

Ramsar Resolutions, 2012



The Ramsar Standing Committee, meeting 31st October to the 4th of November, will discuss various things including the resolutions that are to be discussed at the next Conference of the Parties next year. WWN will work on some of these, to get civil society views on their effectiveness, and whether we can help to advise the decisions. So, now is a good time to try to understand how they are developing. For the full text and details, check the documents on the Ramsar website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-standing-sc43/main/ramsar/1-31-41%5E25232_4000_0

WWN Committee, 27th October 2011

SC43 – 10: Report of the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel

This will not lead to a new draft resolution, but is interesting in terms of being the resolution most relevant to NGOs and Civil society. The ‘participation’ element outlines the Convention’s desire to see local groups and people involved in wetland conservation on the ground.

WWN ACTION: Awareness of the content.

SC43 13: Draft Resolution: Future Administration of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat

A working group was set up to discuss the options of the Ramsar Secretariat continuing to be supported by IUCN, or moving to be provided by UNEP. The working group did not come to a conclusion, and has instead produced a draft resolution that sets out both options as potentially viable (but with no indication as to the respective benefits of either).

For NGOs it is likely to make quite a big difference in terms of civil society involvement. IUCN has a membership that includes NGOs and CSOs, and is therefore more likely to be open to NGO involvement. Ramsar has a history of working closely with NGOs, but UNEP is potentially less likely to be sympathetic to involving NGOs.

WWN ACTION: Request clarity from Ramsar about the likely developments at SC43, and develop strategy to influence the outcome at the Ramsar COP if they proposal to move to UNEP happens.

SC43 – 16: Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions

1. vi the conclusion of new Memoranda of Cooperation (MoCs) with a number of potential partners and the updating and renewing of existing memoranda with others, as well as the redevelopment of a new joint MoC with the Convention’s five International Organization Partners (IOPs);

In the text of the Draft Resolution, it states:

29. URGES the Secretariat to continue its valuable collaboration with the five International Organization Partners and ENCOURAGES the IOP representatives to take steps to increase awareness of Ramsar objectives and the collaborative relationship with the Convention to the greatest possible extent throughout their organizations, including by coordination with IOPs' country and regional offices, where appropriate, in the context of Joint Work Plans prepared with the Ramsar Secretariat;

30. FURTHER URGES the Secretariat to seek opportunities for developing similarly fruitful relationships with other non-governmental organizations and, following a review of memoranda of cooperation already in place with other NGOs, to foster increased cooperation with those NGOs that can most benefit the work of the Convention;

WWN ACTION: Explore options for the WWN to be recognised and identify the best way of working between civil society and the Ramsar convention parties.

SC43 – 19: Future scientific & technical priorities for the implementation of the Convention

There are three major cost top priority tasks identified, one which is:

i) “Reporting on the state of the world’s wetlands and their services to people, and Convention effectiveness” (CHF 100,000), and supporting that task; ‘

This could fit well with the WWN’s work on reporting on local wetlands, both through the globes, but also through an ‘alternative wetland report’ that they would put together.

CHF100k allocated, and this must have been based on the Secretariat’s staff estimates of work with local partners to put this information together. Could include WWN activities?

WWN ACTION: We should put WWN forward as a possible means to collect and collate information – this has been discussed before within WWN, could supplement the existing governmental reports.

SC43 – 20: Draft Resolution: Wetlands and energy issues

Noting that energy and climate change are closely connected and will have major impacts on wetlands, and that reductions in the use of fossil fuel are vital to combat global levels of CO₂. Renewable energy sources are wholeheartedly supported, but not where these are at the expense of biodiversity and local community needs e.g. biofuels from palm oil trees planted on wetlands.

In countries where people are reliant on locally sourced fuel, we should have an emphasis on sustainable energy use. Overexploitation of wetlands e.g. for peat and mangrove wood will lead to damage to both wetlands and the wildlife and people that depend upon them.

SC43 – 22: Draft Resolution: An integrated framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication

Endorses the ‘integrated framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication’, which is an annexe to the resolution. Also urges Contracting Parties to use the framework to develop links between wetlands and poverty, and to implement through wetland management plans. Also to use it to work with development organisations addressing poverty issues.

WWN ACTION: read through and comment on the suitability of the framework, particularly the elements that address engagement of the poor in a positive manner and sustainable livelihoods (21. ii and iii).

SC43 – 23: An Integrated Framework for avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses

Measures to ensure that wetlands are being actively monitored for loss / damage, and that a three step approach involving avoidance, minimization, and compensation (as a last resort).

WWN ACTION: No specific WWN ACTION. Generally support the approach. Issues around specific compensation to local communities?

SC43 – 24: Principles for urban planning and wetlands

Aware that wetlands are impacted on increasingly by urban development and impact, both directly through drainage and development of infrastructure, but also through impacts of pollution and other non-direct causes. Also showing that wetlands can be well-managed in urban areas, as well as provide direct socio-economic benefits. The ‘full participation’ of local communities in decisions about planning and wetlands is recognised as very important.

WWN ACTION: Check detail for engagement of civil society groups – what does this mean / how is it defined? Issues around lack of responsibility / awareness of governmental decision-makers?

SC43 – 25: Wetlands and health: taking an ecosystem approach

WWN ACTION: Underline the reliance of local communities on wetlands for food products, recreation, medicines and ‘cultural’ values that support good physical and mental well-being. Clear links with local communities in terms of access, ownership and the ability of wetlands to deliver ecosystem services that depend on the good state of the wetland. Spiritual and mental health is often something that is not taken into account, nor traditional medicinal usage of wetland products.

SC43 – 26: Rice paddy, wetlands and pesticides

Part of specific WWN Asia approach. **WWN ACTION:** KM to work with WWN Asia colleagues to develop approach to this.

SC43 – 27: Tourism and wetlands

Main theme of the 2012 conference. Local livelihoods link. Pressure between tourists and local communities. Mention made of equitable sharing of the benefits of tourism and the 'carrying capacity' of wetlands to cope with tourists. Link to globes for good / bad practice.

WWN ACTION: Clearer definition of how benefits of tourism can be distributed. Issues of local access to wetlands once tourist developments have been created. Eco-tourism, how this can support communities and civil society. Check definitions contained in the annexes.

SC43 – 28: Promoting responsible investment by government and the private sector to ensure the maintenance of the benefits people and nature gain from wetlands

That no funding coming from the government should support any project that results in negative impacts on wetlands. Responsible investments should benefit wetland ecosystem services, and a system must be in place to demonstrate this, as well as efforts to communicate them to the public and other stakeholders.

WWN ACTION: Is it possible to identify ways of dealing with governments that do not adhere to this principle e.g. ROK and the 4 rivers project? Can civil society play a more active role? Also, ensure that this is applicable to all internationally important wetlands not just Ramsar sites. Should form part of the wise use principle, and therefore be applicable to all wetland sites.

SC43 – 29: The status of sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance

This is a core part of what Ramsar does, and receives reports from Contracting Parties on the status of Ramsar sites. It also includes the process of submitting new Ramsar sites to the secretariat.

WWN ACTION: Contracting parties may sometimes not report adequately, either purposefully or through lack of resources, on the state of Ramsar sites. Can civil society add to these reports in meaningful way? Additionally, CP's may lack resources or the will to designate internationally important sites – civil society groups would like to be able to nominate sites directly with some chance of them being designated.