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From Bastia to Bucharest

June 2010- May 2012: A report on MedWet activities



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Summary report

The objective of this report is to provide MedWet/Com members with an update of the activities undertaken during the time period between the 10th meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com10) which took place in Bastia, Corsica in June 2010 and the MedWet/Com11, which is being held in parallel with the 11th meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP11) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Bucharest, Romania in July 2012. The report is thus, framed around the implementation process of the MedWet/Com10 decisions and the recommendations of the 9th meeting of the MW/Steering Group held in Athens (27th-28th January 2011) and the 10th held in Paris (29th-30th March 2012). The report is divided into two main sections, the Implementation of the MedWet Strategic Vision and Strategic Work plan and the Operation of MedWet in terms of governance, finances and MedWet secretariat legal status and functioning.

The first section of the report focuses on MedWet's achievements and has been divided according to the four axes of the 2009-2012 Strategic Work plan approved in the MedWet/Com9. These have been presented in such a way as to facilitate an evaluation of the extent to which the Work plan is being implemented and are related to networking, communication and project development activities. Overall, greater weight has been given to Axis 1, improving knowledge on Mediterranean wetlands, Axis 3, ensuring the integrated management of wetlands and less so to Axis 2 promoting, developing and implementing national wetland policies and inter-sectoral action plans. Key partnerships in the implementation of the first three axes have been MedWet's active involvement with the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory, its consistent presence in several Advisory Boards and Workshops and the successful organisation and implementation of the Agadir Symposium which took place in Morocco in February 2012. Axis 4, moderating the impact of climate change needs to be more actively addressed in the near future.

The second part of the report focuses on the Operation of MedWet and has been divided in terms of governance matters, MedWet Secretariat operation, its finances and legal status. It has been compiled based on the two intermediate reports sent to the Steering Group. Section 2.1 analyses the organisational developments in the Steering Group and the Scientific and Technical Network. Section 2.2 deals with the current status of the Secretariat in terms of staffing situation and other administrative issues. MedWet's financial developments and audits for 2010 & 2011 are discussed in Section 2.3 in brief. More detailed reports can be given upon request to any interested MedWet/Com member. Finally, section 2.4 details the developments with the legal status of the MedWet Secretariat, even though, as suggested from various sources, this activity has been paused at present due to the turbulent political scene in the host country.

1. Implementation of the MedWet Strategic Vision and Work plan

The 9th meeting of the MedWet/Com in Changwon, Republic of Korea in October 2008 adopted a strategic Vision¹ and a strategic Work plan for the triennium 2009-2012 with 4 main axes along which the MedWet Initiative activities should be developed:

1. Improving the knowledge on Mediterranean wetland functions, services and values, as well as on their status and trends
2. Promoting, developing and implementing national wetland policies and inter-sectoral action plans
3. Ensuring the sustainable integrated management of wetlands
4. Moderating the impact of climate change

The Strategic Vision sets long-term targets in each of these fields, to be implemented through successive triennial periods. For the first period, 2009 -2012², the Work Plan was ambitious in the scope and the strategic relevance of its activities. It was hence proposed from the beginning to focus on a limited number of activities, addressing the main identified priorities. This report covers the last two years of the triennium and comes to succeed Doc MWC10.2 'From Changwon to Bastia: Report on MedWet activities³', which covered the beginning. The achievements of MedWet will be presented below in relation to the four axes of the MedWet Strategic Vision.

11. Achievements under Strategic Axis 1

Improving the knowledge on Mediterranean wetlands.

(a) Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO)

The MWO is designed to be a major MedWet tool to assess, in the long run, the conservation status and the trends of Mediterranean wetlands. Its results also assist in creating and/or developing awareness amongst decision makers on the value of their protection. Its establishment was adopted by the MedWet/Com in 2008 and during the reporting period a major development has been the publication of the MWO first report "Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2012". The report, in its two versions, is available for download in English and French from the MWO and MedWet websites.

The MedWet Secretariat has assisted the MWO Coordination Unit in facilitating contacts with MedWet countries, consulting on strategic issues, written material and other matters, providing financial support for the better visibility of the first report and providing the MWO with a central role in the International Symposium on Water and Wetlands in the Mediterranean held in Agadir, Morocco, 6th-8th February 2012.

(b) International Symposium on Water and Wetlands in the Mediterranean "From Grado to Agadir: the next twenty years"

The importance of the Grado+20 Symposium for the future of the MedWet Initiative had been clearly stated by the MedWet Steering Group during its 8th and 9th meeting and the MedWet/Com during its 10th meeting. Due to organisational problems the Grado+20 Symposium took place in Agadir, Morocco, 6th-8th February 2012, - henceforth referred to as the Agadir Symposium.

¹ The MedWet Strategic Vision and Work plan can be downloaded at www.medwet.org

² Ref. Doc MWC9.6 MedWet Strategic Work Plan 2009-2012

³ Doc MWC10.2 From Changwon to Bastia: Report on MedWet activities can be downloaded at <http://www.medwet.org/documents/medwetcom-meetings/>

The Agadir Symposium was placed under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and the aegis of the Ramsar Convention. The Symposium was opened by Her Royal Highness the Princess Lalla Hasnaa and it attracted wide participation from all over the Mediterranean and beyond as well as from Morocco - a total of 263 participants.

The three day Symposium was divided into plenary sessions and thematic workshops, designed to touch on key aspects, threats of Mediterranean water-related ecosystems as well as challenges and perspectives of cooperation in various fields. The thematic sessions were

1. Ecosystem based approach to water resource management
2. Adaptation to Climate Change
3. Human Pressures and Wetland Services
4. Values of wetland cultural services
5. Sustainable use of Wetland Resources
6. Wetland ecosystems biodiversity and its values

One of the major objectives of the Symposium is increasing and sharing knowledge on Mediterranean wetlands- in line with Axis 1. However, as seen above, the topics selected for the thematic sessions were relevant to all the axes of the strategic vision and hence the Agadir Symposium can be considered as a cross-axes endeavour⁴.

(c) MedWet Inventory System

Significant progress has been made concerning the MedWet Inventory System, in an effort to better capitalise on the MedWet/CODDE and all the other projects that have been developed over many years. The MedWet Secretariat hired Luis Costa (Director of SPEA- Portuguese BirdLife) as a consultant with the mandate to produce an assessment of the state of the tools, the application of the system and recommendations for the future. A workshop was also organised by the MedWet secretariat in Thessaloniki, in EKBY, in order to discuss and validate the report⁵. The seven key figures in the development of the inventory tools and system which were present decided that the MedWet Inventory methodology and tools are still relevant and up-to-date, but they are dispersed and they should hence be gathered in one location and presented in a straightforward way. The MedWet Secretariat responded immediately to this, and has created a new part of the MedWet website (<http://www.medwet.org/medwet-inventory/>), to promote and disseminate these tools to be used freely by the largest Mediterranean audience. Concerning the inventorying of wetlands using the MedWet/WIS, a positive development has been the fact that Italy, with the assistance of ARPAT and ISPRA, has managed to store 1.266 wetland sites in the batch input WIS files covering 13 regions of Italy.

12. Achievements under Strategic Axis 2

Promoting, developing and implementing national wetland policies and inter-sectoral action plans.

Preparing cooperation with national sectoral policies

(2.1) Liaising with national organisations responsible for sectoral policies affecting wetlands (agriculture, water management, tourism...)

During the 2010 Ramsar Regional Technical Meeting in Cairo, MedWet undertook discussions with the representative of the Libyan Jamahirya about re-launching the continuously postponed project of launching a national inventory of Libyan wetlands. MedWet has also

⁴ Information on many aspects like the objectives, programme, official documents and other material can be found on the official website for the Symposium (<http://agadir2012.medwet.org/>)

⁵ The minutes and conclusion of the MedWet Inventory System Workshop in Thessaloniki, 8th December 2011, can be made available upon request.

been approached by the Deputy Director General of the Environmental Resources of the Palestinian National Authority, who raised the issue of the Marj Sanour site and the possibility of recognising it as one of the important wetlands in Palestine. A designation might entail a different management plan that would be more beneficial to local communities and the environment. Consultations occurred with the Ramsar Regional Advisor for Asia and IUCN REWARD Programme Coordinator in order to evaluate the site as a wetland of importance and propose next realistic steps.

MedWet Networking activities

(2.2) *Liaising with regional / international organisations for sectoral policies affecting wetlands*

As instructed by the last MedWet/Com meetings in Changwon and Bastia, the MedWet Secretariat dedicated significant efforts to continue its advisory role within several Working Groups and Advisory Committees of projects and partner initiatives as well as supporting new and interesting projects and other regional initiatives. The main ones are presented below.

(a) Cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean

During the reporting period MedWet has been increasingly involved with the UfM. It has participated in two meetings outlined below and coordinated the facilitation by UfM and the Observatory of the Sahara and the Sahel (OSS) of the thematic session on climate change during the Agadir Symposium. On June 11th 2011 the National Parks of France organised a two-day meeting within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) with the following thematic: *'Protected Areas (PA) can be a major driver for regional policy, in favour of biodiversity protection in the Mediterranean basin'*. MedWet was invited to this meeting, after a recommendation by Tour Du Valat, in order to present its work as a regional network. Furthermore, MedWet represented by Nejib Benessaiah and Emmanuel Thiry, Chair of the SG, attended the 4th Water Experts Group meeting which took place in Barcelona, on the 17th-19th May 2011. A meeting was held with the Deputy Secretary General of the UfM, so overall it was a successful mission which reiterated the willingness of the UfM and MedWet to collaborate. It also saw the participation of MedWet in an expert panel with another 15 regional organisations for a discussion on a European Information network.

(b) Cooperation with the Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (IME)

MedWet attended the 'Water Inflows in wetlands' workshop in Marseille, France, on June 16th 2011, which saw the participation of around 50 concerned stakeholders from different backgrounds (experts and engineers, environment protection agencies and regional organisations). Within the framework of the GWP-Med partnership, MedWet was invited to give a general introduction to Mediterranean lagoons and to chair the second session of the workshop. This workshop and other meetings have given the MedWet coordinator the opportunity to liaise and create closer cooperation with the IME, a partnership which will hopefully be extended.

(c) Global Water Partnership (GWP) Consulting Partners Meeting

As a founding member of the GWP-Med, MedWet attends annually the GWP Consulting Partners Meeting. During the reporting period it attended the Consulting partners meeting in Stockholm, Sweden on the 25th August 2011. The MedWet Coordinator represented GWP-Med in Workshop 2 of the first day through a communication on the Lessons Learnt from the InWent/MedWet Water Dialogues. With this cooperation, MedWet maintains its strategic interest and presence in the field of water and develops partnerships with other international and regional agreements of relevance to wetlands. At the same time, the presence of MedWet serves to remind the role of wetlands for the sustainable management of water resources, as was repeated on various occasions.

(d) Cooperation with UNEP-MAP (Barcelona Convention)

The MedWet Secretariat continued its role as a member of the UNEP/MAP partnership and in this function attended as observer the MAP Focal points meeting in Athens, Greece from 28 November to 1 December 2011. Besides the importance to cultivate a working relationship with UNEP MAP it was also an opportunity for networking and for meeting key representatives in the field of Environment. Indicatively, contact and discussions were made with the Director of Administration and Finance of the Ministry of Environment and Land Planning in Algeria and with the Director General of the Ministry of Environment in Tunisia.

(e) First Mediterranean Water Forum

The First Mediterranean Water Forum took place in Marrakesh, Morocco on the 19th-20th December 2011 and was organized by the Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (IME) and the State Secretariat in charge of Water and Environment of Morocco. MedWet was present in this event, which brought together the stakeholders of the Mediterranean water community with the same level of commitment and delivered strong and targeted messages in order to reach the consequent objectives for the sustainable development of the region. It allowed MedWet to participate in a high level panel of Mediterranean institutions and at the same time to network for and strengthen the presence of the wetland community.

Cooperation with Algeria and Morocco: Wetlands National Strategies

(2.3) Development of national inter-sectoral policies and/or actions plans, adoption of governance of wetlands and water resources adapted to national specificities

In parallel with the last MWO workshop, the MW Secretariat was invited by the Algerian MW Focal Point to attend a technical meeting with TdV and WWF on the National Wetlands Strategy of Algeria. The project is led and financially supported by WWF-MedPo and aims to assist the Algerian Government to undertake consultations with key decision-making stakeholders and expert studies in order to define a participative national wetlands strategy. Technical problems and difficulties for the recruitment of adequate experts are the main causes of delaying the project.

Although MedWet is not directly involved, it continues to follow with interest the process in Morocco and is willing to provide advice to the High Commissariat for Water, Forests and Desertification Control of Morocco. The project, which has been briefly presented in the Agadir Symposium, aims at finalising a national Wetlands Strategy and at preparing an action plan to implement the strategy. The project has somehow suffered from insufficient coordination between the partners, but it is hoped that the new political context will boost the process. The development of both the Algerian and Moroccan Wetland Strategies has been inscribed in the list of "Agadir Commitments" and so MedWet will follow the process closely.

Achievements under Strategic Axis 3

Ensuring the sustainable integrated management of wetlands.

3.1 Development of innovative approaches and tools for integrated participative wetland management

(a) Culture in Mediterranean wetlands - MAVA3 project (Status: in progress)

'Culture in Mediterranean wetlands - MAVA3 project' is funded by the MAVA Foundation and led by Med-INA with the help of MedWet and local stakeholders. It aims to demonstrate the importance of the cultural values of wetlands in strengthening conservation actions in wetlands. Three sites have been selected: Lake Carla in Greece, the Larnaca

salt pans in Cyprus and the Lake of Tunis in Tunisia. MedWet has taken charge of the third site and has been able to become a member of the managing committee for the Lake of Tunis and the Ckiky islet and managed to include part of the MAVA3 project vision to the concerns of this committee. Three missions have taken place in July, September and October 2011. In close cooperation with Med-INA and Tunisian partners (DGF, INP, AAO, APAL, WWF-Tunis, Société de Promotion du Lac de Tunis) the scheduled activities are the following: Launching the feasibility studies, contribution to the development of the Centre for Ecological and Cultural Interpretation of Lake Tunis, incorporation of the Centre in the Tunis General Planning Scheme and participation in the organisation of the exhibitions of the Centre.

(b) MW Culture Network (*Status: in progress*)

At its meeting in Athens on 13-14 January 2009, the MedWet Steering Group approved the establishment of a MedWet Culture Network (MW/CN), in the frame of the 2009-2012 MedWet Strategic Work plan. Progress has been made towards its the creation after the collaboration between the Communication Officer, the Executive Assistant and the significant input of Ms Jharna Joshi, the summer intern for 2011 in MedWet and Med-INA. Much important material has been produced, namely all the texts for the menu items have been written and preliminary internal consideration on the style of website and its presentation have been made. Even though much work remains to be done, important items have been completed like the preliminary membership, needs assessment questionnaires and material for the website.

(c) GlobWetlandII Project (*Status: in progress*)

MedWet is a key supporter of the GlobWetlandII project led by the European Space Agency (ESA) in collaboration with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and other partners. To this end, MedWet attended the first user workshop of the GlobWetlandII project which brought together the user countries, the partners of the Consortium and organizations like MedWet, the EEA and Wetlands International. MedWet also attended the GlobWetlandII meeting which took place in Gland, Switzerland on the 22 - 23rd September 2011 and aimed to support to the GlobWetlandII team concerning assistance with diplomatic issues for country participation in the project and the re-initiation of the project after a six month break. Finally, the coordinator attended the consulting partners meeting in Frascati, Italy in April 2012 to discuss technical, strategic and diplomatic issues. Overall, the MedWet Secretariat is helping the GlobWetlandII with their strategy for contacting countries and focal points as well as with the future directions of the project, given that MedWet will be one of the vectors of dissemination of the software and the results.

(d) Support to the “Hybrid HIMA approach”

The regional workshop on the “Hybrid HIMA approach to community based resource management” took place in Istanbul, Turkey from the 14th to the 16th April 2011. The focus of the regional workshop was the sharing of experiences and capacity building among stakeholders in the (WANA) West Asia and North Africa regions, in the field of natural resource governance and to endorse the principles of the Hybrid Hima approach. The MedWet Initiative was represented by its coordinator, Nejib Benessaiah, who developed an analysis about the spiritual roots of the Hima approach as part of the Islamic perception of nature. Since its collaboration with SPNL during the [TwinMed project](#), MedWet has been interested in the Hybrid Hima approach which effectively combines culture, tradition and environmental protection, and is willing to disseminate this concept of alternative wetland management tool.

3.2 Promotion of the participation of all relevant stakeholders in wetland management

(a) NEREUS project (Status: in progress)

MedWet is now an active partner in the Nereus project along with IUCN-Med, UNEP-MAP, RAC/SPA, WWF MedPO and ACCOBAMS. The primary aim of the project is to create a Representative Network of Mediterranean Marine Managed Areas. It will result in the identification and then the designation and networking of representative sites at the national, sub-regional and regional levels as a support to the protection of the Mediterranean. It is being funded by the MAVA and Total Foundations. MedWet will be involved and will add the perspective of integrated management between marine resources and coastal wetlands which very much depend on each other for healthy ecosystems. At present MedWet has stated its priority countries and capacities and identified Ms Faidra Bazigou, PHD student to be recruited by IUCN in order to assist in the project formulation and implementation.

(b) PEGASO project (Status: in progress)

MedWet supports the PEGASO project and for this reason was present in the 2nd General Meeting that took place in Tulcea, Romania from the 4th-8th July. The main objective of PEGASO is to build on existing capacities and develop common new approaches to support integrated policies for the coastal and marine aspects of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins. It is also assisting the implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol for the Mediterranean, signed in 2008 under the auspices of the Barcelona Convention. The meeting was productive for MedWet as it allowed discussing the important issues of ecosystem approach and challenges of the Integrated Coastal Zones Management which will be implemented through other projects like the NEREUS, as well as the opportunity to network. This resulted with PEGASO entering the Agadir Commitments and being represented in the Agadir Symposium.

(c) Sustainable management of Mediterranean coastal wetlands and lagoons (Status: in planning)

The project aims to provide Mediterranean countries with an integrated strategy to conserve and manage their unique coastal biodiversity, promoting the use of aquaculture and capture fishery as a base for habitat restoration, climate change mitigation, and the improvement of local communities' welfare. The project also promotes the sharing of development experiences on coastal areas, providing high opportunities for countries partnerships in order to exchange information, maintaining a common database on the status of their coastal wetlands and lagoons, and facilitate decision making processes. MedWet is collaborating together with IUCN, RAC-SPA (who is the leader of this project), and FAO to the project's formulation. The concept is still in its refinement phase and will be discussed again in the immediate future.

(d) MEDAFA Marine Spatial Planning-T3 project (Status: rejected)

MedWet was a partner in the formulation of the IUCN-led "Marine Spatial Planning for Artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean" which is a Priority 1 topic on Integrated Coastal Zone Management under the ENPI CBC. The project was aiming to assess the different approaches for managing artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean for the marine and lagoon environment. It would have been implemented in seven Mediterranean countries Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Greece, Italy, France and Spain. Unfortunately the project proposed to ENPI has not been accepted, but IUCN-Med I is looking at the option to propose it again (new ENPI call) as a standard project to develop the methodology for two or three countries.

3.3 Application of innovative management approaches / methods in selected pilot sites in geographically balanced areas

Involvement in the Prespa Transboundary Park

Since 2003 MedWet is working to help the establishment of a shared mechanism for the management of the Prespa Lakes region. During the reporting period MedWet participated in the 1st Regional conference for “Integrated protection of the Transboundary Prespa Region for establishment of a trilateral UNESCO Biosphere Reserve at Prespa Lake”. This first regional meeting took place in Ohrid, 17th -19th February 2011. The event was organized by the Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, with support of the Public Institution National Park Galicica, UNESCO and UNDP. The Conference focused on presenting information and implemented efforts for conservation of the Prespa region; it presented the concept of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and discussed its applicability for the Prespa region. The MedWet coordinator attended the meeting, as permanent observer in the Management Board of the Prespa Park trilateral agreement. Strategically, the meeting gave the possibility to discuss the creation of a trilateral UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which can be a positive development for the Prespa lakes region, as it can bring together the cultural and natural values of the region through a potential MAB designation. This meeting also gave the opportunity to network with high level delegation from the three countries and with UNESCO officials.

3.4 Building capacity in the field of integrated participative wetland management

WI-TdV/CIDA project Civil Society Capacity Building

Led by Wetlands International through its Coordination Unit in Tour du Valat, this project is a regional cooperation initiative, funded by the Canadian cooperation agency CIDA that aims to promote, on a regional level, the exchange of experiences between Mediterranean countries on the issues of participatory and integrated water management and environmental security. It has been implementing three pilot projects in Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco. MedWet has supported these projects since its conception and attended several of its meetings, most recently the roundtable meeting that took place during the First Mediterranean Water Forum in Marrakesh in December 2011.

Cooperation with the BlackSeaWet Initiative

The BlackSeaWet is a newly formed Ramsar Regional Initiative that is presently coordinated by the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority. The 2nd meeting of the Management body of BlackSeaWet took place in Tulcea, Romania in October 2010. MedWet was invited as an observer due to its extensive experience in managing regional cooperation as the first established regional initiative of the Ramsar Convention. The MedWet Coordinator gave the Management Body of the BlackSeaWet its full support- something that is part of the MedWet long term Vision and Strategic Plan.

Cooperation with the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative: “Wetlands for the future” conference

The “Wetlands for the future” conference took place in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia from the 19th to the 21st May 2011. MedWet attended after the invitation by the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative and was represented by Eleni Fytoka from EKBY, who presented the MedWet inventory, assessment and monitoring system. The MW Inventory System has been improved in its operation and enhanced to include socioeconomic and cultural aspects of wetlands, the Water Framework Directive requirements, and inventory based indicators. MedWet promoted the idea that inventorying of wetlands in the Carpathian region should follow the MedWet inventory method, something which will allow further comparison and synthesis of the results between the two initiatives.

3.5 Dissemination of formalised approaches and tools to wetland managers and key stakeholders

The MedWet website in combination with the bi-monthly MedWet/MWO newsletter has become instrumental for CEPA dissemination. On the website various tools and publications have been made available like the MedWet Inventory System along with all the publications related to it, the Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2012 report and the ‘Culture and Wetlands in the Mediterranean: An evolving story’ edited by T. Papayannis and D. Pritchard.

14. Achievements under Strategic Axis 4

Moderating the impact of climate change.

Launch of the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative

MedWet was invited by the Institute for Climate & Energy Security (i4cense), after recommendation by the Greek Ministry of Environment, to the launching of the Mediterranean climate change initiative which took place in Athens on the 22nd October 2010. The Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative is proposed by the Greek government as a regional collaboration in order to recognise the threat climate change poses to the stability and prosperity of the region. The event attracted high level delegation including the prime ministers of Libya, Turkey, Malta, and Palestinian Authority, Ministers from another thirteen countries, the Director of the EIB and various organizations like the GWP, UNEP/MAP and WWF Greece. Unfortunately, there has not been significant follow-up after this initial event.

Adaptation to climate change in the Mediterranean region

MedWet was invited by the Greek Ministry of Environment and in particular the National Centre of Environment and Sustainable Development to a one day meeting (7th June 2011) on adaptation to climate change in the Mediterranean Region. It was an interdisciplinary meeting which involved scientists and experts from many fields like biologists, NGO workers, academics and people from the business world like architects and insurance companies.

Communication, Education and Public Awareness (MW CEPA)

Relevant to all the four Strategic axes

As aforementioned, MedWet has progressed significantly in terms of CEPA, as there is now a fully functional website which gets updated regularly and a bimonthly MedWet/MWO newsletter which informs the recipients on MedWet's achievements or other news of interest. Both these features are linked and have proved to be an efficient way of raising the visibility of MedWet to its members and partners.

It should also be noted that in the last two years, the MedWet Secretariat has focused a lot of its energy in attracting and educating a new kind of audience, young Mediterranean students. Two types of material have been created that can be used- with small adaptations- across the Mediterranean and beyond. These are a Role Playing Game for high school students which include introductory activities, roles, a scenario, the exact process to be followed and is being piloted in three Mediterranean countries Greece, Tunisia and Morocco. Also, a shorter activity on small coastal wetlands was designed by combining field work and a workshop. This game was tested during the visit of the College d'Ile Rousse from Corsica to Greece in May 2011 and was very successful. At the same time, the Secretariat has attempted with success to involve students in its activities and hence their participation in both the MedWet/Com10 and the Agadir Symposium. This new focus towards the new generations is hoped to raise awareness to younger people who will form the basis of future societies.

2. MedWet operation

This second part of the report is the analysis of MedWet organisation and operation developments. It outlines the changes in the structures of MedWet entities, as decided in the MedWet/Com10 (31st May-4th June 2010) and in the 10th meeting of the MedWet Steering Group (29th-30th March 2012). It also briefly outlines any developments in the MedWet Secretariat and administrative issues.

2.1. MedWet organisational development

2.1.1. Steering Group Operation

The structure of the SG was revised during the MedWet/Com10 for the next triennium (to be effective until MedWet/Com12) by including as state members: France (Chair), Morocco (Tunisia as alternate), Greece (hosting the MedWet Secretariat) and Jordan (Lebanon as alternate), Tour du Valat and IUCN as the representatives of non-state members and including the Ramsar Secretariat and the MedWet Honorary Member Thymio Papayannis. The 9th Steering Group meeting decided that a quorum is reached with the presence of 5 members of which at least 2 must be country representatives. It also clarified the process of including alternate countries if needed. Working documents are to be sent to all MedWet/Com members and the conclusions and agenda of each meeting are to be posted on the MedWet website. During the reporting period there have been two SG meetings, 9th SG in Athens, January 2010 and 10th SG in Paris, March 2012; the documentation is available on the MedWet website.

2.1.2. MedWet Scientific and Technical Network

According to MedWet/Com10 conclusions, the MedWet Scientific and Technical team was expanded to become a Scientific and Technical Network (MWST-Net). This was done in order to give MedWet the opportunity to include active partners who work on Mediterranean wetlands in the network and to forge such partnerships that address the geographical imbalance of the distribution of wetlands centres. The MedWet Secretariat developed the criteria for membership and the process and benefits of joining organisations, which were reviewed and accepted with some changes by the SG. Important points raised are that the governance of the MWST-Net will be the responsibility of the MedWet Secretariat and participation in the MWST-Net is separate from being a member of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee. Members of the old MWSTT remain a priority point of call for projects. It is now a priority for the secretariat to ensure the dissemination of the membership criteria to MedWet/Com members and propose the official integration of new Mediterranean organisations like SPANA in Morocco, Med-INA in Greece, SPNL in Lebanon and RSCN in Jordan.

2.2. MedWet Secretariat current situation

2.2.1 Staff

The current staffing situation of the Secretariat is the following:

- Nejib Benessaiah has been designated by the 9th Meeting of the Steering Group, after consultation with the MedWet/Com members, as the MedWet Coordinator for the period 2011-2012. A new recruitment process will be undertaken in the latter part of 2012 to identify the coordinator for 2013 onwards.
- The 9th Meeting of the Steering Group expanded the 2011 contract of Lily Mordechaj, Communication Officer, from 70% to 90% part time.
- Frosso Mantziou is the Executive Assistant on a full-time basis.

- Aspasia Dimizas, Programme Development Officer, was on maternity leave from March 2011 to February 2012; during her absence the post remained vacant. In March 2012, she resigned and the 10th Steering Group decided to keep the post vacant for the near future.
- Alexis Katsaros, International Secretary for the Mediterranean Wetlands Symposium in Agadir, was hired to work on the Agadir Symposium preparation. His contract has been extended (covered by the Symposium budget) with the tasks of assisting to finalise the Symposium Proceedings.
- Jharna Jhosi, architect, post-graduate student on Cultural Landscapes Management, was selected as an intern and worked on issues of culture and wetlands in cooperation with Med-INA and MedWet from June to August 2011.

As requested by the MedWet/Com10 decision, the 10th Meeting of the Steering Group tasked the MedWet Secretariat to launch on July 2012 the Coordinator recruitment process, with the final selection to be validated by the MedWet/Com members in September-October 2012.

2.2.2 Secretarial activities

Secretariat Management

The Secretariat has been dealing with day-to-day secretarial operation tasks (Communication with MedWet entities, consultants, suppliers, public services etc.) and providing secretarial support to the MW/SG meetings (Revision and submission for adoption of key documents: info documents, intermediate technical and financial reports).

Collection of the countries' contributions:

The MedWet Secretariat has continued invoicing and collecting country contributions from members on its own. This was first initiated in 2009 and is upheld.

2.3. Financial development

The Secretariat was committed to undertake the following tasks:

- Follow up with the accounting company to ensure that all accounting and financial activities are in place and that all accounting records are well kept.
- Assign and carry out the task of auditing MedWet's accounts for 2010.

2.3.1 Funding of MedWet

Since its establishment MedWet has been receiving the country contributions in Swiss Francs (CHF). After MedWet/Com8 in Frascati in 2008, the annual total contribution from the countries has been fixed to a total of 153,716 CHF and the countries were encouraged to send directly their contribution to MedWet, instead of sending it to the Ramsar Secretariat as in the previous years. According to this annual basis (document MWCom9.4 approved by the Greek Government, the MedWet countries and the Ramsar Secretariat), the follow up of the country contributions shows that MedWet has so far received 98% of the 2008 and 2009 country contributions, 96% of those for 2010 and 94% of the 2011 invoiced amounts. Details on the country contributions report are mentioned in Doc MWSG10.03 (Financial Report) available upon request.

The annual contribution of the host country, Greece (170,000€) for 2010, was received in full in December 2010. Due to a government change in Greece in November 2011, which unduly lengthened the bureaucratic procedures, the Greek Ministry of Environment was not in the position to fulfil its financial obligations for 2011 to a number of international environmental Conventions and IGOs, among which the MedWet Secretariat. The EU and

International Relations Direction of the Ministry, which is in charge of the relevant procedures, is putting much effort into securing that financing will be available as soon as possible within 2012.

2.3.2 Accounting and auditing services

The recording of MedWet accounts is by now monthly, with the accountant providing regular reports on revenues and expenditure.

Accounts for 2010:

The 2010 expenditures and balance analysis are explained in Doc MWSG9.03 (Financial Report) that has been communicated to the Steering Group and can be given upon request.

Accounts for 2011:

The 2011 expenditures and balance analysis are explained in Doc MWSG10.03 (Financial Report) and can be given upon request. An independent Auditor was mandated by MedWet to have the 2010 accounts fully checked and he delivered the Audit Report on May 5th, 2011 where it was mentioned that the recommendations for 2009 have been largely followed. Considering the improved financial control of our accounts and activities and due to the financial limitations we are facing, it has been suggested to postpone the external audit for this year.

2.4. Legal Status

The possibility of "internationalisation" of the non-profit organisation was investigated since 2009 and the possibility of establishing a legal entity governed by private law was suggested. Within this scope, a law proposal was elaborated⁶ and presented to the MedWet Steering Group members for discussion and reflection. Negotiations are being made between the Secretariat, represented by the Dryllerakis Legal Advisors, and the Greek Ministry of Environment on the recognition of "an international character" by the legislation of the Greek State. Several meetings between the MedWet Secretariat and representatives of the Ministry of the Environment were held to refine the phrasing of the draft document that will form the basis of the law to be passed.

Considering the political and administrative changes in the country and in the host Ministry, we have been advised for the moment, to proceed with caution and avoid confusion until the final appointment of the new Ministry leadership. We have to note and appreciate the very good level of collaboration and understanding that has been established between the MedWet Secretariat and the Ministry of Environment and specifically the former MedWet Focal Point (Ms Katerina Stylogianni), the international cooperation department (Ms Maria Peppas) and the team of lawyers in the Ministry (Ms Angeliki Tshali and Katerina Skouria).

⁶ Ref Annex 2 Legal status in Doc MWC10.4 available on the MedWet website.