

Report of the 5th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, Hungary, June 1996

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PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS

Dr Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu (Ghana, Africa, and Chairperson of STRP)

Dr Makoto Komoda (Japan, Asia)

Dr Roberto Schlatter (Chile, Neotropics)

Mr Allan Smith (Canada, North America)

Dr Keith Thompson (New Zealand, Oceania)

Mr Mihály Végh (Hungary, Eastern Europe)

OBSERVERS

Ms Louise Lakos (Hungary, Chairperson of Ramsar Standing Committee)

Dr Max Finlayson (Australia, ERISS)

Mr Gábor Nechay (Hungary, and Vice Chair for Europe on CBD's SBSTTA)

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Mr Scott Frazier (Ramsar Database, Wetlands International, UK)

SPEAKERS

Ms Birgith Sloth (Denmark, DANAGRO)

Ms Szilvia Göri (Hungary, Hortobágy National Park)

BUREAU

Mr Delmar Blasco (Secretary General)

Mr Mike Smart (Senior Policy Advisor)

Mr Tom Kabii (Technical Officer- Africa)

Dr Montserrat Carbonell (Technical Officer - Neotropics)

AGENDA ITEM #1 Welcoming remarks

The Chairperson of Standing Committee welcomed all participants, conveyed Hungary's pleasure in hosting the meeting, thanked the Canadian Government for its financial assistance, and indicated she was pleased to be able to join the meeting even if only for one day. She stressed the important role of the STRP as an advisory group not only to the Standing Committee and Bureau, but also to the whole Conference of the Parties.

The Chairperson of the STRP thanked all participants for attending the meeting in spite of their tight schedules, the Canadian Government for financial support and Hungary for acting as host.

She indicated that the task of this meeting was to define STRP priorities for the coming triennium from the Strategic Plan (1997-2002), and from the Resolutions and Recommendations adopted at Brisbane (March, 1996); and that, furthermore, this meeting had to decide how these priorities should be carried out, by whom, and by when.

The Secretary General expressed his pleasure in being able to attend the meeting, since in his view this was a crucial event to chart the very significant tasks entrusted to the STRP by the Contracting Parties (CPs). He emphasised the importance of linking the Ramsar STRP with similar bodies under other conventions and institutions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the Global Environmental Facility's (GEF) Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP).

During an evening reception Dr Janos Tardy (Deputy Secretary of State, Hungarian Ministry of Environment and Regional Policy) welcomed the participants and mentioned the new national conservation law, before Parliament at the time of the STRP meeting, which amongst other measures would prevent construction and the use of toxic chemicals within 500m of any wetland in Hungary.

Ms B Sloth and Ms Szilvia Göri made a presentation on the wetland restoration work being done in the Hortobagy National Park with financial assistance from the Danish Government.

AGENDA ITEM #2 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM #3 Development of 1997-1999 STRP Work Plan for submission to the 19th meeting of the Standing Committee (28 October - 1 November 1996): Review of STRP tasks arising from the Strategic Plan (1997-2002) and Resolutions and Recommendations adopted in Brisbane (March, 1996)

The Senior Policy Advisor introduced documents STRP 5.3 and 5.9, noting that document 5.3 was a summary of references to STRP in the Strategic Plan and Resolutions and Recommendations, while 5.9 was an annotated document prioritising these references.

When discussing the priority actions for the STRP, Dr M Komoda's and Dr K Thompson's written comments (circulated to the participants) were taken into account.

Based on Document 5.9, the participants identified the priority tasks for STRP included in the Strategic Plan (1997-2002) and Brisbane Resolutions and Recommendations. The results, arranged from higher (Category 1) to lower (Category 3) priority, were as follows:

Category 1: Criteria for identifying wetlands for the Ramsar List - Ecological Character

Category 2: Restoration/ Rehabilitation - Management Planning

Category 3: Economic Evaluation - Global review of wetlands - Strengthening Links with other Conventions and Agencies - Ramsar Database

The Panel considered that it should also be involved in reviewing the Wise Use Guidelines and Additional Guidance, specifically with regard to toxic chemicals (Recommendation 6.14) and to environmental impact assessments -EIA- (Operational Objective 2.5 and Recommendation 6.2).

The Bureau will also consult the STRP when implementing Resolution VI.11 which instructs it to work on the consolidation of Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

AGENDA ITEM #4 Criteria (Operational Objective 6.3 and Resolution VI.2, VI.3)

Action requested by the CoP: Keep general criteria under review to ensure that they reflect global wetland conservation priorities and values; continue to work on refining guidelines for application of fish criteria; take into account cultural values and/or benefits derived from wetlands; and consider the feasibility of designating sites on the basis of important natural hydrological functions.

Discussion: There was an in-depth discussion on this issue. While it was acknowledged that both the Strategic Plan (Action 6.3.1) and Resolution VI.3 required that the STRP review the existing Ramsar criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance, there were differing views concerning the nature of the output of this exercise.

Opinions ranged from those who considered that the existing criteria are broad enough to allow the identification of all wetlands that are internationally important, to those who considered that the criteria have to be revised in detail in order to make them more comprehensive. To those holding the latter viewpoint, the criteria should cover all aspects that could make a wetland internationally important, including their relevance to human societies, and all wetland types, including human-made sites.

To some, the criteria should be made attractive, convincing and easy to understand for decision-makers who may not have a scientific background. It was agreed that, while the criteria could be comprehensive, they should not be lengthy and cumbersome. Adding guidelines like those appended to the new fish criteria, and good examples to each criterion was thought to be helpful to make the concepts clearer. Guidelines and examples should take into account regional differences.

Some questions were raised about the meaning of "natural" and "near natural" in the existing criteria; some participants felt there were no "natural" wetlands left; others felt that inclusion of "near natural" was important to distinguish such sites from man-made wetlands. The term "biogeographical", was also questioned because of the different biogeographical classifications in existence.

It was recognized that few wetlands have been identified as internationally important using the existing Criteria 1 because it is very general, while Criteria 3 is clear and very specific, and hence easier to apply.

It was acknowledged that Resolution VI.3 requested the development of specific criteria for other taxa in addition to the existing ones based on waterfowl and fish. (The use of the term "waterfowl" was also questioned; the term "water bird" could be considered more appropriate., although the Convention text speaks of "waterfowl"). It could be difficult to decide which are the taxa for which specific criteria should be developed, and where to put the limits, but the STRP would have to argue its case if it concluded that the request was not workable. It could be possible to use indicator groups, even though information might not be available in many instances. Crustaceans could also be important, as they are economically significant. While not requested by the Resolution, the STRP might also consider the need to develop specific criteria for ecological communities, such as coral reefs and mangroves. This would encourage island nations and draw attention to the inadequacy of the current criteria for these wetland types.

There was general agreement that the criteria dealing with animals and plants should be called the "biodiversity criteria".

Resolution VI.2 requested a review of the guidelines for application of the criteria based on fish, but this should be included in the general work concerning the criteria. It was recalled that the Brisbane Resolution did not respond to the Kushiro Recommendation to take fisheries into account as part of the criteria based on fish. In discussions at the Technical Session, the fisheries issue, included in the draft resolution, was postponed for a future "human issues" criterion, and therefore excluded from the final version approved.

Much of the discussion turned on the need and advisability of having a cluster of criteria for identifying wetlands as internationally important for their significance for human societies.

Some participants were clearly against criteria of this sort, considering that this issue should be included and developed within the "wise use" component of the Convention, and not within the criteria. To this group of participants criteria should be based on ecological parameters (not open to subjective interpretation), criteria based on wetland relevance for humans could open the door to all sorts of misuses, mainly by those who want to convert wetlands to other uses, likely to alter negatively their ecological character. There were also serious doubts about the possibility of monitoring the conservation and wise use of wetlands designated under such criteria, mainly because of the difficulty of establishing the baseline to do so. Some considered that values to humankind are implicit in the other values, and that it could be difficult to identify human-related values that are "international".

The argument in favour of including a cluster of criteria based on relevance to humans was that many wetlands are being and will continue to be used by humans. Thus, a clear acceptance of this fact could help to develop the concept of "wise use" as a means for maintaining the ecological character of the sites concerned. In addition, conservation will succeed only if it becomes part of the mainstream of the nature/human interaction, and not exclusively through isolated sites that are given special conservation status.

It should also be recognized that some uses contribute to the maintenance of the ecological character of sites (or at least the ecological character as it has been known for several hundred years). In addition, some wetlands could be clearly identified as important not so much for their ecological features but because of their significance for human societies, thus enhancing the relevance of the Convention in today's world. The dangers of misuse of this type of criteria are real, but it was felt that this danger could be overcome if the necessary safeguards are written into the criteria.

Some participants recognized that, from a political point of view, it would be appropriate to have a cluster of "human-related" criteria, even if from the scientific and technical point of view they could be difficult to develop, since so far most human uses of wetlands have been destructive. Others recognized that a new cluster related to traditional and cultural uses could be appropriate and not too difficult to develop.

A final round-table of STRP members indicated that: a) some participants were totally against developing "human-related" criteria because of the difficulty of drafting them and the misuse that could be made of them, even though they were all open to considering a draft text articulating criteria of this type; and b) the majority were not clearly against, but shared to some extent the concerns which were put forward by those in the previous group. Only the Secretary General was clearly in favour of developing such a cluster under the Ramsar criteria and recommending it to the Conference for adoption.

A report including proposals should be presented at the 6th STRP meeting in April 1997. In preparation of this report, Contracting Parties should be consulted, to obtain their general views, and Specialist Groups should be contacted about the "new" taxa and ecological communities.

Some discussion on guidelines for criteria followed. It was pointed out that all sets of criteria should have guidelines at least as good as those for the fish criteria. However, development of guidelines would be a second step, once the Panel had agreed on the basic clusters.

Decisions:

(a) consider the possibility of establishing three clusters of criteria, as follows:

cluster 1. Representativeness and Uniqueness - with special attention to hydrological functions, with the support of an expert on this issue.

cluster 2. Biodiversity - (a) general and (b) specific taxa: e.g. birds/waterfowl and fish with possible addition of mammals, reptiles, invertebrates. The possibility of developing criteria based on communities such as mangroves, coral reefs, peatlands and karst might be considered. Bureau to contact appropriate institutions to ensure that there is enough data before proceeding.

Note: Limnological aspects should be taken into account in both clusters 1 & 2.

cluster 3. Significance for Humans - there is no consensus that this cluster is advisable or required. However it was agreed to prepare a first draft. Issues to be considered:

cultural/spiritual/religious/cosmological; traditional and other socio-economic uses; educational, research and recreational uses; benefits to humans of the ecological functions. These could be summarised under the concept of benefits and values for humans.

(b) focal points will present a report including proposals at the 6th STRP meeting in April 1997.

Focal points: Cluster 1 - K Thompson; Cluster 2 - Y Ntiamoa-Baidu; Cluster 3 - M Finlayson and A Smith

Bureau contacts: M Carbonell

AGENDA ITEM #5 Ecological character (Operational Objective 5.1; Resolution VI.1; Rec. 6.14)

Action requested by the CoP: Review and update the Montreux Record (MR); identify potential impacts on the ecological character of wetlands through global threats (toxic chemicals, climate change, sea level change); advise on the implementation of the revised procedure for the operation of the MR; and identify the effects of application of Resolution VI.1, especially at specific sites.

Discussion: There was some discussion about the definition of ecological character but it was decided not to spend any time trying to think of a better one at this point.

It was pointed out that "wise use" is not mentioned in the ecological character guidelines. Emphasis should be less on the guidelines themselves, and more on their application. This would imply changes to the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) and the National Reports, and raises the question of whether the existing criteria cover all the values of wetlands Ramsar is interested in. The RIS guidelines need to be improved as indicated in Res.VI.1 to reflect the need for extra/new information on the ecological character of sites. It was also recalled that the 6th CoP asked the STRP to involve other scientists in the evaluation of the application of the ecological character guidelines.

There was a general feeling that the MR guidelines, approved in Kushiro, have not been used. This indicates they may be a good idea but are not working, maybe because most countries consider the MR as a "red list". It was recognised that there is an urgent need to publicize positive examples of the MR. The Standing Committee should be asked to discuss and comment on this issue.

It was suggested that a workshop be organised before the 7th CoP in 1999, to debate these issues (definitions of ecological character and change, how to monitor, how to measure and what) and establish some guidelines.

It was suggested that wetland managers and universities could be requested to test the definition and the guidelines at specific sites and report to the STRP by the end of 1997 so that it can report to the Standing Committee; regional meetings could also be used to test the definition and the guidelines.

Some suggestions were also made of the possibility of getting students to carry out evaluations/test of the guidelines at MR sites, as well as testing them when Management Guidance Procedures (MGP) are being carried out.

Decisions:

(a) test the guidelines on ecological character (point 2 of Resolution VI.1) based on the data provided by Ramsar Information Sheet;

(b) review the guidelines on ecological character in the light of the results (a) and the criteria guidelines. Incorporate the wise use concept in them, and incorporate the whole into the consolidation of Resolutions and Recommendations;

(c) test the effectiveness of the Montreux Record (point 3 of Resolution VI.1) at sites with or without Management Guidance Procedure and at sites which could/should be included in the Montreux Record;

(d) prepare a document to be presented at the next STRP 1997 reviewing the existing Early Warning System's methodology; and

(e) review and suggest methodologies and guidelines for assessing the threshold of change in the ecological character of wetlands taking special account of limnology, hydrology and keystone species; care should be taken with some indicator species, such as migratory birds, to ensure events occurring elsewhere do not introduce a bias.

To carry out (a), (b) and (c) the Bureau will contact CPs and managers of sites suggested by the Panel. Together with the Panel members, the Bureau will identify intern (or other) students, or locate adequate financial resources to carry out the analyses of these data and report to the STRP 1997.

Focal point: M Finlayson

Bureau contacts: T Jones

AGENDA ITEM #6(a) Ramsar Database (Operational Objective 5.4; Resolution VI.16)

Action requested by the CoP: To keep under review the content and structure of the Database; to assess data currently available in the database and identify gaps.

Discussion: The Database manager indicated there were no data for 14% of the sites and 9% did not have a map (31% had poor maps). The importance of the database was stressed, since bad data reflect badly on the Convention. It was agreed that Wetlands International, using data from other sources would prepare drafts of Information Sheets for those that had no sheet, and that the Bureau would submit these drafts for approval to the CPs concerned. The Database manager placed special emphasis on the need to indicate the criterion under which the site qualified and a justification of its use.

The Panel discussed how to improve the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS), without changing the categories of information but altering their order to reflect better the baseline information required for comparison in case of changes in ecological character. The term "biophysical" was questioned in the light of the next information category "ecological features".

The Ramsar Information Sheet is annexed to this report.

Some time was spent debating the *Classification System of Wetland Types*. While recognizing the value of a standardized classification system, some Panel members felt that the Ramsar classification gives too much emphasis to a North American classification. The Ramsar classification, now out-dated, deals inadequately with certain major categories of wetland. When applied on a world-wide basis, the classification has many deficiencies, inconsistencies and overlaps, specially in relation to peatlands and coral reefs.

It was suggested that the present wetland classification could be tested against selected Ramsar sites, so that specific named wetland examples can be available to support the concern of the STRP over the present classification.

Decisions:

(a) recommend full implementation of Resolution VI.16 concerning provision of information and maps for new sites;

(b) recommend full implementation of Resolution VI.13 and Recommendation 5.3 concerning provision of information and maps for already listed sites. (This action will be supported by information provided by the Database manager);

(c) STRP members to send comments on the RIS "Explanatory Notes and Guidelines" document by 15 July, to the Bureau. This will include comments to call for greater detail on peatlands and coral reef descriptions (Dr K Thompson); requesting the inclusion of information pertaining to the management objectives at listed sites (Mr M Végh). The Bureau will attempt to provide a final draft by 15 August for the STRP to make final comments within one week;

(d) invite the Standing Committee to consider instructing the STRP to undertake a review (not necessarily modification) of the Ramsar *Classification System of Wetland Type*,

(e) recommends the following order of categories in the RIS (see Annex 1)

Bureau contact: M Smart

AGENDA ITEM # 6(b) Relationship between Ramsar's STRP and the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the Global Environmental Facility's (GEF) Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) (Operational Objective 7.2; Resolutions VI.7, VI.9, VI.23)

Action requested by the CoP: Strengthen and formalise linkages between Ramsar and other international and/or regional environmental conventions and agencies; establish close working relations with the SBSTTA, STAP and other similar bodies; ensure the STRP includes or has access to hydrological expertise and develops links with organizations with technical skills in hydrology; and report to the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties through the Standing Committee.

Discussion: The Secretary General reported on the actions already taken, notably through contacts with GEF, the Memorandum of Cooperation with CBD and links with the Chairman of SBSTTA, Dr Peter Schei, who had been to Ramsar's 6th CoP in Brisbane and was very supportive of links between SBSTTA and STRP.

Mr Gabor Nechay indicated there are direct and practical points for cooperation between CBD and Ramsar, in relation to the conservation of biodiversity in wetlands.

He made reference to the report of the May 1996 meeting of the Bureau of the SBSTTA, specially about the need for the SBSTTA meetings to eliminate political interventions in order to become a really effective technical and scientific group.

Mr G Nechay identified technical points currently on SBSTTA's agenda on which the CBD's SBSTTA and Ramsar's STRP could cooperate:

- identification of indicators of biological diversity and their review and promotion for use in assessing the effectiveness of measures taken under the CBD;
- advise CPs of ways and means to overcome the current lack of taxonomists, adopting a more practical approach of taxonomy to bio-prospecting and ecological research on conservation and sustainable use;
- the need to identify sound technology to promote the aims of the CBD, and access to that technology in combination with the clearing-house mechanism;
- means to identify and protect the knowledge of indigenous and local communities;
- to review the 1995 assessment of biodiversity and the methodologies for future assessments within the context of minimum standards of data to satisfy national reporting requirements; and
- to start the process of identifying, monitoring and assessing the components of biological diversity and the activities which have or are likely to have significant adverse impacts.

Mr G Nechay invited STRP to send a representative to the SBSTTA and its Bureau meetings. Mr A Smith (Canada) will try to attend the SBSTTA meeting in September 1996, and will send a report of the meeting to the Bureau as soon as possible for circulation to the STRP.

The Secretary General indicated that now that the link with the SBSTTA has been established, the STRP should seek the same kind of relation with the GEF's STAP. He also indicated that Ramsar would present a report on wetland biodiversity at the CBD Conference of the Parties in Buenos Aires in November 1996. A consultant was being hired, by WWF, to produce this report which would be circulated for comments from STRP before the Bureau transmitted it to the CBD Secretariat.

Decisions:

(a) establish links with the CBD's SBSTTA following the practice at this meeting, i.e. invite SBSTTA to send a representative to take part as observer in STRP meetings;

(b) encourage the SBSTTA and its Bureau to invite STRP to send a representative as observer to its meetings.;

(c) the Chair of the STRP and the Bureau to explore possible similar cooperation with the GEF's STAP;

(d) invite WWF-International and BirdLife International to STRP meetings, as observers;

(e) STRPmembers to obtain the agreement of the Chair of the STRP, through the Bureau, to represent Ramsar's STRP at meetings of similar bodies or agencies. After participation in such meetings submission of a report to the Bureau is requested for circulation to all STRP;

(f) prepare short half-page accounts, including objectives, ways of operating, potential interest of establishing links for Ramsar, and name of contact point (address, telephone, fax and email), and send to the Bureau by 31st July 1996 for circulation to all STRP, of:

Bonn Convention Technical Council: R Schlatter

Global Water Partnership: M Smart

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI): M Carbonell

International Association of Ecology (INTECOL): M Finlayson

International Biosphere-Geosphere program (IGBP): M Finlayson

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): M Finlayson

Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB): K Thompson

SCOPE: K Thompson

Society of International Limnologist (SIL): K Thompson

South Pacific Research and Environmental Program (SPREP): K Thompson

The Society of Wetland Scientists: A Smith

Valdivia Group: R Schlatter

World Heritage Convention: M Komoda

World Water Council: D Blasco

Working Group on Aquatic Birds (SIL): A Smith

Wetlands International Specialists Groups: S Frazier*Bureau contact: M Smart*

AGENDA ITEM #6(c) Montreux Record (MR) and Management Guidance Procedure (MGP)
(Operational Objective 5.1; Resolution VI.1)

Action requested by the CoP: Review and regularly update the MR; increase application of the MGP.

Discussion: The Senior Policy Advisor informed participants of the status of the MR and the MGP. He indicated that there were currently over 60 sites included in the MR, and over 30 Monitoring Procedures (formal name of the Management Guidance Procedure) have been carried out since 1988. STRP members and alternates involvement since the establishment of the STRP in 1993 has included, Dr P Bacon (Trinidad and Tobago) at the Nariva Swamp, Trinidad and Tobago; Dr F Letourneux (France) and Dr P Uhd Jepsen (Denmark) at the Dee Estuary, UK.

Decisions:

(a) the Bureau will increase the participation of STRP members and alternates in MGP missions;

(b) in the case of MR inclusions or deletions the Bureau should consult the STRP when appropriate, as indicated in Resolution VI.1;

(c) the Bureau should go ahead with those sites in urgent need of application of the MGP -including Greece (see Recommendation 6.17.1), or in regions with few, well identified needs;

(d) in the case of regions with many CPs requesting MGPs the Bureau will provide information to the STRP and priorities will be set up at the STRP meeting in April 1997;

(e) the Bureau will prepare -for circulation to the STRP- a document listing the sites which in its opinion should be on the MR and which should be considered for application of the MGP;

(f) the Bureau will keep the STRP updated on MR site information.

Bureau contact: M Smart

AGENDA ITEM #6(d) Small Grants Fund (SGF) (Operational Objective 8.4)

Action requested by the CoP: To secure at least one million US dollars per annum (...) and to allocate these funds effectively; to encourage and assist the preparation of high quality applications to the SGF.

Discussion: The Secretary General explained that at present all proposals are sent to IUCN and Wetlands International for technical evaluation, but that he intends to propose a change to this rule, so that only those proposals for which the Bureau needs help are sent to partners. The same could be done in the case of STRP members and alternates.

Decisions:

(a) the Bureau to send to STRP members, on a regional basis, those project proposals for which it requires clarification, interpretation and, in general, technical advice on specific questions;

(b) should the Secretary General's proposal for evaluation of the projects be approved by the Standing Committee, the decision on funding should be made by the Secretary General in consultation with the Regional Representative and the member of the STRP of the region concerned;

(c) STRP to analyze with the view of modifying, if necessary, the form used at present for project evaluation. The Bureau to send out a draft evaluation form to STRP for comments by the end of 1996, and to incorporate those comments in a second draft to be discussed at the next meeting of the STRP in April 1997.

Bureau contact: M Smart

AGENDA ITEM #6(e) Any remaining technical issues

Restoration and Rehabilitation of Wetlands (Operational Objective 2.6; Recommendation 6.15)

Action requested by the CoP: Provide and implement methodologies; define guidelines on principles on wetland restoration and monitoring; identify ten best practice case studies and organise a technical session at the 7th CoP; and produce a list of key wetland sites in need of Restoration.

Discussion: There is a considerable number of publications on the subject and methodologies are generally site-specific, so it would be difficult to do the job requested without repeating what has already been done. It was stress that Ramsar should concentrate on recommending "ways of going about it".

Decisions:

(a) Bureau to develop a proposal for attracting funds, obtaining a secondment, or persuading a lead agency (to recruit a coordinator), to develop an analysis of what has/is being done, including what has worked and what has not (explaining methodologies), and prepare a report for the STRP meeting in 1997;

(b) produce a final report and conclusions on the result of (a) for Standing Committee consideration in 1998;

(c) the activity should include the identification of ten best practice case studies, with which STRP members will assist on providing names of possible examples;

(d) a proposal for the content and organisation of a Technical Session at the 7th CoP should be submitted at the next STRP meeting in April 1997;

(e) among those to be consulted should be interested CPs (e.g. Denmark, Netherlands, USA, UK, Sweden, Spain, Israel and others), as well as Wetlands International and other partners.

Focal point: M Vegh in consultation with Palle Uhd Jepsen

Bureau contacts: M Carbonell

Management Planning (Operational Objective 5.2; Recommendation 6.13)

Action requested by the CoP: Publish ten best practice case studies of management planning for Ramsar sites at local, regional and catchment or coastal zone levels; and monitor the Ramsar guidelines, including review of most recent advances in total or integrated catchment approach to management planning and to report the findings to the 7th CoP.

Discussion: There are very few management plans which follow the Kushiro Guidelines for management planning, and it is not therefore possible to make a good judgement on their implementation. National Reports presented for Brisbane should be the basic source of information. There is a need to focus on biodiversity management in wetlands and to see if the Kushiro Guidelines need to be revised.

It is important to consider that both successful and unsuccessful examples are educational. CPs should be informed of the sites chosen as "best practice case studies", and why.

Decisions:

(a) Identify good examples of management planning and implementation, using the National Reports presented at Brisbane as an initial source of information. The final selection of the ten best case studies should cover the widest possible range of wetland types;

(b) a letter/questionnaire to be prepared and sent out to all CPs and institutions which could contribute, including a request for information on the application of Ramsar's Kushiro guidelines;

(c) the exercise should concentrate on Ramsar sites, especially those that have applied the Kushiro Guidelines in Management Planning, but not to exclude other good examples of wetland management planning;

(d) the focal points, with the assistance of other STRP members, will identify 15 good examples to be submitted for review at the next meeting of the STRP in April 1997;

(e) focal points should prepare a discussion paper for STRP in April 1997 reviewing the Ramsar guidelines and the integrated catchment approach concept, taking into account biodiversity in wetlands and the CBD;

(f) a proposal for a Technical Session at the 7th CoP should also be prepared for the next meeting of the STRP in April 1997;

Focal points: R Schlatter and M Komoda

Bureau contacts: M Smart

Economic Evaluation (Operational Objective 2.4; Recommendation 6.10)

Action requested by the CoP: Review content and implementation of recommended best practice in economic evaluations of wetlands at a Technical Session of the 7th CoP.

Discussion: The members of the panel indicated that there was no economic evaluation expertise within the group and therefore suggested that the Bureau contact the IUCN and the University of York to find out if they are prepared to continue being involved, how and to what extent. Dr M Finlayson agrees to contact Australian National Conservation Agency (ANCA), which has expertise in this field.

Decisions:

(a) STRP to co-opt an expert, through consultation by correspondence within the Panel, and if possible nomination by a CP. The aim would be to have the co-opted expert attending the next meeting of the STRP in April 1997;

(b) the Bureau -in the meantime- will investigate which institutions/agencies have expertise in this field (e.g. IUCN's Biodiversity Programme and the Wetlands international Specialist Group) and establish activity in this field within the new MedWet/LIFE project.

Bureau contact: M Smart

Development Assistance (Operational Objective 7.4)

The Panel felt they could not contribute to this task, other than advising when requested.

Global review of wetland resources (Operational Objective 6.1)

Action requested by the CoP (to Bureau and Partners): Begin to develop a quantification of global wetland resources, as baseline information for considering trends in wetland conservation or loss.

Discussion: It was pointed out that the UK has made available £ 30,000 for this task.

Decisions:

(a) prepare draft terms of reference by 31 July 1996 for a consultant to execute the project, and circulate (the draft ToR) to STRP for comments (to be received until 31 August);

(b) a draft report to be submitted to the next meeting of the STRP in April 1997.

Focal point: M Finlayson

Bureau contacts: T Jones

Education and Public Awareness (Operational Objective 3.1 and 3.2; Resolution VI.19)

Action requested by the CoP: None for STRP, but otherwise, to support and assist in implementing, in cooperation with partners and other institutions, an international programme of EPA on wetlands; to develop and encourage national programs of EPA on wetlands.

Discussion: Some Panel members, referring specially to Operational Objective 3.1 (Action 3.1.3), felt STRP should be asked, as appropriate, to advise on the scientific and technical content of resource materials, to avoid too strong an emphasis on descriptive material and insufficient coverage of ecological functioning and management options/consequences. Dr K Thompson offered to take the initiative on this subject and report to the STRP.

Toxic chemicals (Operational Objective 2.3; Recommendation 6.14)

Action requested by the CoP: report to the 7th CoP on the status of the issue of toxic chemicals as they relate to wetlands.

Discussion: Mr A Smith indicated that he has information from Dr Bill Shotyk (Geological Institute, University of Berne, Switzerland) in relation to the workshop being organized in Switzerland in October 1996. He offered to make the initial contact and report to the STRP.

AGENDA ITEM #7 Future meetings

Both the Chairperson and the Secretary General emphasized that little time was available for STRP work before the 7th CoP in 1999. Results of STRP work had to be ready by mid 1998 for submission to the 1998 Standing Committee meeting. The period mid 1996 to end of 1997 was therefore crucial, and there should be a minimum of two, perhaps three, STRP meetings.

a) STRP report to the 19th Standing Committee Meeting, 29 October -1 November 1996, Gland:

Decision: At the invitation of the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, and as agreed at the 5th Meeting of the STRP the Chair of the Panel, Dr Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, will attend the 19th Standing Committee Meeting and will present a report on behalf of the STRP.

b) STRP representation at non-Ramsar meetings 1996/97:

Decision: STRP members participating in technical/scientific meetings may represent Ramsar's STRP, but are requested to consult the Chairperson and the Bureau in advance.

c) Date and venue of 6th STRP Meeting:

Decision: It was agreed that the 6th Meeting of the STRP should take place in Gland, from Tuesday 15th to Thursday 17th April 1997. Participants are asked to arrive no later than Monday 14th, and leave no sooner than Friday 18th April to allow three full days of work. It was further agreed, subject to review at the 6th Meeting, that the 7th Meeting of the STRP should take place in Gland, from 18th to 20th November 1997. Possible dates for the 8th Meeting of the STRP could be around 14-16 April 1998, but these are subject to discussion at the 6th Meeting in April 1997.

AGENDA ITEM #8 Closure of meeting

The Hungarian hosts thanked Canada for the financial support provided for the organization of the meeting, and thanked all participants for attending.

The Secretary General thanked the Chairperson for her very able conduction of the meeting, and Canada for its financial support and the Hungarian hosts for their warm hospitality. He also indicated he was very pleased with the results obtained, and that he felt the meeting had achieved all its objectives -and more-, and stressed the important role of the STRP within Ramsar.

The Chairperson thanked the Hungarian hosts, especially Mr M Vegh, for their hospitality, and Canada for its financial contribution. She congratulated the Bureau for the work done and the healthy relations among staff. Finally thanked all participants for having contributed greatly to the success of the meeting.

Rapporteur: Montserrat Carbonell