



rampao

Réseau Régional d'Aires Marines Protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest

6th RAMPAAO General Assembly

Report

1st and 2nd October 2015

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1.Introduction

The 6th RAMP AO General Assembly¹ was held on the 1st and 2nd of October 2015 in Banjul, the Gambia, and saw the participation of His Excellency Pr. Saliou Ndiaye, Senegal’s ambassador to the Gambia, His Excellency..... Mauritania’s ambassador to the Gambia, His Excellency Ousmane Sowe, Chief of Staff of the Gambian Ministry of Environment, as well as more than a hundred of stakeholders including MPA managers, representatives of MPA Management Committees, representatives of national institutions in charge of MPA management, members of RAMP AO Scientific Committee, members of the network of parliamentarians, journalists, technical and financial partners and representatives of the Gambia (See attendance list in annexes).



Following were items of the agenda:

- (a) Validation of the options of the Network’s institutional and financial sustainability ;
- (b) Validation of the legal documents, the roadmap and the emergency biannual work plan 2016-2017 ;
- (c) Renewal of the governance bodies (President of the Network, Scientific Committee) and admission of new members.

Table 1 : Agenda of the GA

DAY 1	
09.00-10.00	Opening Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome address of GA President, Cl. Aboubacar Oulare • Speech of the Scientific Committee • Address of MAVA • Address of PRCM • Official opening : Gambia’s Minister of Environment

(i) 1st Constituent GA of RAMP AO in Praia in 2007; (ii) 2nd RAMP AO GA from 11 to 15 December 2008 in Bubaque in the Bolama Bijagos archipelago in Guinea Bissau; (iii) 3rd RAMP AO GA from 2 to 3 July 2010 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, (iv) 4th GA from 14 to 15 November 2011 in Dakar, Senegal; (v) 5th GA from 22 to 23 November 2013 in Dakar, Senegal.

10h-10 h 25	Coffee break
10H25-10H 30	Presentation and validation of the agenda
10H 30 10H 45	Presentation of recommendations of the 5 th GA
10H45-11H 45	Presentation of the technical and financial report & discussions
11h 45-13H	Presentation and validation of the transition option
	(attachment to PRCM) and its duration
13 H - 14h 30	Lunch break
14h 30-15h 45	Presentation and validation of the empowerment option and the type of organisation
15h 45 17h 15	Presentation, discussion and validation of the new entity's institutional documents
17h 15-18h	Election of the new President
DAY 2	
9h-9H 15	Reminder of Day 1 discussions
9h15-10H 30	Presentation and validation of the Work Plan 2016-2017 by members
10h30-11h 45	Presentation and validation of the empowerment roadmap
11h45-12h	Coffee break
12h - 13h15	Presentation, discussion and validation of new membership applications
12h - 13h 15 Side-Event	Side-Event RAMP AO/Parliamentarians/Ministers/Donors Discussion on the roles, responsibilities and partnerships modalities for an effective involvement of parliamentarians, Governments, and donors in the empowerment process and possibilities of funding the Work Plan 2016-2017
13h 15- 14h 45	Lunch break
14h45-15h45	Presentation of activities funded by RAMP AO
15h45-16h 45	Presentation and validation of GA recommendations
17H -17H 30	Closing ceremony MAVA, PRCM, President, Gambian Authority
16h45-17h00	Cocktail / Gift distribution

2. Conduct of proceedings

2.1. Plenary session: Proceedings of 1st October 2015

2.1.1. Opening ceremony

After a prayer session for the success of the 6th General Assembly, the Head of the Gambian Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM), M. Momodou Lamine KASSAMA introduced the authorities attending the event.

The official opening ceremony was presided over by M. Sowe, Chief of Staff of the Gambian Minister in charge of Environment.



2.1.2. Opening addresses of the General Assembly

Speeches during the opening ceremony were delivered by:

- Colonel Aboubacar Oulare, outgoing President of RAMPAO General Assembly ;
- Mr Bocar Kante, Member of RAMPAO Scientific Committee ;
- Mr Simon Mériaux, MAVA Manager ;
- Dr Ahmed Senhoury, Director of the Coordination and Partnership Mobilisation Unit for the Coastal and Marine area in West Africa (PRCM) ;
- Dr Abou Bamba, Regional Coordinator of the Abidjan Convention ;
- Mr Ousmane Sowe, Chief of Staff of the Gambia's Environment Minister.

Colonel Aboubacar Oularé, outgoing RAMPAO President



Colonel Aboubacar Oulare, outgoing President of RAMPAO General Assembly, set the tone by recalling the RAMPAO itinerary during his mandate at the head of the sub regional organisation. He then dwelt on the network's achievements when he was at the helm, including:

- Eleven (11) partnership agreements signed ;
- RAMPAO's participation in the COP of the Abidjan Convention in Cape Town, South Africa ;
- The Network's participation in the Global Congress of MPAs in Marseilles, France ;

- The Network's participation in the Global Congress of Parks in Sydney, Australia, notably through its involvement in a side-event with other regional networks of Protected Areas including RAPAC, MedPan, among others ;
- The organizing, in 2015, of a regional consultation tour with members and national authorities in charge of MPAs to present the findings of the studies conducted on the network's empowerment process ;
- Participation in three (3) meeting of the PRCM Steering Committee;
- Participation in the regional meeting of mangrove experts, as part of the transformation of the regional charter of mangroves into an additional protocol to the Abidjan Convention ;
- Participation in the RAMP AO Executive Committee meetings ;
- Participation in the handover between the outgoing RAMP AO Secretary General and the Research and Projects Coordinator.

Mr Oulare also recalled the main events that have impacted the Network in the sub region, notably:

- The merger of the MAVA Foundation for Nature and the Banc d'Arguin International Foundation, and its administrative and financial implications;
- The resignation of RAMP AO Secretary General, Ms Dominique Duval Diop in the first half of 2015.

Moreover, he echoed Guinea's will to host the upcoming General Assembly, and called for the GA to reflect on the establishment of a Task Force to accompany the incoming President in the transition phase.

In conclusion, Colonel Oulare unveiled the willingness of Guinea's Environment Minister to serve as "Champion of the cause" to his other counterparts of the CSRP space by carrying out missions to secure their support to the Network's empowerment process.

Mr Bocar Kante, Member of RAMP AO Scientific Committee

Mr Kante basically reaffirmed that the Scientific Committee will, as part of the Network's transition phase, assume the advisory role assigned by the General Assembly, notably with regards to the following issues:

- The Network's empowerment options ;
- The consideration of climate changes in MPA management.





Mr Simon Mériaux, MAVA Manager

In his intervention, Mr Mériaux announced that MAVA was on the verge of launching its last phase of activities 2016 – 2022, as the Foundation is expected to wind up its activities in 2022, hence the need to work during this last phase towards obtaining tangible and sustainable conservation results, but also more technical and financial autonomy from partners during the next seven years.

Mr Mériaux recalled that MAVA accompanies and supports the RAMPAO Secretariat in reflecting on the network's future, along with the members and in total independence. But beyond the type of entity it ambitions to become and the legal form thereof, the MAVA Foundation encourages RAMPAO members to take time to wittingly ponder over the purpose of the Network, what it can bring to its members and what the members can bring to it.

What matters for MAVA, is that the West African littoral hosts functional and efficient MPAs and to this end, RAMPAO can be very instrumental, he said.

Mr Mériaux reiterated MAVA's readiness to support RAMPAO, at least partially, in its transition phase and encourages the Network to diversify its sources of funding. In conclusion, Mr Mériaux expressed sympathy to Ms Dominique Duval Diop and extended his heart-felt thanks to the members of the Network's governing bodies for their commitment to the current transition phase.

Dr Ahmed Senhoury, Director of the Coordination and Partnership Mobilisation Unit for the Coastal and Marine area in West Africa (PRCM)

Mr Senhoury recalled the historical ties binding RAMPAO and PRCM and noted that the two organisations share the same vision and have many members in common. Mr Senhoury also stressed the fact that, in spite of the maturity achieved by the Network, the transition period should be handled with due care. He suggested that the PRCM Coordination and Mobilisation Unit should be granted all necessary facilities to ensure a proper transition in the best conditions possible.



Dr Abou Bamba, Regional Coordinator of the Abidjan Convention

Mr Bamba recalled the importance of MPAs as tools of adaptation to climate changes and for the management of fisheries and ecosystems. He argued that with the view to the COP 21 of the UN framework-convention on climate changes, MPAs represent a major opportunity for carbon sequestration. He recalled that the Abidjan Convention supports supplementary initiatives in the fields of ecosystem and blue carbon services.

He further stressed the importance of the socioeconomic dimension of MPAs, with benefits that communities could harness, notably with tourism.

Mr Ousmane Sowe, Chief of Staff of the Gambia's Environment Minister

Mr. Sowe reiterated the Gambian government's commitment to a great success to the 6th RAMP AO General Assembly and undertook to actively participate in strengthening the Network. After stressing the importance of the efforts deployed and the gains of the Network in the conservation of marine and coastal resources, the Gambian official also indicated that the Gambian government would foster the empowerment process. Mr Sowe then urged managers and Network partners to reflect on a roadmap to ensure the sustainability thereof.



Thereafter, he called on the audience to reflect and highlight prospects towards taking up the challenges ahead, notably a better management of the endangered species.

After his address, Mr Sowe then declared the proceedings of the 6th RAMP AO General Assembly open.

2.1.3. Presentation and validation of the agenda

The agenda was presented and validated at unanimous decision, which enabled the Secretariat to turn to the recommendations formulated to the 5th GA.

2.1.4. Presentation of recommendations of the 5th GA



The Secretariat presented the recommendations made during the 5th General Assembly of the Network, as well as the progress made and the activities conducted by the Secretariat as part of the implementation of these recommendations.

Participants advised the Secretariat to structure the presentation of the GA recommendations by highlighting the progress made and the constraints in their implementation.

The Secretariat was also urged to share the technical documents ahead of the General Assembly to enable partners to be well prepared and to facilitate in-depth discussions.

2.1.5. Presentation of the technical and financial report

Following the presentation of recommendations of the 5th General Assembly, the Secretariat presented the technical report of activities of the work plans 2014 and 2015 included in the Network's global work plan 2014/2016 that was validated during the 5th General Assembly held in November 2013 in Dakar, Senegal.

Discussions

Attribution of small grants to MPAs by RAMP AO

During the discussions, MPA managers and representatives of national bodies in charge of MPA management dwelt on the system of evaluation of the funds granted as part of the small grants programme which, according to them, did not benefit all countries. Thus, the Secretariat was advised to revise the grant allocation system, with the view to a balance among countries for the attribution of grants. In case of a possibly new similar initiative, participants recommended that the criteria should be revised towards a certain equity amongst members. The Secretariat was also urged to provide a technical assistance to some initiatives to facilitate the presentation of project proposals and activities eligible for grant allocation.

The Secretariat revealed that the choice of projects for grant allocation was done by external experts. For the possible future small grant programmes, the Secretariat has taken due note of the need for a balance amongst countries in the allocation of grants, as well as the need to assist project holders in the design phase.

Presentation of results of the implementation of GA recommendations, of the work plan and initiatives envisaged by the Secretariat

Concerning the presentation of the results of activities carried out from December 2013 to September 2015, MPA managers stressed the need for the Secretariat to show the level of attainment of the results, the means used and the schedule.

Following the discussions, the Secretariat was urged to focus on presenting the essential activities to give an overall picture of the state of progress for members and partners. Besides, the GA advised that the Secretariat's future technical reports should provide information on the state of conservation in the Network, whereas RAMP AO's contribution to the drafting of strategic documents (e.g. management plans, business plans) for member sites was much desired.

The Secretariat took note of the recommendations and undertook to provide the GA preparatory documents in time, and will give priority, for the next General Assembly, to a presentation of the results of activities based on the level of attainment of the set objectives.

Partnership between RAMP AO and third party entities

The GA suggested that the Secretariat should set partnerships with international conventions working in its fields of intervention, notably on the birds and turtles migration corridors.

Emphasis was also laid on the importance of monitoring the set partnerships and conventions signed with partners and third party institutions.

The Secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to collaborating with international conventions on migration corridors, also pledging an effective monitoring of set partnerships.

Financial report and income generation for the Secretariat

The issue related to the modalities and relevance of the balances carried forward was raised in the financial report. The Secretariat indicated that the balances of 2014 were posted for activities of 2015, but for 2016, this will depend on the choice of the donor that will decide based on the planned activities.

The Secretariat was urged to generate part of its operating costs, engage in the design of income-generating projects and ensure the effective payment of members' contribution.

2.1.6. Presentation of the possible types of organisations for a more autonomous Network: Validation of the empowerment option and the type of organisation

Presentation of the main empowerment options, and viewpoints of members and partners collected by the Secretariat

The Secretariat presented the main results of the consultation tour on the Network's empowerment options proposed under a prior study. This tour enabled the Secretariat of the Network, accompanied by the President of the General Assembly, to size up the viewpoints of members and partners in Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea and the Gambia.

The options retained by partners in all visited countries are the following:

- Establishment of an autonomous network at stake ;
- Attachment of RAMP AO to the Regional Partnership for the Conservation of the Coastal and Marine Areas in West Africa (PRCM) for a transition phase of two years.

Presentation of the main orientations of the Coordination and Mobilisation Unit of PRCM (UCM – PRCM) should a transition phase be adopted by RAMP AO members and entrusted to PRCM

Following the presentation of the Secretariat, the UCM-PRCM Director made a presentation on the proposed tutelage option. For the Coordination and Mobilisation Unit, this option proposed by members and partners carries many opportunities for the Network, as during the transition period, PRCM can:

- Assure the running of the Network and its bodies ;
- Assist in the operation of the Secretariat ;
- Strengthen the visibility of RAMP AO.
- Facilitate exchanges with partners and other networks ;
- Contribute to the conduct of studies necessary for the empowerment process ;
- Participate in the drafting of the new entity's founding instruments ;
- Assist the Secretariat in defining the basic orientations (strategies, action plan) ;
- Identify funding opportunities and mobilise the necessary resources ;
- Conduct the process for the constitution of the future organisation ;
- Prepare and organise the constituent General Assembly of the future organisation.

Eventually, the Coordination and Mobilisation Unit has expressed readiness to accept RAMP AO tutelage, if the Network members so wish, for a transition period of 18 to 24 months as from January 2016.

Presentation of the analysis of the Scientific Board

- Tutelage for the transition phase

Following the presentation by UCM-PRCM, the Scientific Committee made a presentation on the comparative analysis of the various options proposed in prior studies for an empowerment process, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each option. According to the Scientific Board, the choice of PRCM for the administrative and financial tutelage of RAMPAO was not the best solution, since PRCM has no legal personality and can therefore not assume the desired administrative tutelage. Besides, the closeness between the fields of intervention of PRCM and RAMPAO creates a risk of a merger of the two organisations.

The RAMPAO Scientific Board stressed the need to specify the identity of the Network and that of PRCM in order to prevent any overlapping of the two entities in their field of intervention. To this end, the two organisations must have their own communication service working to allay any confusion, and hence avoid any risk of merger.

The Scientific Board recommended the choice of IUCN to assume the administrative tutelage in a bid to prevent any risk of fusion between the two bodies.

For the conduct of the empowerment process, the Scientific Committee recommended the following two actions:

- Recruitment of a Secretary General ;
- Development and immediate rollout of a roadmap for RAMPAO empowerment.

- Final Status of RAMPAO

The Scientific Board proposed the conduct of a comparative study of the legal status of the future autonomous entity during the transition period to bring to the fore the main advantages and disadvantages of the various statuses possible, notably in countries of the sub region. A few options have been addressed, including: (i) a national association; (ii) an international association; and (iii) a foreign association, with the emphasis laid on the functional importance to have a status allowing membership for physical persons and corporate bodies from several nationalities.

The Scientific Board also advised that RAMPAO should bear the status of a «non-profit making sub regional NGO». This status is not applicable in a State that only accepts national associations.

- Financial autonomy

The Scientific Board formulated a few suggestions to ensure at stake a financial autonomy for RAMPAO and its Secretariat, notably: (i) members' contributions; (ii) provision of remunerated services to members and other partners; (iii) diversification of the Network's financial partners; and (iv) establishment of a trust fund.

Discussions

These presentations were followed by a discussion session during which a series of questions were raised:

Tutelage of the Network during the transition phase

The discussions on the Network's tutelage options during the transition phase made it possible to clarify that the tutelage proposed was a multi-dimensional tutelage that could be beneficial for both the Network and PRCM, but also the functional and administrative aspects of IUCN.

In the face of the concerns voiced by participants, Dr Ahmed Senhour undertook to not opt for a merger between PRCM and RAMP AO, completely ruling out such a possibility. He alleged that PRCM would facilitate RAMP AO access to its partners towards reaching empowerment.

Duration of the transition phase

Consensually, participants validated a span of 2 years as the duration of the transition phase.

Revamping of the Network's bodies

Participants reaffirmed the importance of the Network's buy-in by member States. They also suggested the possibility of securing a financial contribution from member States to facilitate the Network's empowerment process.
Financial sustainability of the Network

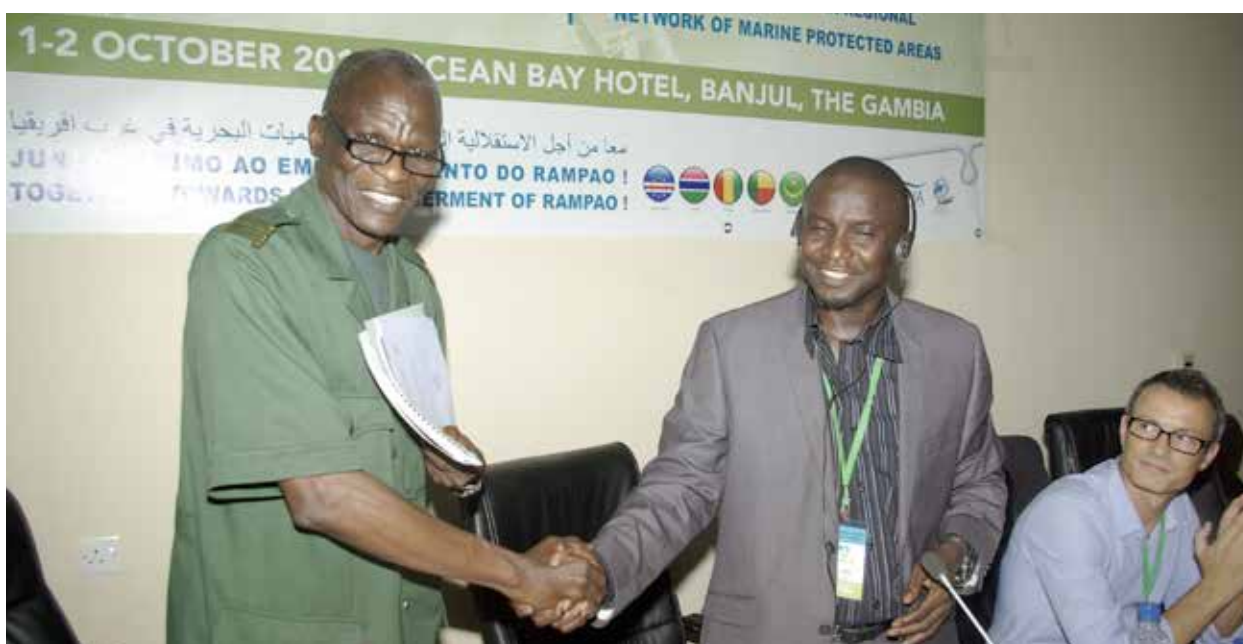
Participants stressed the importance of establishing a sustainable funding mechanism. The various options proposed by participants include the creation of a Trust Fund, the establishment of a voluntary contribution of Member States, the implementation of a membership contribution system, the possibility for the Secretariat to offer income-generating services, and the diversification of the Network's financial partners.

Location of the head office of the Network's Secretariat

The authorities in charge of marine protected areas in Mauritania expressed the wish to host the head office of the Network Secretariat after the transition phase.

2.1.7. Election of the new RAMP AO President

Only the candidacy of Mr Momodou Lamin Kassama, Head of the Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM) of the Gambia, was received by the Secretariat prior to the General Assembly. This unique candidacy was accepted by the GA. Mr Kassama was therefore chosen, at unanimous decision, to assure the Network's chairmanship during the transition period.



Decision relative to the chairmanship of RAMP AO General Assembly

1. The General Assembly has chosen Mr Momodou Lamin Kassama to preside over RAMP AO during the transition phase, until the holding of a constituent General Assembly of the new entity.

2.1.8 Presentation and validation of the empowerment roadmap

A proposed roadmap for the transition period was tabled at the General Assembly for advice. This document is articulated around the main tasks that must be carried out during the transition phase, including:

- (i) The detailed analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the different legal statuses adapted to RAMP AO ;
- (ii) The drafting of documents related to RAMP AO operating structure and adapted to the chosen status (Charter, Statutes, By-laws) ;
- (iii) The participatory development of a five-year programme (2017/2022) of technical actions with MPA managers, in collaboration with line institutions ;

- (iv) The preparation of documents related to the Network's communication strategy ;
- (v) The design of a business plan addressing the operation of the Network (GA, Secretariat) and its activities of support to members;
- (vi) The holding of a constituent GA of the new entity, with the validation of the different elements.

The Secretariat also presented a table summarising all activities and a tentative schedule of the roadmap.

Discussions

The analysis of the roadmap aroused many questions amongst participants. Members requested from the Scientific Board some clarifications as to the terminology used, mainly with regards to the types of association (national, international, foreign associations). Following these discussions, participants advised the Secretariat to take time to analyse the different options and to conduct studies necessary for the option to be made.

Participants urged the Secretariat to take into account the legal provisions in Member States as to the constitution of the future organisation (See the case of the APPEL Network), and to ensure the adaptation of the Network's founding instruments by considering the legal possibilities and the advice and recommendations of members.

Another recommendation was that the Secretariat should mobilise the funds necessary for the allocation of grants for the conduct of pilot activities of MPAs, the furtherance of RAMP AO communication and training activities, and the rollout of lobbying activities to the States (Government and Parliament) to urge them to include the funding of MPA management in their national budgets.

Incoming President Mr Kassama hailed the efforts of all participants and urged them to demonstrate more determination and commitment to take up the current and future challenges of the Network. He reaffirmed that the Gambia will spare no effort to succeed his mandate. Meanwhile, the Gambian official expressed wish to build on the support and experience of the Network's partners to accompany this transition phase.

Decisions of the General Assembly on the empowerment process

At unanimous decision, the General Assembly:

2. Validated the maintaining of RAMP AO empowerment process ;
3. Opted for a transitional tutelage towards this empowerment, for a duration up to a maximum of 2 years;
4. Validated the roadmap proposed by the RAMP AO Secretariat;
5. Entrusted the transitional tutelage to PRCM Coordination and Mobilisation Unit,

with the main task of effectively implementing the roadmap.

2.2 Plenary session: Proceedings of 2 October 2015

2.2.1 Development of the Work Plan 2016-2017

During the tour held for the validation of the findings of the study on the Network's empowerment, RAMP AO was urged to integrate priority activities of member MPAs in the work plan in a bid to meet the concrete requirements of the sites.

To this end, priority activities have been collected from members and line institutions. Consequently, the Secretariat has considered the priorities of the States in the development of the work plan. These activities presented to the GA mainly touched on technical actions pertaining to MPA management.

This process of considering countries' activities, which enhances collaboration between Member States and RAMP AO through the Secretariat, was hailed by the Head of the Department of Community Marine Protected Areas of Senegal (DAMCP) who argued that member States are not waiting for RAMP AO to carry out their activities, adding that RAMP AO activities should come to complement them.

This presentation aroused a lengthy debate on the nature of the work plan during the transition phase.

Discussions

During the discussions, participants suggested that the Secretariat should focus on the strategic studies aimed at the empowerment of the Network and the appropriation of RAMP AO by all Member States during the transition. This prioritisation of activities must be based on the roadmap validated by the GA during Day 1 proceedings.

MAVA representative stressed the need for the Secretariat to build a clear vision of activities to be carried out and the available funding sources and possibilities. He also advised the Secretariat to propose and finalise a comprehensive and realistic action plan by late October 2015, while indicating that the MAVA Foundation envisages, for 2016, supporting the Network to the tune of €150,000 and covering charges of the RAMP AO Secretariat staff equalling a full time and a half.

Moreover, as part of the technical activities, the Secretariat was advised to complete the establishment of the logical framework for priority activities and build on the possibilities offered by the Biodiversity Convention, the Green funds for climate, while taking into account the priority of community MPAs.

2.2.2 Presentation of the orientations envisaged for the legal studies to be conducted towards defining the legal status adapted to RAMP AO

As per the agenda validated by the General Assembly, the Secretariat presented a draft of the Terms of Reference for the legal study aimed at defining the status adapted to the Network. The objective of this presentation was to collect members' opinions with the view to considering their concerns when determining the Network's legal status.

Exchanges on the issues made it possible to reaffirm, as per the discussions, recommendations and decisions of Day 1 proceedings, the need to handle the preparation and conduct of this activity in the transition phase.

Participants also agreed on the maintaining of an Executive Committee during the transition phase for the monitoring of the various tasks under the roadmap, and a Scientific Committee to provide support to the Secretariat in this process.

Decision of RAMP AO General Assembly on the modalities of monitoring and supervision of the transition phase by RAMP AO bodies

6. The GA has validated the maintaining of an Executive Committee to monitor and supervise the RAMP AO empowerment process;
7. The GA has instructed PRCM and the RAMP AO Secretariat to establish a new Scientific Committee.

2.2.3 Presentation of highlights of the side event grouping RAMP AO, Parliamentarians, Journalists, Donors

A side event grouping RAMP AO, Parliamentarians, Ministers, Donors and Journalists was held on the side lines of the discussion on new membership applications. The discussion mainly touched on the development of synergies towards supporting the Network in its empowerment process, but also mobilising the necessary funding. The attendance list is attached herewith.



Discussions

Following the introduction of the topic by the moderator, participants notably parliamentarians, journalists and technical partners present in the meeting room discussed the roles to be devolved on each party. In this regard, parliamentarians proposed:

- An advice-counselling partnership on all RAMP AO legislative documents (harmonisation of legislative policies) ;
- Provision of technical support to the Network in the development of projects by technicians Members of Parliament;

- Communicating and disseminating RAMP AO results in platforms with stakeholders of the littoral ;
- Growing awareness of countries on RAMP AO transformations;
- Developing a common programme of waste management.

The following concerns were raised by the audience:

- Integrating MPAs in the national budgets 2016 of Member States

During the debates, the integration of MPAs in the national budget of each Member State was raised. In response to this concern, parliamentarians explained that the budgets are elaborated between May and June and the vote occurs between October and December, hence the impossibility to integrate such a requirement for 2016.

However, they offered to circulate a memorandum to all parliamentarians of Member States to attract their attention on the place to be granted to MPAs. To this end, the APPEL Network will be in charge of drafting a regional directive to be sent to all members, so that the ministers in charge of the issue address it when facing members of parliament. A call will then be launched to all different sections.

- Supporting RAMP AO in mobilising funds to avoid heavy dependency on the States

To support RAMP AO in raising funding, the APPEL Network proposed the development of a common fundraising programme.

The lack of data for MPAs as to the national budgets was raised. Thus, parliamentarians were urged to support the entities by making a compilation, over a few years, of the share reserved for MPAs in the national budget within the RAMP AO space.

- Communication

The sensitising aspect and the dissemination of information was lengthily discussed. To this end, RAMP AO, the Groupe Recherche Environnement et Presse (GREP) and the Network of West Africa radio stations for environment (RERAO) were advised to pool their efforts to help the populations better understand all aspects related to MPAs.

Emphasis must be laid on the place of MPAs and the dissemination of best practices through broadcast reports, films, documentaries and meetings with the press, among others.

A recommendation was also made to train communication specialists in MPA issues through theoretical and practical sessions, but also in understanding how the sites can benefit from press services to be more informed and better inform the local populations. In the face of all these recommendations, the funding concern was at the heart of the debates. Thus, partners were urged to work on projects to raise funding from donors. RAMP AO was advised to:

- Build on the existing structures to support MPA managers in their communication around the sites and step up its visibility in this transition period where the Network needs to diversify its financial partners;

- Promote exchanges of experiences through networks of journalists specialised in environment issues ;
- Integrate the Biodiversity Network for a collaborative action ;
- Communicate on aspects of common interest ;
- Join the association of mayors of Senegal that have decision making powers at local level vested by Act 3 of Decentralisation. Thus, RAMP AO is projected to integrate the organisation of the platform of local councils in Senegal and in the major platform of stakeholders of the littoral. The tripartite sensitising project DPWM – PRCM – RAMP AO was also discussed. RAMP AO and DPWM are still awaiting feedback from PRCM.

2.2.4 Election of new full members

The Secretariat presented to the full members the membership applications from new MPAs willing to join the Network and the applications of which were complete. A table was drawn, taking into account the criteria related to the biological and ecological importance of the sites, having an official recognition along with geographic boundaries and management objectives, having an operational and functional management body, having a management and/or development plan or a multi-year activity plan. In so doing, the Secretariat secured the support of Mr Bocar Kanté, a member of the Scientific Committee to run the debates.

Table 2 : Synthesis of the analysis of RAMP AO membership applications

Applicant Sites	Biological and Ecological Importance		recognition along with geographical boundaries and management		Operational and Functional Management Body		Management and/or Development Plan or a Multi-year Activity Plan		Remarks	Recommendations of the Secretariat
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO		
Boa vista	X		X		X	X	X		Management Plan	YES
Gandoul	X		X			X	X		Management Plan	YES
Sangomar	X		X			X	X		Management Plan	YES
KAPAK OLAL	X		X		X	X	X		Management Plan	YES

Discussions

Some members advised the full members to put the election of new members on hold until after the transition phase. Besides, they reminded the Secretariat of the recommendation of the 5th General Assembly regarding the prior visit to applicant sites, and the provision of the latter's application files prior to the GA. The provision of the files to the Scientific Committee was also demanded, with the view to collecting a scientific viewpoint on the sites and enhancing the eligibility criteria. Upon discussion, members decided to elect new members by vote.

Table 3 : Results of new full members' election

Applicant Sites	Voters	YES	NO	Abstentions
Sangomar MPA	28	20	6	2
Gandoul MPA	28	20	4	4
APAC OLAL	28	22	4	2
Boa-Vista MPA	28	22	4	2

2.2.5 Presentation of recommendations of the Scientific Board

Members of the Scientific Committee presented the recommendations stemming from their discussions and advised RAMPAO to:

- Position itself on issues related to climate changes, and mitigation measures. In this prospect, it is important to take local communities into account when devising mitigation measures ;
- Consider the exploitation and management of fishery resources in the development of fishing grounds;
- Consider taxation issues in the action plan for empowerment, in case the Network elects to provide remunerated services, but also public accounting rules in Member States;
- Secure synergies with CBD focal points to help the Network identify funding mechanisms.

Outgoing members of the Scientific Committee thanked the Network and reiterated their availability to support RAMPAO in this transition phase towards empowerment.

2.2.6 Presentation by Partners

Promotion of aquaculture in cages and in garlands in the bolong of Mbos Ndo in the Palmarin Community Nature Reserve (RNCP)

The project for the promotion of aquaculture in cages and garlands in the Mbos Ndo bolong of the Palmarin Community Nature Reserve (RNCP) was presented by Captain Abdou Diongue, Conservation officer of the site. The Project aims to contribute to the harmonious development of aquaculture (fish growing, oyster cultivation) through the establishment of a unit that will mainly exploit the *Sarotherodon melanotheron heudelotii*, a species grown in cages in the estuaries of the Sine Saloum River and the *Crassostrea gasar* that sticks to the mangrove roots in garlands. More specifically, this activity seeks to enhance the provision of fish and oysters in the area, step up food security, create job opportunities and sustainable income. It is expected from the project: a production of about 1 tonne of fish with commercial sizes of 400g, and the production of commercial oysters of 6 to 7 cm long, among others.

Development of a compendium of reptiles and amphibians of the Diawling National Park (PND)

Ms Blandine Mélis, technical advisor to PND Director presented the project for the development of a compendium of reptiles and amphibians of the Park to correct some

weaknesses noted in the Park pertaining to the limited knowledge of reptiles and amphibians, the lack of policy to monitor reptiles and amphibians, but also the lack of partnership between the Park and specialised research bodies. The project, which is in its pilot phase (Aug. 2015 – April 2016), has secured RAMPAO support to carry out six field missions scheduled in the wet and dry seasons, with mixed teams expected to work on 15 sampling stations. At the end of the project, some “Reptiles and Amphibians” indicators will be proposed and the results and management recommendations made available to the Park for the conservation of key habitats (resting grounds, corridors, basin flood...).

Evolution of the vegetal cover in the Community Nature Reserve of the Tristao Islands
To understand more the different types of soil occupations on the Tristao archipelago and their distribution in space through tele detection, the BIOCOS Project has commissioned a study on the evolution of the vegetal cover in the Community Nature Reserve of the Tristao Islands. This study was presented to the GA by a Consultant. The presenter recalled that the Marine Protected Area of Tristao has been founded by a joint order of 2009 and confirmed by the decree of 20 February 2013 on the creation of the nature reserve. The global objective in the creation of the MPA is to “ensure protection and participatory conservation of the ecological and sociocultural diversity of the Tristao Complex towards improving the local communities’ living conditions.”

Presentation of the RAMPAO web site

The RAMPAO Communication and Public Relations Coordinator presented the new web site of the Network and the possibilities it offers to members and visitors for being a platform of exchanges, discussions and sharing of experiences, and but also in terms of opportunities to secure funding thanks to the directory of donors, and information via the resource centre, etc. At the request of MAVA, the site also includes a toolbox developed as part of the West African marine and coastal biodiversity management project through the identification of conservation initiatives and monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (BIOCOS). This toolbox will enable MPAs and any organisation or visitor to secure advice and view concrete examples to develop communication tools and materials. In the presentation, a recommendation was made to create a RAMPAO email address for each member site in order to prevent losses of information in case of changes likely to occur in the MPAs management bodies, but also to ensure continuity in exchanges.

2.2.7 Presentation of the GA recommendations

Empowerment option

Transition phase for two years under PRCM tutelage

Roadmap

- Conduct of legal studies pertaining to the autonomous entity ;
- Ensuring funding for MPA pilot activities;
- Furtherance of RAMPAO communication and training activities ;

- Mobilising Member States (Government and Parliament) to register MPA funding in their national budgets.

Technical and financial aspects

- Focus activities on the strategic studies aimed at the Network's empowerment and an appropriation thereof by Member States during the transition phase ;
- Ensure the RAMP AO buy-in by Member States and a strong involvement of the States in RAMP AO activities to ensure the sustainability of the Network ;
- Canvas partnerships with International Conventions addressing migration corridors ;
- Facilitate the development of joint projects amongst MPAs sharing common themes, especially on ecological continuums, the displacement of key and vulnerable species, etc.;
- Insist on the socioeconomic values in the projects to be developed, for more added value ;
- Newsletter: amplify the section « Experiences from here and elsewhere » ;
- Organise, on the side lines of each General Assembly and PRCM Forum, a meeting of MPA managers and State entities in charge of MPAs to exchange views on the challenges and priorities outlined in their strategies, with the view to integrating them in RAMP AO action plan ;
- Ensure a more balanced distribution of small grants among Member States and involve State bodies in the major orientations defined in MPA management plans ;
- Assist the sites in improving their projects, as part of small grant allocations;
- Organise specific exchange visits to ensure a great visibility of the Network;
- Canvas sustainable funding mechanisms for the Network (Trust Funds, Member States' contributions...);
- Collaborate with the APPEL Network that will be in charge of drafting and circulating a regional directive to its members in each country to urge Ministers in charge of environment to take MPAs into account when facing members of parliament in their respective countries, with the view to integrating these marine areas in the national budgets.

Full members:

- Review the procedures and criteria of RAMP AO admission, revise and organise an evaluation of the site based on the advice of the Scientific Board;
- Organise field missions to check the realities of sites' functionality and the management bodies ;
- Monitor and evaluate member MPAs to see if they are entitled to remain RAMP AO members.

Scientific Board:

RAMP AO must:

- Position itself on climate change issues (mitigation, resilience, adaptation) by taking local communities into account when developing mitigation measures ;
- Consider the exploitation and management of fishery resources when developing fishing grounds ;
- Consider taxation issues in the action plan for empowerment, in case the Network elects

- to provide remunerated services, but also public accounting rules in Member States;
- Canvass synergies with CBD focal points to help the Network identify funding mechanisms.

Member States' priority activities:

- Complete the logical framework of priority activities and target possibilities offered by the Convention on Biodiversity ;
- Take into account priorities of Community MPAs ;
- Showcase RAMPAO achievements ;
- Ensure a timely provision of the entire documentation for a proper exploitation thereof by members ;
- Prioritise recommendations when presenting them ;
- Extend the RAMPAO Network to networks of journalists to develop communication aspects.

Parliamentarians – Network of Journalists - Donors:

- Build on existing entities to support MPA managers in their communication in the sites and enhance the Network's visibility in the transition phase when it needs to diversify its financial partners;
- Promote exchanges of experiences through networks of journalists specialised in environment issues ;
- Integrate the "Biodiversity" Network of the Gambia for a collaborative action;
- Communicate on aspects of common interest ;
- Join the association of mayors of Senegal that have decision making powers at local level vested by Act 3 of Decentralisation. Thus, RAMPAO is projected to integrate the organisation of the platform of local councils in Senegal and in the major platform of stakeholders of the littoral;
- Train communication specialists in MPA issues through theoretical and practical sessions.

2.2.8 Decision of the General Assembly

When closing the works, the President urged the RAMPAO Secretariat and all members to keep giving their best to take up the new challenges facing the Network. He then submitted to the General Assembly the following resolutions that have been approved at unanimous decision:

Decision relative to the chairmanship of RAMPAO General Assembly

1. The General Assembly has chosen Mr Momodou Lamin Kassama to preside over RAMPAO during the transition phase, until the holding of a constituent General Assembly of the new entity.

Decisions of the General Assembly on the empowerment process

2. The GA has validated the maintaining of RAMPAO empowerment process ;
3. The GA has opted for a transitional tutelage towards this empowerment, for a duration up to a maximum of 2 years;
4. The GA has validated the roadmap proposed by the RAMPAO Secretariat;

5. The GA has entrusted the transitional tutelage to PRCM Coordination and Mobilisation Unit, with the main task of effectively implementing the roadmap.

Decision of RAMP AO General Assembly on the modalities of monitoring and supervision of the transition phase by RAMP AO bodies

6. The GA has validated the maintaining of an Executive Committee to monitor and supervise the RAMP AO empowerment process;
7. The GA has instructed PRCM and the RAMP AO Secretariat to establish a new Scientific Committee.

After participants dealt with all items on the agenda, the President invited authorities at the presidium to declare the official closing of the GA.

2.2.9 Official closing ceremony

The closing ceremony was marked by two speeches delivered by PRCM Director Dr Ahmed Senhoury, and Mr Momodou Lamin Kassama, DPWM Director and Acting RAMP AO President.

The PRCM Director reiterated PRCM's commitment to accompany RAMP AO in this transition phase by sparing no effort for the success of this transition towards an empowered Network.

He further extolled the encouraging results obtained so far before alluding to the many challenges facing the Network, notably the empowerment process. He wrapped up his speech by reiterating the availability and commitment of PRCM to host RAMP AO and spare no effort to conduct this transition phase with all stakeholders.

For his part, DPWM Director thanked once again RAMP AO, on behalf of the Gambia's Minister of Environment, for choosing his country to host this 6th General Assembly of the Network. He then dwelt on the current environmental problems (soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, climate change) to which the Network should gear its interventions, while assuring the GA of his commitment and that of his country to fulfil all the tasks devolved on him, as Acting RAMP AO President. In conclusion, bade farewell to all participants before declaring the 6th RAMP AO GA closed.

2.2.10 Closing cocktail- Distribution of gifts

To thank RAMP AO members, some internal signage plates were distributed to MPAs, with a pack of shirts, t-shirts, female bodysuits and caps sporting the RAMP AO logo. Partners were not left outdone, some shirts, bodysuits and caps were offered to them by RAMP AO in recognition for their attention and support to the Network during a cocktail party offered to mark the effective closing of the 6th GA.







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Réseau Régional d'Atres Marines Protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest

Mamelles rue 21 - Villa N°F46 - Dakar - Sénégal
Tél. (221) 33 869 10 43 - Fax (221) 33 869 10 43
E-mail : secretariat@rampao.org
www.rampao.org