Resolution on Cooperation (RoC) between the Secretariats of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group

Background

Status – the Arctic
The Arctic plays host to a globally significant array of biodiversity. The size and nature of Arctic ecosystems make them of critical importance to the biological, chemical and physical balance of the globe. Dramatic changes (e.g. habitat fragmentation, climate change) now ongoing and underway are threatening the resiliency and sustainability of the Arctic’s biodiversity and the overall balance of its ecosystems. Continued rapid change in the Arctic will have global repercussions affecting the planet’s biodiversity as a whole.

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF):
The Arctic Council (AC) is an international, intergovernmental circumpolar forum with eight member states (Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States) and six Indigenous Peoples’ organizations, which are known as Permanent Participants (The Aleut International Association (AIA), The Athabaskan Arctic Council (AAC), the Gwich’in Council International (GCI), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and the Saami Council (SC)).

The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) program is the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council. Its mandate is to address the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, and communicate its findings to the governments and residents of the Arctic, helping to promote practices which ensure the sustainability of the Arctic’s living resources. In order to successfully conserve the natural environment and allow for economic development, baseline data on long-term status and trends of Arctic biodiversity, habitats and ecosystem health is required. CAFF’s projects provide data for informed decision making on biodiversity issues. Possible joint activities in the future could include such key CAFF activities as the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA), the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP), nature conservation and work under the present CAFF expert groups on Seabirds (CBIRD) and on Arctic Flora (CFG).

The core objectives of CAFF are:
- To monitor Arctic biodiversity;
- To conserve Arctic species and their habitats;
- To consider the establishment of protected areas;
- To conserve nature outside of protected areas; and
- To integrate both conservation objectives and measures into the economic sectors of society.
Ramsar can help place Arctic wetlands within a global framework while CAFF can help inform Ramsar on the status and trends of water and biodiversity in this globally significant region. The Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet), which includes six out of the eight Arctic nations and operates as a regional initiative under the framework of the Ramsar Convention, could become an operational mechanism for cooperative projects and programmes.

Areas of cooperation

In the face of increasing threats to Arctic water quality biodiversity, cooperation with regards to understanding biodiversity changes within this fragile and unique ecosystem is extremely important. A Resolution on cooperation between the Secretariats of Ramsar and CAFF can contribute to building and sharing knowledge, creating awareness and enhancing capacity for understanding change. This cooperation can help focus more attention on trends in wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services in this period of a rapidly changing Arctic climate. Governments and other stakeholders may see the activities of CAFF and Ramsar as mutually supportive.

The Ramsar Secretariat intends to use relevant and available opportunities to promote the importance of Arctic biodiversity and ecosystem services, including status, trends and threats, including the co-organising of Arctic side-events at Ramsar meetings and the dissemination of CAFF assessments and other materials where appropriate.

CAFF intends to seek opportunities to raise awareness of Arctic wetlands and to use relevant and available opportunities to promote the importance of Arctic wetlands. CAFF’s Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA) and Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) provide concrete opportunities to include wetland-related information, and to contribute wetland-relevant information from Arctic assessments into Ramsar’s planned Global Wetland Reporting System (GWOS) and periodic reporting on the state of the world’s wetlands.

Other areas where Ramsar and CAFF can potentially cooperate are through the Expert Monitoring Groups which are being formed under CAFF’s Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme. These cover freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems and an Arctic Protected Areas monitoring framework, which could include monitoring of designated Ramsar Sites in the Arctic region.

CAFF Chair
Date: 12-07-2012

The RAMSAR Secretariat
Date: 12-07-2012