

Report of the 24th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. Opening statements were made by:
 - Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);
 - Secretary General of the Convention; and
 - Director of Science and Policy.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda

2. The STRP Chair introduced document STRP24 Doc.2.1 Rev.1 *Provisional agenda*¹ (available in Annex 1), which was adopted without modifications.

Agenda item 3: Summary of progress during the 2019-2021 triennium

3. The STRP Chair thanked the task leads for their work and noted that the former STRP Chair had continued leading some of the highest priority tasks in his capacity as regional technical expert for Europe after stepping down from his role as Chair.
4. The STRP Chair provided a summary of progress made with the work of the Panel in the last year. He referred to his report to the 59th Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59), which summarized in detail the progress and status of STRP tasks, and which had been submitted to the Secretariat for publishing (*See document SC59 Doc. 25: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel*²).
5. The task leads presented a summary of the status of the four highest priority tasks, noting that most of the drafts had been or were being finalized for submission to the Secretariat:
 - Global Wetland Outlook—Special edition
 - Wetlands and sustainable agriculture (task 1.2)
 - Peatland restoration / rewetting (task 2.2)
 - Wetlands and blue carbon (task 5.1.)
6. The task lead for the Global Wetland Outlook noted that a timeline for future editions or updates had not been established. Were a full update to be undertaken, it would require more than one triennium, and could potentially be prepared for COP16. He stressed the importance of getting a mandate and guidance from the COP.

¹ STRP24 Doc.2.1 Rev.1 *Provisional agenda*, available at:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/strp24_21_rev1_agenda_e.pdf.

² SC59 Doc. 25: *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel*, available at:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc59_25_strp_chair_report_e.pdf.

7. There were interventions about each of the tasks, as follows:
- Regarding outputs on wetlands and sustainable agriculture (task 1.2), there was a suggestion to highlight large-scale permaculture, including its benefits for agroecosystem resilience, water management, biodiversity support and pollution reduction. There was a question on whether non-drainage agriculture counts as negative emissions.
 - A recommendation was made to refocus the briefing note on blue carbon (task 5.1) from carbon stock to mitigation. It was noted that as carbon stocks in blue carbon ecosystems within Ramsar Sites equal two months of total global emissions, messages on their storage capacity should not be exaggerated.
 - Regarding blue carbon stocks, the Secretary General further noted that while blue carbon ecosystems in Ramsar Sites are limited in extent, the Convention encompasses all wetlands. To that end, it was mentioned that there were already Resolutions of COP7, COP9 and COP12 encouraging designation. Thus, it would be more useful to look at the constraints impeding this from happening.
8. Task leads agreed to incorporate the suggestions, as appropriate.
9. The Secretary General highlighted the role of the Convention as co-custodian of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 6.6.1., *Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time*. She explained that the information Contracting Parties have been submitting on the global extent of wetlands includes marine and coastal ecosystems and could be relevant to SDG 14, *Life below water*. She also noted that a national wetland inventories toolkit and related training webinars had been developed and could be referenced in the blue carbon briefing note.

Agenda item 4: STRP ad-hoc advisory functions

10. The STRP Chair explained that the Standing Committee, in Decision SC58-06³, had recommended that the STRP submit a proposal for the use of alternative and more recent population estimates under Criterion 6 of the Ramsar designation criteria. The Standing Committee will consider the proposal at SC59 for submission to the Conference of Contracting Parties.
11. The Chair thanked the Criterion 6 task lead for his work, noting his extensive expertise on this subject. The task lead had convened a group of experts and prepared a draft for submission to SC59 annexed to the report of the STRP Chair (see document [SC59 Doc. 25: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel](#)).
12. The task lead noted that the role of the STRP is to provide proactive advice to Contracting Parties. He noted that Wetlands International's waterbird population estimates are the official source, but that the absence of stable, long-term funding arrangements constrain efforts to update them. This raised two issues: (1) what information sources to use and (2) how this issue

³ Decision SC58-06: The Standing Committee recommended further that the STRP submit to the Standing Committee a proposal to update Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Criteria regarding the use of population estimates, for the Committee to consider for submission to the Conference of Contracting Parties, taking into account the need for Contracting Parties to have updated and dynamic information.

may be addressed in the long term. He explained that a draft had been circulated to the full Panel and inputs incorporated.

13. The Secretariat acknowledged the Panel for its work and noted that the proposal presented, which calls for the establishment of an international partnership, goes beyond the scope and nature of the request made by Standing Committee in Decision SC58-06 and subsequent guidance by the Management Working Group, which requested the STRP to focus on alternative sources of best available data. The Secretariat noted that the financial aspects of the proposal were not within the scope of work requested by the MWG. The Secretariat had previously conveyed this message to the Panel and remained available for further assistance.

Agenda item 5: Next steps for the remainder of the triennium
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5.1. Production and outreach of STRP outputs

14. The STRP Chair invited the Deputy Secretary General to update the Panel on the production and outreach of STRP outputs.
15. The Deputy Secretary General thanked the Panel for its work during the challenging year. He mentioned that outputs should be ready by summer 2021 and that a professional editor had been engaged to enhance the readability and utility of documents. Once received, outputs would be translated into the three Convention languages and then laid out for publishing.
16. Regarding outreach of outputs, the Secretariat proposed organizing webinars on the outputs with the participation of task leads and authors. He noted that the Secretariat had been holding capacity building events, which had had high participation rates. The webinars would be shared on social media channels and stories would be created.

5.2. Future scientific and technical priorities

5.2.1. Reporting to SC59

17. The STRP Chair explained that the Panel would be reporting to SC59 on the progress with tasks, the Chair's participation at relevant international meetings and a list of future priorities for the Standing Committee's consideration (see document [SC59 Doc. 25: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel](#)).

5.2.2. Draft Resolution on future scientific and technical priorities

18. The STRP Chair explained that [Resolution XII.5, New framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention](#), requests the outgoing Panel to identify a list of priorities for the upcoming triennium, taking into account requests by the last COP, the Strategic Plan of the Convention and global and regional priorities. He explained that, in line with that process, the Panel had identified a list of priorities (through virtual meetings and email exchanges), which had been included in his report to SC59 for its consideration. The priorities were circulated to the Panel and STRP National Focal Points for feedback.
19. The following interventions regarding the Panel's future priorities were made by participants:
 - The Panel should consider the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's future work on including peatlands in Nationally Determined Contributions to avoid overlaps.

- The STRP should ask Contracting Parties for guidance on the timeline or frequency of future editions of the Global Wetland Outlook through the draft resolution on future scientific and technical priorities.
- The global assessments on values, nexus and transformative change of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services could provide a solid basis for looking at social dimensions within the future work of the Panel.

5.3. COP14: update on COP14 and pre-COP meetings and review of scientific and technical draft resolutions

20. The Secretary General mentioned that ongoing discussions in the Standing Committee on potential rescheduling of COP14 implied it was unlikely to take place in 2021. A virtual intersessional session of the Standing Committee would take place to discuss urgent issues. The new dates for the COP would be defined by an extraordinary COP and then a new preparatory timeline would need to be established.
21. The STRP Chair noted that postponing the COP would have implications for the STRP. The Secretary General clarified that the timeline for draft resolutions would depend on the decision of the Standing Committee.
22. The lead for task 1.2 (wetlands and sustainable agriculture) suggested that additional time warrants further planning, such as for delivering on lower priority tasks in the STRP work plan. The STRP Chair confirmed that the implications of the potential rescheduling would have to be considered.
23. The Secretary General noted that the Standing Committee should provide guidance by June regarding what the STRP could do with this additional time. The Secretariat would be ready to facilitate a meeting of the STRP to look at activities during this period, once the Standing Committee had decided on the issue. She added that identifying STRP future priorities was an ongoing process, as these would likely be discussed by the Standing Committee and pre-COP regional meetings. A Secretariat paper for SC59 on urgent challenges would also help inform the process (See document [SC59 Doc.9: Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention: update in the development of wetland inventories and other challenges](#)⁴).

Agenda item 6: Date and venue of the next meeting (STRP25)
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24. The Secretary General informed participants that the date and venue of STRP25 would be contingent upon a decision by Standing Committee regarding COP14.

Agenda item 7: Any other business

25. The representative for the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency mentioned that the Global Mangrove Watch report would be published in three languages on the International Day for the Conservation of Mangroves. This could be an important resource for the STRP, especially if it becomes an annual publication.

⁴ SC59 Doc.9: *Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention: update in the development of wetland inventories and other challenges*, available at: https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc59_9_urgent_challenges_inventories_e.pdf.

26. The representative for the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) mentioned that SWS had carried out a citizen science survey to assess the state of the World's wetlands in 2020, and that he was hoping to access resulting data for the Global Wetland Outlook: if timelines were adjusted, the data would be available to feed into it.

Agenda item 8: Closing remarks

27. The STRP Chair acknowledged the work of the former STRP Chair. He explained that he had accepted the position of Chair at the invitation of the Standing Committee to coordinate the Panel's work, and that he was thankful for the help of task leads for their diligent work. He also thanked the STRP National Focal Points and the Secretariat. He expressed confidence that the STRP could move forward with the support of the Secretariat, which has been significant.
28. The Director of Science and Policy thanked the STRP Chair for his able leadership and expressed satisfaction to have joined an effective team within the Secretariat. He noted that while timelines seemed uncertain, decisions were imminent and that he stood ready to work with the STRP to meet those new timelines. He mentioned that he would like to speak more with members on the outputs and technical issues.
29. The Secretary General thanked the STRP Chair and participants, reiterating the Secretariat's commitment to supporting the valuable work of the Panel.

Annex 1

Provisional Agenda STRP24 Doc.2.1. Rev. 1

Agenda item			Document
1.	Opening statements		
	1.1.	Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)	
	1.2.	Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands	
	1.3.	Director of Science and Policy	
2.	Adoption of provisional agenda		STRP 24 Doc.2.1. Rev1
3.	Summary of progress during the 2019-2021 triennium		
	3.1.	Summary of progress with highest priority tasks	
	3.1.1.	Global Wetland Outlook – Special edition	STRP24 Doc.3.1.1
	3.1.2.	Wetlands and sustainable agriculture (task 1.2)	STRP24 Doc.3.1.2 (A) STRP24 Doc.3.1.2 (B)
	3.1.3.	Peatland restoration/ rewetting (task 2.2)	STRP24 Doc.3.1.3 (A) STRP24 Doc.3.1.3 (B) STRP24 Doc. 3.1.3 (C)
	3.1.4.	Wetlands and blue carbon (task 5.1.)	STRP24 Doc.3.1.4
4.	STRP ad-hoc advisory functions: Criterion 6		SC59 Doc.25
5.	Next steps for remainder of triennium		
	5.1.	Production and outreach of STRP outputs	
	5.2.	Future scientific and technical priorities	
	5.2.1.	Reporting to SC59	SC59 Doc.25
	5.2.2.	Draft Resolution on future scientific and technical priorities	SC59 Doc.26
	5.3.	COP14 : update on COP14 and pre-COP meetings and Review of scientific and technical draft resolutions	No document
6.	Dates and venue of the next meeting (STRP25)		
7.	Any other business		
8.	Closing remarks		

Annex 2

Participants

STRP members

Chair, Vice-Chair, Regional Technical Expert for Europe, Regional Technical Expert for Africa, Regional Technical Expert for Oceania, two Technical Experts and two Scientific Experts⁵.

Representatives of International Organization Partners and invited observer organizations

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Greifswald Mire Centre, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS), The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), Tour du Valat (TDV).

STRP National Focal Points

Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Iraq, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Uruguay.

Secretariat

Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, Director of Science and Policy, Senior Regional Advisor for the Americas, Science and Policy Officer, Scientific and Technical Support Officer, IT Officer, Executive Assistant to the Secretary General, Conference Assistant, Administrative and Communications Assistant.

⁵ Thirty-nine participants attended, including nine STRP members, seven representatives of International Organization Partners and invited observer organizations, thirteen STRP National Focal Points and ten Secretariat staff members. Some STRP members are also STRP National Focal Points. Thus, they have been included in both capacities in the present list.