

9th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Report of the Meeting

List of Participants

AGENDA ITEM 1: Welcoming remarks

1. The Chair of the Standing Committee, Stephen Hunter, welcomed the participants and thanked them for their efforts in the Working Group sessions the previous day. Explaining that he was present in order to assist the Standing Committee (SC) in keeping in touch with the STRP's progress, he reminded the meeting of the important role that the STRP was playing in forming the agenda for the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP8). The Chair of the STRP, Jorge Jiménez, greeted the participants and reminded them of the tasks ahead. The Secretary General, Delmar Blasco, welcomed the members and invited guests and expressed his gratitude for the voluntary contribution of USD 40,000 from the USA for the work of the STRP. The dates of COP8 have not yet been set, but for a number of reasons it appears that the latter half of 2002 might be preferable to the first half. He expressed his thanks to the Deputy Secretary General, Nick Davidson, and the Executive Assistant, Mireille Katz, for their organization of the meeting on the substantive and logistics sides, respectively.

2. Tex Hawkins expressed the USA's pleasure in assisting the work of the STRP financially, in view of the STRP's important contribution to wetland conservation worldwide and of the Joint Work Plan's links with the CBD on several key issues. Ms Tomme Young reviewed the work of the IUCN Environmental Law Centre (Bonn) in wetland conservation and, in particular, in cooperative efforts with the Ramsar Bureau.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Adoption of the agenda

3. The proposed Annotated Agenda was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Proposed provisional agenda and programme for COP8

4. The draft COP8 agenda represents Spain's proposal, in its capacity of Chair of the SC Subgroup on COP8, prepared in consultation with the Bureau; following receipt of comments the Bureau will summarize them and prepare a revised document for the Subgroup meeting in October. The SC should adopt the agenda and programme at its 23-27 October 2000 meeting. The STRP is invited to comment in the meantime, especially on the Technical Sessions (TS) and their subthemes. The SG

noted that it would not be possible to add Technical Sessions to the proposed agenda structure, but 1) other issues might be substituted for existing ones, 2) the STRP might recommend extending the COP by one day more in order to accommodate sessions on additional important issues, or 3) other topics might be included in the "Key Issues" presentations to the plenary sessions. Moreover, additional subtheme presentations can be added to some of the existing TSs. Jean-Yves Pirot (IUCN) noted that there will also be a session of the Global Biodiversity Forum preceding COP8 and additional topics could also be discussed there; he expressed the wish to involve the STRP in the choice of GBF issues. Doug Taylor (Wetlands International) suggested inclusion of discussions of issues arising from the 2nd Joint Work Plan (JWP) with the CBD and of the River Basin Initiative. The Chair invited additional suggestions to be addressed to him so that he can determine whether they can be accommodated.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Expected products of STRP9

5. The Chair expressed the wish to be able to update the STRP8's terms of reference and work chart, which were approved by SC24, with realistic assessments of the expected products, timetable, and key people from each of the Working Groups by the end of STRP9. It is intended that draft products will be ready by October 2000 so that they can be prepared and harmonized in time for the STRP's next meeting. The DSG noted that if the Working Groups wished to modify those TORs in any way, in order to expand or limit them or seek additional expert assistance, the Chair of Standing Committee can give a sense of the SC's likely response. He asked that this meeting also specify to the Bureau and the SC where additional resources would be necessary and in what priority order of desirable outputs these additional resources should be sought.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

6. The SG described the background and current status of the MA and noted that the process is designed to blend insights from the natural and social sciences. A key meeting will take place in Trondheim, Norway, in two weeks' time, where a Board will be established. The secretariat will be supplied by UNEP, to be supervised by the Board; a Scientific Panel, divided into Working Groups, will carry out the actual assessments. The SG, the DSG, and Yara Schaeffer-Novelli, representing the STRP Chair, will attend the meeting on behalf of Ramsar. The SG sought advice from the STRP on what issues it would like to see included in the assessments and which individuals and organizations might be included in the Working Groups. A Working Group on Methodologies will be appointed at the first Board meeting and given a year to establish the next phase. The final report of the 4-year MA project will be submitted to the COPs of the three conventions (Biological Diversity, Desertification, and Wetlands) for appropriate action.

7. Mike Acreman suggested that the hydrological functions of wetlands be included in the assessment, because a lot of the evidence is contradictory and a more sophisticated view of how hydrological values are altered, and under what circumstances, is required for policy decisions. George Zalidis suggested that this issue be included both in the MA and in one of the Technical Sessions of COP8. Max Finlayson expressed doubt that the MA would be able to achieve its stated goals given the very large scale, the short timetable, and the lack of information in many areas; he suggested that perhaps more answerable questions should be proposed. On the same note, Stephen Hunter observed that a current study of land and water resources in Australia alone enjoys twice the budget and is based only upon existing information.

8. Dave Pritchard (BirdLife International) suggested that the MA consider seeking authoritative pressure and threat scenarios and tailoring baseline information to meet specified needs of decision-makers, particularly regarding impact assessment. Doug Taylor mentioned that the supply and quality of information are key issues vis-à-vis the Ramsar Sites Database, and the Contracting Parties may feel that the information in the RSDB needs first to be improved.

9. The SG and DSG observed that the MA is not meant to be a global research project, but only to pull together existing information; it is not meant to suggest policy but only to provide background for policy makers, aided by a number of regional and local demonstration cases. The best model for the MA's purpose would be the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), though the IPCC is intergovernmental and the MA will be scientific only.

10. An *ad hoc* group was established to meet before the start of the session that followed to provide further advice to the Bureau in relation to the upcoming meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Working Group 3, Impact Assessment

11. Invited expert Joanna Treweek gave a background picture of the International Association for Impact Assessment, presently with 1500 members in 124 countries, served by an Executive Office of 3 staff in the USA and a voluntary Board. She noted the CBD's COP5 decision calling upon SBSTTA to work with both STRP and IAIA. IAIA is ready to play an active role.

12. Geoff Cowan noted a need for more clarity in the use of "ecosystem approach", recalling some disagreement at CBD's COP5 over the meaning of the term. George Zalidis suggested finding ways for harmonizing Impact Assessment reporting. Andrea Bagri (IUCN) reported that the Internet Resource Kit, already existing in an early form, will be improved by collecting more content through STRP National Focal Points and IAIA country representatives and by posting the developments from CBD's COP5. It is hoped that an intern can be brought in to supervise these liaisons and update the Internet Kit. Replying to a question, David Pritchard noted that there really is no CBD process for

moving forward on impact assessment; rather the impetus has been coming from Ramsar through the JWP. The DSG stressed the need for interaction between the Impact Assessment and the other Working Groups, with some mechanism for ensuring consistency amongst them of their outputs on cross-cutting themes.

13. Joanna Treweek noted that Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) tends to be put behind site assessments, and felt that Ramsar has been instrumental in moving SEA higher on the agenda of other bodies. SEA is crucial in matters of, for example, watersheds, flyways, and cumulative assessments, and she suggested that SEA should continue as a high priority issue for Ramsar. Joanna Treweek presented Working Group 3's revised proposed work plan, timetable, and cost estimates for deliverables, and identified which tasks could proceed immediately, which would require additional resources or volunteers. The proposed plan, commencing with an enabling MOU between Ramsar and the IAIA, includes development of the Internet Resource Kit, carrying out a review of EIA guidelines from the Ramsar/wetland perspective, and presenting results to COP8; it is provisionally costed at about SFR 175,000.

[For the STRP's decision on impact assessment, see Decision STRP 9.1 below.]

AGENDA ITEM 7: Working Group 4, Incentive Measures

14. The Group chairperson, Tex Hawkins, reported that the Group was focusing upon two tracks: 1) developing and coordinating existing work in order to compile and disseminate information in an Internet Resource Kit, and 2) proposing a strategy for developing guidelines on incentive measures for COP8.

15. On behalf of the Group, Frank Vorhies (IUCN) argued that Ramsar is poised to take the lead for all of the biodiversity-related conventions on this issue, and proposed a three-part work plan and timetable for 1) 'building the knowledge base' in collaboration with CIESIN and updating the IUCN-hosted Resource Kit, 2) developing incentive guidelines based upon updating Jeff McNeely's 1988 book, and 3) elaborating a "Wetland Incentives Programme", with fundraising, which would permit Ramsar to take the lead for CBD and Rio+10 on incentives for one ecosystem. The estimated budget for all three parts would be SFR 250,000. The DSG noted that the guidelines extend further than the Group's TOR and recalled that the COP7 Resolution's inclusion of "resources permitting" allows the STRP to be less ambitious if necessary; he also observed that, on the other hand, the proposed work could be seen in terms of fulfilling the Joint Work Plan with the CBD. Andrea Bagri (IUCN) affirmed that without the additional resources requested, the needed work could not be done.

16. In reply to questions, the Secretary General indicated that the likelihood for securing funding for these two programmes would be fairly good, given a clear statement of their importance and priority from the STRP and an emphasis upon their links with the JWP with CBD. He noted that if other Working Groups were to require funding as well, a clear STRP statement of priorities amongst the requests for additional resources would be needed, and that requests for money to be spent in developing countries would be more readily received by donors than for money to be spent in Switzerland. The final list of task priorities can be decided under Agenda Item 26 at the end of this meeting.

Decision STRP 9.1: The STRP agreed to endorse the proposed work plans of both the Impact Assessment and Incentive Measures Working Groups as attached in Annexes I and II, noting the desirability of guidelines, if resources can be found, especially in light of the Joint Work Plan and other CBD COP5 decisions, and subject to the overall priorities to be determined under Agenda Item 26.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Working Group 10, Allocation and Management of Water for Maintaining Ecological Functions

17. Group chairperson Geoff Cowan introduced invited expert Mike Acreman (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology), who summarized the Working Group's progress and intentions. The Working Group proposes to develop guidelines for COP8 on the principles to guide allocation and management of water, with a draft Resolution and brief case studies.

18. George Zalidis urged combining this Group's work with that of the Restoration Group in several areas, since some parts overlap, case studies should be coordinated, and the language of proposed resolutions should be harmonized. The Chair noted that, after draft outputs have been received in October, an editorial committee will seek to harmonize these and other overlapping issues. Technical suggestions were offered by Bill Streever (on timing of allocations, quality of water) and Max Finlayson (on the need for an understanding of wetland functions, links to local people). Mike Acreman noted that the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology uses four levels of tools for water allocation decisions: 1) rough engineering guesses, 2) expert opinion, 3) study of relevant data, and 4) full modeling of the site, depending upon needs and resources.

19. Tomme Young (IUCN/ELC) noted that the business model for allocation often used in international agreements needs to be accounted for alongside these scientific models. The DSG suggested links with regional agreements such as the Danube and Lake Chad initiatives and with the River Basin Initiative's proposed case studies as well. These could be coordinated through the Ramsar Web site.

Decision STRP 9.2: The STRP endorsed the proposed outputs and timetable of the Working Group on Water Allocation and Management, including guidelines, draft resolution, and short case studies, as attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 9: Ecological quality, assessment technologies, early warning systems

20. The DSG noted that the STRP work plan called for a review of the CBD's work on biological indicators, but the CBD's results on this issue did not materialize as expected. Max Finlayson, the STRP lead on this issue, pointed out that the Ramsar Criteria do not identify the ecological character of each site (they provide a basis for listing sites, but not for monitoring them); the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) does not indicate correspondences between the criteria, the ecological character, or the threats to the site. George Zalidis recalled earlier discussions with Ted Hollis to the effect that change in ecological character can be pinned to a) loss of site area, b) lost of water quantity, c) loss of water quality, and/or d) loss of species; these could be judged on a time series based on RIS data, especially if a fifth factor, projected changes in the catchment area, were to be added.

21. Mike Alexander spoke of Europe's experience with these issues, in which the terms "favorable condition" and "favorable conservation status" (i.e., viable in the long term) are used. He urged focusing upon probabilities based on three factors: direct measurements, a snapshot of the situation; taking account of factors determined by impact assessments likely to obtain in the future; and likelihood of availability of resources. Dave Pritchard noted that the scientific factors are mirrored by legal issues that need also to be considered, especially in light of Article 3.2 of the Convention requiring Parties to notify the Bureau of changes in ecological character of Ramsar sites. He suggested that Article 3.2 has been undervalued and underdeveloped, and he urged that consideration of 3.2 be added to Item 10 in the COP8 agenda, offering BirdLife International's assistance. Harry Chabwela noted the need for flexibility when trying to assess "ecological character". Doug Taylor pointed to the Waterfowl Population Estimates as a successful, simple, volunteer-based approach to gaining information that permits meaningful monitoring. Stephen Hunter observed that discussion of these profound issues should begin, rather than end, at COP8.

22. It was determined that an *ad hoc* working group composed of Cowan, Finlayson, Pritchard, Taylor, and Zalidis would consider this issue further and suggest a way forward for consideration under Agenda Item 26 below (see Decision STRP 9.20). The group will consider legal issues and Article 3.2 as well as scientific and technical issues involved in ecological character and monitoring. The DSG noted that increasing evidence of a lack of crosslinks amongst various elements of the Convention's work appeared to be emerging, almost as a theme coming out of this STRP meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 10: Montreux Record

23. The DSG outlined the current status of the Montreux Record, noting that the delisting procedure (Resolution VI.1) requires STRP participation. He reported that no proposals for removal from the Montreux Record have been received from the Parties during this time period.

AGENDA ITEM 11: Working Group 1, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

24. The DSG recalled the Group's mandate to analyze existing ICZM guidelines and define principles for integrating wetlands into CZ planning and management. Angel Alcalá presented the Group's proposal and timetable for reviewing available information on ICZM, producing an Internet-based list of information resources, analyzing existing guidelines to determine whether they adequately reflect wetland concerns, and defining principles for integrating wetlands into coastal zone planning and management, for consideration by COP8.

25. The STRP Chair noted that the abbreviated name of the Group suggests a broader role than its mandate, which runs only to integrating wetlands into ICZM, not to the whole field of ICZM. The DSG urged that any guidelines must clearly identify the problem that the vast material already existing on ICZM frequently shows little understanding of the role of wetlands, so that the values and functions of wetlands in the sustainable management of coasts must be stressed to coastal zone managers. The slant of the guidelines should be on how to bring wetland concerns into these processes. He noted that the Group's proposal is extremely detailed and ambitious, and he urged emulation of other general guidelines adopted by the Ramsar COP: simple, user-friendly for government officials, suggestive rather than exhaustive. Margarita Astrálaga explained that the Group plans to go through the 12 global and 34 sectoral items in the tabled bibliography of guidelines, in order to assess their suitability from the wetlands perspective, and she solicited further case studies from STRP members.

Decision STRP 9.3: The STRP supported the outputs and timetable proposed by the Working Group on ICZM, as attached in Annex IV, including the structure of the proposed guidelines and the analysis of existing ICZM guidelines, and solicited additional case studies and Web links for inclusion in this work.

AGENDA ITEM 12: Working Group 6, Wetland Inventory

27. The DSG provided background on the Group's tasks (Resolution VII.20), which evolved from the Global Review of Wetland Resources presentation at COP7. The STRP was asked to evaluate the MedWet inventory database model, develop guidance for the Parties on wetland inventory protocols, analyze inventory tools for imagery and mapping, and study wetland classification systems in relation to Ramsar's.

28. Luis Costa (ICN, Portugal) demonstrated the inventory database developed under the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) and described the evolution of the methodology, which is based upon four main tools (data sheets, classification system, mapping procedure, and database) with three main concerns (standardization, flexibility, and compatibility). Completed in 1996, the second version is now ready. He noted four considerations if the MedWet model were to be adapted for global use: 1) compatibility – it would need some revision to be made globally suitable; 2) the classification system, now based on Mediterranean types, would need adaptation; 3) the mapping procedure is suitable for site scale, not global scale; 4) it could be further simplified.

29. The MedWet model is presently being used or considered for use in Algeria, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey, as well as farther afield in Cambodia, Colombia, and South Africa. Thymio Papayannis, MedWet Coordinator, pointed out that efforts are being made to develop training in the use of this methodology, but that resources are slim. Geoff Cowan reported that South Africa is very impressed by the MedWet methodology and intends to use it as it is, after customizing the dictionaries, etc.

30. George Zalidis distinguished between the methodology and the structure of the database itself; the former is widely applicable as it stands, the latter requires some customization. Luis Costa observed that no data has been collected for a centralized database; the aim has been to provide countries with these tools for conducting and storing their own wetland inventories in compatible formats. Thymio Papayannis said that many countries are still reluctant to make their inventory data widely public; the plan is, first, to offer them the use of these tools for their own inventories, and then, hopefully by 2010, to induce them to share their data in a central database.

31. Max Finlayson pointed out that the Working Group has evaluated the MedWet methodology, as instructed, and recommends it highly, but does not intend to recommend it or any other methodology for adoption as a single global standard, since different inventories have different purposes, different scales. He mentioned the Asian Wetland Inventory project as well, which will soon be trialed probably in northeast Asia. He noted that the next task is to evaluate existing tools for imagery and GIS, and he solicited case studies of sites employing GIS from STRP members and National Focal Points. Scott Frazier suggested that Contracting Parties might also take this opportunity to supply these advanced spatial data to supplement often older Ramsar site maps.

32. The Working Group has not yet attempted to evaluate low-cost GIS methods as requested by COP7. For presentation to COP8, Max Finlayson proposed a document that outlines the purposes of inventory and outlines appropriate technologies, with very brief guidance included. He invited input from the Peatlands, Restoration, and Water Allocations and Management Working Groups on inventory needs for different habitats and purposes. The Working Group will supply an outline table of contents for endorsement under Agenda Item 26 below (see Decision STRP 9.21).

33. In discussion of the comparison of wetland classification systems requested by COP7, it was noted that the comparison has not yet been made, but could serve as a technical annex to the guidance prepared for COP8. It was agreed that, though the STRP determined in Decision 7.10 that "the Ramsar Classification System serves the purposes for which it was created", it is not suitable for most inventory purposes. It is likely that the Ramsar Classification will be seen to need amendment in due course.

34. Max Finlayson introduced draft Terms of Reference for a project designed to update parts of the *Global Review of Wetland Resources and Priorities for Wetland Inventory*(GRoWI) as requested of Wetlands International in Resolution VII.20, paragraph 17. He explained that the approach is to check and update the metadata on each national inventory source compiled during the GRoWI project and compile entries for additional and new material, and to develop a standard Web-accessible metadatabase to hold this information. Work updating the GRoWI European information is already under way as part of a separate Wetlands International project.

Decision STRP 9.4: The STRP endorsed the proposed terms of reference of the Global Review of Wetland Inventory, part 2 (attached as Annex V).

AGENDA ITEM 13: Working Group 7, Peatlands

35. The DSG reviewed the process by which the Global Action Plan for Peatlands (GAPP) has come through several drafts and noted that STRP has been asked to take the GAPP forward, develop guidelines for designating peatlands for the List, and develop procedures for the review of peatland inventory.

36. Jack Rieley (IPS) made a presentation which described the consultative process of the GAPP drafts. It had been finalized at Friesing in November 1999 and accepted by SC24, then sent out for further consultation; resulting revisions have now been reviewed by the Working Group. The Group recommended that the STRP endorse the current version and that the Bureau distribute it to the Contracting Parties for review – resulting comments can be considered at STRP10 and passed to SC26 for recommendation to COP8. The Group also invited the Bureau to distribute the text at the Millennium Wetland Event in Québec, August 2000. It proposed that analyzing "headway" on the GAPP's themes should be left for STRP10.

37. It was agreed that the current version of the GAPP should be circulated by the Bureau to both the Administrative Authorities and to the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) for review. Dr Rieley will seek to hold roundtable discussion amid the IMCG and IPS symposia in Québec, in order to give the GAPP publicity.

Decision STRP 9.5: The STRP approved the present text of the Global Action Plan for Peatlands for distribution for comment to the Contracting Parties and STRP National Focal Points, and wide dissemination in Québec, August 2000, and it looks forward to reviewing any further improvements at STRP10, for final endorsement and transmission to the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee.

38. Jack Rieley reported that the Working Group also recommended that Wetlands International continue coordinating the drafting of designation guidelines for peatlands and that comments can be forwarded to Doug Taylor until 31 July 2000; a report will be made to STRP10. (See Decision STRP 9.15 below.)

39. He asked the other Working Groups to prepare a status document on how the Peatland Group can assist them. He noted that important guidelines on the wise use of peatlands (lengthy background document and shorter strategy statement) are under development by IPS and IMCG and will be presented to STRP10, from which they could also enter the Ramsar process. Concerning peatland development and restoration technologies, survey and classification, etc., he sought the STRP's comment and direction. He noted that there would be no funding implications of the present work, unless additional workshops would be required.

40. The DSG pointed out that further thought will be needed about the wise use of peatlands strategy and background documents, in terms of what COP8 would wish to see for assisting in implementation of the GAPP. He commended IPS and IMCG for their hard work in this process.

AGENDA ITEM 14: Working Group 8, Wetland Restoration

41. The Group co-lead, George Zalidis, reported that the Group intends to produce for COP8, not new guidelines for restoration, but a new draft Resolution following on from Resolution VII.17 with annexes including a review of existing guidelines and some basic principles. He urged close coordination with the work of the Working Group on Water Allocation; he noted that further guidelines might be called for by COP8.

42. Bill Streever demonstrated the partially-completed Web site that he is constructing as part of the Ramsar Web site to provide Internet-based resources on wetland restoration (http://ramsar.org/strp_rest_index.htm, not yet available to the public), to include glossary, bibliography, illustrated examples, register of experts, links to other sites, and invited background papers, with a "disclaimer" to distinguish which elements have and which have not been adopted by the Ramsar COP. He solicited input from STRP members and STRP National Focal Points on additional case studies, links, and bibliographic citations and provided a form for submitting them. The Group's timetable was set for a draft resolution and all new material for the Web site by

September 2000, updating of the Web site by October, and background paper drafts by December or earlier. Input on non-USA cases and materials, and on coral and seagrass cases, would be especially welcome. Dr Streever thanked a number of individuals for help so far and his employer, the Waterways Experiment Station, for contributing his time for this work.

Decision STRP 9.6: The STRP accepted the Working Group on Restoration's plan and timetable for producing a draft resolution on wetland restoration, with annexes reviewing existing guidelines and suggesting basic principles on restoration and identifying sites with potential for restoration, and for completing an Internet Resource Kit on wetland restoration as part of the Ramsar Web site. It further accepted the Group's suggestion that the SC Subgroup on COP8 be urged to add restoration as a subtheme to Technical Session I. (See Annex VI.)

AGENDA ITEM 15: Working Group 9, Wetland Management

43. The DSG referred to Resolution VII.12, para. 21, affirming the existing *Guidelines on Management Planning* but calling for further guidance on several specific aspects. Tex Hawkins, Group Chair, reported that the Group, in discussions with invited experts Mike Alexander and Frank Alberts, has determined that its mandate should be expanded to include small but important modifications to the Guidelines. He solicited STRP inputs of case studies and bibliographical citations to the Data Deposit forms set up by CIESIN.

44. Mike Alexander, who was closely involved in developing the original *Guidelines for Management Planning* adopted by COP5 (1993), made a presentation indicating the need for a shift in the Guidelines' emphasis from 'management plans' to 'management planning'. His updating of the thought behind the planning process can be expressed in amendments to the planning flowchart found in the published Guidelines (see Annex VII). More important than outputs (e.g., plans, policies) are outcomes (condition of habitats, species, etc.). Monitoring is the making of observations with sufficient precision to determine whether the desired condition is being met. He illustrated an adaptive management cycle from Objective to Rationale to Management to Monitoring to Review, and back to Rationale (or to Objective if necessary, though he argued against the reconsideration of objectives in most circumstances).

45. The functions of planning include identification of important site features; preparation of measurable objectives for each feature; definition of monitoring requirements; identification and description of management requirements; costing of management; and ensuring stakeholder involvement, all of which enables consistency of management, resource bidding, accountability, and audit. Long-term objectives should be concise, desirable, measurable, and achievable. To establish measurable objectives, one should define the optimal or required condition for the feature; identify all the factors which affect or might affect the feature (impact assessment),

whether positive or negative; identify performance indicators; and describe the monitoring projects. The management plan can reveal whether the available resources can achieve the objectives, but not whether it is the most cost-effective way to do so. Mike Alexander considered zonation essential, but it should be done at the right moment in the planning process, neither too soon nor too late.

46. The Working Group proposed to draft supplementary guidelines to update and amplify each of the themes of the 1993 Guidelines. Antoinette Wannebo (CIESIN) gave a demonstration of the Data Deposit form set up some time ago on CIESIN's server to accept contributions of case studies and bibliographic citations on, so far, Wetland Management Planning Guidelines and Incentive Measures. Only one contribution has been received so far. When Antoinette Wannebo asked whether the Data Deposit should therefore be disabled, but Scott Frazier recommended that the short duration of access to testing meant that a decision to disable it would be premature.

47. Max Finlayson suggested that asking STRP members to interrupt their own jobs and their own tasks for STRP to input material to this and other input mechanisms would be setting expectations too high. The proposed bibliography, to be created through the Deposit form and through the work of Frank Alberts, would assist the Group in drafting guidelines and could serve the public as well through being part of the Ramsar Data Gateway.

48. George Zalidis wondered whether offering important supplementary guidelines on top of the existing ones might not be too confusing for practitioners to cope with, especially if a paradigm shift from plan to planning would lie at the heart of it. Mike Alexander replied that, in the end, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the existing guidelines serve very well, and that it would be better to make clear additions to them than to rewrite them entirely.

49. The DSG requested that the PowerPoint slide showing conceptual modifications to the planning flowchart should be included in the Group's revised terms of reference, so that Standing Committee can easily grasp the need for and nature of the suggested changes; he also asked that the TOR's bullet points be rearranged into the logical sequence that the guidelines will have. The Guidelines will never be sufficient to allow anyone to write a management plan; they offer philosophical guidance and points to keep in mind, and the supplementary material will help with that.

Decision STRP 9.7: The STRP endorsed the revised work plan of the Working Group on Management, with the addition of the revised flowchart and the reordered bullet points (attached as Annex VII).

AGENDA ITEM 16: Management planning case studies and San José Record

50. STRP8 had asked the Bureau to report on suggestions for assembling management planning case studies and a proposed structure for the San José Record for recognizing Ramsar sites with exemplary management planning. The DSG led the meeting through the Bureau's suggested objectives and structure for this Record.

51. Mike Alexander endorsed the idea heartily, noting that there is no better guidance in writing a management plan than looking at other good plans; he suggested using the word "audit" rather than evaluate. He referred to other efforts towards the same end of learning how to measure good planning, notably by Mark Hockins in Queensland, for World Heritage. The management plan is not an end in itself, but one cannot audit a site if the managers haven't told you what they are trying to do there, so a plan is a necessary part of judging the management process.

52. Dave Pritchard noted that the proposal has the two-tiered merit of recognizing both the plan and implementation of the plan, and urged that that this distinction be maintained. He suggested a regular update and review process, rather than an ad hoc review as new information is received.

53. Stephen Hunter suggested that all additions to the San José Record might be for a limited time period, e.g. three years, requiring review afterward. The DSG noted that a regular review process could introduce significant cost factors. Mike Alexander reported that second audits, when problem areas have already been identified, are less costly than first audits.

54. Geoff Cowan observed that the San José Record of good planning would not really be the mirror of the Montreux Record of "threatened" sites, since some well-managed threatened sites, like the St. Lucia System, could appear on both lists. Frank Alberts suggested that further incentives might be needed to encourage nominations for the Record.

Decision STRP 9.8: The STRP approved of the direction in which the San José Record proposal was being developed and encouraged the Bureau to refine it further for consideration by STRP 10. Mike Alexander will serve as the STRP's expert focal point to assist the Bureau in that work. (The STRP9 working document on the San José Record is attached as Annex XIII.)

AGENDA ITEM 17: Working Group 5, Invasive Species

55. Max Finlayson reported that the Group's main task had been to review the guidelines under development by the CBD and by IUCN and determine whether new wetland-specific guidelines would be necessary for COP8. The Group concluded that these guidelines were adequate for the Ramsar Parties and that new Ramsar guidelines would not be required. Tomme Young described the work of the Global Invasive Species Program (GISP), with a broad spectrum of scientific and legal input. Phase I of the GISP ends in September and reports out in November 2000.

56. There was considerable discussion about whether, since COP7 called for wetland-specific guidance, STRP would be fulfilling its task by recommending the use of other guidelines. Stephen Hunter indicated that, if STRP were to agree that additional guidelines are unnecessary, SC would certainly consider that.

57. It was noted that the CBD's decision calls for a role for Ramsar in developing its own guidelines further. The Joint Work Plan's mention (Action 4.3) of a Ramsar contribution relating to invasives in marine/coastal areas is an addition to COP7's mandate to STRP.

58. Jean-Yves Pirot suggested that the joint IUCN/Ramsar project on invasives in Africa be asked to produce short specific guidelines on invasives on the global scale for STRP's consideration. Doug Taylor suggested that IUCN's Species Survival Commission be urged to focus a new variant of its document upon wetland specifics. Max Finlayson noted that the way in which the CBD and IUCN guidance has been written is not habitat-specific and does not need to be customized for wetlands. Musonda Mumba reported that WWF is now working on a report of which Ramsar sites are being infested by invasives.

59. Peter Maitland observed that it would not be difficult to provide some really dramatic examples of the importance of invasives in Ramsar sites. Harry Chabwela suggested that this opportunity might be seized for a thorough rethinking of the invasives issue, since many questions have not been addressed in the emerging documents.

Decision STRP 9.9: The STRP urged to Ramsar Bureau to find a mechanism for adapting emerging guidelines on invasive species to wetland-specific guidance, by the end of the year. Max Finlayson will provide two case studies on risk assessment in regard to invasive species. Inputting wetland perspectives to the CBD process will be left to the STRP Chair's participation in the CBD's SBSTTA.

AGENDA ITEM 18: Working Group 2, World Commission on Dams (WCD)

60. The DSG explained that the Group had been asked to input to the WWF/IUCN assessment of large dams in the WCD process. Scott Frazier (Wetlands International) reported on his efforts to supply information to the WCD from the Ramsar Sites Database on Ramsar sites with dams as major components (46), sites with dams that are not major components (58), and sites which are affected by dams outside the sites (60). The RIS data is rough and severely constrained, requiring substantial interpretation.

61. Max Finlayson noted that since the IUCN and WCD reports have not yet been completed, the STRP's requested evaluation has not yet been made. He felt that it is doubtful whether the STRP

has the capacity to digest the large documents that are anticipated within the timeframe required. He has circulated other WCD documents through the STRP mailing list but has received no comments back. When the COP or Standing Committee request the STRP to carry out tasks, they must take into account the fact that STRP members will not have free time to deal with very large volumes of documents. He offered to find a colleague to work with Scott Frazier on an analysis intended to learn whether or not dams are adding to biodiversity.

62. The DSG outlined a Wetlands International analysis on waterbirds vis-à-vis dams, undertaken as part of the IUCN work, which might be useful.

63. Jean-Yves Pirot (IUCN) felt that the Parties need a clear message from the STRP that Ramsar approves or disapproves of the WCD guidelines, and the WCD will seek a 'yes' or 'no' from Ramsar. The Parties will need guidance on how to implement the WCD guidelines, and at least four STRP Working Groups could contribute to that. He urged that an analysis of the WCD guidelines be folded into the other Working Group products.

64. The Chair noted that the COP has not asked for new guidance, only for a report on the WCD guidelines. The Secretary General expressed the view that COP8 needs the STRP's interpretation of the World Commission on Dams' report, not a presentation from the WCD as at COP7; somehow STRP needs to digest the WCD recommendations and find a way to make them accessible for the Ramsar Administrative Authorities.

Decision STRP 9.10: The STRP deferred the issue until the IUCN thematic report and the World Commission on Dams reports become available, July and November 2000 respectively, and requested that the Chairperson determine the STRP's next steps at that time.

AGENDA ITEM 19: Climate change and the Ramsar Convention

65. It was explained that STRP8 commented on the draft of IUCN's paper on "Climate Change and the Ramsar Convention", which was distributed to the 5th COP of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 1999. STRP8 decided to revisit the issue at STRP9 and give consideration to the task of reviewing climate change impacts on wetlands for COP8, as well as ways in which wetlands can mitigate climate change and sea level rise.

66. Linkages between UNFCCC and Ramsar are important but proceeding slowly. The SG said that he was hoping that linkages with Ramsar could be formally established by UNFCCC at its COP in 2001. He was concerned that this development should not wait until after Ramsar COP8, e.g. at the UNFCCC COP in 2003. The SBSTA has requested the UNFCCC secretariat to work with Ramsar, but a strong working relationship is unlikely unless mandated by the FCCC's COP.

67. Two documents were under consideration by the Panel: 1) a draft project concept entitled "Water, Wetlands and Climate Change: Building Linkages . . .", which was distributed with the agenda papers and for which the Bureau has made available US\$ 25,000 for its development and implementation, and 2) a paper by Brett Orlando (IUCN), tabled at this meeting, which a) identifies elements of the earlier project concept that are most relevant to STRP's work in response to the products expected for COP8, and b) introduces additional project elements proposing a process for STRP to prepare reviews of wetlands and climate change for COP8.

68. Max Finlayson proposed that STRP members comment on wetland-related chapters of the draft Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), for transmission to IPCC before its 10 July 2000 deadline.

69. Jack Rieley noted that the guidance expected for COP8 would be an immense and perhaps impossible task, since there is insufficient basic information to develop such guidance and insufficient capacity amongst the STRP. Max Finlayson suggested that, since IPCC is already studying the role of wetlands in the carbon cycle, the STRP might limit itself to reporting to COP8 on the work of the IPCC in its Third Assessment Report. Considerable discussion followed, leading to the following decision.

Decision STRP 9.11: The STRP decided to

a) establish a Working Group on Climate Change and the Ramsar Convention, composed of Max Finlayson (lead), Randy Milton, Jack Rieley, IUCN, and WWF;

b) request the Bureau to work with IUCN and the other members of the new Working Group to develop a project that would provide guidance on climate change and wetlands for COP8, perhaps with financial support for a consultant's assistance, within the timeframe for other COP8 outputs;

c) invite the Working Group on Ecological Character to provide a report on the use of risk assessment in ecological character in relation to climate change for inclusion in the COP8 guidance on climate change (cf. b) above);

d) request the SC Subgroup on COP8 to add "Climate Change and Wetlands" as a subtheme to Technical Session I;

e) welcome the UNFCCC SBSTA-11's request to the Climate Change secretariat "to liaise with the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands on the specific issues identified in the oral report delivered by the representative of that secretariat in order to determine

how cooperation between the conventions could be strengthened", and urged that a joint UNFCCC/Ramsar workshop be planned to address how Ramsar can assist the FCCC Parties and to move toward greater collaboration between the secretariats;

f) review regional and other chapters of the IPCC Third Assessment Report and provide a digest of the STRP's comments by the 10 July deadline; and

g) request the Administrative Authorities and STRP National Focal Points, via the Bureau, to comment on drafts of the guidance in b) above, and urge them to become closely involved in climate change issues in their countries.

AGENDA ITEM 20.1: Application of Ramsar site Criteria: Review of the Ramsar Sites Database.

70. Scott Frazier presented an update on the status of the RSDB, showing that 82% of Ramsar sites have adequate data, 11% have data in substandard format, and 7% have no datasheet, though many are expected soon. Of maps, 76% are 'fair to good', 22% are 'poor to very poor', and 2% have no map, though some are expected soon. He reported on the considerable progress in putting maps showing Ramsar sites at regional and country level onto the Wetlands International Web site and noted that updates to the Directory (1999) are being posted there as well. He demonstrated a suite of Web pages devoted to under-represented wetland types.

71. Noting that Wetlands International has been tasked with enhancing implementation of the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List, Scott Frazier pointed to problems with Criterion 1, which he referred to as structural asymmetries between advocating under-represented wetland types and a classification system that does not include them. He urged a rethinking of the classification system and new advice on defining bioregions. He outlined a chart-based summary of the procedures needed for enhancing the Strategic Framework process.

72. George Zalidis suggested keeping the classification system and providing advice on cross-referencing the missing types. Scott Frazier suggested clarifying the classification by adding sub-types to allow parts of wetland type categories to be isolated (e.g., mangroves within the Intertidal Forested Wetlands type). The DSG noted the evolutionary process of both classification and guidance but observed that one should avoid creating confusion by updating them too frequently. He also noted that, as the GRoWI project showed, data is frequently insufficient for Contracting Parties trying to follow the Strategic Framework, but that it is recognized that this should not be used as a reason for delaying designations.

AGENDA ITEM 20.2: Application of Ramsar site Criteria: The Ramsar Data Gateway

73. Antoinette Wannebo provided a brief introduction to CIESIN, the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University, USA, and in particular its ENTRI project for Environmental Treaties and Resource Indicators, in which Ramsar data is to be used as a case study. She chronicled the signing of the recent MOU with Wetlands International and the Ramsar Bureau for the sharing of Ramsar site data and the design of a prototype product by identifying potential users and user scenarios and developing an integrated data model to ensure compatibility with data from various sources. The Ramsar Data Gateway will have two user interfaces (table mode and map mode), and she demonstrated several test queries of Ramsar sites data in the interactive table mode.

74. Antoinette Wannebo indicated that the next steps will be to begin testing and refining the "look" of the interface, develop a data management and updating process, and integrate other data sets to add value to the Ramsar data. Discussions are in progress with WCMC concerning digital maps of Ramsar site boundaries which would facilitate the development of the Gateway's GIS map mode. She noted that CIESIN would not attempt to correct faulty or imperfect data in the Ramsar data set, but would alert Wetlands International and the Ramsar Bureau when suspicious data are noted.

75. George Zalidis pointed out that the Working Group on Inventory may be recommending changes to the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) that might improve the quality of the data. The DSG noted that the quality of data presently being submitted is far superior to that of not too long ago, but that since the technical capacity and resources of some of the Parties are limited, it would be a mistake to set the data bar too high, lest some future designations might be discouraged. The ideal data one would like to have on Ramsar sites, as well as the minimum data required, needs better defining in the guidance to Contracting Parties.

76. The DSG noted that a demonstration of the Ramsar Data Gateway has been included in the provisional agenda of COP8, and that at some point the SC Subgroup on COP8 will have to determine whether the Gateway has progressed far enough along for that purpose.

AGENDA ITEM 20.3: Application of Ramsar site Criteria: Short-term targets for designation of wetland types

77. Doug Taylor observed that relatively few Ramsar sites have been designated for threatened species and that many of the most globally threatened species are seriously under-represented in the Ramsar list. A consortium of International Organization Partners (BirdLife International, IUCN's Species Survival Commission, and Wetlands International) are working on guidelines to be proposed to COP8 on how to target Ramsar site designations based upon species, in this case Anatidae (ducks, geese, and swans). Dave Pritchard noted that this analysis follows on from COP6's

formal encouragement (Resolution VI.12) for the drawing up of lists of candidate sites for Ramsar listing. The draft will be considered further at the Wetlands International Specialist Groups' workshop in Wageningen, 4-5 November, and a draft product delivered to the Bureau by the end of the year.

Decision STRP 9.12: The STRP endorsed the development of draft guidance on the designation of Ramsar sites based upon threatened waterbirds, as part of the development of guidance on under-represented types and in accordance with Resolution VI.12 on identification of candidate sites.

AGENDA ITEM 21: Application of Ramsar site Criteria: guidelines for under-represented types

78. The DSG recalled the Convention Work Plan's request for guidance on identifying and designating wetland types that are under-represented in the Ramsar List, namely peatlands, wet grassland, mangroves, and coral reefs, similar to the guidance on subterranean karst wetlands adopted by Resolution VII.13.

AGENDA ITEM 21.1: Guidelines for mangrove, coral reef, seagrass beds, and soft bottom community wetland types

79. Invited expert Jorge Cortés provided background on draft guidelines on mangroves and coral reefs tabled by the Working Group on ICZM, indicating that the Group had not attempted to deal with the other types as well. The drafts follow the structure indicated in the Bureau's briefing paper "Structure and Content of Additional Guidelines". He urged that the guidelines for each wetland type be developed individually, though as Toomas Saat pointed out, specific guidelines for all of the types for which guidance might be wished would be a formidable task.

80. Dave Pritchard also pointed out that treating each wetland type separately risks obscuring the value of a mix of types in a single site, and he wished to see that feature emphasized in each set of guidelines.

81. The Bureau's suggested structure for all future guidelines is: 1) Definition of the wetland type and where it occurs; 2) Link with the Ramsar Wetland Classification System; 3) Values and functions; 4) Threats; 5) Application of the Criteria; 6) Particular issues to take into account.

Decision STRP 9:13: The STRP agreed that all guidelines for identifying and designating under-represented wetland types should be structured in accordance with the Bureau's outline in the paper "Structure and Content of Additional Guidelines" (see [Annex VIII](#)).

Decision STRP 9:14: The STRP endorsed the ICZM Working Group's approach to drafting guidelines on identifying and designating mangroves and coral reefs for the Ramsar List, to be ready in first draft form by 31 December. The Panel accepted the Group's deletion of salt marshes, intertidal zones, seagrass beds, and soft bottom communities guidelines from its workplan and will bring that back to Standing Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 21.2: Guidelines for peatlands

82. Doug Taylor (Wetlands International) made a presentation outlining the complexities of devising guidelines for peatlands, largely because they are so diverse and have no proper inventory or classification system. He noted that 268 Ramsar sites have peat components, and 118 of these are threatened. He proposed that guidelines should focus upon 1) peatland soil characteristics, 2) peat-forming species, 3) species directly dependent upon peat soils, 4) hydrological characteristics of peatlands, and 5) the relative area of peatland. Doug Taylor noted that Wetlands International has problems with the notion of "biogeographic region" in applying Criterion 1 (Strategic Framework, para. 68) but would need to work with it. The SG agreed that the biogeographic region approach would have to be worked with, since it is a key part of the Strategic Framework, which was adopted by the Contracting Parties just a year ago and unlikely to be changed soon.

83. Jack Rieley proposed that the draft guidelines would be discussed at a Working Group workshop coinciding with the Wetlands International Specialist Group meetings in Wageningen, 4-5 November, which would need some financial support.

84. Tobias Salathé highlighted what could entail some new approaches to site designation among Doug Taylor's remarks, namely that Parties should designate a certain surface area or proportion of surface area and that threatened sites should have priority (since some Parties prefer to designate only unthreatened sites). Stephen Hunter indicated that the SC would wish to hear careful arguments before moving in these directions. The DSG acknowledged the various difficulties in preparing guidelines for peat and stressed the need for flexibility, particularly in accounting for regional differences in such a way as still to achieve global guidance.

Decision STRP 9.15: The STRP endorsed the approach to drafting guidelines being taken by the Working Group on Peatlands, and looked forward to viewing the draft document by the 31 December drafting deadline (see timetable in Annex IX).

AGENDA ITEM 21.3: Guidelines on wet grasslands

85. Doug Taylor noted that wet grasslands were not in the COP's original mandate and might be seen as a Western European issue only, where they are maintained by intensive grazing and highly

managed water levels. In Ramsar terms, wet grasslands might already be found under a number of existing natural and human-made wetland types and could qualify for designation under all Criteria. He raised a number of basic questions about how this guidance could be developed; in a European context, for example, the criteria would have to include specification as to management.

86. The SG noted that the guidance should be global if possible, but if it can only be for the European context at this time, narrower guidelines could be brought to COP8 and more extended guidance deferred to COP9. Dave Pritchard urged avoiding taking a regional focus for any of the guidelines as a matter of principle, since a fragmented approach might encourage special interests and create a two-tiered definition of international importance. The DSG agreed but noted that many other wetlands types do not occur in all Parties (e.g., coral in Greenland); the approach should be global, but its application in some cases will be relevant to only some countries and regions.

87. Tobias Salathé noted that the precedent of adding karst guidelines is not analogous, since wet grasslands are already present in the Classification System as a crosscutting type within the existing classification and Criteria. It was urged that all of the Working Group leaders should stay in close contact to ensure consistency of language and approach, especially in regard to crosscutting issues. The Bureau should be advised if crosscutting issues begin to present problems.

Decision STRP 9:16: The STRP endorsed the approach being taken and approved of Wetlands International's taking the lead on drafting the guidance on wet grasslands according to the timetable provided, with assistance from BirdLife International and the Administrative Authority in Belgium (see Annex X).

AGENDA ITEM 22: Interpretation of Articles 2.5 and 4.2

88. In accordance with Standing Committee decision SC24-10, the Bureau has established a contract with IUCN's Environmental Law Centre in order to obtain advice in time for SC25. Tomme Young (ELC) reported that the important issues of "urgent national interest" and compensation extend well beyond Ramsar and affect all countries. Three ELC interns are presently studying the issue in international law and many national legislations, and ELC will be able to provide a thorough survey and analysis of options by SC25.

AGENDA ITEM 23: Regional categorization

89. There have been no indications that Contracting Parties wish to participate in another of the Ramsar regions, and the STRP's advice is not required. The SG observed that this agenda item does not apply to Israel's intention to participate in the European region as well as in its own region,

because that was approved by COP7. The mechanism has been set up to deal with any further requests.

AGENDA ITEM 24: Strategic Plan 2003-2008

90. The SG described the Strategic Plan drafting process so far and noted that the current draft has been given to the STRP Chair; the Chair has asked that the draft be circulated to all STRP members for comments back to him (jjimenez@cro.ots.ac.cr) before 31 August 2000, for incorporation into a second draft to be discussed by the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan at SC25 in October 2000. Following SC25, the draft will be translated into French and Spanish and distributed to the Contracting Parties for comment.

AGENDA ITEM 25: *Modus operandi* of the STRP

91. The Chair raised for discussion a number of questions about the present manner in which the STRP does its work: Is the Panel really a "review panel", and how much original documentation is it able to produce? Is the Panel intended to produce science or to translate science for the Parties? Peter Maitland observed that because the entire Panel, except for Max Finlayson, was new at the first meeting following COP7, the members held back and left a disproportionate amount of the work to him; he suggested that only half of the Panel should be replaced at each triennial COP.

92. The SG noted that only the COP is competent to change the manner of STRP appointments, so that SC would have to bring to COP8 a draft Resolution amending the procedure and recommending a method of implementing it, with suggestions as to which members should be continued for another term.

93. Chris Tydeman (WWF) argued that a filter is needed between the COP and the STRP's work plan, because so many individual Resolutions casually call for the STRP to produce work without taking account of the mandates of other Resolutions. The SG suggested that either 1) the Chair of the STRP should speak out for moderation and balance during the COP, or 2) the STRP could determine its own priorities from the COP's mandates and perhaps recommend that some of the suggested tasks should not be attempted given the limited time and resources. Stephen Hunter added two more suggestions, that 1) the SC and the STRP could filter the tasks in the wording of most Resolutions before they are brought to the COP, and 2) the wording of the Resolutions could regularly be cast so as to allow flexibility whenever possible.

94. The SG urged that the COP should specify "high priority" in some Resolutions, but the STRP Chair should be vigilant to ensure that that term is not added to all of them. He wondered whether there should also be a budgetary allocation for the work of the STRP (at present there is only an

STRP travel allocation, plus the earmarked funds from the USA for this fiscal year 2000) in order to allow the engagement of consultants to prepare the basic work for the STRP's review. The Chair called for clearer terms of reference for the members and the Chair, so that nominees would have a better idea to what they are committing themselves. George Zalidis observed that this Panel's first meeting should have been more clearly focused on priorities and a work plan of realistically feasible tasks. He suggested that a draft Resolution for the COP might be in order.

95. The SG noted that STRP National Focal Points have been appointed by many CPs and that it's now time to energize this network, thus engaging the Parties more closely in the work of the STRP. He also noted, however, that great involvement of the NFPs will mean much more work in coordination. He said that ideally each Working Group should have a paid consultant to assist the Group in developing its outputs. The SG suggested that the present very large workload is a result of having so many new members who did not really know that they could say no. Harry Chabwela observed that, on the other hand, frequent turnover of the STRP would serve to add new views and prevent the STRP from becoming a closed family – the SG suggested that COP might decide that no STRP member could serve for more than two terms.

Decision STRP 9.17: The STRP requested the Bureau to develop terms of reference for the members and Chair of the STRP and to draft guidance for the COP on the workloads given to STRP, including the question of adequate resourcing, to be reviewed at STRP10 for transmittal to SC26.

AGENDA ITEM 25.1: STRP National Focal Points

96. The DSG will prepare a list of the tasks that the Panel has identified as needing input or assistance from the National Focal Points, and the Bureau needs to chase up those Parties that have not yet named their NFPs. Regional STRP members were asked to keep contact with the NFPs within their allocated subregions. Max Finlayson pointed out that one STRP member has not been present for any meetings. Thymio Papayannis noted that managing this network of focal points will be a very big job and wondered whose responsibility it will be, and the DSG recalled that the COP also created another set of National Focal Points, this one for Education and Public Awareness, with two NFPs from each Party.

97. The SG noted that, realistically, if the network of National Focal Points is to succeed it will be up to the Bureau to energize it, which will not be easy with the present staffing level. The day may come when the Bureau will have to have a full-time STRP coordinator. George Zalidis suggested that clear objectives should be explained to the NFP network before they are given any tasks.

Decision STRP 9.18: The STRP expressed concern over the difficulty of coordinating the work of the network of STRP National Focal Points, due to the limitations of the Bureau's resources. The Panel determined that all National Focal Points should have access to e-mail and invited the Bureau to add the NFPs to the STRP "list serve" or an additional one for both members and NFPs.

AGENDA ITEM 25.2: Partnerships with observer bodies

98. Doug Taylor felt that more clarity is needed on the role of the International Organization Partners in the complex of Joint Work Plan relationships between Ramsar and the CBD. The DSG recalled that SC24 had asked the IOPs to draft work plans on their own roles vis-à-vis the Convention work plan and encouraged them to think the question through and report to SC25. This would help to inform the Parties of just how much of the Convention's work is done by the Partners, and four bilateral work plans would help in analyzing gaps. There is a need also to remember the important roles that other organizations are playing in assisting the Convention.

AGENDA ITEM 25.3: Links with counterpart bodies of related Conventions

99. The Chair read a letter to the STRP received from Jan Plesnik, Vice-Chairman of CBD's SBSTTA: "Statement of the SBSTTA Bureau on collaboration with the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SBSTTA-CBD) is pleased to inform participants of the 9th Meeting of the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) that the 5th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 15-26 May 2000, adopted, previously advised by the SBSTTA, a new joint work plan with the Ramsar Convention. In addition, the cooperation between both biodiversity-related conventions was given by several Parties as a good example of effective protection, management and sustainable use of Earth's biological resources. The SBSTTA Bureau believes that collaboration between both the scientific bodies of the above conventions will continue in the very near future. On behalf of the SBSTTA Bureau I wish you a very fruitful meeting. Yours sincerely, Jan Plesnik, SBSTTA Vice-Chairman."

100. The Chair also reported that Colin Galbraith, Chair of the Scientific Council of the CMS, had intended to be present but was prevented at the last moment. Max Finlayson urged that, as these links with counterpart bodies increase, Ramsar needs to identify roles for them at Ramsar meetings in order to give them concrete reasons to wish to participate.

101. Salvatore Arico (UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme) made a presentation in which he described the MAB Programme, with its 368 Biosphere Reserves in 91 countries, and outlined a number of ideas for mutual assistance and reinforcement between the STRP and MAB, based on the STRP's Working Group tasks and MAB's existing institutions. He pointed out that Peter

Bridgewater is both the secretary of MAB and UNESCO's focal point on biodiversity issues. He also expressed the hope that MAB's Biosphere Reserve Integrated Management system (BRIM) can be energized by Ramsar's activities and experience. It was noted that, given the overlap and potential overlap of Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves, it would be helpful to site managers to ensure some consistency in the guidance coming to them from both sources.

Decision STRP 9.19: The STRP determined to invite a representative of the Man and the Biosphere programme to all of its meetings and to include MAB representatives in its distribution list for all draft guidance.

AGENDA ITEM 25.4: Advice to the donor community

102. There have been no requests for advice since the last meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 26: Summary review of progress and agreement on tasks for STRP10

103. Max Finlayson reported that the Ad Hoc Group on Ecological Character proposed to develop a report for STRP10 which will critically appraise the existing tools and mechanisms associated with ecological character and identify any gaps or inconsistencies and how these could be addressed. A report will be submitted to STRP10, and SC25 will be asked to approve the creation of a Working Group on Ecological Character and its workplan.

Decision STRP 9.20: The Panel endorsed the creation of an STRP Working Group on Ecological Character, to be composed of Finlayson (lead), Cowan, Frazier, and Zalidis, and recommended that the Standing Committee approve the Group's proposed work plan (see [Annex XI](#)).

104. The Working Group on Wetland Inventory presented the table of contents of its proposed draft guidance document. The SG suggested that the guidance could benefit by more encouragement for the use of a common inventory method globally; the DSG noted that the 1 July Workshop will consider the suitability of the MedWet methodology for many but not all purposes globally.

Decision STRP 9.21: The STRP endorsed the Working Group on Wetland Inventory's proposed outline for its draft guidance, with its timetable, and authorized the Chair to accept any changes to the outline resulting from the 1 July Workshop on Inventory so that this report can have the latest version (see [Annex XII](#)).

105. The Working Group on Climate Change requested that the Decision adopted by this meeting should stand as its terms of reference (Decision STRP 9.11 above).

106. The DSG summarized the work of STRP9 by noting that in some cases the approved STRP work plan has been extended or refined and slightly reduced, and that STRP9 has created two additional Working Groups, on Climate Change and on Ecological Character, and these alterations will be brought to Standing Committee for approval. In the meantime, based upon Stephen Hunter's assessment, the STRP should proceed with the work on the assumption that SC will approve the changes. The Working Groups' revised TOR and a summary table of agreed tasks will be circulated subsequent to the meeting's report.

107. The DSG reviewed the list of financial resources requested by the Groups for completion of the agreed tasks, and he noted that the Bureau would likely have to seek co-financing for some of them. Some areas of work for COP8, namely concerning guidelines on impact assessment, incentive measures, and invasive species, will depend upon securing additional resources to pursue them fully. He recalled that the STRP has recommended to the Standing Committee's Subgroup on COP8 the addition of two topics to the Technical Sessions, one on restoration challenges and opportunities and another on climate change and wetlands.

Decision STRP 9.22: The Panel approved the draft report of the meeting for the first two days of plenary sessions and authorized the Chair to approve the last day's report on its behalf. The Bureau may make additional editorial and stylistic changes in preparing the final report for distribution.

AGENDA ITEM 27: Any other business

108. Doug Taylor noted again that Wetlands International Specialist Group meetings will be held 4-5 November and invited suggestions for the agenda by the end of July 2000.

AGENDA ITEM 28: Next meeting of the STRP

109. The 10th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel was tentatively set for the **last week of June 2001 (circa 26-29 June)**.

AGENDA ITEM 29: Close of the meeting

110. The DSG praised the STRP members and observers for all of their work and their progress on the assignments for COP8. He looked forward to seeing the draft documents as they emerge from the Working Groups. He urged the Working Groups to discuss any problems that might arise in their work with the STRP Chair or the Bureau promptly, as it would not do to learn too late that any of the tasks cannot succeed.

111. The DSG described the Ramsar STRP as remarkable amongst convention subsidiary expert bodies and predicted that it could become a model for others. He thanked the Bureau staff for all of their help in his preparations for the meeting, namely the cafeteria staff, Paulette Kennedy for finances, the Interns/Regional Assistants, Valerie Higgins and Montse Riera for documentation, the Regional Coordinators, and the Secretary General. He particularly singled out Mireille Katz for commendation for her work on the logistics of the meeting.

112. The Chair, Jorge Jiménez, thanked the Bureau for its help and particularly Nick Davidson, the Deputy Secretary General, for having organized such a successful meeting. He thanked all of the participants and observers. The Secretary General expressed his thanks to Dwight Peck and Sandra Hails, the rapporteurs.