



Wetlands International
Strategy 2002-2005

WETLANDS
INTERNATIONAL

Wetlands... a source of life

Wetlands International

Strategy 2002-2005

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1 *Introduction*

1.1 *Purpose and audience*

This document describes the role of Wetlands International within the period 2002 to 2005, based upon experience accumulated since its formation in 1995 and rooted in an understanding of its history and development. Objectives and targets are proposed within the life of this Strategy, which are further elaborated in the separate and more detailed Programme Action Plans and Regional Strategies, which contain measurable targets. The lifespan of the Strategy is four years, to enable programme continuity, while the review cycle is three years.

This Strategy is intended as a tool to explain the organisation and positioning of Wetlands International to the outside world. It is also for use by Wetlands International staff in all offices as a framework for selecting, prioritising and developing work plans, which reflect the core objectives of Wetlands International. It is also intended to provide a foundation to guide governance and to support constructive dialogue and collaboration with key Partners of Wetlands International.



2 *Wetlands International's Position*

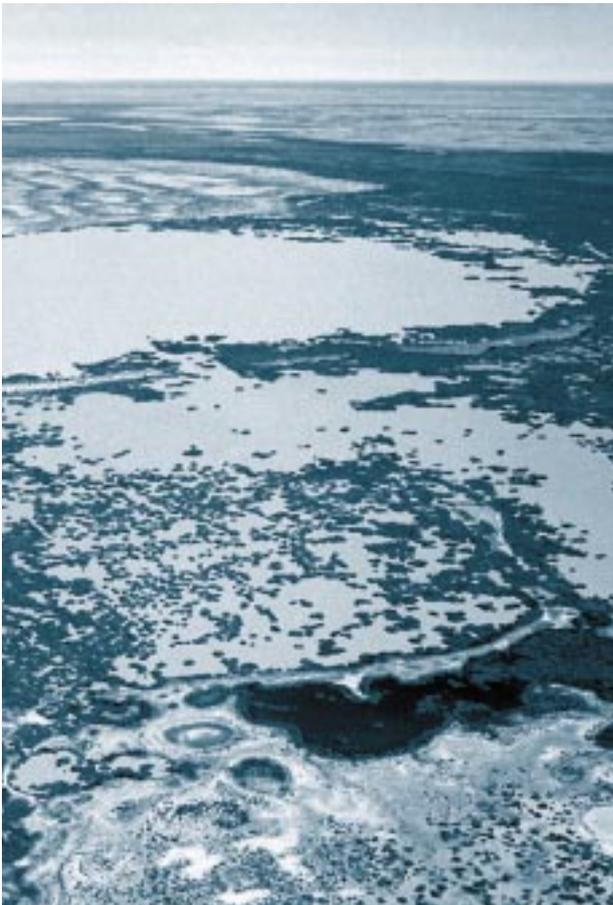
2.1 *Where we have come from and current niche*

Wetlands International was formed in 1995 when three organisations joined to create a wetland alliance. It is considered to be the only global NGO devoted solely to the conservation and management of wetlands. The three founding organisations were:

The International Waterfowl & Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB), formed in 1954 and principally covering Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The Asian Wetland Bureau, formed in 1983 and covering Asia Pacific.

Wetlands for the Americas, formerly part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, formed in 1985 and covering North and South America.



The 'roots' of Wetlands International were greatly enriched by waterbird conservation expertise, created and built upon the well regarded volunteer-led International Waterbird Census (IWC), developed well before environmentally related global Conventions. The IWC continues to be a crucial component of global biodiversity indexes. All three founding organisations originated to monitor and to conduct applied research on waterbird populations, and to work for the conservation of the wetlands upon which the birds depend.

Wetlands International is a global organisation. Our expertise enables us, in collaboration with our partners, to anticipate and to propose new actions at a strategic level to deliver innovative conservation results. Wetlands International's current role and global core strength and niche depends upon being policy relevant and user needs driven. The purpose of Wetlands International is as follows:

Mission statement:

"To sustain and restore wetlands, their resources, and biodiversity for future generations through research, information exchange, and conservation activities world-wide."

Core work priorities are:

- waterbird monitoring activities, associated data management and supra-national analysis and reporting;
- design and piloting of regional approaches to wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring;
- design of, development and support to a family of regional flyways;
- science-led input to and facilitation of the conservation and wise use of wetlands

2.2 Status of wetlands and global change

As issues of the world-wide degradation of wetlands have become more prominent, so the concerns and activities of the founding organisations expanded beyond research on birds to cover, more broadly, the sustainable use and management of wetlands and all their dependent or associated species. This was paralleled by the evolution of the work of the Ramsar Convention.

Global change, including climate change, is the all-encompassing background against which Wetlands International must deliver results. Pressures on biodiversity and wetlands are severe, and increasingly large-scale, and require mitigation of threats and adaptive management of habitat. In response to global change and to more effectively share resources and effort, global and regional Conventions, treaties and agreements are increasingly exploring means of closer cooperation, resulting in joint workplans or programmes of work.

In addition, the essential role that functioning, healthy wetlands play in safeguarding the world's water resources is becoming critically important on the wetlands agenda. This role is recognised within an ecosystem approach to wetland conservation, which considers wetlands as an integrated component of the landscape at multiple scales (e.g. within river basins or coastal zones) and linked to the needs of people who use these landscapes, in particular the wetland.

The present context within which Wetlands International operates demands multi-disciplinary expertise in wetland biodiversity conservation (within which the International Waterbird Census is an essential index) at a landscape and river basin scale. This includes appreciation of the socio-economic values of wetlands and their potential for poverty alleviation and wise use.

2.3 Our ability to respond

Wetlands International, in responding to these demanding challenges, must primarily respond to the needs of its users, members and stakeholders. Priority setting and response must be effective. The expertise required to achieve this does not solely reside within the staff of Wetlands International; many associated experts and those of our partners need to work together to deliver effective results.

The stakeholders of Wetlands International include partner organisations, Conventions, and members (defined as those organisations and countries that pay membership dues). The stakeholders and member constituencies overlap, but through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis they identified clear imperatives. Accordingly, Wetlands International is committed to accountable management, responsible to a regionally representative Board of Directors, that is appointed by our members.

Wetlands International's expertise is represented by a wide-ranging community of individuals and organisations in addition to its staff. Wetlands International Specialist Groups, other expert groups and partner organisations are critical to the delivery of wetland conservation actions. Wetlands International will aim to maximise these relationships and especially to strengthen and support the science and knowledge base of Wetlands International contributed by this expert community.

Wetlands International intends also to progressively align its own strategies and workplans to complement and reflect those of key Conventions and partners, as requested by them. This will allow a coherent programmatic approach to be used, avoiding a fragmented project-by-project dilution of effort. This Strategy therefore responds to the stakeholder analysis by setting out clear programmes and objectives for delivery of work, against needs identified by stakeholders.

3 *Selecting and Prioritising Work*

Wetlands International is an independent global organisation and a Non-Government Organisation, with a membership consisting of government agencies, counterpart national NGOs, Specialist Groups, and other partners. Our stakeholder analysis clearly indicated that our niche as a knowledge-based specialist wetlands conservation organisation is unique, and our position enables us to work in cooperation with Conventions, Treaties and Agreements, while continuing to directly assist our members.

Wetlands International's position also enables us to contribute effectively to national pilot actions, strategies and policies, but just as importantly, we are able to add value to government membership of Conventions and Agreements. This is achieved through our ability to provide science-based advice and information to facilitate intersectoral cooperation, catalyse key international initiatives which are enabled by policies and objectives set at inter-Convention level calling for practical actions for wetlands conservation

3.1 *Working at different scales*

Wetlands International is a global organisation. The balance between the work done at international, regional, national and local level is determined by needs of our stakeholders and users. Close collaboration with our major Partners and with members also assists in determining and maintaining this balance. The emphasis is on the global relevance of all work, even if delivered locally. Work that enables a multiplier effect is a priority.

This Strategy defines corporate science-based Programmes, contained in this Strategy and Objectives, which apply to delivery of all activities and results, at any scale, to which Wetlands International as a whole is committed. The needs of users differ significantly at a regional scale (and below), and the delivery of results is subject to regional priorities. These priorities are set, developed and enabled by Regional Programme focal points in each of the five regions in which we work: Asia, Oceania, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The regions are similar to the regional divisions of the Ramsar Convention.

The key purpose of a regional approach is to:

- Identify priority objectives for each Region (contained in the corporate Strategy) and to set targets for regional delivery of results;
- Assign staff and other resources from the global workforce to enable effective regional delivery;
- Set fundraising priorities within each Programme to enable each Region to be effectively supported

New or updated objectives will be identified by focal points for inclusion as supplements to the corporate Strategy.



4 Programme of Wetlands International

OUR VISION AND MISSION WILL BE DELIVERED THROUGH FOUR SCIENCE-BASED PROGRAMMES, GUIDED BY THE APPLICATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA, WHICH ARE DESCRIBED BELOW.

4.1 Vision and mission

Our vision is that all wetlands and their dependent biodiversity will be conserved, and that where wetlands are managed or used that this be done wisely.

Mission statement:

"To sustain and restore wetlands, their resources, and biodiversity for future generations through research, information exchange, and conservation activities world-wide."

4.2 Guiding principles and criteria

All of our work will adhere to guiding principles, which in common with the more detailed criteria for selection of appropriate activities, will help Wetlands International carry out work that is clearly our business and which will make a real difference to conservation of wetlands and their dependent biodiversity.

We will do this through contribution of our unique combination of skills, while respecting and complementing the niche and skills of other organisations that contribute to wetland conservation and wise use. **Wetlands International will therefore apply the following Guiding Principles, as agreed by the Board of Members:**

- **Wetlands International will, as its highest priority, perform user needs-driven globally relevant work, vertically integrating delivery of results at all geographical scales**
- **Flexibility in use of staff across Regions** – Staff from different offices will be used flexibly to deliver results
- **Science knowledge-based** – provision of scientifically and culturally appropriate knowledge and guidance, conservation and wise use
- **Sustainability built into all actions** – guiding stakeholders that influence or depend upon wetlands to maximise the environmental sustainability of their actions, and to promote wise use
- **User needs driven**

In addition, scale-independent criteria will be used to screen all proposed actions. The criteria, applied sequentially, are essential to provide a rational basis to accept or reject proposals, regardless of their origin. Briefly justified, Wetlands International will only undertake an activity if it is within one of the Programmes and:

- Globally relevant
- Sufficiently funded
- Transferable between and across scales
- Capable of adding scientific based knowledge
- Achievable in proposed timeframe with an exit strategy
- Synergistic / complementary / has leverage – multiplier effect

While guiding principles are the essential primary filter to assist the targeting of our work, the use of criteria also assists practical decision-making. In the **Annex**, a decision flowchart is presented, showing the stepwise application of the criteria. The use of this flowchart is mandatory for selection of all Wetlands International activities.

4.3 Programme and objectives

To enable delivery of our Vision and Mission, Wetlands International works through four Programmes, with the following overall objectives:

- 1 Working towards wetland species conservation
- 2 Inventory, assess and monitor wetlands at all scales
- 3 Working towards wise use
- 4 Build capacity through training and awareness raising

For each Programme, objectives are defined. Each Programme area is underpinned by separate, and more detailed Programme Action Plans containing costed activities on an annual basis.

PROGRAMME 1 *Wetland Species Conservation*



The conservation of species dependent upon, or associated with wetlands for all or part of their life-cycle, is the focus of this Programme, which includes long-standing and authoritative work on waterbirds, mangroves, and peatlands, and which encompasses other key taxa including freshwater fish and amphibia. Species conservation aims to conserve wetland species *in situ*, underpinned by knowledge of their distribution and habitat requirements. Migratory species, including waterbirds, dependent upon a network of wetland sites, are also included. Wetlands International is an important implementing partner for the Bonn Convention, through technical support to the Africa Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, and other flyway initiatives.

Strategic positioning:

Wetlands International will, as its highest priority, provide global leadership of the International Waterbird Census and associated knowledge bases. It will also emphasise the design of, development and support to a family of regional flyway initiatives. Partnerships will be entered into for monitoring, assessment and conservation of selected non-waterbird taxa.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Develop and maintain knowledge of the status of all global waterbird populations
- 1.2 Develop and maintain global waterbird population benchmarks
- 1.3 Disseminate effectively data on waterbird populations, status, threats and trends
- 1.4 Enhance the conservation and management of waterbirds through the development and implementation of action plans
- 1.5 Promote further development and implementation of flyway agreements, strategies and site networks
- 1.6 Undertake preparatory actions to assess and publish the status of knowledge about freshwater fish
- 1.7 Develop wise use tools for waterbirds and other taxa

PROGRAMME 2 *Wetland Inventory, Assessment and Monitoring*



Wetlands International's work on national inventory and the 1999 Global Review of Wetland Resources and priorities for wetland inventory project results, are key strengths which underlie this Programme. It is called for at international level by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and endorsed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). At the flyway level, strategic inventory is essential to the protection of important sites in the network.

Strategic positioning:

Wetlands International will continue to focus on development and implementation of regional or sub-regional wetland inventory, and facilitating national wetland inventories. It will also compile, assess and disseminate information derived from wetland inventory. It will also focus on the development of assessment and monitoring tools, to build appreciation of wetland values and to assist identification of conservation actions and priorities.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Assess and report on the status of wetlands worldwide
- 2.2 Encourage and develop national wetland inventories
- 2.3 Utilize and promote good practice in wetland inventory data management
- 2.4 Help to achieve further official protection of important wetland sites including Ramsar designations, with special attention to under-represented wetland types and sites important to biological networks
- 2.5 Promote strategic regional or sub-regional inventories
- 2.6 Maintain up to date global overview of the status of wetland inventories
- 2.7 Establish new tools and methods focusing on information on the socio-economic values of wetlands towards sustainable development and poverty alleviation

PROGRAMME 3 *Wise Use*



Wetlands International embraces the concept of wise use (or sustainable use) as one of its guiding principles in delivering wetlands conservation results at the global level. Key actions have been identified within action plans of Conventions and through international technical advisory groups (e.g. Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel, CMS Scientific Council) of which Wetlands International is either a member or permanent observer. Wetlands International contributes to identification and formulation of actions, or their targeting, in particular to the River Basin Initiative (Ramsar/CBD) and the implementation of the agenda for Inland Waters of CBD, and with respect to guidance on under-represented wetland types in the Ramsar List.

Strategic positioning:

Wetlands International will through multi-scalar - vertically integrated activities, promote and champion wetlands (values and functions) for people into the global agenda.

Wetlands International will also develop and apply its science/technical knowledge base to enable policy development and implementation at all strategic decision-making levels in the public and private sectors.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Develop a Wise Use of Wetlands Programme for the organisation
- 3.2 Promote wise use of peatlands worldwide
- 3.3 Enhance the effectiveness of wise use delivery by relevant international conventions, agreements and regional initiatives
- 3.4 Promote best practice, including use of traditional knowledge, in integrated wetlands and river basin management
- 3.5 Enhance recognition of the socio-economic values of wetlands, their importance for environmental and food security, and their potential for poverty alleviation
- 3.6 Mainstream wetlands in international development cooperation

PROGRAMME 4

Capacity Building



Wetlands International has long standing experience of capacity building undertaken at all geographical scales. Training and information is provided, for example, to professionals who manage wetlands, monitor biodiversity, or conduct inventories. Capacity building and awareness raising is conducted for policy and decision-makers and institutional networks worldwide, and is intended to promote self-help. In partnership with international Conventions and Agreements, training aiming to build national and local capacity is also achieved.

Strategic positioning:

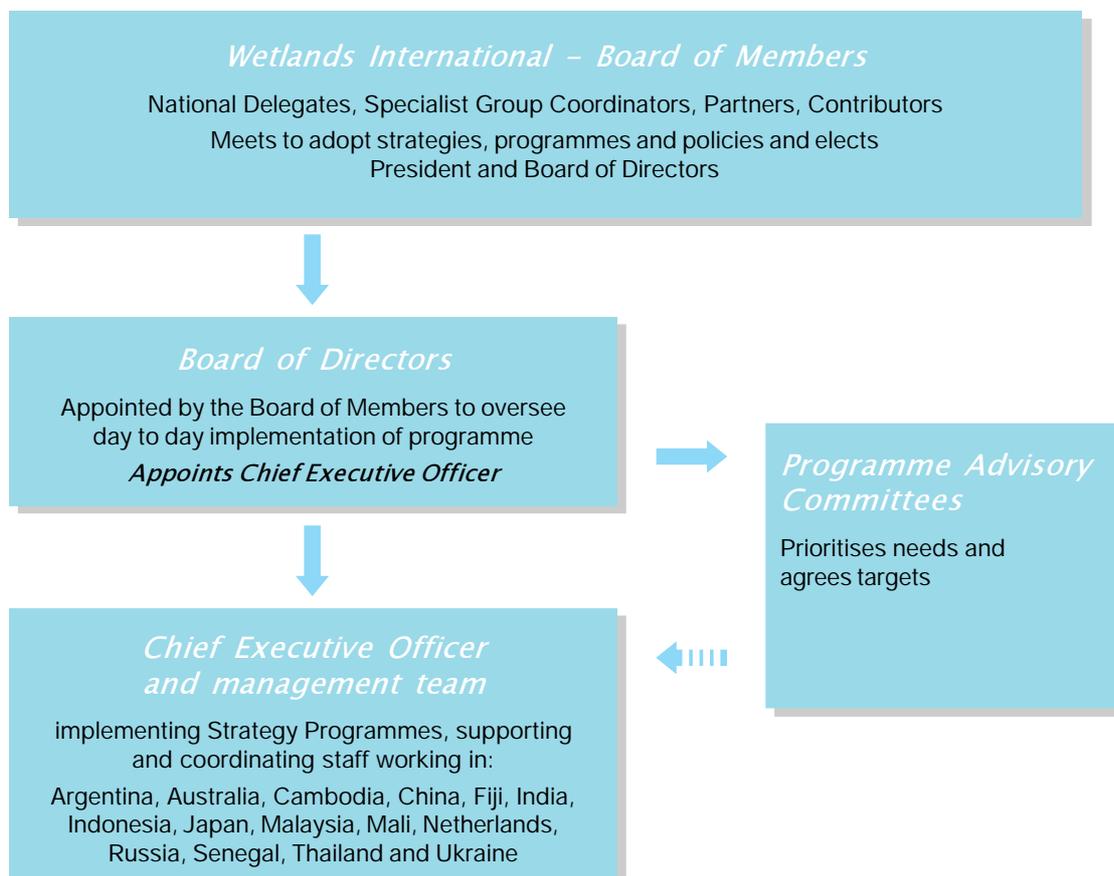
Wetlands International will enhance wise use of wetlands through increasing wetland management skills and raising awareness of wetland values and functions. It will utilize training as a process to improve conservation of wetlands by building capacity to manage wetlands wisely. It will identify training needs at a regional level and identify training products that focus on wetland ecosystem function and biodiversity. It will establish a training service aimed at assisting Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention. Wetlands International will employ communication and education tools as a process to build the awareness of and appreciation for wetland values amongst policy developers and decision makers.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Advice on providers of training and opportunities available to wetland managers
- 4.2 Develop and implement skill based training frameworks for wetland managers at important wetlands
- 4.3 Facilitate the establishment of training centres in developing countries
- 4.4 Improve accessibility of science-based information that enhances wetland management
- 4.5 Raise awareness of policy developers and decision-makers of the functions and values of wetlands and their resources
- 4.6 Use Ramsar CEPA products as a component of project work to increase awareness of best-practice in wise use of wetlands

5 *Delivery of results – organisation, operations and accountability*

5.1 *Structure of Wetlands International*



5.2 *Funding of activities*

All activities require resources to undertake, and these resources are obtained through project income and membership contributions, from governments, bilateral and multilateral development partners. Fund raising will primarily concentrate upon programmatic support needs rather than at individual project level. In addition, to enable better focused management of activities, work will only be undertaken by Wetlands International, if it is defined within a Programme Action Plan, has satisfied our guiding principles and criteria, and funds have been allocated.

5.3 *Delivering results*

We recognise that actions taken in isolation are often not effective. Therefore Wetlands International will build upon and work with the complementary strengths of our partners and collaborators, especially IUCN –the World Conservation Union, WWF, and BirdLife International, as well as local partners in government, science and NGO communities.

A key role of Wetlands International and its staff is to act as a catalyst, proposing and enabling globally relevant results to be delivered. Many wetland conservation activities are conducted more effectively at local level by indigenous NGOs and community groups, or through our international partners' country programmes. As resources permit Wetlands International will aim to support wetland conservation work done by others.

General objectives:

- 5.1 Develop the organisation's resources, networks and programmes efficiently, through sound governance and organisational management systems, and maximising synergy with other organisations
- 5.2 Renew and revitalise existing scientific and technical networks, and identify new expert collaborators according to the support needs identified in the Programme Action Plans

Communication objectives:

- 5.3 Continue to develop and maintain the website of Wetlands International as a global service to support the information needs of Specialist Groups, the expert network, Convention and Agreement focal points, national agencies, and Partners
- 5.4 Communicate Wetlands International's achievements to all staff, Members and Partners and to the outside world, through newsletters, information sheets, brochures and the Internet

Fundraising objectives:

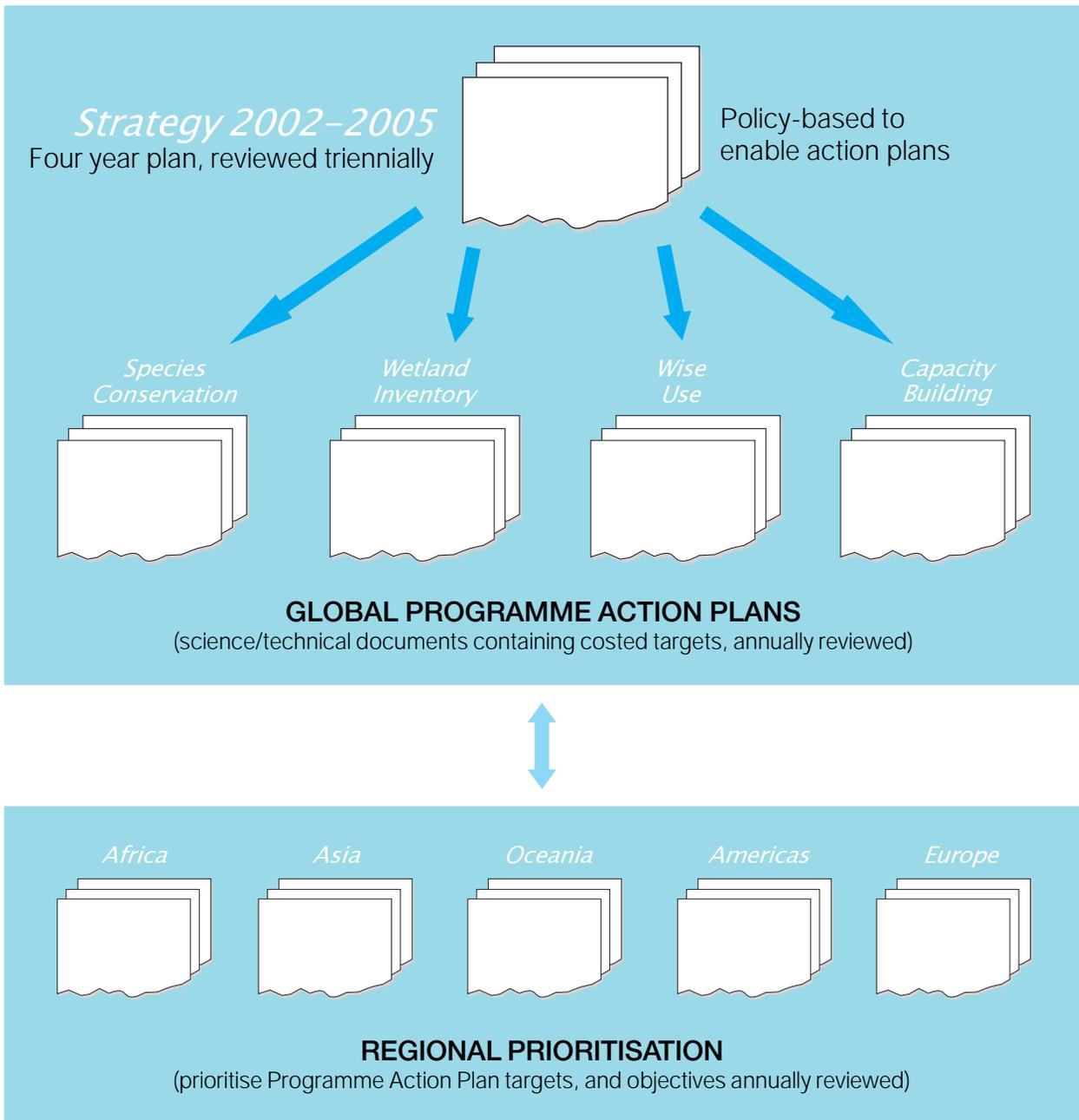
- 5.5 Obtain sufficient funding to underpin essential international activities (e.g. coordination of waterbird conservation and monitoring), through fully justified project modules included in a Programme Action Plan
- 5.6 Adequately fund scientific and technical work performed in technical panels of international Conventions and Agreements, through submission of annual workplans or Joint Work Plans endorsed by Secretariats of Conventions and Agreements, to governmental and multilateral agencies
- 5.7 Develop a strong fund-raising capacity through the development and marketing of high quality clearly targeted proposals. The proposals focus on implementing projects/activities outlined in the Programme Action Plans to be undertaken by Wetlands International offices, Specialist Groups and partners

Monitoring and reporting objectives:

- 5.8 Through the competent sub-committees of the Board of Directors, report against three monthly targets set in the corporate and regional Workplans
- 5.9 Corporate performance in each of the Programmes, which is the responsibility of Programme Leaders, will be evaluated by the Programmes, Science and Finance sub-Committees of the Board of Directors, against the annual targets set in Regional Strategies and the Programme Action Plans



5.4 Strategic documents of Wetlands International



ANNEX *Decision Flowchart*

OBJECTIVE: TO SELECT OR REJECT POTENTIAL WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, BY PROVIDING ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION: **"IS THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY..."**

