



## Strengthening the impact of Ramsar COP 9

Wetlands International was instrumental in establishing the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and plays a key role as an International Organisation Partner in guiding its direction and focus, as well as catalysing and supporting implementation, together with Contracting Parties and other partners.

Wetlands International considers that the Ramsar COP9 in Kampala and the theme of "*Wetlands and Water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods*" provides a number of very significant and timely opportunities to strengthen and extend the reach of the Convention to achieve improved wetland conservation and management, as a contribution to sustainable development. As we enter the COP, we are concerned that the Convention is not currently having a sufficiently strong political impact and that as a result, a number of opportunities to gain more attention and investment in wetlands conservation and wise use are being overlooked. Wetlands International aims to engage even more strongly with Contracting Parties to develop some joint actions that will help mainstream wetlands in sustainable development.

### Proposed changes to the Draft Resolutions

#### **DR 3: *Engagement of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in ongoing multilateral processes dealing with water***

Wetlands International supports this Resolution but, to strengthen its impact and ensure that strategic action follows its adoption, we recommend integrating the following additional text:

Establish a Contact Group at COP9 to

- Develop a clear agenda for COP 10 in relation to Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM),
- Coordinate the establishment of priorities for strategic engagement of the Ramsar Convention with the water sector

Encourage Contracting Parties to

- Assess progress and resources invested in implementing an ecosystem approach to IWRM over the next triennium
- Facilitate resources for promotion and implementation of IWRM nationally and in transboundary situations

#### **DR 9: *Streamlining the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention 2003-2008***

Wetlands International proposes that COP 9 rejects this Draft Resolution since, although we supported the intentions, we do not consider that the *Framework for the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008* adds value to the existing Strategic Plan. It fails to:

- provide a coherent vision for the Convention over this period
- provide an adequate basis for promoting, monitoring and measuring the implementation of the Convention in the 2006 -2008 triennium,
- provide an adequate basis for designing a simplified COP10 National Report Format.
- clarify the roles of Contracting Parties, IOPs and other institutions in delivering the Plan.

Additionally, Article 5 of the Resolution makes the Strategic Plan totally non-committal by stating that every Contracting Party is free to choose the extent to which it will implement it.

The current Strategic Plan ends in 2008. We propose that the COP 9 decides on criteria and guidelines for the new Strategic Plan to be considered at COP 10, and requests that the Standing Committee addresses the points above in the process of developing the new Strategic Plan.

**DR 10: *The Role of the Ramsar Convention in natural disaster prevention, mitigation and adaptation***

Wetlands International welcomes this Resolution in order to put emphasis on the largely unrecognised, positive and valuable role of wetland conservation and restoration in preventing, mitigating and adapting to disasters like cyclones and hurricanes, tsunamis, floods and droughts.

Wetlands International proposes the following text be added to the Resolution to ensure that strategic actions result, addressing global and regional priorities:

- Establish a Contact Group at COP9 to coordinate the development of priorities for the Ramsar Convention for strategic development of the role of wetlands in disaster prevention, mitigation and adaptation
- Call on international financial institutions to increase attention on the role of wetland conservation and restoration in disaster management in their policies and investments
- Encourage Contracting Parties in the Sahelian zone, the Niger Basin Authority, The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the African Development Bank, to develop and act on decision-support tools to ensure integrated and socially equitable management of water to prevent, mitigate and adapt to droughts in the region; such as has been developed for the Upper Catchment of the Niger.
- Encourage Contracting Parties in South, South-East Asia and donor countries to develop a regional facility for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), responding to the capacity building needs identified following the Asian tsunami
- Take action to conserve high altitude peatlands, for example through the Himalayan Initiative and to implement Resolution VIII.17 "Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands".
- Encourage Contracting Parties and Basin Authorities to restore and manage wetlands as a tool in flood management strategies.

**DR 13: *Financial and budgetary matters***

This Resolution presents a flawed solution to the needs of the Convention. Although Wetlands International welcomes the newly included yet notional support for Outreach and CEPA, the support for scientific services is overall significantly reduced, even allowing for the proposed new STRP support staff position within the Secretariat. The budget does not appear to have been set according to some of the priority needs of the Convention. At the start of the triennium, Contracting Parties agreed to a significantly improved budget for the work of the STRP, and at the same time an increase in the budget for the Ramsar Sites Database - part of the Ramsar Sites Information Service, to reflect the significant increase in number of Sites and also to correct an increasing funding gap incurred to provide the Service. This improvement has now been reversed at a time when the Contracting Parties more than ever before need to invest in better data on Sites and networks to measure Convention effectiveness, develop strategic risk assessments for avian influenza and against future natural disasters. The STRP work suffered significantly at critical points over 2003-2004 due to the reduced budget for expert inputs and lack of support to national STRP Focal Points. Wetlands International therefore recommends that the COP:

- Restores the budget for the Ramsar Sites Information Service to at least SFr200,000 annually
- Increases the STRP budget to enable a) logistics and travel support to be given to the STRP support staff member to assist STRP National Focal Points and b) some more flexibility to hire experts for high priority work
- As a matter of urgency requires the Ramsar Secretariat to develop budget support to enable participation in an international partnership to provide an essential and long-term funding regime for the International Waterbird Census and its derived outputs as a means of informing a wide range of national and international policies and indicators, including addressing the need for the international community to enhance preparedness and capacity to assess risks and determine appropriate responses to avian influenza.
- Seek alternative funding for regional initiatives (for which other funding is available) outside of the core budget

- Make adequate budgetary allowance to implement the indicators of performance as proposed in Draft Resolution 1 Annex D

**DR 15: *Wetlands and Poverty Reduction***

Wetlands International strongly supports this Resolution. However, to strengthen its impact, we consider that additional guidance and tools are needed by Contracting Parties.

Wetlands International proposes that DR15 additionally:

- Requests STRP to develop guidance on the implementation of DR15 and that the necessary resources are made available to achieve this
- Recommends active commitment to the following poverty reduction priorities of the NEPAD Action Plan for the Environment, (Programme Area - Conserving Africa's Wetlands) and the specific numerical targets identified within the actions:
  - o Development of plans and policies to promote the wise use of wetlands
  - o Wetland inventory and appraisal, monitoring and assessment to target actions
  - o Demonstration of integrated approaches to wetland management
  - o Demonstration of approaches to wetland restoration and rehabilitation

**DR 16: *The Status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance***

Wetlands International proposes that the COP adds an article between 23 and 24 in this Resolution requiring that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) prepares a set of measures for Contracting Parties to show the state of Ramsar sites for every COP, in a clear, verifiable and comprehensive way. These measures to be presented at the COP 10 as a Draft Resolution.

**DR 18: *Review of Decisions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties***

Wetlands International proposes to add an article (number 7) in this Resolution:

7. Requires the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to develop:

- A set of measures for Contracting Parties to show the extent of implementation of resolutions for every COP, in a clear, verifiable and comprehensive way;
- Ways to hold Contracting Parties accountable the implementation of Resolutions by demonstrating to the Convention;
- Possible other ways to achieve a better implementation of the Resolutions;

and to present these measures at the COP 10 as a Draft Resolution.

**Emergency Resolution: *Avian Influenza***

Wetlands International is playing a critical role in monitoring Avian Influenza in wild birds and is working with virologists and veterinarians to unravel possible mechanisms of disease transmission. Our initiative has been developed in close contact with the European Union (EU), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as well as with international nature conservation bodies. We believe there is an urgent need for global action on avian influenza and for assistance from the international community to developing countries in enhancing preparedness and capacity to assess and respond to threats from this fatal disease. For these reasons and possible implications for wetlands management, we seek the development and adoption of a specific Emergency Resolution at COP 9 that:

- Requests Contracting Parties and urge non-contracting Range States to develop and implement programmes of education and public awareness on HPAI, especially aimed at actually or potentially affected stakeholders, in particular those engaged in outdoor activities and the poultry industry;
- Urges Contracting Parties in their planning and execution of national response strategies to develop fully integrated approaches to address the issues raised by the spread of HPAI that brings together and incorporates virological, epidemiological, medical, ornithological and wildlife management expertise;
- Urges Contracting Parties, other Range States and international organisations to support research and monitoring related to disease processes in wild bird populations given the potential significance of these in terms of bird conservation and population regulation, so as to be better prepared for the future management of avian disease outbreaks.