



MedWet

L'initiative pour les zones humides méditerranéennes
The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
مبادرة المناطق الرطبة المتوسطية

MedWet Steering Group 2021 – 2022

Held on 31/03/2022

Participants

Gordana BELTRAM - Slovenia

Nadjiba BENJEDDA - Algeria

Lola BENOIT - The French Biodiversity Agency (OFB) - DREI

Magdalena BERNUES - Spain

Giuseppe DI CARLO - WWF Italy

Sonia FAUBERT

Ghislaine FERRERE - France

Marijana KAPA - Croatia

François MERLE - The French Biodiversity Agency (OFB)

Tobias SALATHE – The Ramsar Secretariat

Noha SAMY - Egypt

Marie-José VINALS - Spain

Alessio SATTA - MedWet

Isabelle PERROUD - MedWet

Thomas GALESWKI - The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory, Tour du Valat

Agenda of the meeting

Meeting 1 (31/03 : 9.30-11.30)

- a) Is the core contribution provided by members solid and sufficient for the future?
- b) Planning the participation of MedWet at COP14 (defining a roadmap including the support to the approval of the resolution of wetlands restoration). As you have surely known, Zamir Dedej has resigned as director general and for this reason today Albania is unable to submit the Resolution. For this reason, we are considering internally that Spain will present it on behalf of all MedWet countries. We keep you updated.
- c) Shall we have a virtual MedWet/Com15 before the COP14 in China?
- d) Should MedWet act to federate the other European RRI in one European coalition in view of the next Ramsar COP and beyond?

Meeting 2 (31/03 : 14.30 - 16.30)

- e) Should MedWet reinforce its Policy and Communication capacities to be the main interlocutor/partner of the European Commission (and other int. organizations) for all issues related to wetland conservation and management in the Med?

- f) How to secure funds to consolidate and expand the Mediterranean Ramsar Sites Network of MedWet?
- g) What are the perspectives of the MWO in the next 3 years and how the members of the Initiative can concretely contribute (even financially) to its activities?
- h) Exploring the opportunity to involve Mediterranean universities and national research centres in our work.
- i) UNESCO designation of the Mediterranean flyways

Report

Meeting I

Point I

- Alessio explained the core budget of MedWet, highlighting the current challenge generated due to the missing contribution of Italy and the future issue related to the lack of the MAVA contribution. He asked to find solutions to ensure that MedWet have enough resources to co-finance projects and to pay the key team's remuneration (Coordinator, Administrative and financial officer, communication officer).
- Ghislaine commented that she could not take a position vis a vis the budget as she did not see the table before the meeting and she did not get internal discussion in the Ministry to discuss it. Second, according to her, it will be necessary to have first a presentation about the amount of budget that MedWet needs in the years to come before thinking of increasing the country contributions. Third, she highlighted that this will be certainly linked to the Contracting Parties' position about the increase or not of their contribution to the Ramsar budget, recalling that during the COP13, the position of countries was zero increase.
- Alessio is working on the strategic plan and the budget to be delivered in the next month for the Steering Group and to be approved by the MedWet/COM.
- Marijana asked if there were discussions recently with Italy, and if it is aware that according the new Terms of References, it is losing its rights vis a vis MedWet.
- Alessio confirmed that an official letter has been sent by the Spanish Ministry but no reply yet from Italy. The Italian Ramsar Focal Point is aware but he cannot participate to MedWet meetings as he is not mandated by the administrative authority of Italy.
- Gordana stressed that MedWet have to explain more its needs after MAVA disappears, from where MedWet can get other funds, why it needs this budget and where to use it.
- Maria-José recalled that Spain, as Chair of MedWet, tried all the possible means, including an official letter that have been sent, to invite Italy to reflect on its position towards the MedWet Initiative.
- Nadjiba also agreed with the importance to explain what this budget can cover exactly, so can countries decide what actions should be blocked or be financed through the budget, and to justify the augmentations if countries accept it.
- Alessio concluded the discussion about the first point by asking participants to take into consideration the potential change of the minima from 500 to 700 to 1000, and how this will impact the budget of some countries.

Point 2:

Alessio invited Tobias to share an update about the happening of the next Ramsar COP in China.

Tobias responded that from the 23-27 of May the Standing Committee will meet in Gland and he invited the members of the SG to come or to send people from their diplomatic mission. He added that starting from April Geneva will clear that COVID is behind and that there are no restrictions anymore at the Swiss level.

Tobias added that the Standing Committee Meeting will be an opportunity to answer multiple questions. He then explained that biodiversity meetings happened last week in Geneva in a hybrid version and it has been decided that the CBD Cop will be postponed.

Main ideas following Tobias's intervention:

- The Ramsar secretariat didn't decide about the hybrid mode or not for the next COPI4.
- The standing committee is preparing all the documents for the COPI4.
- The draft resolutions on NBS submitted last year by Albania was updated by Alessio.
- An answer from the secretariat about the NBS will be sent the soonest.
- An invitation to consult the website to know which version is published.
- Regional meeting will be like global meeting with the same agenda for each region in the next future without regional coordinators.
- The European online pre-cop meeting planned for the last week of April after the finalization of the agenda and the standing committee members have been contacted.
- The countries can choose draft resolutions (30) that have been submitted, read them and present them to the other parties and depending on the feedback have a long or shorter discussion.
- A simple list of resolutions will be sent along with invitations to the regional meeting.
- Few resolutions have been submitted on the effectiveness of working groups and the convention and propositions were made for operating differently.
- Several draft resolutions came from the countries and will be helpful to look at them together regarding STRP, CEPA etc...
- A question is raised on how to handle with old resolutions following the approach that has put in place in Dubai during the last COP.
- The process of recruitment of a new secretary general will start end of May following the decision of the standing committee.
- A good support is provided from the European Union side specifically from the countries that preside the EU currently (France) and then when the COP will take place the support will be provided by the Czech Republic, then Slovenia and Finland later). The exchanges with the EU are progressing well. This can include other MedWet Countries.

Alessio shared with the participants ideas about the role of MedWet in the next COP:

- A Mava budget will be allocated to promote the WBS project.

- No special representation of Medwet such as the agora because of uncertainty of the context.
- Confirmation of presence in side events were MedWet is solicited by partners in order to share project outcomes in the COP.
- Communication material will be produced for dissemination.
- An application on wetland restoration will be ready (part of a citizen science exercise)
- Pushing the NBS resolution and support France and Spain in this work.

Ghislaine

- France and EU countries will work on RRI resolution in link with MedWet and the position of MedWet is important.
- One evening/dinner (informal meeting) is important to organize to present MedWet's work.

Gordana

- Agrees with Ghislaine's suggestion about the organization of an evening/dinner (informal meeting) by MedWet.
- Discussion about the hybrid model for the next COP are ongoing in the working group particularly if there will be limitation of participation.

Marijana

- Supports the idea of Ghislaine about the organization of an evening/dinner (informal meeting) by MedWet.

Alessio

- After the receiving of the agenda of the COP the possibility to organize an event/dinner will be explored.
- Bridges are being created with other regional initiatives.
- A technical annex linked to the NBS resolution is online and the members of SG are invited to give their feedback and of course the resolution itself. The technical annex is composed by:
 - The state of our wetland and interesting maps on the extent of Mediterranean taking into consideration the Mediterranean water shed.
 - Interesting elements and updated research on climate change and coastal wetlands.
 - Level of protection of wetlands in Northern Mediterranean.
 - A part on blue carbon related to wetlands was developed by ETC Malaga priorities for restoration and the restoration effort were defined (low/high investment). according to variables and indicators to give countries ideas how they can plan their restoration effort. (see technical annex NbS resolution).

Alessio added:

- The technical document is prepared with a policy paper that has been presented to all the members of the environmental task force for UFM (54 countries) and available on the website.
- The policy paper is being developed not only for environmental organizations but also the private sector.
- The level of knowledge for the Northern part of the Mediterranean needs to be extended to the southern part. MedWet works on enabling conditions to have this data base for all Mediterranean countries (discussed with Union for the Mediterranean).

Alessio shared then few points about discussions he had with other regional (European) initiatives:

NorbalWet, Carpathian Wetland Initiative, BlackseaWet, and of course MedWet.

- Countries like Serbia and Bulgaria are also members of MedWet along with 21 European countries so 80 per cent of European countries are represented by the regional initiatives MedWet.
- MedWet's advocacy capacity today is more relevant in the European level starting by the definition of wetlands and linking to the Natura 2000 sites and to ensure funds for wetlands in all the neighboring initiative.
- All the regional initiatives are considering the creation of an informal coalition and a web platform for collaborating and MedWet could be a facilitator for this process.
- Efforts could be joined on many initiatives such as the WWD as MedWet is doing a great job thanks to OFB to support WWD in the Mediterranean and lobbying and advocacy and European sites managers Network.
- The strength of MedWet is to have the countries that are part of the secretariat. It reinforces our condition and allow us to share under the umbrella of European to participate in other projects for wetland restoration.
- Alessio suggested to share the report after the discussion other regional initiatives with the participants.
- MedWet's work will be shared during European Ramsar regional meeting that will be held in April thanks to the Swedish coordination and Ghislaine.
- It's very important to push for a collaboration between regional initiatives and MedWet could also work with African initiatives.

Gordana

- It's good to liaise with other regional countries in Europe.
- The African should have the space to express their ideas about other African initiatives.
- A strategy is needed, MedWet is recognized in the Mediterranean level.
- We could focus on good practices exchanges with other initiatives and not to go too broad.
- Countries should decide how the secretariat should work and this need to be discussed in the formal regional meetings.

Nadjiba

- It's good to collaborate with other initiatives.

Alessio

- African countries are interested in collaborating with other countries.
- Funds are in Europe and the interaction of MedWet with European institutions has increased a lot the last years thanks to the strong partnership with UFM
- Suggested to have UFM as a permanent observer as for the next two years UFM will support the advocacy work of MedWet with their own resources.
- UFM multiply MedWet's capacity to influence and Alessio will write about the increase of the capacity of MedWet thanks to UFM.

Noha

- For African initiatives there is work already undertaken with the Nile based network including universities in each country regarding the ecosystem services provided by each wetland and the methodology of economic valuation and gender equality for Uganda, Tanzania and other African countries.
- Agrees for the strengthening of cooperation with other European initiatives.

Alessio

- Common strong position of MedWet countries needs to be set up for the next COP.
- Organization of a MedWet Com in September/October before China COP.
- Possibility of the organization of an event/dinner during the COP.
- Create space to the MedWet members to exchange in an informal way.

Meeting 2

Alessio

- Activities of MedWet in terms of Policy and communication: How to reinforce the mandate of MedWet in that sense.
- Starting a new phase, we need a strong mandate from the SG and the MedWet Com.
- To define a common platform to promote WWD in Europe.
- Consolidate the strong contribution from OFB, and expand MedWet's capacity to fund and promote WWD.
- Extend the impact of the Ramsar Sites Managers Network and make it more European and other neighboring regions.
- Consolidate the network of universities and research centers and the UNESCO designations of the Mediterranean Flyways.

Alessio continued his presentation by sharing the new approach to communicate coastal wetlands conservation adopted by MedWet. (See Annex I: Alessio's presentation)

Key points from Alessio's presentation:

- Expressed the need to have a new mandate to continue consolidate this work.
- Communication and Policy are the main stone of MedWet's work.

Alessio opened the discussion:

Maria Magdalena Bernues Sanz

- Interface of the Mediterranean wetlands with EU institutions should be the responsibility of MedWet.
- Private and Public donors are happy to support Mediterranean cooperation.
- We need to be the voice of the managers, the countries and the Civil society.

Ghislaine

- Do you think that MedWet was heard in the conference of UFM?
- What about the Ramsar cities?

Alessio

- The blue economy is focused more on the sea, and MedWet participation in UFM Conference is an attempt to raise the voice of wetlands with a different audience.
- Alessandra Sensi UFM is putting efforts to promote the role of wetlands.
- Wetlands are one of the key ecosystems to promote nature-based solution, and recognized by all the partners.

Alessio

- For the MedWet Managers Network, first two years are invested in improving capacities, instead of exploring new possibilities.
- MedWet will involve the regions and initiate wetland city concept.

Marijana

- We didn't start in Croatia working on Wetland City Accreditation, we need some support to introduce this topic.

Alessio

- We can provide support for countries who want to develop Wetland City Accreditation.
- We can include this topic in our Strategy.

Alessio continued by presenting the MedWet Managers Network and its evolution and reminded the group the main benefits of the network such as:

- Knowledge sharing platform
- Capacity building program
- Advocacy actions for site conservation and wise use
- Programmes of twinning of Mediterranean Ramsar sites
- Guidelines on sustainable use practices of wetlands

Alessio

- We need to continue the work with MedWet Academy.

Alessio then shared with the audience the website of [MedWet Managers Network](#).

Alessio continued by showing the category “stories from Managers’ ‘in which we find stories of the wetland through the voice of the managers.

Isabelle

- Managers update their own Ramsar sheet by providing us updated information.
- Through the Network we are able to identify the key actors in every Ramsar Site.

Alessio

- One part-time person is doing the facilitation work for the Network as a daily basis. The work of this person is estimated (20 000-30 000 euros/year)
- Webinars/ activities are achieved thanks to the partnerships work and dissemination which makes the invest low.
- The Network needs a physical meeting every two years to create strong relationships among the Managers (MedPan Model). This meeting can rotate and could cost (60 000 -70 000 euros).
- Managers are the priority because they need to be involved in the EU projects and other.
- We provide knowledge and topics to the managers and will be always available online.
- The link with STRP is weak but we are collaborating with the network by involving them as trainees in the capacity building program.
- We have more or less 50 managers participating to our activities.
- Managers can easily join the Network through our application form to be signed.
- Should we push the Managers to pay a symbolic amount in order to join the Network or it needs to be free? (Open discussion)

Thomas shared a presentation about the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (see annex 2). Alessio thanked Thomas and shared with the audience a work that Tour de Valat is doing on “Gap analysis at 50: over 150 important Mediterranean sites for wintering water birds omitted” that could be designated as new Ramsar Sites:

- Based on Ramsar Criteria with selection of the sites.
- Christian Perennou has prepared a list for the all-Mediterranean countries.

Alessio will share this list with the audience.

Tobias

- There are certainly opportunities to interact more regularly with STRP and STRP-The Global Network.
- A willingness from the Ramsar Convention to propose what the STRP wants to do for the next two years in a common understanding document that could be adapted to the Mediterranean.
- The Mediterranean Wetland Observatory has already the study and we could see what material, presentations, documents, messages could target public.

- We should reach more people than birds community referring on the document- “Gap analysis at 50: over 150 important Mediterranean sites for wintering water birds omitted”.

Gordana

- We are trying to reach out a different audience -the nature-based solutions project is an important project to reach out different communities same for the wetland stories.
- The STRP and the STN all the experts are working on voluntary basis.
- The main area that we could focus on: how to provide the science- based information to the politics to make the best decision.

Marijana

- How many sites will be included in the geoportal (question to Thomas)?
- Gap analysis could be done in general for the needs of the Ramsar Community.
- The geoportal can give us information about new nominations.

Thomas

- The study includes 400 wetland sites, coastal wetland from MedWet countries. It’s a preliminary list.
- The geoportal is used to monitor on the long term the evolution of landcover and land use of wetland sites to see the changes in the sites.

Tobias

- We do see some interest for more easier access (referring to the geoportal).

Maria Jose

- Is the data introduced in the geoportal taken from projects already implemented?

Thomas

- Most of the data is shared from our report published online on TDV website.
- We are developing the data from our own projects.
- We are in touch with the countries to always check the availability of data.

Alessio summarized the key points of the discussion:

- Continuation of the role of Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory,
- Lack of financial resources to continue some activities; there will be still some activities the observatory can make available for MedWet and the partners.
- There activities from the main core activities of the observatory and there are activities that need more effort and they are not still granted.
- There are other initiatives we didn’t mention today, The Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands, the STN collaborating with the Observatory and there is the need to reinforce the work with STRP.
- Opportunity to involve the research and university centers and we need to find the right platform to coordinate this work
- TDV is developing very sophisticated and advanced analysis tools that are useful for the work of countries.

- We discussed with ISPRA in Italy to develop a wetland inventory based on satellite water observation.

Gordana

- likes to see MedWet bringing this knowledge data from universities and research institutions within the Mediterranean countries to the Observatory so to have somewhere these data are available and be useful for the countries.
- Talking about how to see the role of MedWet, she still thinks that primarily MedWet should, as she did before, raise its profile within the Mediterranean institutions because when this kind of recognition is achieved so also wetlands are recognized.

Maria José

- Universities have means, human resources and financial funds for research and results that can be provided to the MedWet countries. Universities can collaborate in providing knowledge by the many and useful information they have about wetlands. We need to find ways on how that information can be assumed by MedWet.

Nadjiba

- Managers and associations must express their need for capacity building for better management and conservation of their sites.
- The Observatory should consult with NGOs and managers to produce the tools they need to better manage their wetlands.
- It is necessary to know how countries can carry and apply the indicators produced by the Observatory.

Alessio

- We think to reshape the role of the MedWet STN. We need to give more visibility to the voluntary work done by scientists of the MedWet STN.
- There are a lot of scientific information that are missing. There is a strong opportunity to involve public universities and national research centers in the MedWet STN to do at least a first task consisting in collecting information and why not produce an annual report "the state of art" of the existing scientific work and publication, etc.

Tobias

- Like the idea of annual report. It is important to communicate more regularly through, for example, a newsletter (4 times a year) to provide a small scientific fact or infographic.

Noha

- We are working with research entities consulting them for water quality modeling and we use that modeling for the scenarios and the best solutions for wetland management.
- Recently we have submitted a proposal to Horizon for mapping biodiversity in certain wetlands including Burullus wetland especially for bird monitoring and raising the awareness of local communities living in the area and suffering from a lot of

illegal hunting.

- We had a 2009 comprehensive and integrated report from MedWet including two Ramsar Sites of Burullus and Bardawil, we still use that report as a database for this area. We want to update the data about the status of wetlands and trends of biodiversity.

Maria José

- Agrees with the idea of Tobias of regularly publishing the results.
- Raised the idea of launching a scientific journal.

Alessio

- We can contact also existing journals and prepare a 'special issue' on Mediterranean wetlands.

Ghislaine

- Supports the idea of involving research centers in the items of Nature-based solutions, and make the results more visible.
- Countries and managers can define together the needs in terms of research and things to be asked from the MedWet STN and the Observatory.

Gordana

- The role of MedWet is to translate all those results into a very clear and convincing language for decision makers to help them to take proper decisions.

Maria José shared a presentation about the Mediterranean flyways and associated wetlands.

Tobias

- To get to this World Heritage Designation, we need additional work, we should clarify why should we be engaged in that work, what is the added value of the Designation.
- The outstanding universal value is very exclusive criteria and IUCN is not necessary very helpful.
- We can start by focusing on those Mediterranean wetlands which are already individual World Heritage sites: Donana, Venice and its lagoon, and few more which are good examples and bring them together.
- MedWet can certainly provide a coordinating committee that it is not a committee existing to be created but maybe it can be easily integrated into MedWet.

Maria José

- We can start by ten places in several countries and then others can be added.
- We need to know if the Mediterranean countries are interested. We can start an event from Spain, we can collect for money to do administrative work and meetings.
- We have a lot of information available for the nomination but we need extra work for preparation.
- If countries agree, we need to start looking for financial funds for this purpose.

- Asked Flavio Monti to prepare the list of wetlands for migratory bird flyways and in which countries they are. We should focus on wetlands that are in good condition that accomplish the UNESCO requirements.

Ghislaine

- Can we / should we reinforce the proposal explaining that these essential wetlands for birds (target n° 1) are also very important for climate / water / etc ?
- It would be very interesting to link this project with Ramsar / MedWet because other regions could do the same! and we could help to increase the protection of these migratory routes all around the world.

Tobias

- It does not need to be only natural sites; it can be mixed sites or cultural landscapes where there is already UNESCO designation in the Mediterranean.

Marijana

- UNESCO is very critical not only about the criteria to be filled but also about management.
- Croatia can be part of this serial nomination but it needs more information about concrete sites.

Tobias

- It is not easy to get a World Heritage serial site approved: it does need a lot of investment in term of work and convincing committees.
- Responding to the question of Maria (should we do it or should we not do it), we need before to asked what is the return in investment.

Alessio

- We need some good projects to reinforce cooperation between managers in the different rims of the Mediterranean. Flyways are the perfect one.
- If we can mobilize our UNESCO offices, we can maybe come with a first feasibility on this Initiative and take decision.

Ghislaine

- Who is going to ask the countries if they are interested? And how?

Alessio

- Suggested a small task force to have a first self-evaluation of the feasibility.

