



**REGIONAL TECHNICAL SEMINAR**  
*Beirut, Lebanon, 16-18 February 2004*

## **«NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR WETLANDS»**

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**Final Meeting Report – March 2004**



Republic of Lebanon  
Ministry of Environment

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# 1. Background

The meeting is one of MedWetCoast regional seminars organized in the context of the capacity building component in an effort to facilitate exchange of experience and expertise across the Mediterranean on wetland and coastal issues, thereby 'closing the Mediterranean circle'.

The MedWetCoast regional project, with pilot activities in 15 sites across 6 Mediterranean countries (Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine Authority and Tunisia) works at three different levels: the local or site level with activities to identify and implement protection measures in the context of the sustainable development of the area – site diagnosis, site management plans, socio-economic and participatory activities with local stakeholders, and implementation of urgent measures, b) the national level with encouragement towards policy making and strategy setting (coastal zone management policy, national wetland strategy, national laws and regulations, intersectoral coordination) and c) the regional level with exchange of experience, regional training and technical guidance.

As the second regional seminar of MedWetCoast, this seminar aims at providing the participating target countries with the necessary elements to launch and/or strengthen a national policy making process to develop and, later, implement national wetlands policies. More specifically, the seminar's objectives were to:

- present the guidelines of the Ramsar Convention for the preparation, development and implementation of national policies for wetlands (résolution VII.6);
- learn from national experiences of a number of countries, preferably Mediterranean countries, with the process of development of national policies and strategies for wetlands;
- consider national experiences of a number of countries, preferably Mediterranean countries, with the process of implementation of national policies/strategies for wetlands and their integration into the sectoral policies of the country;
- review the status of national wetlands policies in the MedWetCoast countries ; and
- in each of the MWC countries, lay the steps for initiating a process of developing and/or strengthening national wetlands policies and/or strategies.

## 2. Introduction and opening

The seminar was opened with the Lebanese national anthem.

Ms. Sylvie Goyet, MedWetCoast regional coordinator, welcomed the participants. She reminded of the importance of wetlands because of their functions and values, highlighting their contribution to:

- biodiversity (migratory routes, bird sanctuary, breeding grounds for fish and bird species, endemism, etc)
- water regulation (flood control, water ground water recharge)
- water purification (against pollution)
- sources of human livelihood (reed cutting, fishing, etc.)

She then insisted on the need for policies to consolidate and also guide the field and local work. A clear strategy is needed at the national level in order to identify areas of high values, define a protection strategy and develop the regulatory and institutional instruments. She also pointed out that national wetland strategies have often been developed within the framework of national biodiversity strategy and the need to ensure that the specificities of their management are correctly addressed. She then spelled out the objectives of this seminar, underscoring that the aim was to exchange experience and practices in order to help countries launch and/or further develop a national process of wetland strategy making. She concluded by expressing her gratitude to the Government of Lebanon and the Ministry of Environment for the efforts in organizing this meeting, her thanks to the MWC partner organizations, Ramsar secretariat, MedWet, IUCN, WWF and the Mediterranean countries (France, Spain, Turkey) for their support and participation.

Mr. Tobias Salathe, Senior Advisor for Europe, Ramsar Secrétariat, commenced by referring to the Biodiversity COP7 currently being held in Kuala Lumpur, thereby making the link with the Biodiversity process. He then underscored that the MWC was a good example of a regional initiative at policy setting and this meeting was therefore important, as it laid the ground for encouraging national processes at that level. The fact that participants do include representatives from sectoral ministries, parliamentarians, NGOs as well as environmentalists and policy makers provides as well a solid platform for spreading the message and starting the process at home. He concluded by thanking the organizers and the MedWetCoast project, a 'lighthouse for further GEF efforts in the region'.

Mr. Spyros Kouvelis, MedWet Coordinator, expressed his appreciation at the convening of this meeting, confirming that this is what MedWet is about, i.e. encouraging exchange of experience and practices for policy setting. He referred to the 1996 approval of the first wetland strategy for the Mediterranean, a theme that he will further develop in his next presentation. He concluded by thanking the Ministry of Environment and the participants.

Mrs. Lamia Mansour, Acting Regional Biodiversity Coordinator for the Arab States, GEF/UNDP, welcomed the participants, confirming that UNDP GEF will put all necessary arrangements to ensure continued backstopping of this project. She highlighted the role of the GEF in supporting environmental policy making, in particular through assistance to the national biodiversity process..... Copy of her speech is attached as [Annex 1](#).

Mr. Yves de San, UNDP Resident Representative, Lebanon, commenced by paying tribute to Mr. Hani Daraghma, former regional biodiversity coordinator for the Arab States who tragically passed away in November 2003 and called for a one minute of silence in his memory. He welcomed all countries and reminded of WSSD development goals that were agreed as targets by 2015. He highlighted the one for 'the efficient use of natural resources' in order to achieve sustainable development. He also pointed out that UNDP is partnering with a large number of institutions to mainstream environmental concerns into sectoral policies, as one of the ultimate goal to achieving sustainable development. He reminded that the MWC Lebanon project started in 2002, thanks to support from the FFEM and the AFD, and with the objective to develop a clear strategic framework for wetlands and coastal zone in Lebanon. He concluded by looking forward to the results of this

seminar, as it provides a platform for following up on policy issues for wetlands. Copy of his speech is attached as [Annex 2](#).

On behalf of H.E. Mr. Fares Bouez, Minister of Environment, Lebanon, Mr. Berj Hartjian thanked all parties for their support. He extended his thanks to UNDP for their continued assistance; his appreciation to MedWetCoast RCU for opting to work with Lebanon for the staging of this seminar; his recognition to Ramsar for their support, also extending his congratulations to Mr. Bridgewater for his recent appointment as Ramsar Secretary General; his welcome to the MedWet coordinator also underscoring his dynamisms as a strength that the region needs; his thanks to Lamia Mansour for her work in following up on the GEF issues; and his thanks to the colleagues from MWC, wishing them a fruitful stay. He greeted the Lebanese participants, in particular those from other ministries such as agriculture and public works, pointing out that their presence attests that the issue is a priority on their agenda as well. Finally he registered his appreciation to AFD, complimenting that it does not spare efforts to support the Ministry.

He expressed concern though with the future of the environment in general, pointing out that our role gets more and more limited as we move to increased privatization and monetization. In that context, he queried the fact that the investment sector is not participating in this meeting, underscoring that the key is to involve the investment sector in environmental matters. He then quoted the example of Citibank which recently moved to environmentally-friendly loans and financial instruments under pressure from their clients, themselves apraised of the negative impacts of Citibank's financial support to activities that lead to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. He concluded by encouraging all of the participants to foster more of this ethical behavior from investment institutions.

### 3. Logistical information

Mr. Charbel Rizk, MWC Lebanon project manager, informed of the logistical arrangements for this seminar, including the field trip scheduled for the afternoon: the Jeita Cave, a remarkable karst site that could be proposed for Ramsar classification.

The final agenda is attached as [annex 3](#)

The list of participants is attached as [annex 4](#). Participants include: representatives from the 6 MWC countries and the MWC-RCU, delegates from Ramsar Secretariat, MedWet, UNDP, UNDP-GEF, IUCN, WWF, France Ministry of Environment, Turkish Ministry of Environment, Spanish Ministry of Environment and Tour du Valat.

The meeting was chaired by, respectively, Ms. Sylvie Goyet (Monday morning), Ms. Lina Yamout, service of conservation of nature of the ministry of environment of Lebanon (Tuesday morning), Mr. Spyros Kouvelis (Tuesday afternoon), Ms. Lamia Chamas, service of conservation of nature of the ministry of environment of Lebanon (Wednesday morning) with technical support from Mr. Pere Tomas, Tour du Valat conservation department.

The MWC RCU acted as rapporteur.

## 4. Context for national wetland policy making

### 4.1 “The Ramsar strategic plan and its implementation in the Mediterranean region: the MedWet initiative”

Mr. Spyros Kouvelis reminded of the MedWet mission and of its working arrangements with the four established centers (in France, Spain, Greece and Portugal) and two in the making, namely in Italy and Morocco. He pointed out that MedWet has been able to mobilize some \$40Million so far for wetland conservation in the region.

He then reminded of the Ramsar strategic plan which includes actions in the thematic areas of:

1. Wise use of wetlands
2. Wetlands of international importance
3. International cooperation
4. Implementation capacity, and
5. Membership

He pointed out that the application of the Strategy for 2003-2008 was approved in Izmir in June 2003 and invited the participants to consult the strategy document.

Referring to the Ramsar guidelines which Tobias will be presenting the next day, he reaffirmed that, though a strategy can take many forms, it is only useful if it is implemented. He also informed of the progress in the development of a MedWet initiative on agriculture and wetlands, pointing out that, for the Tunis meeting, farmers were present which rendered the discussions all the more relevant and pertinent.

Finally he recalled that the Mediterranean region has a delivery mechanism for implementation of wetland initiatives – MedWet - and he invited the countries and the institutions to make use of it.

His presentation is attached as [annex 5](#)

### 4.2. “Mainstreams and Environmental consideration in Catchment Management”

Mr. César Alcacer, Water Programme Officer, IUCN Mediterranean Center, reminded of the themes identified as focal working areas for the IUCN Med Office: Biodiversity conservation, islands, desertification, water and catchment, sustainable use of natural resources. In particular he highlighted the Water and Wetlands programme.

Talking of the policy instruments, he recapped the tools currently in place to address wetland protection in the Mediterranean region:

- the Med 21 (Turin 1994) and subsequent declaration on water management
- the Barcelona Convention (1996)
- the Venice Declaration (1996)
- the EU Water Framework Directive (2000) and its requirements to develop catchment management plans by 2015

He stressed that there is a need to link basin planning with wetland management and that there are tools available to do that: water adaptation frameworks, stakeholder involvement or environmental flows (IUCN). He presented the definition of environmental flows approach as “the water regime provided within a river, wetland or coastal zone to maintain ecosystems and their benefits where there are competing water uses and where flows are regulated”.

In order to implement the tool, he explained that it is important to understand the basin in its context (water headways, floodplains, etc.) and to set clear objectives and scenarios (water needs of the systems, measurable indicators, holistic approach). E-flow assessments can be used for basin-

scale planning and management for different timeframes. He underlined that, in that approach, the desired objective can go from a situation of minimum flow/single fixed value to one of fully adaptive management with a comprehensive provision of good ecological status incorporating restoration where feasible.

IUCN has launched a regional environmental flow programme. It has prepared 8 case studies on e-flows and wetlands in the Mediterranean region and a resource kit on wetland management. The next steps are to carry out demonstration projects in selected basins, build partnerships with utilities/user groups, and assess and promote ecosystem values. For further information, he invited the participants to visit the website.

His presentation is attached as [annex 6](#).

### **4.3. “Assessment of water policies in the light of principles on Integrated River Basin Management: case studies from Morocco and Tunisia”**

Mr. Holger Schmid, Freshwater Officer, WWF-Mediterranean Programme, shared with the participants the results of two studies carried out in Morocco and Tunisia, in the light of principles of integrated river basin management (IRBM). He cautioned that the aim of the study was not to give a full assessment of the policy process but really stimulate a debate on how to improve the state of freshwater ecosystems.

Explaining the methodology behind the case studies, he pointed out that a) the information had been measured against EU indicators, i.e. high standards, b) the exercise reviewed a few of the cross cutting principles of IRBM, namely: participation, integration, and knowledge and c) the process assessed the quality of existing programmes, and policy and legislative responses of governments, insofar as information publicly available.

He provided examples of results against each of the different categories.

The conclusions of the study are:

- the efforts in the country do focus essentially on water provision to urban, domestic and industrial uses: good instruments are in place to that effect in place that can make a difference but one sees little public participation and the environmental aspects of wetlands and their functions are little considered.
- measures to ensure efficient use of water is quite advanced. Water pricing system is a good example
- public participation is unsatisfactory
- there is effort towards integration of policies, however environmental aspects are at the bottom of the list of priorities

The recommendations are that:

- Improve quality and availability of data about the effect of existing pressures on water resources
- improve monitoring programme for endangered ecosystems: knowledge of the state and problem is well understood but there is little monitoring of the health of the ecosystems.
- develop specific regulation for the use of agricultural wastewater
- better dam management under the consideration of ecological aspects (mitigation measures)
- improve the availability of information regarding water resources ( increase transparency)
- improve existing arrangements for public consultation
- Develop a holistic wetland policy instead of selected wetlands

His presentation is attached as [annex 7](#).

## **4.4 Discussion**



Mr. Mohammed Raggabi, director of the Centre Marocain des Zones Humides, Morocco, asked whether, from a methodological point of view, the assessments had been carried out by national teams, with WWF undertaking a parallel verification exercise. Mr. Schmid confirmed that the results are based on publicly held information only and that a workshop was held in each of the countries to validate the data. He further informed that the report of these workshops would be available shortly.

Ms. Lamia Chamas thanked all lecturers for tackling a most important issue for the region where the water is less and less available and the issue of water shortage is very acute. She further pointed out that those studies though lack the economic side of the policies, i.e. an economic assessment of the worth of developing or not a policy. Mr. Schmid explained that WWF has not done yet an economic assessment of policies but undertook an economic assessment of wetlands – the result of which came out with a valuation of wetlands around the world at a price tag of \$70 billion worldwide for wetlands. He further informed that WWF intends to do such a case study in the Mediterranean region. Mr. Kouvelis also reminded that MedWet, in the framework of Medwet 2, undertook such an assessment - published in 1995 and still available. He confirmed that MedWet intends to integrate that aspect into the new project on agriculture and water. Finally, Mr. Alcacer reported that IUCN is about to publish a book on policies values and assessments.

Ms. Lamia Chamas asked how much of the recommendations of the WWF study carried out in Tunisia and Morocco will be implemented on the ground and what the challenges are to their implementation. Mr. Schmid pointed out that the readiness of governments to follow up on the recommendations is up to the governments themselves and WWF is not in a position to address this question. On the other hand, he confessed that, though the studies helped identify the gaps, it has not looked at how to address these; it would require a further series of consultation.

Referring to the ongoing GIWA exercise, Mr. Harash Kouyoumjian, Director of the Marine Studies Center of the NCSR – national council for scientific research, Lebanon, stressed the issue of transboundary rivers, as a subject introducing a new tier of questions and concerns and he cited the example of the Mesopotamian marshes in Irak. Mr. Salathe mentioned that article 5 of the Ramsar Convention, though sometimes overlooked, obliges countries to collaborate among each others and exchange information. He also reminded the participants of the existence of the UN-ECE Convention. He further mentioned the Danube Commission (ICPDR) as an institution managing a transboundary river (13 contracting parties) and working quite well.

Referring to the e-flow approach, Ms. Lamia Mansour asked about the timeframe necessary to pilot a full adaptive management model and get out concrete information that would be useful for decision making. Mr. Alcacer informed that IUCN is currently trying to identify a 'good' case study to start this process and that it was difficult to respond to the question at this point.

## 5. Session 1: Preparing National Wetland Policies/Strategies - guidelines and country case studies

Ms. Lina Yamout opened the meeting by welcoming the Palestinian delegate who arrived last night. She also recalled of the purpose of this seminar, reminding the participants of the opportunity to learn from other experiences and mobilize efforts towards national policy making.

### 5.1 Introduction

Mr. Pere TOMÀS restated the specific objectives of the seminar, i.e. presentation of the Ramsar guidelines (resolution VII6), review of existing national wetland strategies in the Mediterranean countries, review of the status of national wetlands policies in the MWC countries, and contribution to establishing the basis for developing and/or strengthening national wetland policies/strategies in MWC countries.

According to COP8 report, 9 Mediterranean countries have developed a national plan/strategy: Portugal, Spain, France, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Israel. The terminology differs from one country to another, the difference may be in the nature of the document and its scope.

He spelled out the organization of the various sessions of this seminar. The first session is about the development of the strategy and the second session about the implementation of the strategy. He introduced the agenda and the speakers of these two sessions, pointing out that, in the elaboration of the strategy, countries have followed the Ramsar guidelines, Turkey benefiting from the recently revised guidelines. He further outlined the elements central to preparing national wetland policies and strategies, namely:

- Institutional and admin context regarding wetland conservation
- Legal framework of the wetland plan
- Strategic framework of the plan: water strategy, bio strategy, etc.
- Institutions involved in the preparation of the plan
- Mechanisms for consultation
- Budget level for the preparation
- Timetable
- General description of the contents
- Strengths and weaknesses of the preparation process
- Recommendations/lessons learned

His presentation is attached as [annex 8](#).

### 5.2 Guidelines from the Ramsar Convention. Part I: concepts, framework and development of the strategy

Mr. Tobias Salathe introduced the subject by referring to the guidelines published as Ramsar Handbook No 2 in 2000 after COP7 in Costa Rica. The document was initially prepared by a working group involving representatives of some 20 countries; thus various national experiences and views were introduced in that document. The guidelines are not constraining and prescriptive but rather suggestive, a guide book to pick and choose and get inspired. A second version of this document is currently being prepared and will be published on CD Rom; the content will remain the same and is based on Resolution VII.6 adopted in Costa Rica.

He reminded of the signing of the Ramsar Convention in 1971; including 138 contracting parties today. The convention text is mainly general, in the form of a framework agreement: 1) each

country should use its wetland in a wise way, 2) wetlands of international importance should be designated, and 3) international cooperation should prevail.

With regards to policy making, he referred to a number of sections in the text of the convention, in particular the preamble of the convention which stipulates that the contracting parties are “confident that the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna can be ensured by combining far-sighted national policies with coordinated international action”. Article 3.1 reiterates the need of contracting parties to “formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List [i.e. Ramsar Sites] and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory.” Over the years, the text of the convention has been further developed through many COP Recommendations and Resolutions with specific guidelines and further guidance attached. Since COP6 (1996 in Brisbane, Australia), the convention has adopted a strategic plan to guide its implementation. Among the operational objectives, of the current Strategic Plan (2003-2008) objective 2.1 asks to “specify the most appropriate policy instruments to ensure wise use of wetlands” and 2.2 the countries should “develop, review, amend when necessary and implement policies, legislation, institutions and practices”.

He then pursued by reminding of the need for wetlands policies:

- wetlands are seldom explicitly covered in national policies: it was thus felt useful to develop a specific wetland policy.
- Where wetlands policies are components of other environmental policies, the wetland message can become diffused and overpowered.
- A stand-alone wetland policy articulates clear goals and responsibilities.

He underscored the nature of a wetlands policy/strategy. Some countries have adopted sub-regional policies for wetlands (eg in the Biodiversity Strategy), there are also examples of supra-national policies/strategy (eg the MedWet initiative). During this seminar, the focus though will be on what would be most helpful at the national level. He stated that a policy/strategy is a framework that enables conclusions to be drawn. That framework would have to reflect attitudes, express desired principles and state intentions; it should show alternative choices, clarify these, identify strategic directions, make commitments, provide focus and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different actors.

He made a brief note of the relationship between policy and wise use. Wise use is a concept that operates at all levels while a national policy is one tool proposed in the spectrum of actions for wise use (Recommendation 4.10 and Resolution V.6).

A strategy should therefore be a reference document available to all and relevant/clear to all. He recommended that the organization of the policy document could be broken down into 3 main sections:

1. Goals and principles,
2. Specification of the objectives of a national policy (e.g. our policy wants to achieve no further wetland loss, restoration of former wetlands, maintenance of current state, improvement of this or this aspect, etc.),
3. Show clear measurable and concrete activities; the time period could also be mentioned and a monitoring plan described.

The Ramsar guidance document has an annex which illustrates 8 priorities for establishment of wetland policies: The strategy should:

1. define common objectives that all sectors will agree on;
2. think of coordinated actions, cooperation between government agencies and other stakeholders;
3. recognize the role and efforts of local community;
4. not be sectoral but embody the will and mandate to coordinate different government programmes;
5. have a clear statement about what would be the proper management of protected wetlands;
6. identify the remaining gaps in knowledge;

7. improve public awareness; and,
8. ensure the delivery of international commitments.

At the level of specific activities to be addressed in a strategy, he suggested a number of priority actions:

- institutional arrangements: what institutions are in place, which ones should be strengthened and empowered?;
- legal instruments: proposals for new laws or adjustments to the laws;
- increase knowledge and awareness: the benefit of such a strategy should be known, the status of the wetlands in the country should be known; and,
- address the specific problems at particular sites.

He pointed out that the strategy should be the framework tool that puts the pieces together and translate the commitment of the government.

He concluded by outlining a few steps that need to be taken for developing the strategy:

1. preparation by a lead agency;
2. establishing a national wetland committee, with representation of major stakeholders;
3. reaching, at an early stage, a common vision/statement of the goals;
4. identifying, at an early stage, the stakeholders and the sectoral interests, and mobilizing them to participate in the process;
5. scheduling stakeholder workshops, as a helpful tool in the process;
6. establishing a writing team;
7. ensuring political support from an early beginning; and,
8. undertaking, at a later stage and in the finalization phase, a formal process to secure cabinet or government approval and official announcement.

He concluded by inviting the participants to further refer to the Ramsar guidelines document.

His presentation is attached as [annex 9](#)

### **5.3 Spain: Preparation of the strategic Plan for the protection and sustainable use of wetlands (1999)**

Mr. José Ramón Picatoste, from the General Direction of Nature Conservation (DGCN), Environment Ministry, commenced by explaining the distribution of competence and responsibility in Spain, underscoring the high degree of decentralization on nature conservation competences in the 17 Spanish regions. The Central Government acts as a coordination body for the work of all the regions towards implementing the basic framework for nature protection and the international commitments. In the case of the wetland strategy, the role of the Central Government was one of coordinating the work of the 17 regions throughout the elaboration process and thereafter of promoting the implementation of the strategies. The final responsibility for implementation is with the regions. He informed of the relevant legal and strategic instruments in place, both at the national and European level (Bird and Habitat directive and the Natura 2000 network), and the national government structures concerned with nature protection in Spain, in particular the National Wetlands Committee. He explained that some of the regions have stricter regulations while others have adopted the national standards and recommendations.

The Spanish Strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity adopted in 1998 is the Spanish response of the Biodiversity Convention requirement. Also he pointed out that, in Spain, the process to develop the wetlands strategy is similar as the one followed for the biodiversity strategy and he spelled out the different steps of that process. A lead team, composed of 4 experts, worked over a 2-year period with a budget of 120,000 Euro.

He outlined the guiding principles and the conservation instruments introduced in the document. The strategic plan is organized around 10 general objectives implemented via operational objectives and some 178 actions (general actions, local actions, sector policy actions).

He highlighted the strong points of the process undertaken in Spain, in particular the strong technical background of the team elaborating the document and the high coherence with the Ramsar Strategy 1997-2002. On the other hand, he pointed out that the lack of strong final legal support and cabinet approval is a weakness.

His presentation is attached as [annex 10](#).

#### **5.4 France: Preparation of the National Action Plan for wetlands (1995)**

Ms. Marie Odile Guth, general inspector of the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development of France and coordinator of the national French action plan for wetlands, highlighted that wetlands represent 1,7 millions hectares or 3% of the French territory. Some 30 areas are recognized under the EU Habitat directive. She pointed out that the French territory has a high representation of various wetlands ecosystems and types.

She recalled the history behind the preparation of the action plan. Prefet Bernard was asked to carry out an assessment of the national wetlands policy in France – what is now referred to as the Prefet Bernard Commission and report. This assessment highlighted a rather negative picture of the situation but allowed the development of a process for launching a national consultation around wetlands.

Working from 1992 to 1994, the commission reported of a continuous regression of the wetland area (65% lost since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and recorded the causes, in particular: the sectoral management of water, abhazard urban development, sectoral public policies with negative impacts on these ecosystems - draining, agricultural intensification -, external aggressions such as pollution, and fiscal policy. The report allowed to bring attention to the functions of the wetlands, in particular insofar as flood prevention, underground water recharge. In that context, she pointed out that during the recent floods in France (November 2003), sadly few have reminded of the role of wetlands in regulating floods. She also pointed out that the functions of wetlands are increasingly recognized with regards to their contribution to tourism development and to the economy (saline work, animal production, agricultural production, hunting and fishing). Finally she explained that the cultural and landscape value of the wetlands are starting to be recognized as well.

These functions and values having been recognized by the Commission, a process was launched to elaborate a national action plan. She pointed out that France, though signing the Ramsar convention in 71, did not ratify it until 1986. Also, in the French law, it is only in 1992 that wetlands were specifically defined.

There are 22 Ramsar sites in France. France has, since 2000, a code of the environment, both in terms of law and secondary laws, and the definition of wetlands is registered in the code. She underlined the difficulty that they faced in agreeing on a definition.

Within the framework of this plan, a great number of legal tools are available, in particular:

- international agreements : Ramsar, World Heritage Sites, MAP, Bonn et Berne convention, bird and habitat directive ;
- Protected area designation in France: Reserves naturelles, protected sites, national hunting reserves – both terrestrial and maritime
- various sub-national regulatory instruments : ‘schemas directeurs d’amenagements et de gestion des eaux’ of the 6 basin/watershed management areas in France, the ‘schema d’amenagement et de gestion des eaux’ at the local level, the local urban plans, the coastal area law / loi littoral, and the mountain law / ‘loi montagne’.

She informed of the institutions that are in charged of protecting wetlands:

- the Conservatoires du littoral, which, through their policy of land acquisition, purchase a number of sites, thereafter entrusting their management to local authorities or NGOs.
- the Conservatoires régionaux d'espaces naturels (CREN), often managed by NGOs
- the foundation for the protection of habitats – which is managed by the hunters association and which acquired land as well

She finally reported on the various measures and programmes that are in place and which somehow address wetlands management such as the measures agro-environmental and the LIFE programmes.

In 1995 a plan was approved by Cabinet. It identifies 4 objectives:

1. stop the degradation
2. ensure sound and wise management
3. encourage restoration of habitats
4. reclaim wetlands of high value

These were translated into 4 priority axes and a number of corresponding practical actions:

1. inventory of wetlands and Monitoring & Evaluation tools – in particular she quoted the implementation of some 20 research projects from 96 to 2001;
2. ensure the coherence of the public policies – she mentioned, as example, the support to extensive stock breeding, and to agricultural certification;
3. reclamation of wetlands – she explained that 8 pilot areas have been selected for multi-annual efforts (these include the Camargue and Marais Poitevin) and that two trust funds were set up: the 'Fond National de Solidarite sur l'eau' and the 'Fond de Gestion des Milieux Naturels'. She also reported of an example of reclamation in France Conte where the river has been returned to its original bed over a 20 km stretch (valley of the Drugeon) for 1,8 Million Euro
4. public awareness.

Her presentation is attached as [annex 11](#).

## **5. 5 Turkey: Preparation of the national strategy for wetland (2003-2008)**

Mr. Mehmet Golge, Environment and Forest Ministry of Turkey, introduced the background to the preparation of the strategy from the establishment of the wetlands division in 1992 to the approval of the National wetlands strategy 2003–2008 in 2003, the preparation of which started immediately after Ramsar COP7 and is based very closely upon the Ramsar strategy 2003-2008.

He then highlighted the process of preparation of the document, pointing out to the series of working group meetings. The draft was prepared by the Ministry of environment, then reconciled with the Ramsar strategic plan and then aligned to the national policies and principles. He particularly singled out the diversity of representatives in the working groups -ministries, NGOs, academics- and the progress from the first to the third meeting.

The strategy was approved by the National wetlands committee established in January 2002.

He presented the aim of the strategy and the four general objectives:

1. protection and wise use,
2. wetlands of international importance,
3. cooperation and
4. capacity.

These are translated into 12 operational objectives, each equipped with a number of activities.

His presentation is attached as [annex 12](#).

## **5.6 Plenary discussions**



Mr. Habib Ben Moussa referred to horizontal strategies such as the Water Strategy, the Biodiversity strategy and he enquired about how to ensure coherence between those horizontal strategies, the sectoral strategies and wetlands strategy. Ms. Guth explained that, in France, there is close interaction between the Biodiversity strategy and the wetlands action plan and the principle of complementarity has been noted and acted in the documents. One needs to monitor now how, in the next few years, this interaction does materialize. She also added that France is now implementing a national sustainable development strategy approved in 2003 – this strategy will be integrated into the French constitution, which then ensures that the government is held fully responsible for integrating sustainable principles into all of the government's policies. Mr. Jose explained that the biodiversity strategy will be implemented through sectoral plans, such as the tourism plan, the agricultural plan but also the wetlands plan. All of which will also be under the umbrella of the national strategy for sustainable development currently in development.

Mr. Pere Tomas asked about the calendar for the preparation of the wetland plan until approval. Ms. Guth pointed out that it took two years of study and analysis from 92 to 94 to produce an assessment of the situation, further to which the government has developed the plan and approved it in Cabinet in 1995. She further noted that, some 10 years after, it would be interesting to monitor the implementation of the Plan. In Turkey, the first phase was about 1 month and the second phase about 2 months. In Spain the whole process of elaboration was about 2 years. The document will be revised every ten years.

Mr. Hafid Chihab, cadre, Secretariat d'Etat a l'Environnement, Morocco, referred to the information facility set up by the Biodiversity Convention (Centre d'Information de la CBD) and queried whether it would be opportune to set up such a facility to facilitate exchange of information for the Ramsar convention. Mr. Salathe responded that a number of countries do benefit from the funds available for the biodiversity convention and the financing made available by GEF and the donors for biodiversity efforts. He further underscored that, if at all relevant to produce a wetlands strategy within the framework of the biodiversity strategy, it is indeed possible. Only, he cautioned to cross-check with the Ramsar strategy to ensure that the principles and elements are well addressed in the wetlands strategy. He also pointed out in that regard that France first prepared a wetland strategy and just now completed a biodiversity strategy. With regards to the set up of a clearing house for Ramsar, he agreed that the idea is relevant. He explained that there is a common Internet site [www.biodiv.org/convention/partners-websites.asp](http://www.biodiv.org/convention/partners-websites.asp) (Ramsar, CITES, migratory species, CBD) which could be further worked on and developed; he also suggested that one could look at the MedWet facility to include such a clearing house. He underscored that the Ramsar Secretariat is probably the smallest and the poorest of the convention secretariats and has little resources available. He finally pointed out that the Ramsar Secretariat does put great attention to ensuring synergy with other conventions and cited the development and current implementation of the third Joint Work Plan between the CBD and Ramsar. In that context, he called upon the countries to ensure that synergy does prevail as well at the national level, so that the convention focal points/institutions do exchange capacity and expertise.

Mr. Hassan Falaki, Administrateur, Secretariat d'Etat charge de l'Environnement, Morocco, made three remarks: 1) he referred to the preparation of the strategy as recommended by Ramsar in particular insofar as the need that it be orchestrated by an independent organization, 2) he pointed out to the pressures from and the priorities towards development activities, in particular in the southern countries, and the need to factor this in the preparation of the wetland policy, and 3) he alluded to the mandatory status of the plan, its adoption by law. He pointed out that this process may, in the context of some of the countries, actually slow down the process of implementation. Mr. Salathe clarified that the guidelines do suggest to appoint a dedicated organization/institution to lead the preparation of the strategy, but the idea is not that it be an independent body, but a clearly identified body. On the other hand, and referring to the Spanish recommendation and the French decision, he indeed favored that the text be officially approved by the Government in order to secure the mobilization of the government. Finally, he concurred that the problem of resource constraints is real in all countries and encouraged the countries to identify the most cost effective way to produce the strategy. He confessed that the Ramsar convention, not being formally tied to

the UN system, has not easy access to the big financial pots such as the GEF and the FFEM. Progress has been made but he asked for the support of the member countries to further link the Ramsar initiatives with the big financial pots. He concluded by pointing out that the Ramsar convention is probably the only convention that can ensure integration of environmental issues in all water-related aspects of the national plans.

Mr. Charbel Rizk emphasized the need to demonstrate the economic values of wetlands through practical demonstrative examples and enquired about efforts in that direction. Mr. Salathe explained that several studies have been conducted and referred to the Ramsar publication earlier cited, though pointing out that it may be too general. The economists are still working on the issue. He also recalled the specific MedWet project which produced 5 socio-economic case studies, copies of which are still available. He agreed that more needs to be done on that front. Mr. Kouvelis cautioned that the pricing of wetland values is very difficult and controversial. The definition of values has to be extremely relevant to the local stakeholders, also paying attention that the price tag does not raise expectations. Ms. Goyet further confirmed that the most recent economic analysis of wetland values do tend to focus on direct values only, sometimes indirect values as well, and that intrinsic and less tangible values remain difficult to assess and not so meaningful in practical terms. But she agreed that case studies carefully integrated within a participatory approach can bring benefits to the process of decision making.

Mr. Esam El Badry, MedWetCoast project manager, Egypt, emphasized the need for gender sensitivity, pointing out that women do have a specific role in wetlands. Spyros explained that, in the context of the next MedWet Centers meeting (Valencia, March 2003), a workshop is organized to discuss cultural values of wetlands. He also reminded that, through the Ramsar Strategic Plan and operational objective 6, there is specific reference to local people including youngsters and women. He confirmed that the various issues raised here do appear in the guidelines in various chapters.

Ms. Lina Yamout requested the speakers to please specify a bit more some of the lessons learned and main issues encountered in the process of elaborating wetland strategy. Mr. Golge emphasized that one of the main constraints was the sheer number of stakeholders participating in the meetings and therefore the difficulty in reaching agreements; this was addressed mostly through bilateral discussions before the meeting so that consensus can be reached at the meeting. In France, Ms. Guth highlighted that the most crucial difficulty is to ensure coherence among the sectoral policies and she cited the example of the highway built through the Marais Poitevin which was secured thanks to support from the Ministry of Equipment and the local authorities, thus leading to the down grading of the site from the Natura 2000 status. She cautioned that the development of a strategy does take time and that it is necessary to monitor the process after some time, eg 10 years.



## **6. Session 2: implementation of the national strategy/policies: guidelines and case studies**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Pere introduced the afternoon session, highlighting the structure of the different interventions. His presentation is attached as [annex 13](#).

### **6.2 Guidelines of the Ramsar convention. Part II: mechanisms for implementation of the wetland strategy and its integration into sectoral policies**

Mr. Salathe started by reminding of the 8 steps recommended for the development of a national strategy. He particularly highlighted the relevance of setting up a national wetland committee, and the prerequisite of representativeness of this committee to ensure a balanced approach. In terms of organizational matters, he underscored a number of issues which should be addressed in order to ensure greater chances of implementation: a) responsibility for implementation, b) developing implementation guidelines and c) defining what resources are needed. He stressed the importance of coordination at the national level and inter-ministerial harmonization as well as the development of an implementation plan or workplan with clear timeframes and targets.

He further highlighted a number of essential parameters to ensure that policy is translated into action:

- article 4.5 – training of policy planning staff and wetlands managers, based on a training needs assessment.
- Precedence of conflict resolution and consensus development

He also underscored the usefulness of sharing experience at national and international level.

In terms of the next steps, he recommended 1) the establishment of a monitoring programme, both to monitor the progress and success in the implementation of the policy and to monitor the status of the wetlands and 2) the set up of mechanisms to adapt the policy to changing circumstances.

His presentation is attached as [annex 14](#).

### **6.3 Spain: Implementation of the strategic plan for the protection and sustainable use of wetland**

Mr. Picatoste described the composition and role of the National Wetlands Committee in charge to coordinate the implementation of the strategy.

He pointed out to the weaknesses in the implementation of the policy:

- lack of political willingness;
- lack of resources to develop/implement the commitments. In that context, he explained that the General Direction of Nature Conservation is using its core budget to implement the strategy, for there is no budget line specific for this purpose;
- overlapping with the Spanish Strategy of Sustainable Development (currently in development). There is a need to redefine the relationship between this and the other strategies (wetlands, biodiversity).

In terms of strengths and opportunities, he highlighted that:

- The strategy is a document of consensus
- The dynamics of work is consolidated
- It gives a solid planning framework
- To be the host country of Ramsar COP8 supposed an reinforcement for the implementation

He pursued by pointing out to specific activities and actions undertaken under each of the general objectives, such as the inventory of wetlands by royal decree, the establishment of a training programme in the National Education Environmental Center and the set up of social participation structures in protected areas. He explained that wetlands funds were envisaged under general objective 7 – mobilize financial assistance – but not yet operational; funds for implementation have therefore been reoriented from the core budget.

He reminded that Spain fully contributes to the European and international agreements, directives and policies related to wetlands, also highlighting that the country contributes to Natura 2000 with 24% of its territory. In terms of international cooperation, he stressed that there are two major priority: latin American countries and Mediterranean countries (by means of the so-called cooperation programmes on biodiversity ARAUCARIA and AZAHAR, respectively).

Finally, he confirmed that Spain is currently preparing an analysis of the Spanish strategy and its alignment to the Ramsar Strategy 2003-2008. He reported though that some 75% of the Ramsar strategy is being addressed by the Spanish strategy.

As a conclusion, he stressed that:

- The use of resources from the DGCN core budget for the implementation of the strategy has resulted into serious limitations
- Weak results in those actions that require strong political support
- Good implementation in those actions related to inventoring, planning, management, research, synergies and cooperation
- The consolidated dynamics of work with a rich and strong relationship among the multiple parties involved in wetland conservation was reinforced

His presentation is attached as [annex 15](#).

Mr. Falaki asked how the Loi Littoral/Coastal Act does contribute to the Spanish wetland strategy. Mr. Picatoste explained that the Spanish Coastal Act does include coastal wetlands, and that there is a strong link between both instruments. He further confirmed that the General Direction of Coastal is a member of the National Wetland Committee, and that, as such, they are involved in setting up the wetlands priorities.

Mr. Boumezbeur asked whether the members of the national wetlands committee are paid on a separate budget or whether they are covered under their own ministry's budget. Mr. Picatoste explained that each body/institution covers the cost of its own participant(s). He reaffirmed that, regrettably, the Ministry has no specific budget for implementation of the wetland strategy.

#### **6.4 France: Implementation of the national action plan for wetland**

Ms. Guth referred to her morning presentation and explained that she would now present a very concrete mechanism for implementation of the strategy. The implementation of the action plan is entrusted with the various dedicated management units: the 6 'poles relais' or activity centers adopted in 2000, set up in 2001, and operational since 2002. Each is hosted in and run by a specialized agency or institution, under contract, and supported administratively by one of the regional directions for environment:

- 1) littoral wetlands - entrusted with the Forum des Marais Atlantique,
- 2) mediterranean lagoons – entrusted with the Tour du Valat,
- 3) peatlands - ENF
- 4) inland wetlands - FPNR
- 5) river valleys - CSP
- 6) ponds and temporary ponds - IEDD

Each of these structures is staffed with 2 persons, and charged to ensure the thematic guidance over the whole territory. They operate under a framework agreement of 3 years with the Ministry

whereby they each receive a yearly allocation of 150,000 Euro in order to carry out their actions. The funds are taken from the Fonds National de Solidarite sur l'Eau.

The coherence of the whole plan is ensured by:

- yearly coordination meetings of the 6 regional directions of the environment, the 6 agences de l'eau and the 6 'poles relais'.
- yearly meeting to review the status and progress
- a technical meeting intra-'poles' to facilitate exchange of experience among the 6 poles relais.

She then presented the organisation of these 'poles relais'. They have a steering committee defining the priorities, and a scientific committee which is consulted on technical and scientific matters.

To translate the national wetland action plan on the ground, the 'poles relais' must:

- collect and make available relevant information. They each have a website where information can be consulted; they organized thematic workshops, publish newsletters and documents
- they promote the sustainable management of wetlands, through their participation in management networks, technical support and guidance, publication of methodological guidelines
- they are responsible for assessing the results of the national action plan at the national level

The mandate of these 'poles relais' is to:

- implement and translate the plan into concrete actions;
- make known the national elements of the plan at the local level;
- participate in relevant fora and networks in order to sensitize and disseminate information
- communicate the results of the actions that they carry.

She then provided further details on the working of these 'poles relais' through the example of the forum des marais atlantiques. Further information and full coordinates of the 'poles relais' can be found at [www.ifen.fr](http://www.ifen.fr)

In terms of communication, she added that the managers of wetlands sites do meet regularly to publish a newsletter 'zones humides info' 3 times a year.

To conclude, she highlighted the priorities of the plan for 2004:

- further carry out the ongoing actions;
- support the activities of the 'poles relais'
- pursue the effort to integrate the wetlands issues into all of the sectoral policies
- strengthen the work of awareness raising and training

She also further informed that they are considering establishing two additional 'poles relais': one for mangroves and for mountains.

Her presentation is attached as [annex 16](#).

Mr. Slaoui pointed out that the sites covered by this plan surely does not only include public but also private land and asked how they succeeded in bringing the private owners in line with the plan's priorities. Ms. Guth explained that getting private owners to participate in the plan does indeed require persuasion, lots of consultation and some resources. There is no straight forward means to oblige a private owner to conserve a wetland. But sensitization and communication should prevail.

Mr. Tayseer Mustaha, Policies and Environment Planning, Environment Quality Authority of the Palestine Authority, pointed out that it took a long time from preparation to implementation and he

asked as to what should then be the recommended action to ensure restoration and implementation of urgent measures when needed and even though the plan is not yet ready for implementation. Ms. Guth emphasized the role and responsibilities of the partners and of the users or abusers in that respect. She cited the example of the highway and TGV line Lyon-Marseille going through wetlands of regional importance. The Highway society was obliged to recreate a wetlands site nearby in compensation for the one that was authorized for destruction.

Ms. Goyet underlined that the French implementation strategy, through the 'poles relais', is a very interesting mechanisms and she asked whether there are any links between the 'poles relais' and regional/international efforts. She also asked about the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of the plan. Ms. Guth pointed out that the 'poles relais' do not have the mandate to do so for the moment, the priority being on strengthening the structure and the initiatives nationally, with the exception of TdV which has some prerogatives to work internationally, but this is due to the mission of TdV not to the objective of the Mediterranean lagoon 'pole relais'. With regards to the involvement of private sectors and investors, she confirmed that the objective is to ensure that they do contribute financially to the effort. She cited the example of the Conservatoire du Littoral which has an agreement with Danone to contribute to infrastructure development of some of the sites. She also mentioned cooperation agreements with private foundations ('fondation de france', 'foundation national des chasseurs', etc.) There are then options for private sector to participate.

## **6.5 Turkey: Implementation of the national strategy for wetland**

Mr. Golge reminded of the operational objectives of the Turkish national plan. In terms of implementation of the strategy, he informed of some of the activities already engaged:

- a national inventory programme and a background education programme started in Fall 2003 (the collected data will be digitized and incorporated in a MedWet database and available on the website);
- some restoration projects have started such as lake Avlan;
- new Ramsar sites have been studied and submitted for nomination, to include 9 karsic sites;
- preparation of management plans (eg. Lake Manyas management plan was launched in 2001, lake Uluabat management plan was completed in 2002). In 2003, 10 new management plans are in the making.

He pointed out that the ministry does not receive any specific budget for the implementation of the strategy but some funds for specific activities: from NGOs or international projects. He pointed out that one of the problems that they encounter in implementing the strategy is the difficulty to run the activities from the central government; therefore they now attempts to work with decentralized agencies or institutions, in particular for environmental education and awareness.

Mr. Tomas asked whether the national wetland committee is involved in the implementation of the strategy. Mr. Golge informed that the committee is consulted for any decision that needs to be taken.

His presentation is attached as [annex 17](#).

## **6.6 Summary of the key elements with regards to the preparation and the implementation of national wetland strategy/policies and discussion**

Mr. Tomas summarized key points from the two sessions.

- as per the Ramsar guidelines, the strategy has to be led by a national lead agency, often, a ministerial department of the Ministry of Environment.
- Identification of main issues
- identification of government departments concerned and other stakeholders
- recommendation that the national wetland committee plays a significant role in that process

He recalled some of the practical recommendations made, in terms of: writing team, budget available, timetable for preparation, political support.

In terms of the outline of the document, he stressed the importance of defining main goals, the scope of the strategy, including the definition of wetland (he cited a few controversies with regards to the definition: rivers, lakes, constructed wetlands), the classification of wetlands, and the values of the wetlands.

He further stressed that the strategy must be based on:

- analysis of status of wetland resources – on the basis of inventories, but also study of the uses, analysis of the problems and causes leading to a diagnosis of the present situation, thereby defining priorities for the strategy
- guiding principles
- definition of objectives: from the general to the specific (eg. the Turkish strategy is following the current Ramsar strategic plan)
- actions: some at the national level, some at the catchment level, some at the local level. He stressed the importance of providing guidelines also at the sectoral policy level (eg. Irrigation, water use)
- definition of who are the actors involved in the implementation of the actions.

In terms of implementation process, he suggested that the actions have to be prioritized, normally through an action plan. He recommended the set up of a coordination mechanism (citing the example of France with the 6 'pole relais'; the role of the ministry in Spain to consolidate the regional action plans). And he stressed that the implication of local actors and funding mechanisms have to be considered when preparing the strategy.

Finally he stressed the importance of monitoring and evaluation and of a feedback process to evaluate the success of the strategy, including through the preparation of annual reports.

He concluded by reaffirming that the strategy is a tool, an instrument to achieve the target, the target being to change the mentality from 'wetlands are wastelands' to 'wetlands are NOT wastelands'.

His presentation is attached as [annex 18](#).

Ms. Aude Delescluse, AFD Lebanon, asked how these national strategies can be integrated into the local development policies and urban plans. From the Turkish side, Mr. Golge mentioned that local authorities are consulted systematically for any local activities planned. As for France, Ms. Guth confirmed that the 'poles relais' do rely on steering committees and local support structures, which are staffed with representatives from local authorities. She gave the example of the Forum of the Marais Atlantiques which organize a number of activities to reach out to local concerns and issues, events which are widely attended by local authorities, thereby further sensitizing them to the issues. In addition, she gave the example of the 42 regional natural parcs/'parcs naturels regionaux' which are closely associated with the local authorities. She also gave the example of the Sologne, largely under private holding. There is then few options: either appropriation of the land by the Conservatoire or negotiation with the private owners, the latter being clearly the preferred option. She stressed that the link to local authorities is through the 'poles relais', which are closely associated with the local issues. In Spain, Mr. Picatoste explained that all local authorities (more than 8000 municipalities and 52 provinces) are grouped into a Federation; this Federation is often used as conduit to convey messages and reach out to the local authorities.

Mr. Raggabi asked about the most effective operational timeline for a strategy. Mr. Salathe indicated that Ramsar guidelines are not specific on this point, probably a 5-year strategy, or one that would best refer to the timeline of national governmental planning processes would be best, i.e. follow the same cycle as the government, in order to ensure best correspondence of the deadlines and synergy across the planning processes. That is why the Convention does not give any strong indication on this issue. Ms. Guth also suggested that, in terms of timeline, it is best to define the timeline as per its own national context and constraints. In France, the scale is 10 years. On the other hand, the 42 'parcs naturels regionaux' set up in 1967 must, every two years, present their

management plan and every 10 years they have to renegotiate their label with the Ministry. For the 7 national parcs, they must develop a 5-year programme of action – fully financed by the State. For other types of policy instruments, the scale of 3 years is recommended, eg. the 3-year framework agreements with the 'poles relais'.

## **7. Session 3: Status of the national wetland policy.strategy in the Mediterranean countries**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Mr. Tomas explained that this next session is about the countries who have not yet elaborated a strategy. He spelled the outline of the countries' presentation:

- the institutional and admin context
- the legal framework of the wetland plan
- the strategic framework of the wetland plan: water strategy, etc.
- the structures, institutions and organisations involved in the preparation.
- the mechanisms for consultation and participation
- the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation
- the steps forward

His presentation is attached as [annex 19](#).

### **7.2 National wetland strategy/policy in Algeria: status**

Mr. Ammar Boumezbeur, DGF, Ministry of Agriculture, Algeria, presented the process carried out up to now in Algeria. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Eaux & Forets, a few objectives have been identified, some of which include:

1. inventory of wetland sites: an atlas of some 254 wetland sites has been prepared covering some 2,8 millions hectares and 8 Ramsar sites;
2. capacity building of site managers: since 1989, a number of training programmes have been delivered, from specific ornithology training sessions to management planning;
3. environmental education: he particularly stressed the effort of the government in terms of communication (documentary, articles, )
4. international valorization of wetlands. One of the objective is to, by the next Ramsar COP, designate 60 wetlands covering more than 3 Million hectares.
5. cooperation with international partners
6. national wetlands policy and action plan

In particular, he cited that, in 1997, under a GEF/UNDP project, a national strategy for the sustainable use of biological diversity was prepared. He spelled out the main elements of this strategy and emphasized that one of the innovative elements was its recommendation that a dedicated agency be created to manage the environment. He summarized that the implementation of the strategy has been estimated at some 3,7 billion Euro.

Finally, he pointed out that a new law was promulgated in July 2003: law on environment and sustainable development. The law on coastal zone management was adopted in August 2003 with the creation of a 'cellule littoral'/coastal center.

His presentation is attached as [annex 20](#)

### **7.3 National wetland strategy/policy in Egypt: status**

Mr. Esam El Badry, MedWetCoast project manager, Egypt explained that some two months ago, they started preparing a first outline of a national strategy and action plan for Egypt. He stressed a few elements:

- importance of the definition



- classification of the wetlands: he mentioned that weeks were needed to address just this point. As a result, 14 categories were identified.

A first attempt at the goal and objectives was presented, with 6 goals and 10 programme areas. The work could be initiated thanks to the fact that there already exists an effective biodiversity national plan, which was used as a basis for developing the first draft of this strategy. The proposed action plan refers to the establishment of the national council for wetlands, meeting every 6 months, and responsible for the implementation of the action plan.

He mentioned that, so far, two sites only are designated as Ramsar sites, also designated as protected areas so that funds can be allocated from the Government.

Finally, he pointed out that one of the problems is the great number of laws in Egypt that have been enacted under the different ministries. It is sometimes necessary to seek higher approval (prime minister's decree) to enforce wetlands policies. One of the actions suggested is to consolidate national law for wetlands.

In terms of work programme, he confirmed that a committee of 10 persons will shortly be formed and visit the sites. A 1-2 day workshop with stakeholders will be organized to provide inputs and further comments. Thereafter, a 100-person meeting will be scheduled in general assembly to finalize the strategy. He expects the process to complete by end of 2004.

His presentation is attached as [annex 21](#).

#### **7.4 National wetland strategy/policy in Tunisia: status**

Mr. Habib Ben Moussa, MedWetCoast project manager, Tunisia, recalled that Tunisia carried out an inventory of the wetlands in 2001. Wetlands are characterized into 6 categories, to which one could add peatlands and dams. He confirmed that the state of knowledge is quite abundant, looking at the bibliography available. As examples of the importance of the Tunisian sites in terms of biodiversity, he pointed out that about 25,000 flamingos come to Tunisia (or about 1/3 of the total med population); he also pointed out that the dams do mobilize some 85% of the water resources available for drinking waters and irrigation.

With regards to the legal status, Tunisia has ratified the Ramsar Convention in 1981 and has a national Ramsar committee. With regards to land tenure, the wetlands do belong to the public domain whether relative to the maritime or freshwater, except for oasis, which are private properties.

With regards to the management of wetlands, a number of legal instruments do regulate the management of wetlands, in particular the code forestier, the relevant laws of application of the Berne and Biodiversity convention and the law 91 on environmental protection.

Talking about national strategies relative to wetlands, he mentioned:

- Agenda 21, which includes reference to the protection of wetlands.
- The 'strategie nationale de gestion des ressources en eau'/national water resource management strategy with the principle that the water resource has as much a social and economic value as as an ecological function. For this he quoted the example of Ichkeul and the release of dam water to the lake which allowed the reappearing of particular species.
- National biological strategy;
- Integrated national coastal zone strategy

In terms of key actions undertaken, a few can be noted:

- A programme of management of the sensitive areas
- A programme with reference to the national parcs which covers 26 parcs, including Ichkeul
- A national sanitation programme (6 Sebkhass).



He concluded by stressing that NGOs are involved in a number of ways in the policy and implementation actions.

His presentation is attached as [annex 22](#).

## **7.5 National wetland strategy/policy in Albania: status**

Ms. Violeta Zuna, MedWetCoast project manager, Albania, introduced her presentation by presenting information on the types and nature of wetlands areas in Albania: a total of 270 sites and 514 artificial sites. She highlighted the importance of the sites for wintering migratory birds (~70 different waterfowl bird species with about 180,000 individuals) and the fact that at least six of the lagoons are considered as IBA (Important Bird Area), or as potential Ramsar sites, with more than 20,000 wintering birds each. To date only two sites have the Ramsar status.

She also stressed that transboundary lakes like Shkodra Lake, Ohri Lake and Prespa Lake are important exchange sites of flora and fauna with the neighboring countries in the Balkan.

She outlined the conventions to which Albania is a party, elaborated relevant documents and legal frame as well as relevant ongoing projects.

She highlighted the problems faced :

- Lack of legal status: only 6% of the territory is actually under protected area status;
- Weak institutions and lack of institutional and financial instruments
- Rapid development of urban and demographic changes often uncontrolled
- Insufficient integration of environment policies and instruments into economic development

She underscored the key threats to and causes of the degradation of wetlands from agricultural activities to soil degradation, industrial activities with high risk of pollution, or use of the wetlands as dumping grounds.

A strategy has not been prepared yet but within the framework of the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) a number of elements and actions are recorded for wetlands protection, including the recommendation to design a strategy and action plan for the sustainable management of wetlands.

Her presentation is attached as [annex 23](#).

## **7.6 National wetland strategy/policy in Lebanon: status**

Ms. Lina Yamout informed that Lebanon has no strategy yet, though is party to the convention since 1999 She described the 4 wetlands sites currently under Ramsar status – these include Aamicq, a private land holding and one of the MWC project site for which a management plan is currently being prepared, and Tyr Coast Nature Reserve declared as a nature reserve, supervised by a local committee, also a MWC project site for which a management plan is currently being.

She cited a number of potential Ramsar sites: 3 potential inland freshwater wetlands, 1 artificial lake, 17 perennial streams, 23 seasonal streams with a combined length of 730km, 250km of coastal strip with several habitats for marine turtles, karst formation (450 caves and abyss systems), and salinas.

Justifying the need for a national wetland strategy in Lebanon, she underscored the diversity of species in the country, with 255 bird species, and the high threats they face together with the other values and functions of the wetlands. A strategy is needed in order to maintain and sustain an effective management of the sites.

She concluded by proposing next steps, to include:

- Starting the national strategy process

- Setting up a national wetlands committee
- Prepare a wetlands inventory

Her presentation is attached as [annex 24](#).

Mr. Boumezbeur pointed out that Lebanon already has a strategy for biodiversity and asked whether the strategy does include reference to wetlands management. He referred to the case of Algeria where there is a strategy for Biodiversity but which does not sufficiently address the questions/issues of wetland protection. Ms. Yamout explained that Lebanon indeed has developed a biodiversity strategy but that it is not yet really implemented. Ms. Chamas added that the biodiversity strategy does make reference to wetlands but possibly not sufficiently. Surely, synergy will have to be made to ensure coherence between the two strategies. She added that one of the action included in the biodiversity strategy is an inventory of wetlands.

Ms. Chamas further reminded of the mechanism adopted by the Lebanese ministry to manage protected areas with the establishment of Government Appointed Committees (GAC) which include local stakeholders and local authorities and therefore link well with the local context and concerns.

### **7.7 National wetland strategy/policy in Morocco: status**

Mr Raggabi, director of the national center for wetlands that was recently created recalled that the Ramsar convention was ratified by Morocco in 1991 and proposed 4 Ramsar sites. Last year 20 new sites were proposed exemplifying the commitment of Morocco to the protection of wetlands. He stressed that the existence of a national biodiversity strategy provides a solid basis already for moving on with the preparation of a wetlands strategy, on the basis of the Ramsar guidelines.

Insofar as the institutional context is concerned, he confirmed that the two key ministries, namely the Ministry of Eaux & Forêts and the Ministry of Environment are closely connected in particular through the biodiversity action plan. In addition to the strategy for biodiversity, he explained that there is also a strategy for protected areas – a law is currently being prepared classifying the protected areas into 5 categories, with the hope that wetlands will be introduced in one of the classification, as recommended by IUCN. He mentioned that there is also a strategy for water resources which can contribute to the strategy for wetlands.

Morocco has a national Ramsar committee (comprising delegates from the Ministry of E&F, Environment, maritime, and water utilities, the NGO SPANAS, and the 'institut scientifique le Grepon). The committee prepares the Ramsar reports to the COP which assess the progress made and the constraints. There is also the biodiversity committee and the 'comite superieur pour l'environnement'.

In conclusion, he highlighted strong and weak points:

- strong concertation between the two ministries
- Ramsar committee already in place

But also:

- the complex lines of responsibilities: the water issues are addressed by several different ministries and jurisdiction.
- the complex land tenure system.

Mr. Falaki added some points on the synergy between the two ministries. The Environment Ministry/Secretariat d'Etat a l'Environnement has prepared and developed individual strategies for the various ecosystems. He also highlighted a number of objectives of the Ministry and some of the actions undertaken by the ministry and relevant to the protection of wetlands.

Finally, he pointed out and commented that noone has talked about indicators yet for the monitoring for wetlands. As example, he reported that Morocco, for the biodiversity national strategy, has developed a series of indicators of pressure, state and response.

The Moroccan presentation is attached as [annex 25](#).

## **7.8 National wetland strategy/policy in the Palestine Authority: status**

Mr. Mustaha presented excuses for not having prepared a proper presentation. He recalled the historical background to development of policies in Palestine, which include:

- In 1998, the Palestine Authority prepared 2 regional plans, one for the Gaza strip and one in Ouzbeck.
- In 2000, a Palestine environmental strategy was issued
- In 2001, a draft national strategy for biodiversity was prepared but not yet approved
- In 2001, a decree was issued for the protection of Wadi Gaza issued.
- In 2003, a management plan for Wadi Gaza was prepared.

With regards to the elaboration of a national wetland strategy, the Palestine Authority plans to first amend the national strategy for environment in 2004 which should be completed by 2005. This strategy define 15 elements and 9 environmental themes, nature protection being on the top of the list.

Regarding Wadi Gaza, the MedWetCoast project site, he informed that the ministerial decree did face conflicts from the local communities, mostly because part of the area is privately owned. As a result, the area proposed as protected area had to be reduced and some agreement was reached with the local municipality.

The approach used for planning in Palestine is a mix of top down and bottom up approach. Regarding the institutional structure, 3 bodies are involved in strategy/policy preparation:

- 1) a steering group with all concerned ministries and environmental institutions – it provides the political support
- 2) a resource group which consists of ministries, technical staff, NGOs and academics – it provides the information base, and
- 3) a planning/technical group – these are the professionals who write the strategies and policies.

Looking at the weaknesses, he highlighted the problems with:

- land ownership, as most of the land is privately owned,
- lack of awareness of people and politicians, and
- limited financial resources

Finally he noted that, as for other MWC countries, in the case of Palestine, one can not concentrate on the protection areas and leave the development aside. In order to protect the natural areas, one has to find jobs or create jobs for the local communities living in or around these areas.

## **7.9 Discussion**

Ms. Mansour, referring to the objectives of the meeting and GEF guidance, cautioned against developing complex documents. She further underscored the importance of identifying which specific areas can be strengthened with this strategic planning process. It is also important to review the sectoral policies and making sure that, as per the specificities of each country, biodiversity is clearly taken care in each of these. She also reminded that this is a GEF biodiversity project and that GEF expects impacts upon the protection of biodiversity. She further mentioned the of the involvement of the private sector, an issue raised many times in this meeting, and called for key institutions to be mobilized, such as the water agencies and equipment ministries which are key players in this area.

She reminded that the strategy needs to lead to clear deliverable and that, for this purpose, it is necessary to be able to measure it. She further reminded the participants that, during the working groups, it would be necessary to narrow down the priorities, identify the timing which would be needed to deliver the strategy and specify how to engage into the process. She stressed that this project has deliverables to show and that the government counterparts have agreed to deliver some

specific commitments with regards to sustaining wetlands and that some concrete results need to be recorded by the end of this project.

Ms. Lamia Chamas further underscored that we have to start thinking as business persons, in particular including a business plan in the management plans in order to best link up with the private and investment sector. She reminded that one has to come up with a product that can be of interest to private partners and one has to sell the strategies and plans. She affirmed that one can not compete by just saying 'protect, protect'. One has to start selling the fact that environmental protection is a money making business as well.

## 8. Working groups : preparation towards a country-process of national wetlands policies/strategy making.

### 8.1 Introduction

Mr. Tomas introduced the working group session. The participants will be divided into 5 'country' groups: Albania, Egypt, Moro, Tunisia, Lebanon. He presented the objective of this working group, i.e. to identify the key aspects at the national level regarding the development of a strategy. The group should review:

- gaps in knowledge that are needed to be completed in order to be able to develop the strategy (eg. Inventory)
- is the current legal framework sufficient? what aspects would need to be improved?
- what aspects of the institutional and administrative context should be improved?
- Are there mechanisms of consultation and participation already in place in the country?
- tentative workplan to proceed to develop a policy, strategy or plan (setting up priorities and timing)

The objective of this session is to prepare the countries so that they have something to start with when back in their respective country. This workshop will be successful if, upon return, a process is launched in the country to develop this strategy. He mentioned that, probably, not much funding is necessary to develop this strategy and that the initial process can be carried out within the MWC project.

His presentation is attached as [annex 26](#).

### 8.2 Report from the Albania working group (Mr. Eno Dodiba)

- 1) As a first step, reviewing /updating the wetlands inventory, which is already carried out.
- 2) Identifying the stakeholders and defining how they will be involved in the development of this strategy
- 3) Establishing an NGO Forum to facilitate their involvement in the strategy making process. The task would be to bring up the concerns from the local level.  
The effort would also involve gathering lessons learned from the activities already carried out in some sites (eg Narta, Butirnti, Karavasta), so that the experiences can serve as background to the development of the strategy, highlighting the obstacles, constraints and successes.
- 4) As far as the other steps, it is necessary to identify potential funding partners for specific activities in the strategy: local to international donors, calling for their possible support to this strategy.  
Having an environmental approach but also linking to the business community: the strategy must fix protected areas status and objectives but also allow for some development to take place.
- 5) Timeline: 12 to 18 months with a validity of 5 to 10 years
- 6) the role of MWC will be to address the issue to the Ministry of Environment and other relevant authorities, to establish and coordinate a committee that will lead the preparation of the strategy and to facilitate the consultation mechanisms

### 8.3 Report from the Egypt working group (Mr. Esam El Badry)

1. Gaps of knowledge: he highlighted that the main problems are:
  - lack of land ownership and land tenure
  - lack of maps (boundaries)
  - identification of threats to define
  - human activities and socio-economic conditions to be further identified
  - information on biodiversity in some wetlands are not yet available

2. legal framework sufficient but we need to solve the conflicts between existing laws; maybe getting an overriding law (decree) would be useful, i.e. not going through the regular channel.
3. institutional and administrative context are not adequate. The national wetlands advisory committee does exist but it needs to be empowered.
4. mechanisms of consultation and participation are in place: good consultation with government institutions and NGOs exist.
5. tentative workplan
  - preparing the first draft strategy by 4 experts from different institutions.
  - development of the final strategy through a) a 1-2 day workshop inviting 10 experts only to add more comments and informations (tent. March); b) conduct several workshops in the sites involving all stakeholders and actors (6 months from April to Oct) – 50 to 100 persons, similar process as the biodiversity strategy, involving representatives from various sectors and institutions – the draft will then be improved iteratively, and c) a general assembly meeting (100 participants) (tent in Nov) under the auspices of the First Lady – preparation would have to be made 6 months in advance.
  - Nov-dec: finalization of the strategy.

#### **8.4 Report from the Tunisia working group (Mr. Habib Ben Moussa)**

The objective of the strategy should be 'to protect the wetlands, involve the population, and have a management plan for each site'.

In terms of knowledge, a number of tools do exist. Similarly the protection of wetlands is clearly formulated at the level of national laws. At present, only the law of APAL, covering coastal zone, envisages the preparation of management plans for the sites and allows to allocate the management to NGOs, institution or private organization.

He recalled of the institutional framework in place to support the process of national strategy making and the various organizations that can provide support in terms of knowledge, management and studies.

He reminded that there exists national mechanisms for consultation and participation, in particular the 'schema directeur d'aménagement des zones sensibles', and the site management plan which allow for systematic public consultation.

Steps and workplan:

- ⇒ Update and improvement of the knowledge of the situation
- ⇒ The regulatory provisions currently available for the management of the coastal zone could be extended to the inland wetlands areas. Also the principle that water is a resource for protection of the wetlands must be confirmed.
- ⇒ Institutional level: ensuring coherence and improving coordination of the actions referring to wetlands. Also one could consider the creation of a center specialized in wetlands / work is engaged towards that
- ⇒ one must create a national committee for wetlands that would be connected to the CNDD and entrusted with the preparation of a national wetland strategy. Also the role of local authorities and NGOs must be strengthened and the private sector must be involved in the management process
- ⇒ financial and cooperation mechanism : funding partners must be invited to participate in the efforts towards implementation of the strategy, in the framework of cooperation agreements.

His presentation is attached as [annex 27](#).

### 8.5 Report from the Lebanon working group (Mr. Charbel Rizk)

He reported that 15 persons participated in this working group meeting – NGOs, private sector, ministries, private owners. It was decided that this meeting would be the first informal steering committee meeting to initiate the process. A small task force was selected to initiate the process, with the Ministry of Environment as lead agency to develop the strategy and MWC as facilitator.

The first priority is to carry out an inventory assessment, a stakeholders identification and a review of the laws. Thereafter financial sourcing is essential.

The work would be at 2 levels – ministries / municipalities and users.

He reminded that they are missing some knowledge and elements.

### 8.6 Report from the Morocco working group (Mr. Falaki)

- 1) in terms of gaps in knowledge, the problem concerns particularly the limited mapping of sites, the lack of information on the legal and land tenure system, and land uses.
- 2) in terms of legal status: there does not exist any specific laws for wetlands protection but some regulatory tools of a general nature exist and can help. A few other relevant laws were cited : 'loi sur les etudes d'impact', 'loi sur l'eau 10/95'. Also the law in the making on protected areas was cited as well as the proposed 'loi littoral'/coastal area law which have direct relevance to wetlands management.
- 3) Institutional set up: There exist a number of mechanisms for consultation and participation, some of these at the local or sub-national. In addition, there is the Ramsar committee, the 'conseil national de l'environnement', the 'comite national de la biodiversite', the 'conseil superieur de l'eau et du climat', and the 'conseil régional sur l'environnement'.
- 4) Tentative workplan:
  - finalize and complete the inventory
  - strengthen the legal and institutional framework through analysis of the legal texts, adoption of a new text for wetlands, and set up of an interministerial structure for wetlands in addition to the adoption of policy for land acquisition

## 9. Summary points of the seminar

- The participants registered that a significant number of steps have been taken in each country towards the development of a National Wetland Strategy: legal framework, strategic framework, National Wetland Committees, etc.
- The MedWet Coast countries reaffirm the importance of initiating or continuing the process of developing a National Wetland Strategy as per the national commitment under the Ramsar convention.
- Within the framework of the project objectives and mandate, the MedWetCoast national projects will support all necessary actions and Government efforts in order to elaborate, finalise and, as far as possible, implement National Wetland Strategies.
- The participants acknowledge the due consideration that should be granted to water and river management issues (including aquifers, catchment, basin-wide strategy, transboundary rivers, water scarcity, etc.) and strongly suggest that, when developing or finalizing a national wetland strategy, efforts be made to reach out to those stakeholders and institutions directly involved in water, river and basin management
- The participants call upon the Ramsar Secretariat, MedWet and the partners to support the efforts of the countries insofar as developing and implementing a national wetland strategy.

In addition, the participants recognize (that):

- National Wetland Strategies provide a framework and are a tool for achieving:
  - conservation of the biological diversity
  - conservation of the cultural heritage
  - sustainable (wise) use of wetland resources
  - local community development
  - integration of wetlands into sectoral policies
  - further development of national policies and strategies (biodiversity, water resources, protected areas, etc.)
  - commitments and obligations related to international conventions (Ramsar, Biological Diversity, Barcelona, World Heritage, Bonn, AEWA, etc.) and strategies (Ramsar SP, Venice, etc.)
  - obtaining funding for wetland conservation and wise use
- the process of preparing a National Wetland Strategy requires:
  - a leading agency to ensure coordination
  - a drafting team or steering committee
  - to involve different governmental, social and economic actors through a consultation and participation process
  - to consider both natural, cultural and socio-economic aspects
- the strategy should be built upon an analysis of the status of wetland resources that
  - is based on the best available information from inventories, assessments, research, etc.
  - analyzes the uses, problems and causes
  - makes a diagnosis of the present situation
  - allows to define priorities for the strategy
- the strategy should incorporate:
  - clear statement of objectives: general and specific, Ramsar Strategic Plan
  - clear statement of actions at national, catchment and local level
  - clear statement of the actors in charge of each action



- a multisectoral approach
  - consideration of transboundary rivers and waters
  - priorities and calendar for implementation
  - provision of funding for implementation
- the scope of the strategy should be defined based on:
- a wetland definition  
“areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres” including areas which “may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands”
  - a wetland classification
- the importance of full involvement of the National Wetland Committee in the preparation and implementation of the Strategy
- the advantages of a formal endorsement or approval of the National Wetland Strategy by the government
- the need for appropriation of the strategy by the different actors involved in its implementation
- the importance of establishing mechanisms for:
- coordinating the implementation of the strategy through a coordination unit, activity centres, etc.
  - monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Wetland Strategy
  - the important role of the National Wetland Committee in the monitoring process
- the timing for the National Wetland Strategy should be:
- Development phase: 10-18 month
  - Implementation phase: 5-10 years

See [annex 28](#) (Pere Tomas presentation)

## 10. Closing

On behalf of all of the participants, Mr. Raggabi thanked all of the delegates, resource persons, institutions and especially the Lebanese colleagues for their contribution to the seminar. He extended his gratitude to Mr. Charbel Rizk and his team for the excellent organization of the seminar and special thanks to the Ramsar and MedWet representatives. He pointed out that this seminar provided the opportunity to exchange experience and assess the work that is still needed to protect the Mediterranean wetlands. He also highlighted the spirit of cooperation and frank exchange that prevailed and pointed out that bringing northern and southern Mediterranean countries around one table was most inspiring and effective in fostering national mobilization and regional networking.

Ms. Lamia Chamas closed the meeting by reaffirming the thanks extended earlier and wishing all of the participants the best and a safe return. She invited them to continue sharing experience and information and to keep the connection among experts and countries.

# ANNEXES

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- A01** – Lamia's speech
- A02** – Yves de San's speech
- A03** – Agenda
- A04** – List of participants
- A05** – “The Ramsar strategic plan and its implementation in the Mediterranean region: the MedWet initiative” – Spyros Kouvelis
- A06** – “Mainstreams and Environmental consideration in Catchment Management” – César Alcacer
- A07** – “Assessment of water policies in the light of principles on Integrated River Basin Management: case studies from Morocco and Tunisia” - Holger Schmid
- A08** – Introduction of session 1 – Pere Tomas
- A09** – Guidelines from the Ramsar Convention (part 1) – Tobias Salathe
- A10** – Spain: Preparation of the strategic Plan – José Ramon Picatoste
- A11** – France: Preparation of the National Action Plan for wetlands (1995) – Marie Odile Guth
- A12** – Turkey: Preparation of the national strategy for wetland (2003-2008) – Mehmet Golge
- A13** – Introduction of session 2 – Pere Tomas
- A14** – Guidelines from the Ramsar Convention (part 2) – Tobias Salathe
- A15** – Spain: Implementation of the strategic Plan – José Ramon Picatoste
- A16** – France: Implementation of the National Action Plan for wetlands – Marie Odile Guth
- A17** – Turkey: Implementation of the national strategy for wetland – Mehmet Golge
- A18** – Summary of the key elements with regards to the preparation and the implementation - Pere Tomas
- A19** – Introduction of session 3 – Pere Tomas
- A20** – National wetland strategy/policy in Algeria: status – Ammar Boumezbeur
- A21** – National wetland strategy/policy in Egypt: status – Esam El Badry
- A22** – National wetland strategy/policy in Tunisia: status – Habib Ben Moussa
- A23** – National wetland strategy/policy in Albania: status – Violeta Zuna
- A24** – National wetland strategy/policy in Lebanon: status – Lina Yamout
- A25** – National wetland strategy/policy in Morocco: status - Raggabi
- A26** – Introduction of work group sessions – Pere Tomas
- A27** – Report from the Tunisia working group - Habib Ben Moussa
- A28** – Conclusions – Pere Tomas