

## The Ramsar Convention and synergies with other conventions

Dr Nick Davidson  
Deputy Secretary General,  
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands



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Nick Davidson

### What is the Convention on Wetlands?

- Oldest of the global environmental conventions
- the only global convention focussing attention on an ecosystem (wetlands)
- covers very wide range of wetlands - from coral reefs to mountains

#### *Why the "Ramsar" Convention?*

- Ramsar, Iran - where Convention agreed 2 February 1971
- XX so not an acronym (RAMSAR) XX

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## Ramsar Contracting Parties



Contracting Parties commit to delivering the Convention through 3 "pillars":

- **Wise use of all wetlands**
- **Wetlands of International Importance** - designation and management
- **International cooperation**

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## What is the "wise use" of wetlands?

**Essentially = "sustainable use"**

"... their sustainable utilization for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem"

(Ramsar COP3, 1987)



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## The Ramsar Convention today

- **136 Contracting Parties**
  - others in process of joining (accession)
  - from Africa, central Asia, Caribbean, Oceania
- **1288 Wetlands of International Importance - "Ramsar sites"**
  - Largest global protected area network
  - totaling 108.9 million hectares
  - size: from <1 ha to >6 million ha

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## Ramsar links with other organisations

### Extensive cooperation with:

- NGOs and expert networks
- regional environmental organisations
- UN agencies
- other environmental conventions

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## Why is improving synergies important?

- To clarify common areas of interest/overlap
- Simplify and harmonise approaches and guidance to Parties
- Enhance collaboration on implementation at national and global levels
- ✓ Ramsar has played leading role in developing convention synergies
  - through MoCs, Joint Work Plans and programmes of work

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## Links with other Conventions: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- **Ramsar: lead implementation partner on wetlands since CBD COP3**
- **Joint Work Plan 1998-1999**
  - focused on inland waters
- **2nd Joint Work Plan 2000-2001**
  - all ecosystem themes & cross-cutting areas
- **3rd Joint Work Plan 2002-2006**
  - all ecosystem themes & cross-cutting areas
    - adopted for CBD COP6 (April 2002) & Ramsar COP8 (Nov 2002)

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## CBD-Ramsar 3rd Joint Work Plan

- Joint Ramsar-CBD River Basin Initiative
  - on wetlands, biodiversity and integrated river basin management
- all ecosystem themes
  - inland waters, marine & coastal, forests, agriculture, drylands, mountains
- cross-cutting issues
  - e.g. invasive species, monitoring and indicators, inventory & assessment, CEPA, traditional knowledge, protected areas; incentives
- joint cooperation with other conventions
- national reporting
  - streamlining reporting -drawing on UNEP national pilot projects

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## CBD-Ramsar 3rd Joint Work Plan

- Enhanced cooperation includes:
  - CBD COP6 guidelines on *impact assessment* adopted by Ramsar COP8 with annotations for Ramsar context
  - joint development of technical guidelines - *rapid assessment methodologies* (inland waters; coastal/marine)
  - joint review and elaboration of CBD inland waters programme of work - for CBD COP7 (2004)
  - increased participation in each others' technical working groups

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## CBD/Ramsar collaboration - direction

*from*

- Identifying common issues, &
- making available each other's guidance to respective Parties

*through*

- adopting each other's guidance for common national implementation

*to*

- joint development of initiatives (e.g. RBI)
  - joint development of technical guidance and programme implementation
- simplified and consistent guidance for national implementation

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## Collaboration with other Conventions: Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

- **MoC 1997**
- **Joint Work Plan - finalised 2002**
  - with CMS and African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA):
  - collaboration on migratory waterbirds, turtles etc. & cross-cutting issues
    - **site networks and technical information**



## Collaboration with other Conventions: UNESCO

- **MoC with World Heritage Convention -1999**
- **Joint programme of work with Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) - 2002**
  - focus:
    - **protected areas monitoring and management**
    - **consolidation & expansion of management planning guidance**

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## Collaboration with other Conventions: UNCCD

- **MoC - 1998**
  - focus on key role and value of wetlands in drylands
  - focus on collaboration at regional and national levels



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## Collaboration with other Conventions: Regional Conventions/Agreements

- Regional Seas (Barcelona, Cartagena, HELCOM)
  - Mediterranean: joint work between Barcelona Convention & Ramsar's MedWet Initiative
- South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) - 2002 Joint Work Plan:
  - Pacific Island States capacity building



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## Collaboration with other Conventions: UNFCCC

- Ramsar COP8 (November 2002)
  - considered technical reports & adopted Resolution (VIII.3) on: "*Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation and mitigation*"
  - basis for focussing on key cross-cutting issues for future common action
  - requested special attention to ↑ capacity & synergies: wetlands and climate change
  - Ramsar Parties' commitments to conservation and sustainable use and management of inland and coastal wetlands:
    - provide existing mechanisms for climate change adaptation and mitigation action

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## Ramsar and climate change

- Ramsar COP8 recognised potential for conflicting requirements of Ramsar & UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol
- Parties to ensure climate change implementation
  - through revegetation and forest management, afforestation and revegetation
  - **does not conflict with commitment to conservation and sustainable use of wetlands**

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## Status of national-level synergies

- Ramsar COPs have strongly urged collaboration between focal points for many years
  - Strategic Plan actions
  - COP decisions (Resolutions)
- but extent of national collaboration still very variable
- analysis of 131 National Reports to Ramsar's COP8 provides insights
- Most Reports from countries who are Parties to all global MEAs

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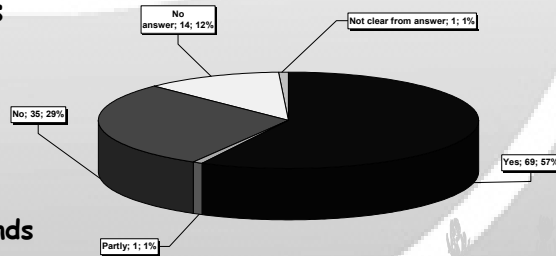
## National mechanism for convention coordination?

7.2.1. Mechanism at national level to coordinate/integrate implementation of international/regional conventions/treaties. Global analysis

• **Yes: 57% of countries**

e.g.

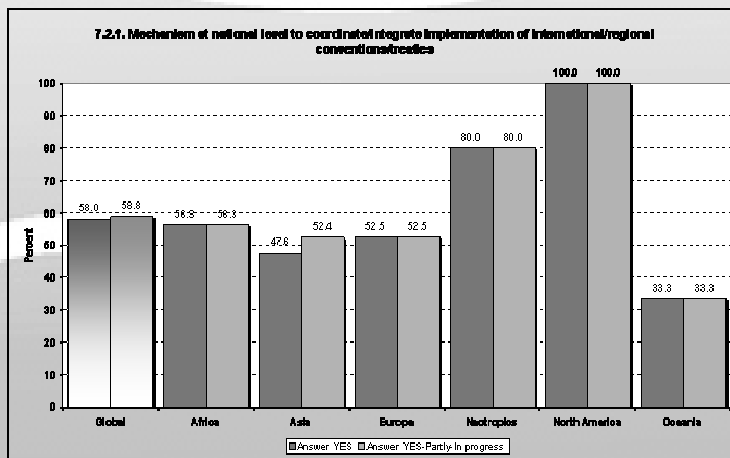
- ✓ Inter-ministerial committees
- ✓ sub-committees on biodiversity
- ✓ National Ramsar/wetlands committees
- ✗ but often only 'informal dialogue'



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## National mechanism for convention coordination?

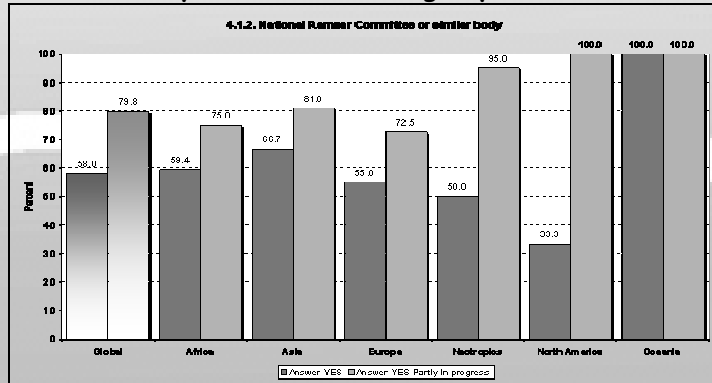
### Regional variations



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### National Ramsar/Wetland Committee

- ✓ key Ramsar national collaboration mechanism
- ✓ Yes: 58% of countries
- ✓ expected to incl.: other convention focal points, ministries, gvmt. agencies & sectors (esp. water mgmt.), NGOs, research experts
- ✗ But not many involve all these groups

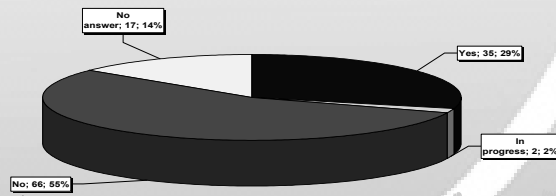


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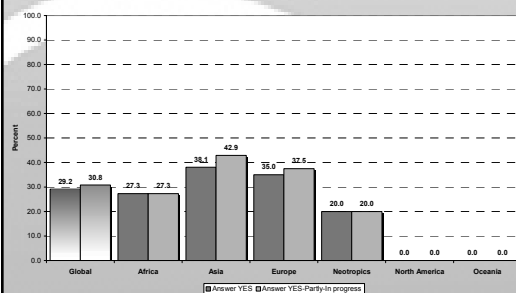
### Review of CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan: to establish cooperation priorities?

7.2.3. Review of JWP Ramsar CBD to establish priority areas of cooperation

- Yes: only 29% of countries
- Extent of review implementation unclear



7.2.3. Review of JWP Ramsar CBD to establish priority areas of cooperation



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## Conclusions: national-scale collaboration on implementation

- mechanisms exist in many countries, but lacking in many others
- do not appear to always work effectively
- Are Focal Points of each Convention wary of 'interference' from other Conventions' FPs?
- lack of engagement from other government sectors?
  - environment ministries often weaker than other sectors

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## A consequence: lack of national focal point collaboration

### At COPs/subsidiary bodies meetings:

- Some delegations not briefed by other conventions' focal points
  - unaware of issues of common ground
  - unaware of relevant decisions adopted by their governments in other conventions
  - take contradictory stances on same topic in different fora



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## Collaboration challenges

- most joint activity at global level (secretariats, subsidiary bodies)
  - need to enhance national level collaboration
- many bilateral work plans ↑ complexity for Parties
- establishment & implementation of joint work plans ↑ workload of overstretched secretariats
- different governance schedules & priorities (COPs, subsidiary bodies) &
- differing subsidiary body *modus operandi*
- ↑ difficulties of undertaking and reporting on joint work

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## Global-scale challenges: Way forward?

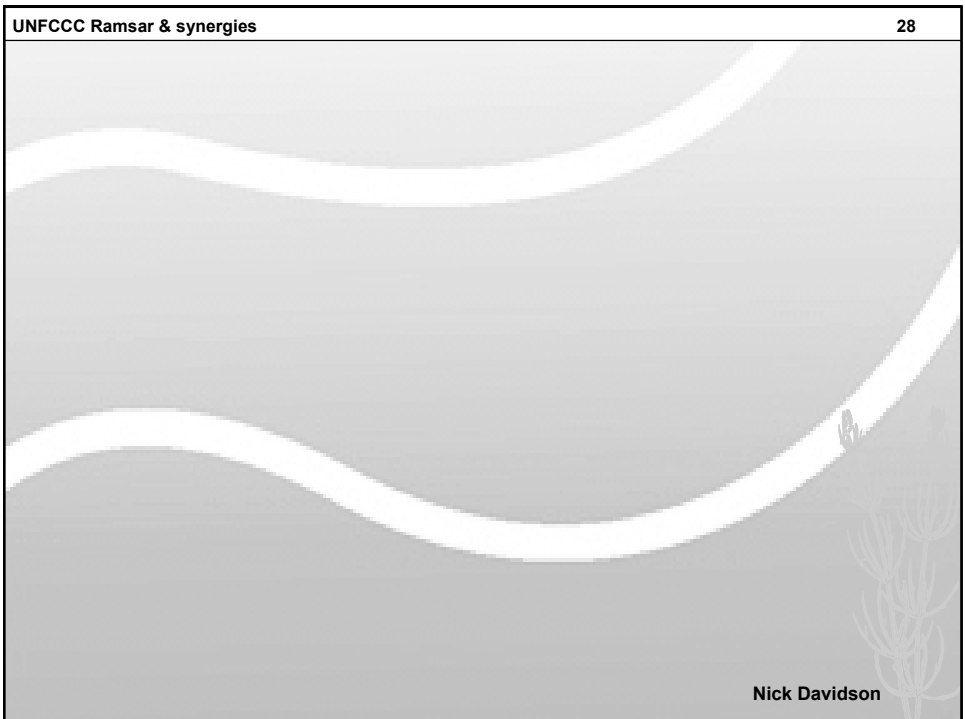
- multi-convention joint work plans?
- needs clear analysis of common issues and overlap of national implementation requirements
  - ⇒ basis for implementation harmonization
- Are there conflicting national requirements under different conventions?
- Streamlining national reporting
  - important capacity issue for Parties
  - should follow from common issues analysis and national harmonization of implementation
  - not the starting point for activity
    - i.e. treat the problem, not the symptom

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Thank you



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## Ramsar and climate change - 1

- COP8 Resolution VIII.3 calls on Parties to:
  - **manage wetlands to increase resilience to climate change and extreme events**
  - **promote restoration & management of peatlands and other wetlands which are significant carbon stores or sequester carbon**
  - **research role of wetlands in**
    - carbon storage & sequestration, and
    - sea-level rise mitigation
  - **special attention to strengthening institutional capacities and synergies to address climate change and wetland linkages**

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## Ramsar and climate change - 2

- COP8 recognised potential for conflicting requirements of Ramsar & UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol
- Parties to ensure climate change implementation
  - through revegetation and forest management, afforestation and revegetation
  - does not conflict with commitment to conservation and sustainable use of wetlands
- STRP preparing further guidance on vulnerability assessment methodologies for wetlands in relation to climate change
- Requested IPCC to consider preparing technical report on climate change and wetlands

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