

**6th Oceania Regional Preparatory Meeting
for the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971)**

Nadi, Fiji, 18-20 August 2014

Meeting Summary

1. The meeting participants included representatives from the:
 - government of the Ramsar Contracting Parties in the Oceania region, e.g. Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Samoa, (the representative from Palau was not able to attend);
 - community and stakeholder groups, such as from the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) Network, Great Sea Reef's Qoliqoli Cocovata Management Committee, Taveuni Island, and the Upper Navua Conservation Area Ramsar Site;
 - partner organisations such as Nature Fiji, Ramsar Secretariat, SPREP, UNEP, Wildlife Conservation Society, Birdlife Pacific and WWF Pacific.
2. Participants presented updates on activities under the 2011-2013 Regional Wetlands Action Plan, discussed priorities for a new Action Plan for 2016-2018, and made preparations for the upcoming COP12 to be held in Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015.
3. Oceania region participants stressed the importance of their wetlands as playing a critical role in sustaining people's livelihoods, human health and national economies - exemplified in Fiji's newly nominated Great Sea Reefs site, and several others across the region. These wetlands are also extremely biodiverse, with high conservation values for threatened, migratory and culturally important species.
4. The major drivers of change in wetlands in the Oceania region are unsustainable development, invasive species and increasingly, climate change. More cost-effective actions have to be identified at the national and regional level to mitigate these threats.
5. Climate change is resulting in reduced fresh water quality and quantity. It is perhaps more urgent now than ever to recognize wetlands as natural infrastructures and to protect and manage them using the Integrated River Basin Management approach and to include their conservation in national policies such as for land-use planning, sustainable development etc. .
6. Mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs - important for coastal protection, fisheries productivity, tourism, and community livelihoods – require urgent attention as they face ongoing impacts of un-sustainable upstream and coastal land-use practices plus new catastrophic impacts under climate change. These coastal wetland types also 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. The wise use through watershed-scale, ecosystem-based management and ecosystem-based adaptation is vital for securing long-term resilience to the impacts of climate change in the Oceania region.
7. Resource mobilisation and sustainable financing for wetland conservation is a major challenge in the region. Participants highlighted the need for innovations and expansion in

the use of sustainable financing mechanisms for biodiversity-related work affecting Ramsar sites. Examples of sustainable financing mechanisms need to be promoted, e.g. market-based instruments, Payment for Ecosystem Services, Levies. Efforts will also need to be made to explore and train practitioners on new and innovative financing mechanisms that generate commercial profits from biodiversity projects (e.g. businesses generated through improved water treatment and conservation, waste management and compost/organic fertiliser production).

8. Other common challenges across the region include the lack of human capacity (expertise and experience), high turnover of staff and the lack of institutional and legislative frameworks to sustain human capacity in wetland conservation. Solutions to sustain human capacity on projects were discussed, with one of them being the need to engage with stakeholders outside the environment sector.
9. The role of traditional knowledge in supporting the wise use and conservation of wetlands cannot be overstated, and needs to be included in the decision making process for wetland conservation activities. Efforts for the preservation of traditional knowledge on inland and coastal wetlands need to be stepped up and facilitated with the support from national governments and grass-root NGOs.
10. Oceania delegates recognize the critical role that the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands provides in achieving multiple MEA targets, e.g., including:
 - the Aichi Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - specifically Targets 9, 11 and 14
 - goals of other environment related Conventions, in particular the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Wetlands are critical actors in combating and mitigating impacts from climate change, and critical habitats to ensure the survival of man-kind and global biodiversity;
11. The Secretariats of the CBD, CMS, Ramsar, UNFCCC and other related environmental conventions are encouraged to strengthen dialogues and activities that achieve cross-cutting outcomes for multiple Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). For Pacific Island countries in particular, this will help to leverage or scale up our minimal on-ground resources to better advance wise use of wetlands, while addressing the objectives and obligations under the different conventions.
12. Contracting Parties in the Oceania region seek urgent assistance in simplifying the administration and reporting to multiple biodiversity MEAs. Efforts need to be stepped-up at the national and regional levels to strengthen synergies and cooperation across the biodiversity-related MEAs. Actions by the MEA Secretariats should be based on national priorities, and be guided by a practical synergy projects in countries. The recent Pacific joint MEA Pre-COP meeting for CBD, CMS and Ramsar (August 2014) is noted as a global milestone in moving towards greater MEA synergy and coordination.
13. The meeting participants requested specific assistance and guidance from the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and Ramsar partners for countries to simplify processes in:

- identifying and designating Ramsar Sites
 - managing Ramsar and non-Ramsar wetland sites
 - building capacity in wetland science and CEPA
 - applying ecosystem-based adaptation for resilience to climate change
14. A mechanism should be developed to facilitate communication and collaboration between Ramsar Contracting Parties in the Oceania region between the triennial Pre-COP meetings to ensure sustained implementation of the priorities and actions agreed.
 15. The meeting recognises that the ‘Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands’ 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 and welcomes the development of the new Action Plan for the period 2016-2018 through a PICT driven and partner-facilitated process.
 16. The meeting recognises that baseline information is critical to inform decisions on the wise use and conservation of wetlands and notes the support of the Australian Government, US Aid to the Noumea Convention, the Ramsar Secretariat and SPREP to update the national wetland inventories of PICTs.
 17. The role of media and communications at all levels - nationally, regionally and internationally - is important to ensure successful wetlands conservation work is widely understood and appreciated. There is also a commitment to continue strengthened communications on wetlands conservation at all levels. The meeting has initiated communications plans and activities in the spirit of the Pacific Voyage Campaign to raise our Oceania voice on the international stage, specifically at Ramsar COP12 and other fora.
 18. Oceania region comments on the development of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021 were captured via a Skype meeting with the Ramsar consultant. They include several issues outlined within this Meeting Summary plus additional recommendations on improving outcomes for wetland conservation and wise use in the Oceania region. The Australian Government kindly agreed to assist in being the contact point for the Oceania region in the Strategic Plan Working Group. Other countries who showed interest in providing comments on the development of the new Strategic Plan included Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa.
 19. The meeting discussed the themes of the Draft Resolutions that will be presented to Ramsar COP12. In mid-October 2014 when the DR becomes available, SPREP will assist in collecting comments and responses on the DR from Oceania Contracting Parties and to send these onto the Ramsar Secretariat.
 20. The meeting participants agreed to explore alternative sources of financial support for delegates to the Ramsar COP12 in June 2015. This included the possibility of funding their costs through the budget of ongoing projects.
 21. 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 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, 1st to 9th June 2015, Punta del Este, Uruguay. To ensure continuity and facilitate

effective follow-up, we recommend that the participants at this meeting be included in their COP12 national delegations.

22. The participants extend their heartfelt thanks to the government of the Fiji, through their Department of Environment, 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 government of Australia and the support of SPREP and the Ramsar Secretariat.