

Report of the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. **Gordana Beltram, Chair of the Standing Committee (SC)**, welcomed the participants and introduced Peter Bridgewater, the new Secretary General. She paid tribute to the work of his predecessor, Delmar Blasco, in establishing the Ramsar Convention as a recognized equal to all of the other environmental conventions. She noted the departure of Anada Tiéga and Carlos Villalba and thanked them for their remarkable contributions, and welcomed the new members of the Bureau.
2. **The Chair** reported that the Subgroups on COP9, Resolution VIII.45, and Finance had met the preceding day and would report shortly. She looked forward to achieving a clear direction for the next COP (Uganda in 2005) by the end of this week. She noted that Ramsar has been recognized for its contributions in international fora, such as CBD and UNFCCC, and will be making inputs to CBD's COP7 in Kuala Lumpur next month – the challenge now is to encourage similar cooperation at national level, too, and among different water-related sectors.
3. **The Chair** noted that a small “management advisory group” had helped to prepare for this meeting and she would suggest that this group be set up to provide informal support for the Bureau, reporting back to the SC, with a wholly advisory rather than decision-making role. She expressed her gratitude to the Bureau staff for their preparations for the meetings and documents. She wished the participants a fruitful meeting.
4. **Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN**, made a welcoming statement on behalf of the Bureau's host institution, drawing particular attention to the newly-signed Agreement for Programme Cooperation, which underlines both IUCN's commitment to supporting Ramsar in a number of areas and its support for the Ramsar/CBD Joint Work Plan. He looked forward to helping Ramsar play a more central role in international cooperation on water resources issues. Ramsar is now the world's largest protected area network and, since wetlands often cut across political boundaries, it can play a key role in the international water debate. He said that in meeting the world's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, Ramsar can demonstrate the positive effect of well-managed wetlands on livelihoods, ensuring that improved management within river basins can contribute to water security. He urged that Ramsar and the International Organization Partners (IOPs) engage even more proactively on basin-wide issues with major international and regional partners, scientific networks, the private sector, etc. He wished the participants a successful meeting in the coming days. [The text of this statement is available at http://ramsar.org/key_sc30_statement_iucn.htm.]
5. **Peter Bridgewater, Secretary General (SG)**, welcomed the participants to “Ramsar World HQ” and thanked the SC for the confidence shown in selecting him for the post. He paid tribute to a great team supporting him, and welcomed both Abou Bamba, the new Senior Advisor for Africa, an especially important post right now with the development of NEPAD and COP9 set for Uganda, and Sebastião Semene, seconded to serve as special assistant and build upon the work of Sandra Hails and Dwight Peck in the Bureau's communications efforts. He noted that Ramsar is a special convention particularly because of its access to the cooperative work of the IOPs in helping CPs deliver the Convention's programme. He described COP8 as a transition from the

20th century and looked to COP9 as a COP for and of the 21st, building upon the global political will to tackle the water issues as a way of proving our value. Synergy among the secretariats must be made to work at national level, with the help of SC members and the national Administrative Authorities (AAs).

6. **The SG** drew attention to the problem of a shortfall in budget income, but also noted that the budget itself is very small compared to that of other MEAs of similar size. He urged Contracting Parties (CPs) to pay their contributions on time. He also noted that the Convention's agenda and Bureau's Work Plan were overly ambitious and probably could not all be accomplished. He urged consideration of a more streamlined and focused Work Plan in future. He observed that the COP9's theme of alleviating poverty would require more than just a large number of Resolutions, but rather boosting confidence of governments that they can make a difference. He paid tribute to the Convention's drafters for "the integration of the human and social dimension in environmental policies", and called for renewed progress in broader issues of climate change, poverty alleviation, waste management, and, more globally, human well-being. He drew attention to the Government of Switzerland's suggestion that like-minded countries work together within the Ramsar framework to address the issues of "water for people, water for ecosystems". [The text of this statement is available at http://ramsar.org/key_sc30_statement_sg.htm.]
7. **Andreas Wurzer (WWF International)**, speaking for the four IOPs, drew attention to growing recognition of the challenge of water resources and noted the WSSD's targets for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and water efficiency plans for 2005 and reduction of biodiversity loss by 2010. The IOPs are concerned that freshwater management challenges may increase threats to wetlands, as some see their conservation as a use that competes for water against agriculture. He alluded to recent Ramsar Resolutions that recognize this conflict and called for implementing these good intentions on the ground. He urged the Convention not to let the debate be unduly narrow and to insist upon an integrated management approach in all relevant sectors, especially agriculture and water management. [The text of this statement is available at http://ramsar.org/key_sc30_statement_iops.htm.]

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

8. **The SG** explained a few proposed rearrangements and the agenda was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

9. **The SG** listed Contracting Parties and others that were present as observers. CPs do not require admission, but the others were admitted to the meeting by consensus.

Agenda item 4: Report of the Secretary General

10. **The SG** highlighted only a few of the issues included in DOC. SC30-2, beginning with the reasons for changing some staff titles and calling for the use of "Secretariat" to refer to the former "Bureau" to bring it into conformity with other MEAs. He cited the recent successful briefing session for the Geneva missions, to encourage better information flow to the CPs, noting that another is planned. He noted the Bureau's continued representation in the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of Rio conventions, important for Ramsar as a non-UN convention, and asked for SC support in assuring a continued welcome in that forum. He drew attention to the interest of some space agencies in cooperating with Ramsar on remote sensing, an opportunity to monitor wetland change globally, and reported better relations with the new head of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and attendance as an observer in its Council meeting.
11. **The SG** reported that there has been little response from the CPs on the targets called for by the National Planning Tool/National Report Format (NR form) and asked the SC to encourage more

timely input. Concerning Africa, he noted continued work with NEPAD and reported on the positive feedback to the Parliamentarians' meeting in Benin in November, a constituency we have not addressed before – he urged that that approach be tried in other regions. Concerning the Americas, he highlighted Brazil's first National Wetland Committee meeting, which he attended and which was charged with enthusiasm. He pointed to progress on the Regional Center in Panama and to the Chile meeting on a plan for migratory species, held with US support. He also noted the “white water to blue water” initiative on integrated water resources and coastal management. He welcomed Bahamas as a new SC member due to the imminent increase in CPs in the Neotropics region.

12. Concerning the Asia-Pacific, **the SG** noted recent work on mountain wetlands and mangroves and applauded the progress of Vietnam and Iran towards National Wetland Policies (NWP). He reported ongoing discussions concerning the funding and location of a proposed Ramsar advisor for the Pacific islands. Concerning Europe, he drew attention to establishment of a Coordination Committee for the Global Action on Peatlands, as called for by COP8, and a successful Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) to the Ukrainian Danube. On Trade and Development, he highlighted the Conservation Finance Alliance, seeking innovative ways to finance conservation work, and Alain Lambert's work at the World Parks Congress, as well as his efforts in developing sustainable trade in wetland products.
13. Concerning Communications, **the SG** pointed to the World Wetlands Day materials and their use in the new Bureau display items and to the progress of the Ramsar Web site. He pledged to seek more funding for CEPA in order to help the able efforts of the staff become still more effective. He offered two suggested themes for WWD 2005 and 2006 and reported that Danone's valuable contributions to WWD materials will continue – Danone is also interested in education and efforts are being made to try out a small education kit on wetlands, in collaboration with UNESCO, to be tested in schools. He noted that MedWet continues to be highly successful, particularly in securing funding for specific projects. He summarized recent developments with the Ramsar Sites Database and with the European Space Agency.
14. **Japan** saw no objection to using “secretariat” in informal, external relations but urged continuing to use “Bureau” in official documents, and reserved the right to do so. She asked that references to the Japan Space Agency be deleted from the Secretary General's report (¶9) and the Bureau's Work Plan, since that idea is still in a planning phase and it would be premature to mention it.
15. **Ghana** inquired about two issues from SC29: the need for a desk officer to coordinate NEPAD issues on wetlands, and the need for National Wetland Policies that have been adopted to have help in implementation. **The SG** replied that proposals have been made to Kenya, with no response so far, and urged that Ghana discuss further steps with the Senior Advisor for Africa.
16. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** emphasized the importance of synergies with other MEAs, especially the GEF Council. She pointed to the need to encourage more Asia-Pacific countries to accede to the Convention and observed that Iran is concerned about the need for more funding for training in the region.
17. **Nicaragua** announced its National Wetlands Group's newly prepared strategic plan, with the support of the Convention and especially the Senior Advisor for the Americas. He expressed gratitude for help in the review of technical proposals for management plans for Ramsar sites in the country. The National Wetlands Group, the local Mesoamerica Biological Corridor, and the Ministry of Environment and National Resources have made the new NWP official last week. **The SG** congratulated Nicaragua on this good news.
18. **Spain** expressed concern that if the NR Form is getting so little response, the important work of Carlos Villalba in creating an NR database may not be used (¶15). He asked whether the Bureau is

seeking resources to continue the NR database with its tremendous potential. **The SG** replied that he has every hope of making full use of Carlos' database for COP9 and into the future – more importantly, the data must be submitted. If the NR Form seems to be too complex, it must be remembered that it is the SC that adopted it.

19. **IUCN** conveyed recent news on partnerships among the IOPs: a coastal project for West African wetlands, all Ramsar sites, involving all four IOPs, for which one-third of the needed €30 million has been raised; Himalayan wetlands; and Andean wetlands. He hoped that those examples would be followed by more. He reported that the four IOPs and the Bureau have contributed a chapter on wetlands for NEPAD and that all four have signed an agreement with the Niger Basin Authority, related to Ramsar's MOU with the NBA. These are just examples indicating that the IOPs are far more effective when undertaking jointly the same major initiatives.
20. **Romania** questioned why budgetary restrictions should have prevented Ramsar participation in the Lower Danube Green Corridor meeting (¶91).
21. **Indonesia** agreed that “advisors” and “secretariat” are preferable terms (¶4). He noted that coral reefs are among the most important wetland types and urged greater emphasis on encouraging new CPs that have them, especially those with long coastlines (¶52). He urged better wording for the suggested WWD themes, adding e.g. “Promoting” to emphasize the need to achieve an outcome (¶104).
22. **The Slovak Republic** suggested an added paragraph after ¶77: “Many financial instruments granted projects in Europe for wetland conservation to implement management and restoration measures in Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, especially within EU countries, as for example cooperation on bilateral levels and from EU funds, as in its important LIFE Nature Financial Programme.” To ¶81 on expected Ramsar designations, she suggested including a new bilateral site in the process of being designated by Slovakia and Hungary and noting existing Ramsar Sites in Austria, Czech Republic, and Slovakia that are in the process of designation as a Trilateral Ramsar Site. She urged that ¶90 on the Tisa River meeting should include the names of the CPs that are cooperating and reported an effort to establish a multilateral Ramsar site there (Slovakia and Hungary are in the final stages of designation). She lauded the RIZA wetland courses and noted that the restoration training course will continue for at least another year.
23. In relation to the migratory species meeting in Chile (¶41), **Argentina** suggested that, in the future, the participation of Regional Representatives to the SC be encouraged, in order to support and enhance their role as such; said that the Ramsar Forum is useful in its present format (¶103); and expressed support for the WWD themes proposed.
24. **Armenia** added that the Ramsar seminar for Newly Independent States was funded by LakeNet and US AID as well as by the Ramsar SGF (¶88). He favored the change to “Secretariat” but wondered whether that was legally possible, since the Convention specifies “Bureau”.
25. **Uganda** inquired about the state of Ramsar's relations with the FAO. He noted that RIZA's decision on its management course was to devolve it to the regions, and the KWS course at Lake Naivasha, endorsed by Ramsar, covers the East Africa region. **The SG** replied that Ramsar has had contacts with the FAO but not yet close ones, though they will increase.
26. **Papua New Guinea** approved of the new names (¶4) and urged the Bureau to take steps to provide a Regional Advisor for the Oceania region as soon as practicable.
27. **Botswana** lamented that the largest Ramsar Site had not been mentioned – Ramsar has been instrumental in initiating the Okavango management plan with financial and technical help.

Progress is continuing, with expert and support staff now in place. **The SG** pledged the Senior Advisor for Africa's continuing support for the Okavango efforts.

28. **Australia** welcomed the initiative to assist the Pacific island states and pledged to work with the Bureau on how best to implement an advisory role on that issue. In ¶63 on threats to Moreton Bay, the government has not been informed of this Article 3.2 threat. Australia is happy with the current format of the Ramsar Forum (¶103). **The SG** replied that the Moreton Bay complaint may not involve a Ramsar Site.

29. **The USA** supported the name change to "Secretariat" (¶4). She complimented the Bureau on synergies with other instruments but urged only limited participation, given limited resources and staff. She recommended collaboration with the JLG and GEF on a limited basis, when appropriate. **The SG** concurred on the limits of resources but noted that the upcoming year will be extremely important for water issues, particularly because of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). He suggested that Ramsar cannot afford to not engage with the UN-related conventions, lest it get left out; it's gratifying that presently Ramsar is welcomed among their counsels.

30. **The Netherlands** supported the name change to "Secretariat". He noted that in addition to the new Ramsar Sites mentioned in ¶80, the Netherlands designated 26 new sites in 2000, some of which were only processed and added to the Ramsar List during the present period. He detailed the government's decision on the RIZA training courses. The restoration course will continue for at least another year. The management course, now 10 years old, will follow a new strategy, in particular to be more regional – courses in East and West Africa and Southeast Asia are operating or under development. The Board wishes to move in the direction of 1) regional training, close to the sites, 2) e-learning using electronic methods, and 3) training of trainers. The direction of RIZA and the International Agriculture Center (IAC) will be training trainers with a regional focus, making use of virtual methods. A two-week pilot is set for next September.

31. **Morocco** agreed with the ¶4 name change and welcomed the new Senior Advisor for Africa, Abou Bamba. He noted that Morocco's recent inventory of 20 wetlands had been given to the SG at the WPC for comment and is needed in order to move ahead. Morocco is establishing a new Wetland Centre, supported by SEO BirdLife Spain and the EU, a 2-year project. **The SG** congratulated Morocco on the Wetland Centre and urged discussions with the Bureau's regional team about the inventory.

32. **Canada** agreed with the ¶4 name change, and expressed an interest in learning more about the terms of reference of the new Special Assistant for Media, Culture, and Outreach. **The SG** replied that the new secondee will work with the WWD team on the UNESCO educational materials and will develop a media strategy for the Bureau, in order to take advantage of someone with experience to advise on "press office" functions as well. He will work with the SG on the Swiss proposal to seek a broader water-related agenda for the Convention, and will help plan for the French conference on biodiversity in 2005.

33. **The Dominican Republic** stressed the value of the Bureau's briefing sessions, particularly if held in Geneva rather than Gland, and welcomed Ramsar participation in the GEF Council. **The SG** reported that the next briefing is set for International Environment House (UNEP) in Geneva, probably in March. **The Dominican Republic** urged that the Bureau explore options to work in synergy with UNCCD on undertaking a project on management of Lake Enriquillo, a Ramsar Site located in an arid zone.

34. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** urged that the "role of wetlands in water management" be adopted as the COP9 theme and supported the ¶4 name change to "Secretariat".

35. **Japan** agreed that synergy with the MEAs is important but reminded that each convention has its own mandates, and looking at the synergies among the different conventions at the National Focal Point (NFP) level, particularly with regard to implementation, is up to the Parties themselves.
36. **The SG** thanked the participants for their positive responses to his report but noted that it was the work of many members of the Bureau as well. He made point-by-point responses to the interventions (some of which have been distributed above). He agreed that the Pacific islands and marine issues are of the highest priority for the Bureau and progress towards an advisor will be pursued vigorously. He reiterated the Bureau's support for the RIZA courses, and noted the delegates' support for the format of the Ramsar Forum. He offered to discuss reservations about the change to "Secretariat" with Japan and Armenia and report later in the meeting.

Decision SC30-1: The Standing Committee adopted as the themes for upcoming World Wetlands Days: for 2005, "Cultural and biological diversity of wetlands", and for 2006, "Wetlands as a tool in poverty alleviation".

Agenda item 5: The Bureau's Work Plan for 2004

37. **The Deputy Secretary General (DSG)** presented the proposed Work Plan and outlined its structure. He noted the problem of balance between plans that provide details but are too long and those that are satisfyingly short but leave much out.
38. **Canada** reported the Americas region's view that the work for the Americas should include preparations for a pre-COP9 regional meeting, perhaps in November 2004, and that fundraising for the Bureau (deficit, regional meetings, SGF, STRP, etc.) needs greater emphasis.
39. **Japan** offered specific changes to ¶65 and 68.ii (Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy) and Op.Obj.1.2 (deletion of mention of JAXA) and noted that the volume of the document is large – she urged shorter documents for the SC and COP.
40. **WWF** urged strengthening the relations with the EU and EU institutions, which would be important not only for Europe but globally as well, since EU instruments and funding have wider applications. He urged an SC decision on that and its addition to the Work Plan, and offered WWF's advice and contacts.
41. **The Netherlands** expressed a desire for more emphasis on cooperation with the FAO and sought Ramsar participation in the Netherlands/FAO conference on agriculture and water, about which he offered to provide further information. The focus is on 'Water for Food and Ecosystems'. He urged SC support for strengthened relations with the FAO.
42. **The Slovak Republic** reported on a regional initiative for promotion of the Ramsar Convention and the newly-signed Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, funded by the Norwegian Government. The full text of this intervention is available at http://ramsar.org/key_sc30_supplement_carpathian.htm. He urged that the Carpathian cooperation be seen as a regional initiative which can learn from the MedWet experience among others. He noted the establishment of a Wetland Centre in Slovakia with a national (and perhaps Carpathian) coordination role in wetland and Ramsar issues, and he welcomed further advice on development and on funding support, urging that this initiative be included in the Bureau Work Plan (p.28, R3.1.i, Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention).
43. **Austria** applauded the proposed Work Plan but had three comments. 1) It seems too ambitious, given budget restrictions. 2) Decision SC29-1 called for time allocation estimates, which do not appear here. 3) Better cooperation with the European Commission should be emphasized.

44. **Ghana** called for more attention to the cultural aspects of wetlands, in order to make wetlands more relevant to the needs and aspirations of people, especially in Africa, and urged that, since NEPAD is recognized as a central tool, cooperation with the African Union should be heightened.
44. **Argentina** noted that though the COP preparations are important, this should not be a reason to neglect other priority issues. Since Regional Representatives are encouraged in the document to participate fully in the hemispheric migratory species strategy, the Bureau is requested to keep Parties informed of developments in this regard. Argentina expressed that although Op.Obj.7.1.4's suggestion of a Friends of Wetlands initiative seems a useful one, it would not be convenient to allocate funds from the core budget to this proposed group.
45. **The USA** stated that, concerning Op.Obj.13.1.1, she agrees "that the process of enhancing cooperation between the conventions should recognize the different mandates of the three conventions, preserve the rights of the parties of the respective conventions, be transparent to the parties, and aim to avoid duplication of work, use resources efficiently, capture synergies and identify potential areas of conflict. The US Government feels that implementation and consideration of wetland work is better addressed at the national focal point level before mutually beneficial activities under the different conventions are implemented. The US Government does not support going beyond the current arrangements for cooperation between conventions, i.e., the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the secretariats of UNFCCC, UNCBD, and UNCCD, to share information. Ramsar should be invited to the JLGs as an observer only when appropriate."
46. Concerning Op.Obj.13.1.9, **the USA** stated: "Regarding the feasibility of regional economic integration (REIO) or similar organizations/institutions. If the SC wishes to consider this matter, the issues of the REIO's competence over the issues covered under Ramsar and that of the organization's relationship to its members re: voting and participation must be considered. The US Government notes that the matter of voting rights must be considered under the principal of no additionality." The USA observed that Op.Obj.3.4.8 "lists as ongoing discussions with the IPCC regarding wetlands and climate change. The role of the IPCC is to assess the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant for the understanding of risk of human-induced climate change. It does not carry out research or monitor climate-related data on relevant parameters. In its current workplan the IPCC does not indicate that there is any ongoing work with the Ramsar Convention. The US would like clarification on the exact nature of work that Ramsar is collaborating on with the IPCC that is referred to in ¶3.4.8."
47. **The USA** said, concerning Op.Obj.R3.4.xxi, "At this particular time, with the upcoming Assessment Report 4 being prepared by the IPCC, the US Government does not feel that the IPCC has the resources to complete a technical paper on wetlands and climate change before Ramsar's COP9. Synthesis of information already contained in the Third Assessment Report, by either the IPCC or the STRP, would not be a cost effective and wise use of limited resources." On Op.Obj.15.1.v, "The US Government supports Ramsar participation in international meetings as appropriate. We request that the word 'all' be deleted and the words 'as appropriate' be added after 'GEF Council meetings'."
48. **The Dominican Republic** suggested an addition to Op.Obj.21.1, to organize a national training workshop on Ramsar implementation for the Dominican Republic as a new Contracting Party.
49. **The MedWet Coordinator** drew attention to the Tunis workshop on Water, Agriculture, and Wetlands and thanked Germany for financial support. He noted MedWet's new MOU with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) on agricultural issues, and reported that FAO has expressed a strong interest in working with MedWet and Ramsar.

50. **Botswana** urged that the Work Plan pay greater attention to assisting Parties with the preparation of project proposals. He noted that, even when proposals succeed, project implementation capacity may be lacking, resulting in longer completion times.
51. **Argentina**, concerning Op.Obj.3.1.ii, stressed the great importance of this initiative for the region and noted that in meetings with the Regional Office of IUCN (IUCN-Sur), countries involved identified this initiative as a highest priority. The Programa de Humedales Altoandinos has also been identified as a high priority in the conclusions of the meeting on National Biodiversity Strategies in Rio de Janeiro, December 2003. She urged that the Bureau actively support this initiative, in addition to the activities of the Grupo Páramos and the Grupo de Flamencos Altoandinos, during 2004.
52. **WWF** agreed that Bureau time spent in helping with project proposal preparation would be highly strategic.
53. **The DSG**, concerning additional meetings, noted that the second half of 2004 will be extremely busy, but most suggestions can be incorporated into the Plan. He noted that some actions in the Plan probably cannot be accomplished because of lack of capacity. To the USA's points, he recalled that the wording of the tasks comes from the COP8's mandates to the Bureau in the Resolutions and Strategic Plan, and these have not been much progressed. Some discussions have been had with the IPCC Secretariat but the COP8 request for a technical paper is unlikely to be feasible. Concerning regional economic organizations, this was called for in the Strategic Plan, but there has been no action. He agreed with the call for cooperation with FAO, subject to capacity.
54. **The DSG** apologized to Austria for not having explained the absence of time allocations; no way was found to do that. **The SG** confirmed the importance of Austria's reference to time allocation forecasts in the Work Plan and noted that the elaborate nature of the Work Plan made detailed time allocations unhelpful – he urged that more focused Work Plans in future could include them. He noted that the suggested additions to the Plan can be incorporated, with the caveat that many existing tasks cannot be progressed.

Decision SC30-2: The Standing Committee approved in principle the Bureau's Work Plan for 2004, subject to the additions suggested and with time allocations if feasible, and the amended Plan will be circulated soon after the meeting.

55. **The Chair** drew attention to the invitation from the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests, and Landscape for the SC dinner on Thursday evening.

Agenda item 6.1: Report of the Chair of the STRP

56. **Max Finlayson, Chair of the STRP**, surveyed the STRP's progress and described the process of setting up the Working Groups and Co-Leads and the cross-cutting issues of CEPA and Agriculture. Despite the SC's prioritization, there was a large volume of work. The Working Groups have completed the tasks expected at this stage of the work to the following levels: WG1, 60% of tasks completed; WG2, 35%; WG3, 48%; WG4, 50%; WG5, 45%; WG6, 99%; CEPA, 50%; Agriculture, 20%. There has been difficulty in encouraging interaction by electronic means, and the COP decision to suppress the triennium's middle meeting has been limiting; thus most WGs have requested mid-term WG workshops. The STRP Support Service has contributed and has updated Co-Leads on progress. The WGs have identified needs for additional resources where they exist.
57. **The STRP Chair** reported that there has been low or zero engagement from many appointed STRP members, despite the formal agreements to do so. He questioned whether, since they are so little engaged, it is cost effective to bring them to meetings. It would be worth considering an

overhaul of the *modus operandi* to allow a (probably funded) lead expert to draft each document and then have it reviewed by the appointed Panel members. He observed that the Support Service has been helpful, and cooperation with the Millennium Assessment has been encouraging.

58. **Argentina** noted that the make-up of the agricultural group seemed regionally inequitable; the **Chair of the STRP** explained that the group was constituted by volunteers among STRP members and observers. **Argentina** suggested that a revision of the *modus operandi* should be undertaken and sought more details in order to do so.
59. **Canada** shared concerns about the lack of engagement of members and expressed support for the suggested model for improvement in DOC. SC30-4, ¶21, seeking elaboration from the Chair and Bureau before COP9. He suggested a priority for fundraising and a reappraisal of priorities in the absence of new resources.
60. **Japan** sought more information on non-performing STRP members, suggested that the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) become more involved, asked who would do the work under paragraph 11 of the STRP *modus operandi* when the mid-term STRP meeting was dropped, and requested deletion of mention of the Japan Space Agency in ¶30. She also requested that, if the IPCC cannot undertake preparation of a technical paper on the relationship between wetlands and climate change owing to a lack of resources, the Chair of the SC ask the SC members for comments about further STRP work before the STRP proceeds to preparation of an information paper for COP9, since this task has been considered by the SC as a lower priority activity and the STRP faces budgetary restrictions.
61. **The STRP Chair** noted a general lack of engagement but considered it inappropriate to discuss individuals. Despite the title “review panel”, members have been expected to both draft and review the guidance and thus work voluntarily between meetings. Some may have had a false expectation of being contracted to undertake work, and for some, language is a difficulty, since the STRP works only in English for budgetary reasons. The workload, despite prioritization, is still too great, and it’s been difficult to match members’ expertise with the mandated tasks. The STRP NFP network is not presently helpful – some CPs don’t have an NFP, etc.
62. **The DSG** explained the COP’s thinking in dropping the mid-term STRP meeting, including budgetary savings. He questioned whether the SFR 100,000 in delegate support could be better spent, in e.g. contracting expert work. Every effort had been made in explaining their role to prospective STRP members. The fundraising process needs streamlining, since the present time-line leaves a delay before the COP’s mandates can be prioritized and planned for. He noted that the STRP has been tasked with suggesting changes in the *modus operandi* to COP9.
63. **The SG** noted that it is too late for changes in this triennium and a shortfall of products should be expected. **Argentina** suggested that the Regional Representatives urge the CPs to appoint their NFPs.

Decision SC30-3: The Standing Committee agreed to reiterate the importance of the STRP as a hallmark of Ramsar as a science-based convention; charge the STRP Chair and the Bureau to make concrete proposals for changes in the STRP *modus operandi*; urge the Parties to consider making voluntary contributions for the substantive work of the STRP in this triennium; and encourage the SC Regional Representatives to contact their Parties about appointing their STRP National Focal Points, where necessary.

Agenda item 6.2: The STRP Support Service

64. **The DSG** provided background on the COP’s endorsement of a Support Service and its establishment by Wetlands International in collaboration with the other IOPs.

65. **Wetlands International** noted that the Service is intended to increase the capacity of the STRP and the Bureau by providing logistical and secretarial support for the STRP and facilitating access to other networks of expertise, according to the priorities of the STRP and SC, not those of the IOPs. He noted that it has also taken over the Ramsar Experts Database, first established by the Bureau with funding from the USA. The STRP members have had a full opportunity to engage and participate in the Service, with 177 registered users and over a thousand visits so far. One of the bottlenecks has been in clarity in how the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) could be brought into the process. The first two categories of the budget within 2003 were underspent by about CHF 6,000. He expressed pride in how well the IOPs have worked together.
66. **The Netherlands** congratulated WI and the IOPs for helping to continue the Ramsar tradition as a science-based convention. He agreed with the need for more involvement of the NFPs.
67. **Japan** questioned whether items could be transferred from one budget item to another without SC approval. **Wetlands International** observed that the budget under discussion is an internal breakdown under the contract with the Bureau, within the single line item approved by COP8.
68. **The SG** pointed out that the Subgroup on Finance is still considering financial aspects of continued work with the Support Service, in light of the budget deficit, and would be taking this up later in the meeting.
69. **The STRP Chair** and **the DSG** pointed out that they have focused on negative aspects in their report on the STRP's work, but also wished to convey gratitude to the members and volunteers who have done so much work already. The Service has provided a significant improvement in progressing the STRP's work compared with this time in the last triennium.

Agenda item 8: Indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention

70. **The DSG** provided background to the COP's decision to define indicators and described DOC. SC30-7 as a work in progress, requesting that the SC provide direction on the next steps in the work. He described the work on indicators being done in other fora, notably the CBD.
71. **BirdLife International**, on behalf of STRP Working Group 6, described the assumptions and intentions of the work in SC30-7 and noted that the aim was to evaluate outcomes, rather than just activities, and to assess what difference is being made by Ramsar implementation specifically. The 19 indicators suggested are meant to be scientifically-based indicators of outcomes for Parties to use in conjunction with their National Reports, which are more institutionally based. He suggested that all or some of the suggested indicators be pilot tested by willing CPs, prior to adoption of guidelines for the 2005-2008 triennium, and noted that additional resources would probably be required to do that.
72. **The UK** recommended further work and pilot testing; she urged that it be done in harmony with the CBD's efforts and cautioned that the collection of data should not detract from conservation work. **The USA** also urged harmonization with the CBD's work and drew attention to the resource implications. The USA also raised the question of assessing the Ramsar impact without comparison with a control group. **Argentina** pointed to the need for a zero baseline in order to measure change. She noted that major diagnostic work would be needed to evaluate the indicators, whereas some CPs don't even have inventories yet. She suggested that continuing work follow closely the work of CBD and UNCCD and urged that the pilot test use only a small group of the proposed indicators.
73. In further discussion, **Japan** indicated that this work needs careful consideration, and **Indonesia** urged that easier indicators also be included for the use of countries with fewer capacities. **Spain**

echoed the need to continue work on this subject, especially in coordination with CBD, noting that CPs can choose a number of relatively easy indicators to apply if they wish to, but that there are also other indicators with strong difficulties to be applied, due to the process of assessment. **WWF** applauded the indicators proposed and drew attention to the Water and Wetland Index recently published by WWF, suggesting that it might be helpful in supplying data for this purpose, especially for Europe and North Africa. The **STRP Chair** pointed out that Working Group 1's work on the ecological character of wetlands will contribute to the indicators and will suggest ways for CPs to choose which indicators are most important to apply. **Australia** urged further progress and said that the present direction is in line with Australia's procedures. **Canada** supported pilot testing but wished to see more indicators included, particularly institutional ones. **Uganda** echoed the need for a clear baseline, as for example in the RIS.

74. **BirdLife International** noted that the work of the CBD has been fully drawn into the present proposal, but that there should always be an irreducible minimum of specifically Ramsar work. He pointed out that many of the questions raised – on the example of legislation, on controls inside and outside Ramsar Sites, on baselines – are treated in the commentaries to the proposed indicators. Many indicators are proposed because each has different strengths and weaknesses. To Spain's question about who should make the assessments, he said that had been left open but he presumed that each Party would decide for itself. He noted that the Working Group has focused on issues rather than upon indexes and aggregations, and he pointed out that the proposed indicators are deliberately scientifically, rather than institutionally, based, because the Convention already has ways to measure institutional progress, e.g., the National Reports.
75. **Ghana** felt that it is important to have indicators that look at the impacts of pressures before looking at the responses to those impacts; therefore, indicators on Impacts are needed between those for Pressures and those for Responses. **BirdLife International** sympathized but stressed that the proposal includes a sample of issues and that sophisticated distinctions in categories would not have been profitable.
76. **The DSG** noted that harmonization with the CBD's work on indicators has been a two-way process, because the CBD is also looking closely at the progress of the STRP's work. He noted that the document proposes indicator topics – the next step is the phrasing of the questions, and funding may be necessary to pursue that further.

Decision SC30-4: The Standing Committee determined to:

- i) thank the STRP's Working Group 6 for its efforts in bringing forward proposals for ecological 'outcome-oriented' indicators of the effectiveness of implementation of the Convention;
- ii) endorse the approach taken thus far by the Working Group in preparing these proposals, as described in the report annexed to DOC.SC30-7;
- iii) request the STRP Working Group to continue to develop these proposals, taking account of the comments made in the present meeting, and the global-scale indicators recommended by the CBD process;
- iv) instruct the Bureau, with the assistance of the STRP Support Service, to seek appropriate additional expert consultancy assistance to work with the STRP Working Group to refine the detailed indicator descriptions and guidance on the application and use of the proposed indicators;
- v) encourage Contracting Parties willing to assist with pilot-testing the proposed indicators during 2004, in conjunction with their use of the National Planning Tool and National Report Format for COP9, to make their willingness known to the Ramsar Bureau; and
- vi) request the STRP's Working Group, depending upon resources, to prepare a further draft of the proposed indicators for circulation to the Standing Committee for comment prior its 31st meeting.

Agenda item 7: Initial report of the Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45

77. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup**, made an initial report of the Subgroup's discussions. He drew attention to three themes. 1) Concerning the evaluation of the process of developing and adopting Resolutions and the effectiveness of their implementation, there will be a questionnaire to be circulated to the AAs with guidance on how to distribute it within their countries. 2) For improving the process of adopting Resolutions, the Subgroup will recommend distinguishing between Technical Resolutions and all others and that the Bureau be charged with facilitating the consolidation and simplification of all Resolutions for COP9. 3) Concerning the COP9 programme, the Bureau should be urged to maximize the wise use of time, as stated in Resolution VIII.45.

Agenda item 9: Initial report of the Subgroup on COP9

78. **Uganda** outlined the present state of COP9 preparations and summarized the recommendations that the Subgroup would be bringing forward, especially on dates, the theme, logo, honorary host, budget, Award, and regional meetings. He noted that resources for the COP are limited and sought continued support.

Agenda item 11: Ramsar sites that cease to meet or never met the Ramsar Criteria

79. **The DSG** recalled the background and outlined the issues as found in DOC. SC30-13. The paper, a first response to developing the guidance sought by Resolution VIII.22, describes nine scenarios involving boundary change for reasons other than "urgent national interests" and suggests a six-step process for dealing with them.
80. **Australia** noted the great significance of this issue to his country, where it is a legal issue. He urged further development of the six-step process to increase its relevance to other scenarios besides the ninth. He urged a stipulation that a revision of boundaries should trigger a revised RIS. Australia offered to join the group developing this issue further.
81. **Japan** offered specific comment on scenario 4 – she indicated that the Parties have authority to change Ramsar Site boundaries and inquired why such a complicated process would be needed, so different from the process of designating new sites. **The DSG** replied that Article 2.5 mentions the right to delete and restrict sites only in cases of "urgent national interests" and Parties have frequently asked for guidance for scenarios when they do *not* wish to invoke those interests.
82. **Argentina** argued that there is not sufficient depth in the document and that more discussion is required. **The SG** noted that it is intended to outline the particular issues and that it is hoped that SC will request continued discussion among all interested parties towards a guidance document. **Argentina** proposed that, since a matter of interpretation of the Convention text was involved, Regional Representatives should be asked to consult with their regions at an early stage. **The DSG** assured the SC that all Parties would be directly consulted at an early stage.

Decision SC30-5: The Standing Committee requested the Bureau, with the assistance of interested Contracting Parties and International Organization Partners as appropriate, to further develop the issues and approaches on Ramsar Site boundary restriction in the form of guidance for Parties, in line with the request in Resolution VIII.22, for circulation to all Parties prior to consideration at its 31st meeting.

Agenda item 9.1: Preparations for Ramsar COP9

83. **Uganda, Chair of the Subgroup on COP9**, outlined the Subgroup's report on the COP preparations; drew attention to the annex, an update of 12 January from Uganda's Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment [available at http://ramsar.org/key_sc30_supplement_cop9.htm] and described the budget process.

Decision SC30-6: The Standing Committee agreed with Uganda's proposal that Ramsar COP9 should be held during the period 7-15 November 2005, subject to Uganda's Cabinet's approval.

84. **Austria** summed the projected costs of the meeting at more than 2.4 million Swiss francs (CHF) and asked where it would come from. **The SG** replied that it is normal at this stage that these items require funding, and that after the theme/logo issues have been settled by SC, the fundraising will commence. The method has worked well for past COPs and he was optimistic for this COP as well. COP9 is different insofar as additional funds will be needed for the Bureau's functions, since these have normally been supplied by the host country, but this was recognized at the time of Uganda's offer to host the COP. **Austria**, noting that if funds were not found for regional meetings or sponsored delegates these would simply not happen, inquired further about what would happen if the Bureau's additional costs could not be resourced. **The SG** expressed confidence but promised to report regularly on progress, especially if difficulties arise in fundraising.
85. **Argentina** stressed the importance for the Neotropical Region of funds for sponsored delegates, since many Parties could not otherwise attend the COP.
86. **The Islamic Republic of Iran**, referring to the outcomes of the Johannesburg WSSD, the forthcoming session of the CSD, and the coming ministerial meeting of UNEP in the Republic of Korea, stressed the need to highlight Ramsar's role in international governance for water during the COP and urged Ramsar CPs to emphasize that in the CSD meeting and the UNEP Global Ministerial Environmental Forum. Iran urged keeping the COP at the same duration of nine days, given the value of such an important gathering only once every three years, but cautioned that no more than two meetings should be held simultaneously during the COP. She emphasized the importance of holding regional and subregional meetings in preparation for the COP in order to identify needs and problems and to reduce the COP workload. The logo should highlight the importance of water and particularly Ramsar's role in international environmental efforts, in addition to Uganda's interests. Iran invited donor countries to contribute generously to the COP and its preparatory process.
87. **Uganda** proposed a COP theme of "Wetlands – alleviating poverty, sustaining life", in order to bring out the role of wetlands, highlight the poverty reduction goal so important in Africa, and include the overall goal of sustainable development. **The SG** considered the theme an attractive phrase that would help in fundraising.
88. In further discussion, **Iran** urged that the COP theme should match the international atmosphere of water and proposed "Ramsar's role in water resources management", which would highlight the Ramsar name and role, but he was prepared to accept the consensus view. **Ghana** cautioned that "alleviating poverty" sends a negative signal and urged something more positive, *doing* something rather than alleviating something. **The USA** noted that the danger lies in becoming too caught up in sustainable development terminology; "sustaining life" is more primary, whilst "alleviating poverty" narrows the Ramsar focus. One must avoid the impression that the COP is just one more conference on poverty.
89. **The Chair** invited the interested Parties to consider the theme further and report back later.

90. **Uganda** showed a preliminary suggested logo, a basket held up by a hand above a water lily, suggesting prosperity, Africa, humans, and wetlands. **Bahamas** suggested adding water around the lily. **Armenia** suggested adding Uganda to the name Kampala. **The USA** urged that the word “wetlands” be included in the legend. **Uganda** noted the suggestions and promised further developments.
91. **Ghana** strongly urged that at least two sponsored delegates should be the minimum, since delegations of one would be deprived of the chance to participate in concurrent sessions though they might later be asked to vote on issues they had not observed. **The SG** reassured that sponsoring two delegates is the goal and a Ramsar tradition (though some other MEAs only sponsor one), and that’s included in the fundraising sums to be sought. He also hoped to plan the COP agenda to avoid simultaneous sessions on important issues.

Decision SC30-7: The Standing Committee agreed upon the COP9 fundraising priorities of 1) holding the COP itself (both Bureau and in-country costs), 2) supporting at least one sponsored delegate from each eligible Party, and 3) holding regional/subregional preparatory meetings.

Agenda item 9.2: The Ramsar Award / Evian Special Prize

92. **Uganda** reported the Subgroup’s recommendation that the Award be given in the categories of management, science, and education, with an effort to achieve a geographical spread and among stakeholders. To **Argentina’s** question, **the DSG** outlined past practice, that the Bureau processes and assesses nominations and recommends a shortlist to the Subgroup on COP9, which acts as a jury to choose the laureates in closed session.

Decision SC30-8: The Standing Committee agreed that the Ramsar Award for COP9 will be given in the categories of management, science, and education and that the Subgroup on COP9 will act as a jury to choose among the Bureau’s recommended shortlist. The Committee approved the Criteria and Procedures proposed and gratefully accepted the generous offer of the Danone Group (France) to provide three “Evian Special Prizes” of US\$ 10,000 each to accompany the Awards.

Agenda item 9.3: Regional and subregional meetings

93. **Uganda** reported the Subgroup’s recommendation that primary responsibility for arranging regional meetings should be placed with the potential hosts, with help from the Bureau, but should not be the Bureau’s responsibility, given other fundraising needs.
94. **Austria** initiated discussion of the breakdowns of meeting costs between the hosts and the COP9 fundraising needs. **The DSG** noted that normally the hosts bear in-country costs but that has been variable. The proposal shifts the challenge of holding meetings onto the regions, in order to avoid conflicts in the Bureau’s fundraising responsibilities. He noted that, despite the great importance of regional meetings, it might not be possible to hold them in all regions, though he urged the goal of at least one per regional grouping. **Iran** objected that devolving responsibility to the regions would determine that there will be no meetings in some regions; all MEAs have a preparatory process before COPs, and the SC should urge the Bureau to do its best to mobilize resources.
95. **The MedWet Coordinator** clarified that MedWet/Com meetings should not be confused with COP preparatory meetings, though their timing is one between each COP and another as a COP side event. Fundraising for these does not conflict with the Bureau’s COP fundraising.
96. **Argentina** also emphasized the vital importance of regional meetings and objected to the text’s mention of the possibility that they might not be able to be held. The wording should remove

responsibility from the countries and add a Bureau role in providing support. **Armenia** and **Indonesia** agreed that, given the importance of these meetings, the Bureau should assume a more central role. **The SG** promised that the Bureau will work closely in support of any interested hosts and help with fundraising, and he urged the regions to identify potential hosts as early as possible.

97. **The USA** said that the host's responsibility to "seek necessary funding" was not agreed by the Subgroup. The USA noted that some of its contribution for COP8 remained unspent and directed that that sum, about CHF 40,000, should be used to support a regional meeting in the Western Hemisphere.
98. **Canada** agreed on the importance of regional meetings, but that the highest fundraising priority should be the COP itself. He felt that meetings should not be discretionary but that the Parties should take up some of the responsibility, not just the Bureau. Canada pledged to work with the Bureau's Senior Regional Advisor towards a meeting, hopefully in Mexico in November 2004, and pledged to contribute funds to support it.
99. **Armenia** said that, unofficially, his country is interested in organizing a regional meeting as well.
100. **Austria** inquired about whether any resources were available to the Bureau for these meetings. **The SG** replied that there is no money provided in the budget for holding meetings, but if the SC so directed, *staff* resources would be allocated to assist meetings rather than to other tasks. **The Chair** foresaw success in the traditional close cooperation between hosting countries and the Bureau.

Decision SC30-9: The Standing Committee recognized the value of mid-term meetings of regional groupings of Parties and pre-accession countries and adopted as a goal that there should be at least one intersessional meeting of each regional grouping in each triennium. The SC recommended that proposed meetings should be the responsibility of a country or countries in the regional grouping concerned to organize, with the Bureau, and that the purpose of the meeting and the issues to be discussed be kept flexible so as to meet the priority issues and needs of the countries concerned. Opportunities should be sought to capitalize on other relevant meetings taking place in the region. The Bureau will provide advice to organizing countries and participate in any such meetings as appropriate.

Agenda item 9.4: Resolution VIII.45

101. **Australia** expressed concern about the process proposed for adopting technical Resolutions, since CPs may wish to debate them again at the COP, and **the STRP Chair** was not certain that the STRP has a mechanism for vetting these documents. Given lack of engagement among some STRP members, the vetting might not occur, especially if the Support Service were cut from the budget. **The USA** replied that Parties could take as much time to debate as they might wish, in advance of the COP, and at the COP, if unsatisfied, they could vote no. The problem is not whether CPs have enough time but whether they will take any time prior to the vote. The USA added that these documents will already have been going through the STRP process.
102. **The DSG** recalled the Ramsar tradition of proceeding by consensus rather than by voting – noting that debates are frequently only over operative paragraphs of the Resolutions, he suggested that a simple form of Resolution, thanking the STRP and urging Parties to apply annexed guidance, might be preferred. **Argentina** expressed discomfort about limiting the rights of CPs to discuss issues at the COP. **The USA** noted that if discussion on the issues were to be opened up at all at the COP, it would be uncontrollable, as Parties would continue to wait until the COP to raise their preliminary thoughts. The proposal gives the CPs the right to debate as much as they like in advance and then join a consensus or not at the COP. **The DSG** distinguished between Resolutions on topics prepared through the ordinary process, usually through the STRP, with or

without annexed guidance, and those submitted by Parties prior to the 60-day limit but still late in the process, with no opportunity for review by the STRP.

103. **Austria** urged that in future Resolutions should include an estimate of what adoption of the Resolution would mean in terms of time and costs for the Bureau – ideally all Resolutions but at least the technical ones. **The SG** applauded the suggestion and wished to extend it to all Resolutions, as it would help to control the large numbers of proposed drafts and impose discipline in mandating work on the Bureau, the STRP, and the Parties.
104. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup**, noted that the second proposed recommendation merely charged the Bureau with facilitating and simplifying the Resolution process to the extent possible. **The SG** promised to look into this, but suggested that it might be more complicated than it seems at first glance. The COP should be streamlined wherever possible but its results should still be “fully owned” by all of the Parties.
105. **The USA, Australia**, and the **SG** and **DSG** also discussed the goal of consolidating the draft Resolutions and urged the SC to encourage the Parties to propose their own drafts as early as possible in the process. Consolidating the Resolutions of the past, to assess where we’ve been, is a worthy goal for the future – **the USA** noted that the Subgroup’s questionnaire should help with that, and the Web site has a linked keyword index that assists in identifying superseded Resolutions, terms, and ideas.

Special presentation on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

106. **The Chair** introduced Dr Walt Reid, directory of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)
107. **Walt Reid** made a PowerPoint presentation which provided background on the MA and addressed the issue of how to link the MA into Ramsar governmental processes. He provided overviews of its structure, participants, work model, and time line, organized around the principle of “Ecosystem Services” and the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. The products will include lengthy assessment reports, a summary reports, and synthesis reports for each of the user conventions. He described inputs from Ramsar to the MA’s work and board and from the MA to the Convention’s STRP, and announced that the UN University is considering funding the participation of 5-10 MA experts in the STRP workshops in July 2004. The MA Synthesis Report for Ramsar should be completed by February-March 2005 and could be presented to COP9 for consideration, endorsement, etc.
108. **The SG** noted that he and the STRP Chair are on the MA board and the SC Chair serves as an at-large board member.
109. **Dr Reid**, to Argentina’s question, said that provisional findings are only beginning to come in from the more than 700 scientist/authors from 90 countries and cannot yet be summarized, but he noted that the first “conceptual framework” report already published would also be relevant for the Parties. **The Chair of the STRP** noted that the MA has already benefited the STRP’s work, as e.g. with Working Group 1’s thoughts on ecological character, which includes ecosystem services as well as biophysical values.

Decision SC30-10: The Standing Committee

- i) welcomed the progress of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in relation to the needs of the Ramsar Convention;
- ii) urged all Contracting Parties to contribute, as requested, to the review of the MA’s full and summary reports;
- iii) strongly encouraged the MA to ensure that its experts contribute, as appropriate, to the work of the STRP and its Working Groups, and expressed

- its gratitude to the United Nations University for its offer of support for this involvement;
- iv) requested the STRP's 12th meeting to review all appropriate MA reports, including the draft Ramsar synthesis report, and to prepare a report and draft COP9 Resolution for consideration by the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee;
 - v) requested the Bureau and the MA to make all MA findings available for consideration by COP9; and
 - vi) thanked the MA for its past and continuing contributions to Ramsar and especially thanked Walt Reid for making his presentation to the SC.
110. **Argentina** recalled that it had been understood that legal advice was needed before using the term "Secretariat" instead of "Bureau", since that might need an amendment to the Convention. **The SG** reported that informal consultations with Armenia and Japan had agreed that "Secretariat" should be employed in informal uses and "Bureau" in official documents and that he would be procuring a written opinion from IUCN's Environmental Law Centre (ELC) for consideration by Standing Committee out-of-session.

Agenda item 10: Financial matters

111. **Canada, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, presented his overview of the Subgroup's discussions. The Bureau's budgetary situation is complicated by the presence of a number of income and expenditure items that are difficult to predict. The financial management of the Bureau is extremely complex, with contributions paid at different times, in different currencies, with different earmarks and restrictions, etc. He thanked Stephen Virc and Bureau staff for their help in updating the financial documents.
112. **Canada** reported that the Subgroup found problems in understanding the situation and getting an accurate overall picture. The three simplified tables in his paper give a clear summary view, but full details are available upon request. Table I shows the COP8's income/expenditure expectations of a small surplus for the triennium. Table II shows what would happen under present circumstances if no action is taken, with lower-than-anticipated income for all three years, chiefly because of unrealistic projections for interest, and higher expenditures for 2003, largely because of abnormally high recruitment costs – a deficit of \geq CHF 200,000.
113. At the Subgroup meetings, three options were offered: 1) permitting a deficit until COP9, 2) seeking voluntary contributions by fundraising, and 3) reducing expenditures. The Subgroup recommended the third option and focused on strategic rather than across-the-board cuts. Table III shows that by cutting Operating Costs by CHF 12,000 and Communications by 60,000, and canceling the STRP Support Service, thus saving 220,000, savings of CHF 292,000 can be made and a surplus of about 7,000 returned by the time of COP9. **Canada** invited the Secretary General to clarify two issues that have caused confusion, the item for "exchange loss" and the funding implications of the outreach secondment.
114. **The SG** reported that when he arrived, he found the financial morass quite confusing and immediately concentrated on containing expenditures, restraining travel, postage costs, etc. He realized only in December that the income side was also in trouble because of a real structural problem, i.e., the matter of "interest income", which COP8's budget estimated at about CHF 100,000 per year based on interest rates then prevailing.
115. Concerning bad debts, **the SG** noted that this refers to Parties that have not paid their contributions. The exchange loss refers to currency conversions the figures for which appear at the end of the year closing of the books.

116. Concerning the funding of the secondee, **the SG** explained that he had had discussions with the head of the Andorra government even before arriving at Ramsar and was aware of Andorra's interest in a secondment as part of a package leading to accession. He saw the possibility to advance in a direction that COP8 had identified as a priority. He was aware that Andorra's contribution would not be sufficient to cover a salary in Switzerland and he sought the difference elsewhere, but unsuccessfully. When he arrived in the Bureau, he was advised that there were other funds that could be used for this project, as they had not yet been committed; as he was not aware of other funding difficulties at that time, the agreement was finalized. It does not impact on the core budget in any way. The project will help to improve the Bureau's work in key areas specified by COP8.
117. **The USA** drew attention to the various different parts of the Ramsar budget: the core budget (from CP dues), interest, exchange rates, Swiss tax refunds, 10% project overheads, unspent project money. He said that it was not clear which of these can be applied to core and which used in other ways – for example, the USA's Wetlands for the Future contributions include 10% to help pay the project administrator's salary, which is fine, but the rest must necessarily go to the WFF. He sought clarification as to what funds can be applied to core from other sources.
118. **The SG** replied that the interest income is part of the core budget, and that is the whole problem, the reason for the deficit. Different projects have different requirements – normally they are spent fully and accounted for fully to the donor, but sometimes the Bureau goes back and asks to use leftover funds for another purpose, e.g., the SGF. The WFF is managed separately from the USA's core contribution – the exchange gain of US\$ 27,000 earned by converting its contribution to francs has, with US permission, been applied to COP9 costs. If we were fortunate enough to have some large projects, the 10% overhead charge could bring a surplus, but presently it barely covers the salary of the Project Coordinator. In essence, there are no spare funds anywhere.
119. **Japan** expressed concern about the 2003 deficit and the increase in staff costs and sought reason to believe that it would not happen again. Of the Subgroup's three options, only option 3 on reducing expenditures would be sustainable. **The SG** explained that in 2003 there was a rise in the salary payments that was larger than foreseen, but 2004 and 2005 should be within the budgeted amounts; in addition, 2003 saw two major staff changes requiring recruitment and relocation expenses, which should not be repeated in 2004 and 2005.
120. **The USA** recalled that at COP8 a final consensus was reached on a 4% increase in the budget, and an unrealistic interest-income figure may have been included in the budget chiefly to drive that 4% increase somewhat higher. He recalled that the former Secretary General did ask whether interest could be included in the core budget and was told that would be permitted. The interest rate used for calculation of interest income was that of the previous triennium, which created unrealistic projections. This should be remedied at the next COP.
121. **Romania** inquired whether the Bureau's huge COP9 fundraising responsibilities can be accomplished in light of the proposed reduction in operating expenses. **The SG** said that is a critical question but remained optimistic, since the cuts in operating and communications costs are manageable and since the fundraising depends more upon the efforts of people than upon financial resources.
122. **BirdLife International** feared that cancellation of the STRP Support Service would jeopardize the Convention's strong science base, which we almost take for granted now. He recalled that COP8 judged that the Support Service would be a more cost effective way of managing the STRP's work than having the Bureau supervise it, and cancellation could impact strongly upon the success of the STRP's work. **The Netherlands** agreed and said that cancellation seemed too strong a move. He urged that the practices of the other conventions in the face of unpaid dues be

examined and asked whether savings could not be made in other budget lines besides the Support Service.

123. **The SG** agreed that canceling the Service is a very strong move and said he'd suggested a partial cut. He noted that there are very few other options, and he surveyed other major budget lines (including the Ramsar Sites Database, travel, office supplies, IUCN services, delegate support, etc.) showing that they cannot be reduced significantly. He could only suggest an "attenuated reduction" of the Support Service, with a promise to try to raise funds to make up the missing sums. The key problem is the structural flaw in the budget (its reliance on interest income), which cannot be remedied until COP9.

124. **Canada** agreed that the Subgroup was not pleased with this solution and the "attenuated" version had had support. He urged that the Support Service be reduced, but not to zero, not cancelled, and that the Secretary General be requested to pursue fundraising aggressively – if in a year no new income had been generated for that purpose, the SG would consult with the SC and change course.

125. **Botswana** stressed the importance of the STRP's work and feared the effects of reducing the Support Service's resources. **Ghana** observed that the expenditure would have exceeded the budgeted amount even without the income shortfall, and **Canada** explained that this had been noted by Subgroup.

126. **The USA** noted that the Bureau's Senior Trade and Development Advisor's work has been focused by his TOR on projects in the field and resources for the Parties, and he suggested that the STDA could be asked to raise funds for the core.

127. **Argentina** remarked that the report was the Chair's report, not the Subgroup's, since it had not completed its tasks, and requested more time to gain a proper perspective. The Subgroup did not reach a conclusion and several participants did not agree with a drastic cut in the STRP Support Service. Argentina also expressed concerns about additional costs involved in breaking contractual obligations and requested information on this matter.

128. **Wetlands International** explained the implications of different kinds of budget cuts to the Support Service. With a cut to 50% in 2004 and to 0 in 2005, it had might as well be shut down now, since its end results would never appear. With a cut to 50% in 2004 and 50% in 2005, the Support Service mechanism would be maintained but the money for the Working Group workshops would need to be raised separately (since some of the WI contractual sum was to be passed through to STRP).

129. **Canada** agreed that there had been no Subgroup decision and stressed the need to find a consensus solution soon. He summarized that the SC seems 1) to reject continuing to run a deficit; 2) to endorse reducing the deficit by increased fundraising for the Bureau (by redirecting the Senior Advisor's terms of reference and studying how other conventions deal with unpaid dues); 3) to endorse reducing expenditures on operating costs and communications; 4) to endorse reducing the Support Service by no greater than 50% in 2004 and maintain the support as high as possible by fundraising for additional contributions; and 5) to endorse tasking the Bureau with reporting to a "Management Advisory Group" in a year's time and seeking further direction.

130. **Argentina** did not support the creation of a "Management Advisory Group", which would have no regional representation, since Resolution VI.17 defines the role of the Subgroup on Finance very well. All Subgroup members should be consulted. **Canada** agreed and amended the above proposal to substitute Subgroup on Finance for Management Advisory Group, to be consulted by the Bureau in January 2005.

Decision SC30-11: The Standing Committee determined to

- i) reject the option of continuing a deficit into future years;
- ii) reduce the deficit by increased fundraising for the Bureau (by redirecting the Senior Advisor's terms of reference and studying how other conventions deal with unpaid dues);
- iii) reduce expenditures on operating costs and communications by CHF 12,000 and 60,000 respectively;
- iv) reduce the STRP Support Service by no greater than 50% in 2004 and 2005 and maintain the support as high as possible by fundraising for additional contributions;
- v) instruct the Bureau to report to the Subgroup on Finance in a year's time and seek further direction; and
- vi) request the Subgroup on Finance to develop guidance for COP9 on how to budget for interest income.

Agenda item 10.2: Approval of Small Grants Fund projects for 2003

131. **Canada** reported that the Subgroup recommended that 1) the A1 projects in DOC. SC30-11 addendum 1, ¶5, be funded and that 2) a "reserve list" be established in case of additional funds becoming available, consisting of the ¶6 A2 list but with Mali to be substituted in place of Zambia.
132. To Armenia's question, **the DSG** explained that in the SGF's Operational Guidelines, approved by the SC, if a country has failed to supply a satisfactory final report on a previous SGF project, it is ineligible for further projects. Mali submitted a highly rated proposal but was disqualified because of an uncompleted project, but the Subgroup noticed that other A2 countries also have uncompleted projects, so Mali was reinstated to the A2 list as the highest rated project in the Africa region. Mali should remain on the A2 list, to be funded if resources become available and once it completes its outstanding project; if funds become available and it does not do so, the next proposal down on the list will be selected.
133. **Nicaragua** questioned the proportionality of project proposals chosen relative to those submitted. Oceania had two chosen from two submitted, whilst the Neotropics had two chosen from ten. **The DSG** explained that, according to the Standing Committee's Operational Guidelines for the SGF, adopted for each triennium, proposals are scored on various attributes. The Bureau makes no judgments beyond that scoring – its recommendations then seek regional balance by identifying the highest scoring proposals in each region. Thus regions with fewer Parties are not penalized on that factor alone.
134. **Iran** too questioned the proportionality: Asia has 25 Parties and Oceania has only 4, yet both receive two chosen projects. Since the Wetlands for the Future and Swiss Grant for Africa benefit those regions, Asia seems underfunded, and she asked that ways and means be found to establish a similar mechanism for the Asia-Pacific region. **The DSG** said that he has always sympathized with Asia, but the SC's Operational Guidelines do not take into account what other funds might be available to a country. He noted that, although Asia has received low scores in the past for the quality of the proposals, this year there were many good ones.
135. **The Senior Advisor for the Americas** conveyed the good news that Bolivia has recently submitted its final report for an outstanding SGF project and can be removed from the list of non-reporters.
136. **Australia** welcomed support for projects in Oceania and attributed that to good proposal preparation. Australia helps in this process whenever possible, and the Government is encouraging countries to join the Convention. Many island countries do not have the capacity to join and

require assistance. Australia would be willing to discuss other methods of allocating SGF resources but recommends that the present guidelines not be revised.

Decision SC30-12: The Standing Committee approved Small Grants Fund allocations to the A1 list found in DOC. SC30-11 addendum 1, ¶5, and agreed to fund the A2 list (¶6, with Mali listed second and Zambia removed) if additional resources should become available.

Decision SC30-13: The Standing Committee decided that 1) the Bureau will be authorized to cancel, following consultation with the Chairs of the SC and the Subgroup on Finance, an SGF project that has not complied satisfactorily with reporting requirements within three years of the date of signing the project contract and for which the Bureau has received no indication that the project is being implemented to completion; 2) the proposed modifications to Section B 'Request for Funding' should be made in the SGF Operational Guidelines; 3) the proposed modifications to the Project Proposal Assessment Form should also be made; but 4) a separate Emergency Assistance Fund should not be established within the Small Grants Fund, as emergencies should be dealt with on an ad hoc basis; and 5) the Bureau is requested to prepare revised Operational Guidelines as soon as possible and post them on the Web site for the 2004 cycle.

Agenda item 10.3 and 10.4: The Ramsar Endowment Fund and fundraising

137. **Canada** provided background on the COP's establishment of an Endowment Fund (REF) to help finance the Small Grants Fund and the Standing Committee's attempts to establish a *modus operandi*. When the contact group mandated by SC29 could reach no consensus, in the end Canada recommended that the issue be abandoned.
138. **Argentina** argued that the REF was established by the COP and its Resolution mandated the SC only to establish its *modus operandi*. The Subgroup should provide detailed explanations about why consensus could not be achieved and why it cannot fulfill its mandate. Only the COP can dissolve the Fund and then consider further options. She called for a detailed report to be prepared for SC31 for transmittal to COP9. **Canada** agreed to prepare such a report.
139. **Uganda** agreed on the need for further explanations and expressed surprise that COP8 could achieve consensus on establishing the REF but the Subgroup could not. **Austria** emphasized the importance of the SGF and noted that Resolution VIII.29 was the COP's attempt to establish a fund to better resource it – if there is no consensus so far on the REF, we can try again and suggest alternative methods. **Armenia** agreed that the SGF is extremely effective, both in itself and as a seed fund for additional sources (as e.g. LakeNet recently); he urged that the REF not be abandoned lest the SGF die as well. **Ghana** urged that the REF not be abandoned just because of some objections and suggested that it might be established by majority rather than consensus (since those who benefit from its funds will be grateful even if only two Parties approve it).
140. **The SG** urged that the SC think of the REF not as the REF but as what we want it to accomplish. We need ways to tap into global funding sources but if the REF is not the best method we should develop alternatives to meet the same objectives. We cannot pursue the REF adequately with so many other fundraising needs at present, but a more comprehensive set of alternatives can be brought to COP9.
141. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** emphasized that some mechanism must be found and supported Ramsar's participation in the GEF Council. **Indonesia** emphasized the importance of the development of the REF and encouraged any effort so that the SGF should not be underfunded, suggesting that a majority vote might be preferable to a consensus in this case.

142. **The USA** suggested that this would be a good time to reassess the role of the Senior Trade and Development Advisor, who presently provides his expert advice without charge. If an overhead fee were to be attached to his services, as is common elsewhere and in Ramsar project administration, that percentage could be brought back to the Convention for SGF, COP, etc. He urged that the Subgroup on Finance study this potential. **The STDA** observed that he has done this before on an EU project in Brazil. **The USA** suggested that a standard fee could be charged for certain services, with terms of reference, advertised for use by the Parties.
143. **Argentina** reiterated that the SC can only discuss the *modus operandi* for the Endowment Fund, since this Fund was established by the COP and only the COP can dissolve it. **The SG** noted that nothing is inconsistent with the proposed SC decision – since the COP made its decision other avenues have opened up, and the SC needs to take back to the COP either a *modus operandi* or a range of alternatives.
144. **WWF** welcomed the US suggestion on management fees but cautioned that one is then dependent upon the interests of the donors. He saw no real solution except that the Parties would agree to fund fully the Bureau's work in providing these services back to the Parties. He urged greater collaboration with the EU, which is the largest donor source in environmental matters.

Decision SC30-14: The Standing Committee directed the Ramsar Bureau to analyze and document issues that precluded consensus on the Ramsar Endowment Fund *modus operandi* and endorsed the establishment of a working group to identify further options to resource the Small Grants Fund and other fundraising needs of the Bureau for SC consideration. The objective of this group would be to identify fundraising opportunities and inform the Bureau; it would also be to support the Bureau when needed: introductions to private companies, development cooperation agencies, etc.

145. **Argentina** reiterated that this working group is to be within the framework of the Subgroup on Finance and not an independent group, and that it will be reporting to the Subgroup.

Agenda item 7: Resolution VIII.45 (continued)

146. **The USA** reported on the further talks of the Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45, in which the participants agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee that the issues concerning the efficiency of the processing of drafting, considering, adopting and implementing Resolutions (Res. VIII.15, para. 12) be subjected to further study before the next SC meeting.
147. **The SG** pledged that the Bureau will act as a vehicle, via e-mail and conference call, to allow the issue to be moved forward, and agreed that the latest text of the Subgroup's report will be included in the SC30 meeting report as an annex.
148. **Argentina** wished to record an expression of gratitude to all members of the Subgroup, and particularly to the chairperson, for their work on this issue.

Decision SC30-15: The Standing Committee requested the Bureau, working with the STRP and the Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45, to explore the most practical approaches to addressing Resolution VIII.45, and it took note of the questionnaire concerning the Resolution's paragraph 10 that will be circulated by the Subgroup to the Administrative Authorities in the near future.

African support group for COP9

149. **Ghana**, speaking on behalf of the African members of the SC, said there is a strong need for Africa to support Uganda in its preparations for Ramsar COP9, and that they therefore proposed

to form an “African support group” to offer political and other support. They suggested that the group should be composed of Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa, since these countries have shown a strong will to work for wetlands and would provide a good subregional distribution. Ghana asked the SC to endorse the proposal and direct the Bureau to inform those governments, in the hope that this will add impetus to Uganda’s efforts to prepare for COP9.

150. **The SG and Uganda** welcomed that encouraging announcement.

Decision SC30-16: The Standing Committee welcomed and endorsed the proposal to form an African Support Group to assist Uganda in its preparations for Ramsar COP9 and asked the Secretary General to invite Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa to make up that group.

Agenda item 9.1 (continued): Theme for COP9

151. **Uganda** reported that the Subgroup on COP9’s contact group had found a revised theme wording to propose, and this was greeted with wide approval.

Decision SC30-17: The Standing Committee welcomed and endorsed the Subgroup on COP9’s proposal that the theme of Ramsar COP9 should be “Wetlands and water – sustaining life, supporting livelihoods”.

Agenda item 12: Progress with the establishment of the Ramsar Centre in Panama

152. **The Senior Advisor for the Americas** was pleased to report that, as of 5 January, the offices of the “Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere” have been open, that Ms Rosa Montañez G. has been named as the director, and that its activities will be getting started over the next two to three weeks. The first tasks are to establish the needs in the region and to establish a work plan for the next three years.
153. **The USA** expressed support for the Centre and stated that CHF 30,000 currently remaining with Ramsar from a previous USA contribution to COP8 should be redirected for a workshop organized by the Centre.
154. **Spain** congratulated Panama on the opening of the Centre and welcomed the initiative. He noted that his country traditionally tries to aid programmes in Latin America and asked that Spain be kept informed as the Centre defines its work and its needs, in order to assist where possible.
155. **Nicaragua** expressed pleasure at those gestures of support and stressed the Centre’s importance for the region. He asked whether the Netherlands would be willing to share its great experience in similar training and research initiatives.
156. **The Netherlands** also welcomed the initiative and reiterated the importance of regional capacity building efforts. He welcomed information about the Centre’s needs and ideas as they developed and expressed willingness to consider taking cooperation further.
157. **Ghana** congratulated Panama and noted that the importance of capacity building in developing countries cannot be overemphasized. He said that the African members of the SC are planning to consult and suggest a similar initiative for Africa for discussion at the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee, in the hope of having a concrete proposal ready for COP9. He appealed for the necessary assistance to enable this facility.
158. **Argentina** also congratulated Panama and expressed gratitude for the expressions of support.

159. **Indonesia** said that the Asia region also congratulates Panama on the Centre; he noted that Indonesia is pursuing a similar initiative, with the help of the Netherlands, and hoped to learn from Panama's experience.

Decision SC30-18: The Standing Committee welcomed the new developments in bringing the 'Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere' to life and expressed gratitude for the gestures of support from the USA, Spain and others for its continuing work. The Committee acknowledged with thanks the great efforts that Panama has made to achieve these results.

Agenda item 13: Progress with the Ramsar/CBD Joint Work Plan (JWP) and CBD COP7 issues

160. **The DSG** noted that the links with CBD are the most progressed of all of Ramsar's collaborations, and that it has been eight years since CBD COP3 identified Ramsar as its lead partner on wetlands. The relationship is widely seen as a model for other bilateral cooperative arrangements. Collaboration with the CBD has moved from a recognition of common interests to a close working relationship between the secretariats, and is now going a step further, to a proactive working together to develop issues for both conventions. The document SC30-15 Addendum 1, which is also available on the CBD Web site, shows mid-term progress in this third JWP 2002-2006.
161. **The DSG** observed that CBD COP7 will be considering refined thematic programmes of work on inland water ecosystems and on marine and coastal biological diversity. The revised inland waters programme was jointly developed by the CBD and Ramsar secretariats, with the support of the Netherlands via Wetlands International, and with the benefit of a substantive paper on the status and trends in inland waters biodiversity prepared by the World Resources Institute (which has been published in CBD's technical support series and will be presented at CBD COP7).
162. **The DSG** noted that among the SBSTTA8's recommendations being considered by the CBD COP7 are the adoption of interim 2010 targets for inland waters, use of Ramsar's wetland classification by CBD Parties, harmonization of Ramsar criteria for identification of globally significant areas for inland water biodiversity, and the use of the jointly-developed rapid assessment guidelines. He stressed that it is important that CBD should recognize Ramsar's role in marine and coastal ecosystems as well. He also noted that another priority issue at COP7 will be protected areas but observed that the recommendations for a COP7 decision on this new programme of work do not pay sufficient attention to the role of existing global designation mechanisms (Ramsar sites, World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves) as tools for Parties' delivery of the programme's implementation.
163. **The DSG** recalled that the Ramsar COP recognized the importance of the threats from invasive alien species but the SC had declined to forward the STRP's guidance on this issue to COP8 because of doubts about the validity of the CBD's decision. He suggested that, if CBD COP7 should successfully resolve that dispute, the SC might ask that that draft STRP guidance be updated and brought forward to Ramsar COP9 for consideration.
164. **The DSG** identified those Ramsar people who will be available at CBD COP7 for consultations and he called upon SC participants to bring the results of Ramsar collaboration with CBD to the attention of their counterparts in their governments.
165. **The UK** said that the UK was fully supportive of effective collaboration between CBD and Ramsar. She recognized the relevance of Ramsar guidelines in marine and coastal zone issues and welcomed further Ramsar involvement in this area. She said that the UK feels that it is important for CBD to foster an approach on protected areas that is consistent with existing designation

mechanisms, and fully supports this message at CBD COP7, lest what we already have be forgotten in creating new targets and directives.

166. **The USA** agreed with the UK on the importance of fostering an approach to protected areas that is consistent with existing designation mechanisms. She affirmed the importance of the CBD's resolving the issue of the invasive alien species decision before Ramsar goes forward on this issue.
167. **Switzerland** requested more detailed guidance for delegates on Ramsar's goals in the CBD's issues during COP7. **The SG** indicated that he could not produce directions, but that he and other Ramsar personnel will be available throughout COP7 for consultations.
168. **Botswana** noted that in Africa frequently the NFPs of both conventions are housed in the same building and deal with the same stakeholders and communities; this collaboration supplements efforts in the field.
169. **Indonesia** welcomed the progress with the CBD Joint Work Plan and announced that Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia will sign an MOU with WWF at a CBD COP7 side event concerning the 60 million hectare Sulu Sulawesi marine ecoregion area, similar to the MOU signed at the preparatory meeting in Bali by Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Australia. The SG will be attending this side event.
170. **Japan** welcomed the progress of collaboration with CBD and stressed the importance of this relationship at both international and national levels. Japan agreed to highlight wetland issues at CBD's COP7. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** also welcomed collaboration and pledged to help to support Ramsar issues at COP7.
171. **Argentina** expressed support for synergies among the conventions and noted that a major challenge is to implement the commitments derived from such MOUs at the national level, and to set up pilot projects in the field in order to see whether these guidelines and synergies really work, and how to optimize the use of financial and human resources. It underscored the potential leading role of Ramsar in this process since the Convention is already carrying out field work in Ramsar sites.
172. **Papua New Guinea** supported collaboration and noted that many Pacific islands are members of the CBD but not Ramsar.
173. **Nicaragua** reiterated support for the JWP and added that in the subregion of Central America efforts are already underway, within the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, to achieve synergies among CBD, UNCCD, and Ramsar.
174. **Austria** encouraged SC members to contact and brief their counterparts in government and encourage them to address Ramsar issues at CBD COP7.
175. **The DSG** expressed gratitude at this strong support for Ramsar's efforts at collaboration with the CBD. He drew attention to the role of the Senior Advisor for the Americas in contributing to work on marine and coastal issues as part of the JWP. He also pointed out that Mr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (Islamic Republic of Iran) had chaired the SBSTTA8 working group dealing with inland waters and that his efforts had led to the strong revised programme of work now being considered at CBD COP7.
176. **Switzerland** asked that the Bureau identify the gaps and passages in proposed COP7 decisions and programmes of work, in order to give concrete advice to Ramsar Parties present at COP7. **The SG** promised to do his best to do that in consultations at the scene; he said that the key issue is a clear identification of Ramsar's role in inland waters biodiversity, but that it is also important

for Ramsar CPs to emphasize that Ramsar is relevant to other ecosystems as well, such as marine and coastal, drylands, and mountains, and to the cross-cutting issues.

177. **WWF** proposed that CBD and Ramsar should set joint targets, such as the proposed WWF 250 million hectares target for newly protected wetland areas by 2010.

Decision SC30-19: The Standing Committee

- i) noted the progress in implementing the Ramsar/CBD Joint Work Plan and welcomed the work of the Bureau, the STRP, and the CBD Secretariat in furthering this collaboration;
- ii) urged the Contracting Parties to ensure that the importance of wetland issues and the collaborative role of the Ramsar Convention are fully reflected in the decisions made by CBD's COP7;
- iii) urged that participants in the CBD COP7 recognize the Ramsar Convention's role in marine and coastal and other ecosystem programmes of work, and in the cross-cutting issues, in the relevant decisions made by that COP, in line with the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan 2002-2006;
- iv) urged that participants in CBD COP7 take account of existing global mechanisms when planning the CBD's work on protected areas.
- v) if appropriate, following CBD COP7 discussions on invasive alien species, requested the STRP to update as necessary and bring forward to Ramsar COP9 the draft guidance on invasive alien species that was prepared by the STRP in advance of COP8;
- vi) welcomed the full participation of the Secretary General and the Chair of the Standing Committee in the CBD COP7 process; and
- vii) requested the Standing Committee members and other Ramsar Administrative Authorities to bring this decision to the attention of their delegations to CBD COP7.

Musical interlude

178. **Uganda** introduced music which will be associated with COP9, a composition of 1989 entitled "Wetlands, our lifeblood", which was launched in 1992 among the tools used to disseminate the wetland message around the country.

Agenda item 16: Any other business

Proposal for a "Management Advisory Group"

179. **The Chair** introduced the idea of establishing an informal "management advisory group", to be composed of the SG and DSG, the Chair and Vice Chair of the SC, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, and the Chair of the STRP, to offer guidance to the Bureau between Standing Committee meetings within the parameters set by the SC and COP decisions. It would have no decision-making authority, but would also help to channel greater communication from the Bureau to all SC members.
180. **The SG** endorsed the idea, as presented in the paper distributed at the meeting, and noted that the main purpose would be to improve and increase information flow to the SC members. **Japan** accepted the idea, on the understanding that there would be no budgetary implications. **The UK** supported it as well, especially given the long gap before the next SC meeting.
181. **Argentina** said that such a group should not be established, because it would not have sufficient regional representation. It noted, however, that nothing should prevent informal contacts as

always. It recalled Resolution VI.17 which specified the roles and responsibilities of the Subgroup on Finance.

182. **The SG** noted the points made and suggested that the proposal was over-formalizing what should be seen as a normal process of keeping in touch and offering advice. The objective is to increase the information flow, and he pledged to report to the SC at three-month intervals.
183. In further discussion, **Uganda** reiterated a need for such a consultative group and urged that the Chair of the Subgroup on COP9 be included as well. **Iran** noted that other MEAs have similar groups for informal consultation and said that regional representation should not be an issue, as it is just a procedural and not a substantial relationship. **The USA** supported any initiative towards transparency and greater flow of information, whether formal or informal, and encouraged the SG both to communicate with the chairs in search of advice and to report to the whole SC regularly.
184. **Canada** noted that it would be difficult, as a Subgroup chair, to carry out that role without regular consultations with the SG and other chairs; the proposed group would assist the Bureau and help the chairs fulfil their responsibilities. He drew attention to the importance of writing down these relationships in order to clarify these responsibilities and to make the expectations clearly known to those who come after. **Morocco** also urged that the group be established, with the addition of the Chair of the Subgroup on COP9.
185. **Argentina** expressed concern that the proposed group might have budgetary implications and that it might take important decisions. The proposal had not been circulated in advance of the SC meeting and, to ensure transparency, it should have been discussed beforehand with the countries of the region that Argentina was representing. Argentina could not support the proposal.
186. **The SG** urged that, lest further time be taken up, the establishment of the group be abandoned. He sensed that the SC wished better communication and pledged to work towards that, with consultations as needed. He committed himself to making more regular communications to the SC and to provide more transparency.

Regional Ramsar Training Centre in Iran

187. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** informed the meeting of the latest developments on establishment of a Regional Training and Research Centre on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia, as approved by Ramsar COP8 (Resolution VIII.41). During the past year, the government has prepared draft terms of reference for its establishment and operation; the governor of the city of Ramsar has allocated a nice flat to the secretariat of the Centre; and an expert affiliated with an environmental NGO has undertaken responsibility for the interim secretariat. The Iranian Government plans to hold a small workshop to finalize the draft TOR, with the participation of interested delegates from the countries in the region, donor countries, and relevant international organizations such as the Ramsar Bureau and the Ramsar IOPs. Iran would appreciate any contributions that states, NGOs, and others might wish to make to this initiative.

Collaboration with LakeNet, Ramsar regional meeting

188. **Armenia** provided an update on LakeNet's collaboration with Ramsar, in the context of the MOU signed in April 2003. LakeNet is supporting 28 lakes in many countries and has supported a number of regional and national workshops, notably in India, Nicaragua, and the Philippines and recently in Armenia (in conjunction with the Ramsar SGF and US AID). He recommended the LakeNet Web site at <http://www.worldlakes.org/>.
189. **Armenia** also announced that the Minister of the Environment, Vardan Ayyazyn, has sent an official invitation to the SG, received on 15 January, offering to host a European regional meeting.

Secondment to the work of the STRP

190. **WWF** said that the IOPs were concerned about the future of the STRP, one of the pillars of the Convention's success. Accordingly, WWF was prepared to offer a 4-6 months' secondment to work on STRP issues, particularly those of Working Group 5 on Wetland Management, subject to negotiations. He urged that a long-term solution be sought for strengthening the STRP.

Participation of Bahamas

191. **Bahamas** thanked the SG and Bureau staff, as well as the SC, for their warm welcome to Bahamas as a new member and looked forward to a constructive long-term relationship.

Agenda item 14: Date of the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee

192. **The SG** noted that the next meeting will be the one in which the SC will have to sign off on the materials and preparations for COP9. He suggested that, instead of holding the next SC meeting a year from now and likely having to schedule additional Subgroup meetings a half year later, that order could be reversed, with the needed Subgroup meetings to be held in January/February 2005 and the final SC meeting to be held in June 2005.

Decision SC30-20: The Standing Committee determined that the dates of its next full meeting, SC31, will be the week of 6-10 June 2005. The Subgroups may be convened early in 2005 to assess progress and prepare decisions for SC31. In particular, the Standing Committee delegated the Subgroup on Finance to make selections for the 2004 cycle of Small Grants Fund project proposals, based upon comments offered by SC members following circulation by the Bureau of the nomination materials.

Agenda item 15: Report of the meeting

193. **The Chair** led the meeting through a review of the report of the first two days of plenary sessions, and amendments were noted by the rapporteur. The Chair conveyed her thanks to the rapporteur for the timely preparation of the reports. The Bureau agreed to prepare the draft text of the decision on CBD COP7 for preliminary circulation the same day.

Decision SC30-21: The Standing Committee approved the first two days of the report of its 30th meeting and will have one week to comment on the draft of the third day's report following its circulation to all participants in the next few days, following which the Chair will approve the final report and it will be released for the public.

Agenda item 17: Closing remarks

194. **The Secretary General** thanked the participants for the active participation of the members, observers, and IOPs in this encouraging meeting. He felt that the meeting had moved a long way forwards towards COP9, and noted that some CHF 150,000 has already been pledged for the COP, though there is a very long way to go – he observed that the fundraising will be a collective effort and counted on the help of the Parties.
195. **The SG** acknowledged an enormous debt to the Bureau staff, both those who were visible and those who were less so, in ensuring that the participants could do their work. He also thanked the Government of Switzerland for the splendid evening and dinner. He conveyed his strong gratitude to the SC Chair, Gordana Beltram, and the Vice Chair, Javed Amin Mansour, for their able leadership of the proceedings.

196. **The Chair** expressed appreciation for all of the very positive contributions of the members, observers, and IOPs – she thanked them all, and thanked the Bureau staff as well for its excellent teamwork, not only in the documentation but in the logistics, too, Annette, Montse, Mireille, and Valerie, and in the work of the Senior Advisors. She also applauded the contribution of the great team of Assistant Advisors. She offered her thanks to the interpreters and to IUCN for having provided the venue. She noted that the Convention is well on its way to Uganda, but there is still a lot of work to do.

Annex

Report of Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45

Subgroup members: Argentina, Austria, Iran, Japan, Morocco, Romania, Papua New Guinea, U.S.A., Birdlife International.

Resolution VIII.45 includes several charges to the Standing Committee. The Subgroup on this resolution offers the following recommendations to the Standing Committee with regard to these matters.

Article 10: Directs the Standing Committee to undertake, as one of its highest priorities, a general review of the effectiveness of the process of drafting, considering, adopting and implementing Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

- The third version of the draft questionnaire was distributed to Subgroup members. It was agreed that any additional comments should be provided to the Chair within three weeks of adjournment of the SC meeting.
- A draft cover letter for the questionnaire shall be prepared by the Chair and circulated to Subgroup members and the Secretariat for review and comment. This letter should indicate the purpose of the survey, suggest to whom it should be distributed, and clarify any potential confusion with the STRP's research on effectiveness indicators.
- The questionnaire will be sent to each Ramsar national administrative authority and the latter shall be responsible for subsequent internal distribution within their country, to include all Ramsar sites, national committees, water resource agencies, and other entities to which Ramsar guidelines could be useful.
- The questionnaire shall also be circulated to a number of international NGOs and other organizations involved in water resource conservation, use and management.

Article 12: Directs the Standing Committee, based upon this review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the process of drafting, considering, adopting and implementing Resolutions and Recommendations, to prepare and circulate to Parties in a timely manner a report and recommendations on this matter, including possible amendments to the Rules of Procedure, to be considered at COP9.

- This Subgroup recommends that the SC adopt the following recommendation:

"Requests the Secretariat, working with the STRP and this Subgroup, to explore the most practical approaches to address Resolution VIII.45."

Article 18: Requests the Standing Committee to analyse, report and provide recommendations on possibilities to improve the efficiency of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

- Further recommendations under this Article may be made following circulation and analysis of the questionnaire.

Article 19: Recommends that in preparing the agenda and programme for future COPs the Standing Committee, host country and Bureau endeavor to maximize the wise use of time on the agreed agenda for Convention business, including reports previously circulated as conference documents.

- The Subgroup reiterates the importance of Article 19 supporting that these adjustments might result in shortening the length of the COP.