



**CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS OF THE PARTIES TO
MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS IN 2008:
COMMON THEMES AND APPROACHES**
[Amended version 15 September 2008]

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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS OF THE PARTIES TO MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS IN 2008: COMMON THEMES AND APPROACHES

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1. Background

- 1.1 Later in 2008, there is a concentration of Conferences and Meetings of the Parties (CoPs and MoPs) to a range of multilateral environmental agreements to which the UK is party (see Annex 1). JNCC staff will support the UK Government delegations at most of these meetings in our role as scientific advisers. Advice to Government on IUCN is led by the Countryside Council for Wales.
- 1.2 It is clearly desirable that JNCC provides consistent messages on key issues across the various agreements, in line with the approach agreed by Committee in June 2007 (JNCC 07 D07). Sections 2-7 of this paper cover a number of cross-cutting themes, and suggest potential lines for our advice to UK Government.

2. Climate change and biodiversity

- 2.1 Climate change will be a major issue for discussion at all the meetings of multilateral environmental agreements this year.
- 2.2 **Key messages** for JNCC to promote include:
- i. biodiversity and geodiversity can play a positive role in climate change mitigation and adaptation – this role needs to be clarified and communicated;
 - ii. further work is needed to assess the implications of changing species' distribution and habitat composition for conservation tools such as protected areas;
 - iii. better understanding of ecosystem services is needed to support the development of adaptation management tools;
 - iv. initiatives to 'climate proof' development aid need to be 'biodiversity proofed' as well.
- 2.3 There is significant potential to use cross-cutting processes¹ under the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** aimed at reducing forest loss to ensure that work undertaken under the three main Rio conventions (UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification) is complementary.

¹ LULUCF (Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry) and more recently REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Developing Countries)

- 2.4 The **Ramsar Convention** has been asked by the Convention on Biological Diversity to take the lead on guidance and policies regarding climate change and wetlands. A draft resolution to the Ramsar CoP² stresses the importance of intact wetlands in carbon sequestration and storage, as well as in the provision of other ecosystem services.
- 2.5 Following a UK-drafted resolution adopted at MoP3 of the **African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement** on climate change and migratory waterbirds³, further work has been funded by the UK, including the preparation of a major assessment of the impacts of climate change on migratory waterbirds and draft guidance for response options. A draft resolution for MoP4 identifies species particularly at risk.
- 2.6 Defra have funded work to identify a suite of migratory species that may act as international indicators of climate change⁴. The outcomes of this work will be reported to CoP9 of the **Convention on Migratory Species**.
- 2.7 *A new climate for change* is one of the key themes of the **World Conservation Congress**.

3. Ecosystem services and human health

- 3.1 There is increasing emphasis across multilateral environmental agreements on the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity and their contribution to human livelihoods, well-being and health. Losses of biodiversity erode the provision of such services, and the rural poor in developing countries are especially vulnerable.
- 3.2 In the future there is likely to be increased emphasis on ecosystem services as a major justification for the conservation of biodiversity, set in terms of their economic benefits and their contribution to alleviating poverty and enhancing the health and food security of the world's population. The recent publication of *The economics of ecosystems and biodiversity*⁵ is an example of this trend.
- 3.3 **Key messages** for JNCC to promote include:
- i. recognition of the value of ecosystem services to human livelihoods and well-being and the appropriate economic valuation of such services offers a means of making informed decisions about future policies and actions (although such valuation may not always support the case for nature conservation);
 - ii. the ecosystem approach needs to be developed further to enable its practical application;
 - iii. we need to address existing perverse incentives that detrimentally affect biodiversity and ecosystem services, and guard against the creation of new ones.
- 3.4 This theme will be explored further at the **Ramsar CoP**⁶, noting the conference theme of *Healthy wetlands, healthy people*. It is also one of the three themes of the **World Conservation Congress: Healthy environments, healthy people**.

² http://www.ramsar.org/sc/37/key_sc37_doc27.htm

³ http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop3_docs/final_resolutions_pdf/res3_17_climate_change.pdf

⁴ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/resprog/findings/climatechange-migratory/climatechange-migratory.pdf>

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/economics/pdf/teeb_report.pdf

⁶ http://ramsar.org/sc/37/key_sc37_doc26.pdf; http://ramsar.org/sc/37/key_sc37_doc32.pdf

4. Biofuels

- 4.1 The Joint Committee has endorsed a JNCC position statement on biofuels and nature conservation. The issue remains highly topical and controversial, especially with respect to the impact of biofuel production on food security and food prices. There are also strong links to climate change mitigation.
- 4.2 **Key messages** for JNCC to promote are set out in our position statement and include:
- i. biofuels must deliver genuine savings in carbon emissions, should not affect the attainment of the 2010 biodiversity targets, and should not affect the provision of ecosystem services or the sustainable use of natural resources;
 - ii. the development of internationally agreed sustainability criteria for the production of biofuels is a high priority.
- 4.3 The EU is currently developing a set of sustainability criteria for biofuels as part of the Directives on Renewable Energy and Fuel Quality. JNCC has worked closely with officials in Defra and the European Commission and has actively contributed to the development of these criteria. The **Convention on Biological Diversity** has the potential to be another international forum to develop sustainability criteria and/or guidelines. However, at CoP9 several countries were strongly opposed to discussions on biofuels under the Convention; this has weakened the Convention's role but there is still potential for the Convention to make a significant contribution if effort is well placed.
- 4.4 Consideration of biofuels in the **Ramsar Convention** focuses on their impacts on wetlands and the ecosystem services these provide, in particular through water abstraction or direct habitat conversion for agriculture. Such changes may cause the release of stored carbon from wetlands. A draft resolution⁷ suggests further work for the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel – there is scope for JNCC to offer expertise in taking such work forward.
- 4.5 Biofuels are likely to arise as a significant issue at the World Conservation Congress.

5. Avian influenza and other wildlife diseases

- 5.1 Wildlife disease and zoonoses and their direct and indirect effects on human health, socio-economic issues and wild bird conservation have been the subject of considerable attention in the recent past, especially with regard to the spread from eastern Asia of highly pathogenic avian influenza (sub-type H5N1). Comprehensive guidance on how to respond to the spread of this disease has been developed through a number of international fora, with significant input from JNCC's senior ornithologist.
- 5.2 This is a good example of how UK practical experience in implementation has contributed to the development of what is being promoted as good practice guidance at international level. Moreover, the issue provides a good example of the need to integrate work at a range of scales ranging from international multilateral collaboration, to pan-EU down to national implementation,

⁷ http://ramsar.org/sc/37/key_sc37_doc28.pdf

all underpinned by a strong evidence base, including the UK's surveillance of wetland birds and their migration.

5.3 While some further work on avian influenza is likely to be necessary in future, there is a broader issue to address with respect to other wildlife diseases/zoonoses (e.g. West Nile virus), their implications for wildlife, human health and livelihoods, and how responses to these might be coordinated. A report to the Convention on Biological Diversity CoP suggested that 26% of all human mortality is attributable to infectious disease and that 60% of these are zoonotic in origin; 70% of such zoonotic infections arise from interactions with wildlife.

5.4 **Key messages** for JNCC to promote include:

- i. the guidance and best practice for dealing with the spread of avian influenza should be adopted;
- ii. this guidance should be used as a model for developing a proactive and strategic approach to risks of future zoonoses (some of which may have implications for biodiversity conservation) that may spread as a result of climate change and globalisation of trade;
- iii. good communication is needed to prevent ill-considered reactions to zoonotic diseases, such as wide-scale culling, becoming a major risk to biodiversity;
- iv. preventing wildlife diseases from spreading or being introduced into new areas is far more effective than seeking to contain or eradicate diseases following outbreaks.

5.5 Draft resolutions to the **Ramsar** and **African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement** meetings contain guidance on responding to the spread of avian influenza, and a similar resolution is anticipated at the **Convention on Migratory Species** CoP.

5.6 A resolution on broader wildlife diseases issues is likely to be prepared for consideration at the **Convention on Migratory Species** CoP9.

6. Invasive alien species

6.1 Invasive alien species are a major pressure on biodiversity and ecosystem health, and are likely to become an increasing global problem, exacerbated by the effects of climate change. The UK is ahead of many other countries in recently launching an Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain⁸.

6.2 An EU strategy for Invasive Alien Species should be adopted in late 2009 or early 2010.

6.3 **Key messages** for JNCC to promote include:

- i. many of the principles and proposals contained in the GB Strategy are relevant at an international level;
- ii. island ecosystems are especially threatened by invasive alien species, and so the issue is particularly pertinent to the Overseas Territories.

⁸ http://www.nonnativespecies.org/documents/Invasive_NNS_Framework_Strategy_GB_E.pdf

6.4 Invasive alien species will probably be covered at the **Ramsar** CoP during discussion of progress with the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 and at the meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

7. Overseas Territories

7.1 The major wildlife conventions have been extended to a number of the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (referred to hereafter collectively as the 'Territories'). It is clearly vital that, where appropriate, the Territories have the opportunity to provide views on issues being discussed at CoPs, and that relevant outcomes are fed back to them so that they are aware of any decisions and can, if appropriate, take steps to implement them.

7.2 Many of the issues discussed in sections 2-6, especially climate change, invasive alien species and ecosystem services, are at least as relevant to the Territories as they are to the metropolitan UK.

7.3 JNCC staff will be alert to the relevance to the Territories of issues arising at the various meetings of multilateral environmental agreements. Where appropriate, we will encourage input from the Territories to our scientific advice to Government, identify scope for their involvement at meetings, and provide feedback.

Annex 1. Major meetings of multilateral environmental agreements in 2008

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) CoP9 www.cbd.int/cop9	19-30 May 2008	Bonn, Germany
African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) MoP4 www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop4_docs/mop4.htm	15-19 September 2008	Antananarivo, Madagascar
IUCN World Conservation Congress http://cms.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/index.cfm	5-14 October 2008	Barcelona, Spain
CMS initiative to develop an agreement on African-Eurasian Migratory Raptors www.cms.int/species/raptors/index.htm	20-22 October 2008	United Arab Emirates
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands CoP10 www.ramsar.org/index_cop10_e.htm	28 October - 4 November 2008	Changwon, South Korea
Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) CoP9 www.cms.int/bodies/cop_mainpage.htm	1-5 December 2008	Rome, Italy
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) CoP 14 http://unfccc.int/meetings/items/2654.php	1-12 December 2008	Poznań, Poland