
11th Meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee

5 July 2012, Bucharest, Romania

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Report of the MedWet/Com11 meeting

The 11th Meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) took place in Bucharest, Romania, on 5 July 2012. The meeting has been held prior to the COP11 opening meeting and chaired by Emmanuel Thiry (France), Chair of the MedWet Steering Group with Nejib Benessaiah as Coordinator of the MedWet Initiative and Lily Mordechai, Communications Officer as Rapporteur. The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention has been invited to co-chair the meeting, but he was not able due to last moment other commitment, to attend. The good surprise was the unexpected attendance of Dr Luc Hoffmann as MedWet honorary member.

Of the 45 members of MedWet/Com, 15 were represented in the Meeting, as listed in the attached participants list. Jordan and Portugal due to flight constraints did not attend the meeting. Observers present were three members of the BlackSeaWet Initiative, members of WWF International and WWF Turkey. Due to the limited time allocated (3 hours) the meeting started directly with the scheduled points of the agenda.

Discussion on the agenda items

Agenda item 1: Reporting on MedWet Activities: from Bastia to Bucharest (Doc MWC11.02)

Lily Mordechai, Communications Officer presented the report on MedWet activities held between MedWet/Com10 in Bastia, France (June 2010) and May 2012. The achievements of MedWet in terms of networking, project developments and communication were presented in the framework of the four axes of the MedWet Strategic Vision including a separate section on CEPA activities.

It was observed that axis 4 “Moderating the impact of climate change” has not yet been well addressed. The MWO first report, the MedWet inventory System and the successful implementation of the International Symposium on Water and Wetlands in the Mediterranean were presented under Axis 1 and were noted with satisfaction.

In Axis 2 the cooperation of MedWet with various regional and international organisations were briefly described for example with the Union for the Mediterranean, the IME and GWP. Under Axis 3 projects in progress and in formulation in which MedWet is involved were presented for example the NEREUS project led by the IUCN-Med, the sustainable management of Mediterranean lagoons led by RAC/SPA, the Prespa Transboundary Park and others. Its support to other regional initiatives like the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative and BlackSeaWet were also mentioned. Finally, the work done on CEPA and the impending launching of a French version of the MedWet website as well as two new sections namely the MedWet School- which will host wetland educational resources and The Agadir Commitments- which will monitor the projects inscribed in the list were presented. The presentation briefly mentioned the organisational developments of the Medwet bodies and the current staffing of the secretariat.

Agenda item 2: Reporting on the Agadir Symposium

In absence of comments or clarifications request by the MedWet/Com members, concerning the project achievements, CEPA and networking activities, a short film of 6 minutes prepared by the MedWet Secretariat was screened on the Agadir Symposium. It was noted with satisfaction by the members. The Coordinator invited the participants to attend the MedWet related side events where more details on the Agadir Symposium will be given.

Agenda item 3: MedWet Terms of Reference & Internal Regulations (Doc MWC11.03 & Info MWC 11.011)

The MedWet Coordinator presented the changes in the MedWet Terms of Reference, mainly the changes in the MedWet Steering Group membership and structure and the MedWet Scientific and technical Network. For the MW/SG he noted the new member- including the permanent presence of Greece as a host of the Secretariat and the new system with setting an alternate country in case the main member country can't attend. He mentioned that a quorum is reached with the presence of 5 members, 2 of which must be state members. Finally, he mentioned that meetings will be limited to once a year due to financial constraints but that Skype will be used to resolve emerging issues remotely.

The MedWet Scientific and Technical Network new clarifications were presented and the distinction between becoming a member of the MedWet/Com and participating in the network was made, as recommended strongly by the 9th MW/SG. The new potential members were presented : RSCN Jordan, SPNL Lebanon, SPANA Morocco, WWF-Tunis and Med-INA Greece.

Croatia requested a re-circulation of the document visibly presenting these changes in an easy to read manner and explaining the difference with the past structures. The coordinator agreed and the document will be uploaded on the MedWet website with these changes. Taking into consideration the comment by Croatia, the members presented no disagreement to this new structure, membership criteria and potential joining organisations, so the document was adopted.

Agenda item 4: MedWet Strategic Work Plan 2013-2015 (Doc MWC11.04 & Info MWC11.02)

The MedWet Coordinator, Nejib Benessaiah presented the MedWet Strategic WorkPlan 2013-2015, as the previous one adopted in the MedWet/Com9 in 2008 is reaching its end. In order to review the level of achievement of the MedWet strategic Work Plan 2009-2012 the coordinator invited the members to review the Information Document 11.02. He mentioned that based on the Agadir conclusions and Guidelines it was recently proven that the strategic vision is still relevant but that in the new work plan the lessons learnt from the previous one have been incorporated. One of the main efforts is to capitalise on the Agadir Symposium that is to maintain and organise the Agadir Commitments, identify gaps and develop new projects, encourage and disseminate the MedWet Inventory System, promote more MedWet networks like the Culture and the NGO's networks and continue to promote the involvement of young generations in wetland issues. On a final note, he insisted on trying to interest private sponsors in MedWet and wetlands activities. In the absence of comments by the members the document has been adopted.

¹ Info MWC 11.01 MedWet Association internal regulation and rules of procedure

Agenda item 5: MedWet Financial Situation (Doc MWC11.05)

The MedWet Coordinator presented the financial situation of MedWet to the members, in a concise manner mentioning the lack of funding for 2011 and 2012 by the host country and the financial problems this has created. He did however note that prudent financial management in the last few years has led to creation of a reserve fund which has proven invaluable in the last year. He stated that a certain amount from the reserve fund is currently being used to sustain the critical mass required for the MedWet initiative and especially secretariat operation. He also underlined that 62.000 euros is missing from past contributions but he recalled on a positive note that most other countries continue to provide their contribution in a systematic manner.

Greece expressed the commitment of the Ministry to continue supporting the MedWet Secretariat and noted that the failure to pay the 2011 and 2012 contribution was also a matter of political instability not just financial reasons, as there have been 2 rounds of elections very recently. He stated that a new minister is now in place and a secretary general will soon be appointed and that he is hopeful that the contribution either fully or partly will be paid so as to continue the operation of the MedWet Secretariat.

Croatia requested an updating of the table for the 2012 contribution, as Croatia has paid its share and that was not reflected in the table. The coordinator replied that the table had been last updated on the 15th May 2012 and that was the reason it was not included. He said the money has been received and MedWet is grateful for that.

Spain requested to add as an annex on the financial report in the future the table of agreed country contributions, so that it is clear what amount was decided to be given by each country. She stated that this would assist the justification to her Ministry of the amount of funds released. The coordinator agreed and the document will be revised and circulated with the consideration of the comments by Croatia and Spain.

The Coordinator reminded the participants of the decision taken by the Steering Group to consider the difficulties of the host country which pays for more than 10 years over 60% of the budget of the initiative, and to wait until the end the 2012 the expected contributions for the operation of MedWet.

He briefly presented the various options for the MedWet Initiative in case Greece is not able to pay its contributions like changing the location of the secretariat, increasing the funds by other members, finding private donors or implementing projects. He did also note that even though a contribution has not been paid for two years by the host country they are still paying the overhead costs of the secretariat (rent, phone line etc) which amounts to approximately 35.000 euro a year.

The members did not express any specific path of action or other suggestion and the status quo will be maintained until the end of 2012, as decided by the MW/SG10 before any clear decision is taken.

Agenda items 6 & 7: Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory Advisory Board meeting (Doc MWC11.06)

The MWO Coordinator, Laurent Chazee screened a 10 minute film on the observatory and the results of its first report. He emphasized the publication of the first report "Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2012" as well as the publication of the first thematic issue on biodiversity. He then presented some major points concerning the status and trends of Mediterranean wetlands and explained the types of partnerships, networking and communication used by the MWO. He observed the impact of the MWO by stating the requests made by several organisations for assisting the creation of national and local observatories for example in

France and in Morocco. Finally he proposed the 2012-1025 workplan for the MWO centred around three broad sections: (i) the management and development of the MWO, (ii) the monitoring and dissemination and (iii) its strategic and political influence. In the absence of comments by the members the strategic plan of the MWO is considered approved.

Agenda Item 8: Recruitment process of the MedWet Coordinator
(Doc MWC11.07)

The Chair of the MedWet Steering Group, Emmanuel Thiry, presented the process for the recruitment of a coordinator for the MedWet Initiative. The members presented no disagreements to the process and so it is considered adopted.

Agenda Item 9: Host country for the MedWet/Com12 and other matters

The Chair of the MedWet Steering Group, Emmanuel Thiry presented the issue of the next MedWet/Com 12 to be held in the first trimester of 2014. The Coordinator of MedWet, briefly informed the members on his recent travels to Malta, Cyprus and Jordan and suggested that one of the above countries may host the MedWet/Com12. No final decisions were made but contacts will be continued by the Coordinator to find potential locations and partners.

MedWet/Com11 Decisions

The Mediterranean Wetlands Committee

1. NOTED with satisfaction the efforts the diverse activities completed since MedWet/Com10 in Bastia, France.
2. APPROVED the updated Terms of Reference for the MedWet Initiative, concerning the operation of the MedWet Steering Group and the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network.
3. MANDATED the Secretariat to more clearly present the changes in the MedWet Terms of Reference and concerning specifically the operation of the MedWet Steering Group and the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network, in an annex to the document Doc MWC11.03 distinguishing the changes from past operation.
4. ENDORSED the enlargement of the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network with new members.
5. APPROVED the MedWet Strategic Work Plan 2013-2015, as prepared by the MedWet Secretariat, to guide the future activities of MedWet.
6. APPROVED the financial report produced by the MedWet Secretariat.
7. REQUESTED the inclusion of an annex to the financial report stating the level of contribution of each member country, as approved in Frascati (MedWet/Com8).
8. ENDORSED the publication of the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory publication "Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2012" and the work undertaken by the MWO.
9. APPROVED the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory strategic action plan for 2013-2015, as prepared by the MWO Coordination Unit.
10. ENDORSED the recruitment process a MedWet Coordinator as prepared by the MedWet Secretariat.