surrounding wetlands, and suggested urging parties to include risk reduction in their own policies and management plans. India highlighted the need for increased cooperation with specialized institutions towards effective ecosystem-based approaches for risk management. The US recommended integrating not only climate change adaptation but also mitigation in development policies and planning.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution on wetlands and disaster risk reduction (COP20 DR13 Rev.2), the COP encourages parties to, *inter alia*:

- integrate wetland-based disaster risk reduction and management into national strategic plans and all relevant policies;
- integrate wetland management plans into land-use and development plans;
- assess disaster risk to wetland ecosystems to enable the designing of effective disaster risk reduction interventions, including ecosystem-based solutions; and
- recognize the roles and challenges of the indigenous peoples and local communities and, where applicable, their experience, knowledge, ancestral rights, methods and approaches in wetland management and disaster risk reduction.

In addition, the COP:

- encourages mainstreaming disaster risk reduction measures in management plans;
- welcomes initiatives that support the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, including options to build a “Caring for Coasts” initiative;
- encourages parties and the Secretariat to emphasize the importance of conserving, restoring and wisely using wetlands for disaster risk reduction in discussions related to the references to risk reduction contained in the proposals of the Open Working Group on SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030;
- urges parties to adopt approaches to disaster risk reduction to ensure the rights of wetland-dependent displaced persons; and
- requests that the Secretariat liaise with the UNFCCC Secretariat and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The COP furthermore requests the STRP to consider:

- reviewing and compiling existing guidance on wetland ecosystem-based adaptation concerning disaster risk reduction and to develop appropriate indicators and baseline information for demonstrating progress; and
- monitoring the discussions, developments and trends in the international fora on the role of wetlands conservation, restoration and wise use in disaster risk reduction and in climate change adaptation.

## CONSERVATION OF MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

**ISLAND WETLANDS:** On Friday, 5 June, plenary took up the draft resolution on the conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands (COP12 DR14), submitted by Greece. A revised draft resolution was adopted in plenary on Monday, 8 June.

Senegal asked for a legal opinion on whether a draft resolution may refer to a particular region, suggesting that all island wetlands should be included. Greece noted reference in the draft to non-Mediterranean island wetlands. The EU acknowledged that an extension of the scope to the global level has been considered and a draft resolution will be prepared for COP13. Senegal withdrew his request.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution (COP12 DR14 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- calls upon parties in and around the Mediterranean to address human-induced pressures threatening island wetlands through a precautionary approach, while developing more long-term and integrated strategies or plans;
- requests that Mediterranean parties continue to designate under-represented types of wetlands as additional Wetlands of International Importance;
- urges Mediterranean parties in the framework of the MedWet Initiative, to produce or update as a matter of high priority a complete, science-based inventory of their island wetlands; and
- requests Mediterranean parties to ensure effective and long-term conservation and, whenever applicable, the restoration of their island wetlands, by considering designating key small island wetlands for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

## EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

**OF RAMSAR SITES:** On Saturday, 6 June, plenary took up the draft resolution on evaluating and ensuring Ramsar Sites’ effective management and conservation (COP12 DR15), submitted by Thailand. The draft resolution was discussed informally and a revised version was adopted without amendment on Tuesday, 9 June in plenary. Most discussion focused on the Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT).

Argentina requested the STRP’s input on the proposal, and emphasized R-METT as a tool for self-assessment, not for external evaluation. Uruguay requested linking R-METT with the strategic plan and asked parties to report periodically on their evaluations. South Africa and the EU underscored the need to integrate all reporting requirements to avoid administrative burdens on local authorities. New Zealand suggested that parties use R-METT when preparing national and site reports. Canada suggested reporting on R-METT at least every six years or when submitting Ramsar Site Information Sheets, while the DRC noted the need to establish criteria on tools and indicators. Mexico and Peru cautioned on the resource implications of evaluations. Thailand requested adding socio-economic criteria regarding indigenous peoples and local communities, in addition to biological and hydrological criteria.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution on evaluating and ensuring Ramsar Sites' effective management and conservation (COP12 DR15 Rev.2), the COP, *inter alia*:

- invites Ramsar Site management authorities to assess and measure the services that their Ramsar Sites provide and the maintenance of these services in their management processes;
- encourages parties, when monitoring the condition of Ramsar Sites, that such assessments include not only biological and hydrological components, but also the socio-economic status of any indigenous peoples or local communities, subject to their respective national laws;
- approves R-METT as a voluntary self-assessment tool for evaluating the management effectiveness of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands;
- encourages parties that do not already have effective mechanisms in place for effective management planning of their Ramsar Sites, to consider using the R-METT; and
- encourages parties, where appropriate, to utilize R-METT when preparing their national reports and describing the status of sites on the Ramsar List.

The annex includes the R-METT data sheets on: contextual information; values from the ecological character description and the Ramsar Information Sheet; Ramsar Sites threats; assessment form; and trends in Ramsar ecological character, including ecosystem services and community benefits.

**DECLARATION OF PUNTA DEL ESTE:** On Saturday, 6 June, COP12 President Rucks reported that the Conference Committee was working on a proposed declaration. On Monday, 8 June, Uruguay reported that after consulting informally with delegations on the declaration draft text, a revised version was prepared. The declaration was adopted by acclamation by plenary on Tuesday, 9 June.

**Final Resolution:** In the final resolution thanking Uruguay as the host country and containing the "Declaration of Punta del Este" (COP12 DR16 Rev.1), the COP recognizes that the Declaration will enhance the visibility of the Convention and the advances reached during COP12 showing parties' strong commitment to the new Strategic Plan, the relationship between wetlands and other environmental issues, and the need to strengthen collaborative association with other instruments, organizations and stakeholders. In the annexed Declaration, parties, *inter alia*:

- recall with concern that since 1900 over 64% of the world's wetlands have been destroyed, representing a reduction in access to fresh water for two billion people, and a real threat to the preservation of relevant ecosystem functions and ecosystem services;
- welcome the proposal of the Open Working Group for SDGs, especially the proposed goals related to the mission of the Ramsar Convention;
- welcome the new Strategic Plan and decide to inform partners and stakeholders to consider its guidelines; and
- highlight the need for strengthening partnerships with individuals and organizations beyond those responsible for the operation and maintenance of Ramsar Sites and important wetlands, including in relation to water, livelihoods,

biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, resilience and carbon sinks as means to create conditions that allow and promote the Convention's implementation.

### CLOSING PLENARY

On Tuesday, 9 June, COP12 President Rucks introduced the final report of the meeting, which was adopted with minor amendments and with the understanding that the report of the final day would be added by the Secretariat. Many delegates expressed gratitude to Uruguay as the host country and to the Secretariat for a successful COP12, in particular with regard to the adoption of the new Strategic Plan. Secretary General Briggs noted that COP12 has been "quite a challenge and a great learning experience," apologizing for the mistakes made by a team new to the process and experiencing a paperless meeting for the first time. He thanked parties for their commitment, hard work, patience and guidance, and the Uruguayan hosts. Deputy Secretary General Grobicki congratulated participants in achieving consensus on all resolutions and commended their high level of engagement with the process.

Birdlife International, on behalf of the IOPs, considered the new Strategic Plan an opportunity for the Ramsar Convention to communicate its commitment to other international processes, such as on the SDGs, and called upon participants to take the plan to other sectors to find compatible solutions with production and development. She welcomed the creation of an expert group to develop outcome-oriented indicators and WWT as a new IOP. The World Wetlands Network expressed NGOs' commitment to the Convention, calling for leadership and commitment in implementing COP12 resolutions and for strengthening the participation of civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities in national strategic plans. She underscored the need to tackle threats to wetlands arising from extractive activities and urbanization.

Uruguay lauded parties' great sense of commitment and responsibility, calling upon them, the Secretariat and others to work tirelessly to serve the interests of the Convention. COP12 President Rucks introduced a video highlighting participants' activities during the meeting, underscoring COP12's role in highlighting the need to support wetland conservation for the people that live in and depend on wetlands. He urged commitment by all present to implement the agreed targets and goals in order to bring good news about wetlands to COP13. He drew the meeting to a close at 6:39 pm.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF RAMSAR COP12

### WETLANDS AREN'T WASTELANDS

Wetlands are disappearing fast: "40% of wetland habitats have been lost over the last 40 years, and 76% of all wetland species are threatened." Ramsar COP12 opened to this stark reminder, challenging delegates to address long-standing misperceptions in other sectors about the value of wetlands and their precious contribution to nature and society, including ecosystem diversity, clean water and flood prevention.

Against this background, COP12 sought to heighten the visibility and broaden the reach of the Ramsar Convention. During the week it became clear that delegates arrived in Punta del Este seeking to give the Convention—the “oldest sister” of the family of multilateral environmental agreements—a new sense of direction and relevance for a wide range of both international and local stakeholders. This mission was most visible in discussions on the new Strategic Plan, but also in a series of resolutions aimed at linking to other international processes, notably the UN post-2015 development agenda, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and disaster risk reduction. At the same time, however, delegates focused on ensuring that the new resolutions would be workable and useful for local wetland authorities.

This analysis focuses on the substance of COP12 resolutions in seeking useful connections with other international processes (branching out), and enhancing implementation of the Convention on the ground (rooting).

### **BRANCHING OUT**

Despite the longevity of the Ramsar Convention, the need for synergy with other relevant international processes within and beyond the environmental sector is fundamental to raising the profile of wetlands and their conservation. Resourcing such actions requires clear demonstration of the links with other priority environmental issues, especially in light of the lack of a specific funding mechanism for the Convention.

With regard to the new Strategic Plan, delegates worked hard to establish bi-directional links when defining the targets and indicators that will guide Ramsar’s work, and to increase and exchange information on wetlands from different sources. Such links are also expected to allow tapping into financial resources available for other relevant processes, most notably funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) via integration of wetland management needs in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), as well as from the private sector. In doing so, the Strategic Plan is expected to raise Ramsar’s profile higher in the international realm with a mandate that is aligned to global environmental and sustainability goals, while also providing value-added information on wetlands’ sustainability and services.

The Strategic Plan 2015-2024 was thus unanimously highlighted as the most important achievement of COP12. Its extension to 2024 (as opposed to the initial end-date of 2021) is also meant to ensure its implementation generates the opportunity for Ramsar parties to feed into the revision of the Aichi targets in 2020 or follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to benefit from the results of ongoing processes like the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

Other resolutions adopted at COP12 served to anchor Ramsar’s work to other international processes, such as that on disaster risk reduction (linking to the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction), on water requirements (linking

to global water governance) and on synergies (related to the work on SDGs indicators and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification).

Efforts to link to the post-2015 development agenda, most notably the SDGs, brought to light the on-going tensions between wetlands conservation and other economically-driven sectors, highlighting the need to extend Ramsar’s reach into fisheries, sanitation and infrastructure development. These debates are reflected in the vision of the Strategic Plan, namely that conservation and wise use of all wetlands should contribute “towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world,” while noting that to achieve this mission it is essential to recognize “vital ecosystem functions and the ecosystem services they provide to people and nature.” To help provide some clarity on this dichotomy, the COP called upon the STRP to provide scientific and technical advice on “balancing” wetland conservation and development in the next triennium.

The same need for balance was also relevant to the contested issue of peatlands and climate change, which kept delegates busy in several rounds of informal consultations. The main difficulty was the sensitivity to current negotiations on a future climate agreement (in fact, the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies were meeting in parallel to the Ramsar COP). But in actuality, the resolution was more concerned with local-level action. Parties eventually agreed to highlight the value that wetlands have for climate change adaptation, as well as their potential for mitigation and the need to further study their value as carbon sinks. Having eliminated references to market instruments that were seen as prejudging the outcomes of current climate negotiations, and with questions of mandates of different conventions addressed in a balanced manner, the final resolution was considered useful in encouraging parties to utilize their inventories to map the distribution of their peatlands and the extent of their carbon sequestration. Experience has already shown that this is no minor issue: in the context of the Ramsar partnership with Danone, a peatlands conservation project has already been registered within the Clean Development Mechanism and obtained carbon credits. That partnership has also contributed to develop a methodology on carbon sequestration by peatlands. It is thus likely that when negotiations on a new post-2020 climate agreement conclude, the issue of adaptation through wetlands management and mitigation in peatlands will receive renewed attention, including possibilities for funding these initiatives within the climate framework.

### **STAYING ROOTED**

Efforts to link with other international regimes were matched with multiple attempts to ensure that the Convention maintains a focus on providing guidance and support to local authorities and Ramsar site managers. These efforts pertained to the new Strategic Plan, but also emerged clearly in the discussions on the STRP, resource mobilization and partnerships, water requirements of wetlands, and city accreditation.

While the advice stemming historically from the STRP had been noted and appreciated, it was acknowledged that the way it has been conveyed was not for all audiences—in particular

for local wetland managers and CEPA target audiences. A revised scientific and technical framework was, therefore, seen as necessary by many in order to provide clear, structured and transparent priorities for scientific and policy support to parties and other stakeholders that is more responsive to their needs, while still maintaining the independence and stability scientists need to provide their valued advice. This was also highlighted in the budget discussions, where the possibility for parties to request the support of advisory missions, including the participation of STRP members, was prioritized for the next triennium. By the end of the meeting, delegates welcomed the increased focus on making the STRP's outputs relevant to national and regional authorities.

The resolution on resource mobilization and partnerships sought to emulate the decisions in other agreements, such as the UNFCCC or the Nagoya Protocol, where new responsibilities are matched with mechanisms for resource mobilization and support that allow developing countries to access additional funding for implementation. In this case, the resolution will require further intersessional work, but was conceived as a necessary step to enable management authorities to attract funding to implement the new Strategic Plan and other policy-oriented resolutions.

The resolution on cities also sought to support work at the local level. By offering a new, international label to wetland cities, it seeks to catalyze urban action and encourage integrated spatial/land-use planning, while also lifting the Convention's visibility among a distinctly local audience. In doing so, it diffuses the Ramsar spirit beyond wetlands of international importance, to include other "significant" wetlands in close proximity to urban centers.

### **STILL WATER RUNS DEEP**

Despite an impression of slow progress, especially to newcomers more familiar with other MEA processes, the impact of COP12 became evident by the end of the meeting. Faced with organizational and technological challenges, the COP started at a sedate pace. Delegates found several outdated references in the documents; they were confused by the scheduling of informal groups; and they encountered difficulties submitting textual suggestions to the Secretariat or understanding which version of certain revised drafts was under discussion, as this was the first paperless meeting in the process. It was also the first COP for the new Secretary General and his Deputy, who during the closing plenary admitted having encountered a steep learning curve at this COP.

Nevertheless, once deliberations got underway, a high level of engagement marked COP12 debates with old and new delegates being well prepared and insisting on resolution language that would make their work on the ground more effective. Many interventions during the meeting focused on the needs of wetland managers and how to make their efforts more visible and valued within their communities. Ultimately, all resolutions tabled for COP12 were adopted by consensus. Delegates showed great flexibility and commitment, by agreeing to adopt revisions to resolutions in the absence of translations in all official languages of the Convention. The COP thus ended on a positive note, with

many celebrating the professionalism and hospitality of the host country Uruguay, while enjoying the last in a series of great receptions.

Taken together, CEPA, the Strategic Plan and the revised STRP provide a combination of policy-oriented documents expected to provide coherent and wider-reaching guidance to all stakeholders involved in wetlands management. The Strategic Plan was carefully crafted, and also benefitted from a series of regional consultations prior to the COP—an unprecedented development in this process that many delegates welcomed. The new CEPA Programme clearly points to providing instruments and a strategy to bring the wise use of wetlands into the public eye, and to highlight the values of wetlands to other sectors of the economy to finally overcome the idea—still present beyond the boundaries of the environmental sector—that wetlands are wastelands. However, many cautioned that with all on-the-ground implementation activities in the budget based on non-core (voluntary) financial resources, sustained efforts on resource mobilization and partnerships will be key.

COP12 convened under the theme "Wetlands for our Future," and as the NGOs stated at the end of the meeting, "this future starts now," implying the need for immediate follow-up action. As a result of COP12, the Convention appears, in the eyes of many, to be better geared to play a role in other international processes, but work in that regard needs to start right away if Ramsar is to stay on top of fast-approaching global developments, such as a new climate agreement and the UN post-2015 development agenda. COP12 also set a clearer path ahead for supporting and reviewing implementation, with more defined priorities for the Convention's bodies and some stern instructions to the Secretariat on the use of resources and preparations for the next COP. The shift from detailed technical issues towards more policy-oriented guidance was generally greeted as a positive change in the process, as it may place Ramsar authorities in a better position to influence decisions that are badly needed to achieve a substantive improvement in the conservation and management of wetlands around the world.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

### **Responding to the Global Food Security Challenge through Coordinated Land and Water Governance**

**Workshop:** Jointly organized by the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the International Land Coalition Secretariat, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI-Africa), and the Southern African Regional Water Partnership, the workshop is intended to share positive and negative experiences of (un) coordinated land and water governance and practice, from different geographical settings and levels. **dates:** 15-16 June 2015 **location:** Pretoria, South Africa **contact:** GWP Technical Committee **email:** [danka.thalmeinerova@gwp.org](mailto:danka.thalmeinerova@gwp.org) **www:** <http://www.gwp.org/Global/Activities/News/March%202015/Call%20for%20workshop%20with%20logos.pdf>

**IUGG 2015:** The 26th General Assembly of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) will meet under the theme "Earth and Environmental Sciences for Future



Generations” to address various issues across physical, chemical, mathematical, and environmental disciplines. **dates:** 22 June - 2 July 2015 **location:** Prague, Czech Republic **contact:** IUGG Prague Secretariat **phone:** +42-261-174-305 **fax:** +42-261-174-307 **email:** info@iugg2015prague.com **www:** http://www.iugg2015prague.com/welcome.htm

**Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015**

**Development Agenda – Sixth Session:** The sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda is expected to focus on negotiating the outcome document for the September 2015 Summit. **dates:** 22-25 June 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/negotiationsoutcome1

**World Heritage Committee 39:** The 39th session of the World Heritage Committee will, *inter alia*, identify cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value, which are to be protected under the Convention, and to monitor the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. **dates:** 28 June - 8 July 2015 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** World Heritage Committee 2015 Taskforce **phone:** +49-30-2065819-10 **email:** info@39whcbonn2015.de **www:** http://www.39whcbonn2015.de

**UNESCO Water Quality Symposium:** As an activity under the UNESCO-IHP International Initiative on Water Quality, the International Symposium on Scientific, Technological and Policy Innovations for Improved Water Quality Monitoring in the Post-2015 SDGs Framework will meet to promote the sharing and exchange of the state-of-the-art scientific knowledge and technologies for improved water quality monitoring. **dates:** 15-18 July 2015 **location:** Kyoto-Otsu, Japan **contact:** Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa, Division of Water Sciences – International Hydrological Programme, UNESCO **phone:** +33-1-45-68-40-54 **email:** s.zandaryaa@unesco.org **www:** http://www.unescokotosympo2015.org/

**Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015**

**Development Agenda – Seventh and Eighth Sessions:** The seventh and eighth sessions of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda will focus on negotiating the outcome document for the September 2015 Summit. **dates:** 20-31 July 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015

**World Water Week:** Organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute under the theme “Water for Development,” the meeting’s aim is to network, exchange ideas, foster new thinking and develop solutions to today’s most pressing water-related challenges. **dates:** 23-28 August 2015 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **contact:** Karin Lexén, World Water Week 2015 Secretariat **phone:** +46-8-121-360-50 **fax:** +46-8-121-360-01 **email:** karin.lexen@siwi.org **www:** http://www.worldwaterweek.org/

**CITES AC28:** The 28th meeting of the Animals Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora will convene to develop recommendations for CITES COP17. **dates:** 30 August – 3 September 2015 **location:** Tel Aviv, Israel **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** http://cites.org/eng/com/ac/index.php

**UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda:**

The summit is expected to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including: a declaration; a set of SDGs, targets, and indicators; their means of implementation and a new global partnership for development; and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation. **dates:** 25-27 September 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit

**Eye on Earth Summit:** The Summit will be held under the theme “Informed decision-making for Sustainable Development.” **dates:** 6-8 October 2015 **location:** Abu Dhabi, UAE **contact:** Eye on Earth Secretariat **phone:** +971-2-6934436 **email:** eoecommunity@ead.ae **www:** https://www.eoosummit.org/summit-2015/

**UNCCD COP12:** The 12th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will take decisions regarding the Convention’s implementation. **dates:** 12-23 October 2015 **location:** Ankara, Turkey **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-288-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** http://www.unccd.int

**CITES PC22:** The 22nd meeting of CITES Plants Committee will convene to develop recommendations for CITES COP17. **dates:** 19-23 October 2015 **location:** Tbilisi, Georgia **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** jvasquez@cites.org **www:** http://www.cites.org/eng/com/PC/index.php

**CBD SBSTTA 19:** The 19th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to the CBD will consider the implications of the findings of the Global Biodiversity Outlook 4. **dates:** 2-5 November 2015 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SBSTTA-19

**CBD Working Group on Article 8(j):** The 9th meeting of the CBD *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions will include an in-depth dialogue on shared traditional knowledge across borders. **dates:** 4-7 November 2015 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=WG8j-09

**AEWA MOP6:** The 6th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) will mark the 20th anniversary of AEWA. **dates:** 9-14 November 2015 **location:**

Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNEP/AEWA Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2413 **fax:** +49-228-815-2450 **email:** aewa.secretariat@unep-aewa.org **www:** <http://unep-aewa.org>

**Water Convention MOP7:** The seventh session of the MOP to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) will take place in Budapest. **dates:** 17-20 November 2015 **location:** Budapest, Hungary **contact:** Nicholas Bonvoisin, Secretary of the Water Convention **phone:** +41-22-917-11-93 **fax:** +41-22-917-01-07 **email:** [nicholas.bonvoisin@unece.org](mailto:nicholas.bonvoisin@unece.org) **www:** <http://www.unece.org/env/water.html>

**UNFCCC COP 21:** The 21st session of the COP to the UNFCCC and associated meetings will take place in Paris. **dates:** 30 November - 11 December 2015 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int) **www:** <http://www.unfccc.int>

**CITES SC66:** The 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (CITES SC66) will meet in Geneva. **dates:** 11-15 January 2016 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org) **www:** <http://cites.org/eng/com/sc/index.php>

**International Water Summit 2016:** The Summit is a global platform to promote water sustainability in arid regions, to foster innovation, best practice and collaboration, and to offer tangible solutions to water scarcity. **dates:** 18-21 January 2016 **location:** Abu Dhabi, UAE **contact:** Claude Talj, International Water Summit team **phone:** +971-2-409-0409 **email:** [claudet.talj@reedexpo.ae](mailto:claudet.talj@reedexpo.ae) **www:** <http://iwsabudhabi.com/>

**CBS SBSTTA 20:** The 20th meeting CBD SBSTTA will consider marine and coastal biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, biodiversity and climate change, and the scientific review of the implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan and the achievement of the Aichi targets. **dates:** 25-29 April 2016 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SBSTTA-20>

**CBD SBII:** The first meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation will review implementation of the Strategic Plan. **dates:** 2-6 May 2016 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/>

**ECOSUMMIT 2016:** The fifth international Ecosummit Congress under the theme “Ecological Sustainability: Engineering Change” will highlight the advances made to address the current environmental problems facing our changing world. **dates:** 29 August – 1 September 2016 **location:** Montpellier, France **contact:** Elsevier **email:** [n.cosgrove@elsevier.com](mailto:n.cosgrove@elsevier.com) **www:** <http://www.ecosummit2016.org/>

**CITES COP17:** The CITES COP will convene for its seventeenth session. **dates:** TBC, October 2016 **location:** South Africa **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org) **www:** <http://www.cites.org/>

**CBD COP 13:** CBD COP 13 will be held in late 2016. **dates:** 4-17 November 2016 **location:** Los Cabos, Mexico **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/>

**CMS COP12:** COP12 to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals will be held at a date to be confirmed in 2017. **dates:** TBC, 2017 **location:** the Philippines **contact:** CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2401 **fax:** +49-28-815-2449 **email:** [secretariat@cms.int](mailto:secretariat@cms.int) **www:** <http://www.cms.int>

**INTECOL 12:** The 12th International Association for Ecology Congress will be held under the theme “Ecology and Civilization in a Changing World.” **dates:** TBC, 2017 **location:** Beijing, China **contact:** Dr. Bojie Fu, Vice President of INTECOL **email:** [bfu@rcees.ac.cn](mailto:bfu@rcees.ac.cn) **www:** <http://www.intecol.net/>

**Ramsar COP13:** COP13 of the Ramsar Convention will convene at a date to be confirmed in 2018. **dates:** TBC, 2018 **location:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates **contact:** Ramsar Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-999-01-70 **fax:** +41-22-999-01-69 **email:** [ramsar@ramsar.org](mailto:ramsar@ramsar.org) **www:** <http://www.ramsar.org>

For additional meetings, see <http://nr.iisd.org/> and <http://sd.iisd.org/>

## GLOSSARY

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
COP	Conference of the Parties
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IBA	Important Bird and Biodiversity Area
IOPs	International Organization Partners
IPBES	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
MedWet	Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
R-METT	Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
SC	Standing Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust