

**5th Oceania Regional Preparatory Meeting
for the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971)**

Koror, Palau, 26-30 March 2012

Meeting Summary

1. Wetlands in the Oceania region are extremely diverse, with high biodiversity conservation values, and they play a critical role in sustaining people's livelihoods and national economies.
2. Tourism is a major contributor to most Pacific Island economies. The planning and management of tourism activities in wetlands should seek to minimise damage to the habitats and maintain the ecosystem services provided by the wetlands, especially to local and downstream communities.
3. The major drivers of change in wetlands in the region are unsustainable development, invasive species and increasingly, climate change. Concrete actions have to be identified at the national and regional level to effectively mitigate these threats.
4. With growing evidence across the Pacific that climate change is resulting in reduced fresh water quality and quantity, the need to protect and manage our inland wetlands and their catchment areas as a natural water infrastructure is perhaps more urgent now than ever.
5. Coastal wetlands, such as mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs provide key services to address the effects of climate change by protecting coasts from erosion, adapting to sea-level rise through sediment accretion, acting as buffer zones to reduce impacts from storms and floods and providing important nursery and rearing habitats for fish. Their wise use is vital.
6. Sustainable financing for wetland conservation is a major challenge in the region. Efforts will be made to document examples of sustainable financing mechanisms, e.g. the Palau 'Green Fund', and to explore new and innovative financing mechanisms. Other common challenges across the region include the lack of manpower and high turnover of staff, lack of expertise and experience, and the lack of institutional and legislative frameworks to support wetland conservation action.
7. Oceania delegates recognize the critical partnership role that the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands provides in achieving the Aichi Targets of the Conventions of Biological Diversity - specifically Targets 11 and 14, and the goals of other Conventions, in particular the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species. Wetlands are critical actors in combating and mitigating impacts from Climate Change, and critical habitats to ensure the survivability of important global species; the Ramsar Secretariat, the secretariats of the CBD, UNFCCC, CMS and other key conventions are encouraged to strengthen dialogues to leverage or scale up additional resources to further advance wetlands' wise use in Oceania through robust partnerships.
8. Efforts need to be stepped-up at the national and regional levels to better link the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); actions should be based on national priorities, guided by a practical process and should as far as possible, involve all key stakeholders. A suitable mechanism should be identified to facilitate synergies at the regional level.

9. A mechanism should be developed to facilitate communication and collaboration between Ramsar Parties in the Pacific between the triennial Pre-COP meetings to ensure sustained implementation of the priorities and actions agreed.
10. The 'Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands 2011-2013' provides a framework for strategic and targeted action for wetlands, and an opportunity for all stakeholders to work together for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
11. Participants agreed on the following priority projects, to be undertaken in the next 1-2 years under the RWAP (a proposal on each will be available at COP11):
 - a. Update the Oceania Wetlands Directory (1993) to include among others, information on economic valuation, and traditional knowledge. Activities will include training and capacity building in database development and design, monitoring protocols, and ecological surveys.
 - b. Plan and implement capacity building actions, focusing on project management, compliance and enforcement training, and local communities. Resources will be needed to facilitate the training, and for follow-up work.
12. The role of communications at all levels - nationally, regionally and internationally is very important to ensure that successful implementation of wetlands conservation is fully understood by participants. There is also a commitment to continue strengthened communications on wetlands conservation at all levels. This has led to the agreement for a "Pacific Voyage to Romania" campaign to raise the Pacific voice at the international stage specifically the COP through a range of communications activities.
13. The meeting recommends that this summary be transmitted to all the Oceania Ramsar Contracting Parties and National Focal Points (STRP and CEPA) to advise their preparations for the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, 6th to 13th July 2012, Bucharest, Romania. To ensure continuity and facilitate effective follow-up, we recommend that the participants at this meeting be included in their COP11 national delegations.
14. The participants extend their heartfelt thanks to the government of the Republic of Palau through the Bureau of Agriculture for hosting this meeting, and for the warm hospitality and fellowship that we have enjoyed throughout our stay. We also acknowledge the generous funding assistance of the governments of Australia and France, the additional support provided through the SPREP-UNEP-EC MEAs Project "Capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries" and the support of SPREP and the Ramsar Secretariat.