

Report of the meeting of the Management Working Group of 14 June 2021

Participants

Management Working Group Members

- Australia
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Arab Emirates (Chair)
- United States of America
- Uruguay

Non-Contracting Party Members

- STRP Chair
- Past STRP Chair
- IOP representative (WWT)

Secretariat

- Secretary General
- Deputy Secretary General
- Director, Science and Policy
- Senior Advisor
- Science and Policy Officer

Background

1. During the current triennium the Management Working Group (MWG) has met three times prior to its online meeting of 14 June, fulfilling its role to provide oversight and guidance to the Scientific Technical and Review Panel (STRP) and the CEPA Oversight Panel.
2. The Group met on 21 November 2019 to provide guidance to the STRP on its proposed scoping of work for the delivery of the highest priority tasks, which included a number of external consultancies. The MWG recommended to the STRP to downsize the scope of the consultancies to match existing capacity within the Panel and available funding, noting the bulk of the work should be undertaken by Panel members. The MWG recommended to the Secretariat to move forward task 4.1 on gender, so that the STRP could focus on delivering the highest-priority tasks.
3. On 10 June 2020, during the intersessional process of the Standing Committee, the Group met to assess progress with the highest priority tasks. The MWG recommended that the Panel continue working on the Global Wetland Outlook (GWO) in a way that it could be aligned with the theme of the 50th anniversary (when announced), as well as for the Panel to submit to the Standing Committee a proposal to update Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Designation Criteria

regarding the use of population estimates, for submission to the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

4. On 02 November 2020 the Group met to be updated on the work of the Panel and to provide guidance on a way forward for the GWO and the Criterion 6 ad-hoc advisory task. The MWG suggested a simpler approach for the GWO, linking the 50th Anniversary theme with cross-cutting issues, wetland values and current and future challenges. Noting that work in relation to the Criterion 6 ad-hoc task was outside the scope of the request, the MWG instructed the Panel to provide advice by mid-2021 on a long-term solution to Parties on the use of population estimates under Criterion 6, focussing on the completeness, quality and compatibility of data. It agreed that in the interim, when more current information is available, Parties could, on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Secretariat and under the guidance of the MWG, provide alternative up-to-date data. The MWG further instructed the STRP Chair to address the leadership for outstanding tasks to ensure timely delivery and alignment with Contracting Parties' requests.

Meeting of 14 June 2020

5. The Chair welcomed participants and introduced the meeting.
6. The Secretary General explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review current progress and consider next steps of the Scientific Technical and Review Panel (STRP) and of the CEPA Oversight Panel in preparation for further consideration of these issues at the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee, to be held the following week.

Overview of the progress and next steps of the STRP

7. The STRP Chair provided an update of progress since the previous MWG meeting of 2 November 2020, drawing on the report prepared for the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee (document SC59 Doc.25¹). He noted that, as face-to-face meetings were still not practical, a virtual meeting (STRP24) had been held on April 29 2021, which had had good participation and provided an opportunity to update National Focal Points on the STRP's work and on progress in preparing draft resolutions.
8. He noted that the STRP's work on all four of its highest-priority tasks (production of a revised GWO; wetlands and sustainable agriculture; peatland restoration; and wetlands and blue carbon) had effectively been completed. In addition, some work had also been undertaken on three ad-hoc advisory tasks, namely: application of quantitative criteria for the designation of Ramsar Sites (criterion 6); review of criteria for removal of Sites from the Montreux Record (a draft report on which had been submitted to the Secretariat the previous week); and review of draft resolutions submitted to SC59 (underway). In view of the postponement of COP14, the STRP Chair suggested that the panel could continue work based on the current workplan. This may include further work on Blue Carbon Ecosystems in line with resolution XIII.14; and addressing medium or low priority tasks in the current work plan including task 1.7, *Global assessment of gaps in the Ramsar site network*; and task 2.3, *Assessing implementation status of Resolution VIII.17: Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands*.
9. Considerable progress had been made in the production of a revised GWO, with an updated draft shared in late April. However, given that a partial restructuring had been proposed and

¹ <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc25-report-of-the-chair-of-the-scientific-and-technical-review-panel>

the shortage of time for extensive further input from the STRP, he was advising that the MWG ask the Secretariat to move forward with finalizing the document. The Secretariat responded that the draft GWO could benefit from stronger messaging, a clearer narrative arc and a greater focus on the role of the Convention in helping to drive change in the understanding and valuation of wetlands. The Secretariat also noted that scientific input was largely complete but that there may remain a few gaps that could be filled during the editing process.

10. The Secretariat sought guidance as to whether the revised GWO should be published later in 2021 as originally planned, to coincide with the Convention's 50th Anniversary, or be deferred to 2022 when COP14 was intended to take place, as suggested during a recent meeting of the Subgroup on COP14. After some discussion, the MWG recommended that the Secretariat continue work on the GWO, aiming to publish it this year.
11. Regarding work on wetlands and blue carbon, the Chair acknowledged financial support from Norway and noted that work on developing terms of reference for the second phase of this task was underway and could be pursued in the coming year, with the postponement of COP14. The MWG acknowledged the importance of this work and encouraged its continuation. Clarification was requested in regard to non-core funding of STRP tasks and whether all of the core budget had been consumed. The Secretariat noted that in Resolution XIII.2 *Financial and Budgetary Matters* Parties had identified STRP tasks as a non-core funding priority and that Norway expressed interest in supporting the work of the STRP. The Secretariat also noted that it is anticipated that there will be a balance of core funding for STRP work at the end of the triennium.
12. Regarding the use of criterion 6, Annex 1 of the Report of the STRP Chair (SC59 Doc.25) contained further discussion on this, and included a proposal to establish an international partnership. Working Group members raised concerns about the scope and financial implications of carrying such a proposal forward. They expressed that this proposal was beyond the STRP's scope and mandate, noting that they had already stressed this in previous meetings. They acknowledged that quantitative data were often patchy, outdated and incomplete but reiterated their concerns that what Contracting Parties were in need of was information on what relevant data exists and some clear guidance on how to assess applicability and quality of data and how to proceed under different scenarios. They questioned whether the International Organization Partners were fulfilling their mandates in the provision of population information. The STRP Chair took note of this, emphasizing that the partnership proposal was at a very early stage and stating that the STRP would concentrate on the production of the guidance asked for.
13. The Secretary General also reported on the successful implementation of work on task 4.1 *Develop guidance on integrating gender issues in the implementation of the Convention*, recalling that the MWG had instructed the Secretariat to complete this task and to report on progress. She noted that guidelines and training for Contracting Parties had been made available in the three Convention languages.
14. Regarding possible work of the STRP for the coming year, the Secretariat observed that, as the highest priority tasks had been completed, the STRP could examine some of the medium- and lower-priority tasks, and as possibly also considering particularly topical issues such as the ongoing pandemic and wetlands. The Secretariat also drew attention to the fact that 2021 marked the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and emphasized likely opportunities for input from the Convention. It further noted that the proposed STRP Priority Thematic Work Areas for 2022-2024 as contained in the draft resolution (document SC59

Doc.26²) would benefit from further consideration, including a stronger analytical basis and focus, in order to better support development of an STRP work plan for the next triennium.

15. The STRP Chair noted that, with the postponement of COP14, there was indeed opportunity to discuss and develop STRP Priority Thematic Work Areas further.

Overview of the progress and next steps of the CEPA Oversight Panel

16. The Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel introduced her report, prepared for SC59 (document SC59 DOC. 17.1³), noting that it was the first time such report was addressed by the MWG since SC57. The last report was never addressed due to reduced agenda at the SC58. The report is written as work that was planned to take place between the deadline for the report and the SC59 had been done. But there have been delays and the CEPA OP will continue with that work. In its Annex B, the report contained a summary of the findings of a web survey of National Focal Points, CEPA Government Focal Points and CEPA NGO Focal Points on their use of and attitudes to CEPA as it currently was. The Panel Chair noted that, at present, much governance issues for the CEPA Oversight Panel was contained in Standing Committee decisions rather than originating with the COP and was often difficult to find. The Panel has the ambition to address this and other governance issues in a draft resolution to the COP14. If it will be separate from DR on the new CEPA approach is not yet decided. The Panel was proposing a more streamlined approach that focused on identified high priorities and, with regard to this, sought guidance and feedback from the MWG. The Panel intended to prepare at least one draft resolution on a new approach to CEPA for consideration at COP14.
17. Members of the group commended the work done to date and recommended that this continue, noting that the composition of the Oversight Panel raised some governance issues that it would be wise to address. One member expressed a desire that all CEPA matters could be dealt with in a single draft resolution.

Any other Business

18. No matters were raised.

Recommended decisions from the MWG for consideration by the Standing Committee

19. The MWG recommended that the Standing Committee:
 - i. Request the Secretariat to finalize the GWO in close consultation with the STRP, for launch in 2021 in association with the commemoration of the Convention's 50th Anniversary;
 - ii. Instruct the STRP to complete the ad-hoc task on Criterion 6, in line with the guidance provided by the MWG, taking a narrow interpretation of the request made and focusing closely on the need of Contracting Parties for concrete, practical information in available data and guidance on its application;
 - iii. Encourage the STRP to continue its work on blue carbon, in line with the current work plan, and to consider additional tasks within the current work plan that were not identified as

² <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc26-draft-resolution-on-the-future-implementation-of-scientific-and-technical>

³ <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc171-report-of-the-chair-of-the-cepa-oversight-panel>

high priority tasks as well as any relevant emerging issues, to develop its work plan for the coming year; and

- iv. Request the STRP to undertake discussion and analysis with a view to further developing STRP priorities for the coming triennium.