

**"Wetlands: water, life, and culture"**

**8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

**Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002**

## **Resolution VIII.28**

### ***Modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)**

1. RECALLING the establishment by Resolution 5.5 of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), made up of members with appropriate scientific and technical knowledge, appointed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), but participating as individuals and not as representatives of their countries of origin;
2. ALSO RECALLING Resolution VI.7 and Resolution VII.2 on this matter, which made successive modifications in the way in which the STRP and its work were organized;
3. THANKING the members and alternates of the STRP and its observer organizations and invited experts for their contributions since COP7, and for their expert advice on numerous scientific and technical issues important for implementation of the Convention;
4. RE-EMPHASIZING the need to establish a close link between the STRP and the network of scientists and experts in each Contracting Party, so that the Convention may benefit from the array of existing knowledge and experience;
5. RECOGNIZING the importance for the STRP to work in partnership with the equivalent bodies of those conventions with which Memoranda of Understanding or Cooperation are in place, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Convention to Combat Desertification, and other conventions and agreements; and
6. ALSO RECOGNIZING the need for continuing cooperation between the STRP and a number of expert networks, specialist groups and societies which exist, some in association with the official International Organization Partners of the Convention;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

7. REAFFIRMS the critical importance to the Convention of the work and advice of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in providing reliable guidance to the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
8. APPROVES the revised *modus operandi* for the STRP as annexed to this Resolution, and DECIDES that the provisions in the Annex supersede those in the previous Resolutions on the STRP dealing with the same issues;
9. ENDORSES the establishment of an STRP Support Service, working in open and transparent partnership with all International Organization Partners, STRP observer organizations and others, and INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Bureau to establish, with the approval of the Standing Committee, a contractual arrangement and terms of reference for the delivery of this Service;

10. RECOGNIZES the urgent need to ensure both that the Panel is provided with the necessary resources to undertake its work effectively and efficiently and that the Ramsar Bureau has sufficient capacity to support this work, and URGES Contracting Parties and others to afford the highest priority to securing continuity of such funding;
11. URGES those Contracting Parties that have not yet done so to appoint a National Focal Point for the STRP, as the COP urged in Resolution VII.2, so that they may contribute fully to, and be more effectively assisted by, the work of the Panel;
12. REVISES as follows the list of bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in the meetings of the STRP during the 2003-2005 triennium, in addition to the International Organization Partners, and INVITES them to consider establishing close working cooperative arrangements with the STRP on matters of common interest:
  - the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
  - the Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
  - the Committee on Science and Technology of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
  - the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
  - the secretariats of the CBD, CMS, UNCCD, UNFCCC and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
  - UNEP – World Conservation Monitoring Centre
  - the Society of Wetland Scientists
  - the International Association of Limnology
  - the Global Wetlands Economics Network
  - the International Mire Conservation Group
  - the International Peat Society
  - the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University, USA
  - the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)
  - The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
  - Ducks Unlimited (Canada, Mexico, and USA)
  - The World Resources Institute (WRI)
  - The Institute for Inland Water Management and Wastewater Treatment (RIZA) (The Netherlands)
  - LakeNet
13. FURTHER EMPHASIZES the value of participation by STRP members in meetings of the COP and Standing Committee, and REQUESTS Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Ramsar Bureau to do their utmost to secure any additional funding which might be necessary for this purpose;
14. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to a) define and estimate costs of the principal tasks and priorities for the work plan of the STRP on the basis of the decisions and the views expressed and priorities established by the Conference of the Contracting Parties; b)

appoint the members of the STRP from the list of candidates submitted by Contracting Parties; and c) designate the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair;

15. REAFFIRMS that the STRP shall have the same regional structure and proportional system of membership as the Standing Committee, as established in Resolution VII.1, and that, in order to attain equitable representation on the subsidiary bodies of the Convention, members of the STRP ought to be selected, as far as possible, from Contracting Parties different from those Parties elected to the Standing Committee; and
16. REQUESTS Contracting Parties to take into consideration the mechanism established in the annex to ensure continuity of membership of the STRP through the reappointment of a proportion of its members when proposing nominations for membership of the Panel.

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## Annex

### ***Modus operandi* of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)**

#### **Establishing STRP tasks and priorities**

1. The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) shall have available to it a list of STRP assignments, derived by the Bureau from the draft Convention Work Plan for the next triennium and draft Resolutions submitted to the COP. The COP shall establish the priorities for STRP work in the coming triennium.
2. The Standing Committee shall adopt the definitive list of STRP assignments for the triennium on the basis of the Convention Work Plan and Resolutions adopted by the COP, and will provide additional guidance on priority tasks.
3. At its first meeting, the STRP shall agree on its work plan and identify which tasks it considers can be undertaken during the triennium with the available resources and which ones will require additional resources for their implementation.
4. The Bureau shall circulate immediately by e-mail the work plan agreed by the STRP at its first meeting for comments by the Standing Committee and the STRP National Focal Points, with a deadline of three weeks for input, so as to ensure the maximum possible time for the STRP to undertake its work.

#### **Schedule and purpose of meetings, and process between meetings**

5. The STRP will meet twice in plenary during a triennium. The first meeting shall take place no later than six months after the COP, and the second meeting approximately nine months prior to the next COP.
6. The first meeting of the STRP in each triennium shall:
  - a) include an 'induction and briefing session' for all participants in order to ensure that they (particularly members appointed for the first time) are fully aware of their respective roles and responsibilities prior to making decisions on progressing the work requested of the Panel. The briefing will emphasize the role of the Panel in relation to that of the COP, the Standing Committee (to which the STRP reports), and the Ramsar Bureau.
  - b) establish the STRP work plan for the triennium, based on the tasks and priorities identified by the COP and Standing Committee, also taking into account issues arising from the Panel's role in strategically reviewing the current tools and guidance available to Parties and the new and emerging issues for the Convention;
  - c) establish an Expert Working Group for each substantive task in the STRP work plan, identify the members of each Working Group, and agree the *modus operandi* for each Working Group to undertake its tasks;

- d) identify additional experts to be invited to contribute to the work of each Working Group, either in the drafting of materials or in reviewing them. In doing that, the STRP should give due consideration to geographical and gender balance and to the language abilities of the proposed experts; and
  - e) identify key additional strategic issues for consideration by the STRP during the triennium and establish a Working Group to progress these for reporting to the next COP.
7. Thereafter, Expert Working Groups shall develop and undertake their work largely through electronic communication, tele- and video-conferences, virtual forums and exchange networks. The STRP Support Service shall assist in establishing such mechanisms as necessary.
  8. Each Expert Working Group shall, as resources permit, meet in a workshop approximately nine months after the 1<sup>st</sup> STRP meeting in order to review draft materials, amend their parts of the work plan as necessary, and agree the steps to be taken for timely completion of their tasks.
  9. Where the STRP determines that it requires the expertise of an invited expert to prepare draft materials for its review, resources permitting, the Bureau shall arrange as necessary for contracts to be let immediately after the period for comments on the STRP work plan is over. First draft materials prepared under these contracts will be available for review by the relevant STRP Working Group before any mid-term Working Group workshop.
  10. Should the dates for the next COP be set less than three calendar years (36 months) after the previous COP, the STRP Working Groups shall review their workloads and agreed deliverables, and advise the Standing Committee of any proposed changes to the Panel's work plan.
  11. The second meeting of the Panel shall:
    - a) receive reports from each of its Expert Working Groups, including final draft guidelines and other materials;
    - b) review and approve finalization of these materials for consideration by the Standing Committee and COP;
    - c) identify any further work on each topic that it may consider is still needed, and make recommendations on this to the Standing Committee and COP; and
    - d) review the recommendations of the Working Group on key strategic issues for the Convention, and prepare these for consideration by the Standing Committee and COP.
  12. The working language of the Panel shall be English. The ability of STRP members and invited experts to consult and use literature in other languages shall constitute an additional asset for their appointment.

### **The roles and responsibilities of the Panel and its members**

13. The Terms of Reference of the STRP and its Members are to:
- a) review the tasks and nature of the products requested of it by COP Resolutions and the Convention's Work Plan;
  - b) undertake strategic review of the current tools and guidance available to Parties and new and emerging issues for the Convention;
  - c) determine and agree a mechanism for the delivery of each of these tasks, including the establishment of Expert Working Groups as appropriate, advise on which tasks it does not have the expertise or capacity to progress, and receive the advice of the Standing Committee for this work plan;
  - d) identify, for each task the Panel proposes to undertake, and with the advice of any Working Group on the topic, the best global expert(s) either from within or outside the Panel to undertake drafting work, taking into account geographical and gender balance and language ability;
  - e) identify, for each product in the work plan, and with the advice of any Working Group and the STRP Support Service, additional experts to undertake review by correspondence of draft materials, as necessary;
  - f) make expert review of the draft products in its work plan, taking into account the views expressed by additional experts in d) above, agree any amendments needed, and transmit these revised products for consideration by the Standing Committee;
  - g) ensure, with the assistance of the Ramsar Bureau, that the work of the STRP contributes to and benefits from the work undertaken by similar subsidiary bodies of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).
14. In undertaking their work, members of the STRP should, as set out in the ToR for STRP National Focal Points (NFPs), establish and maintain contact with the National Focal Points in their region or sub-region, with an agreed allocation of Contracting Parties to each regional member, in order to ensure that the views and expertise of NFPs is available to the Panel.
15. In undertaking their work, International Organization Partner (IOP) members of the STRP should ensure that their networks, including their expert Specialist Groups, are consulted on the work of the Panel and that their views and expertise is available to the Panel.
16. STRP members should, as resources permit, participate in meetings of the COP and Standing Committee.

### **The role of STRP Expert Working Groups and their Leads**

17. Terms of Reference for Expert Working Groups established by the STRP are:

Under the guidance of the Working Group Lead, to:

- a) prepare a work plan for the Working Group tasks as identified by COP Resolutions, including scoping the structure and contents of any guidelines and reports and proposing a mechanism and timeframe for their delivery;
  - b) review draft materials prepared under this work plan, and advise on any necessary revisions, amendments or further work; and
  - c) advise the Panel when the Working Group's scientific and technical work on the guidelines and reports is complete, so that the materials can be recommended by the Panel to the Standing Committee for consideration.
18. The role and responsibilities of a Working Group Lead are to oversee and guide the work of the Expert Working Group so as to ensure timely review and delivery of its products, including through electronic networking and chairing of any Working Group workshop. In undertaking this role the Working Group Lead will work closely with the STRP Chair or Vice-Chair so as to keep the Chair or Vice-Chair advised on progress.
  19. Appointment of Leads of Working Groups will be made by the Chair of the STRP with the assistance of the Bureau at the first meeting of the STRP in the triennium. A Working Group Lead need not necessarily be an STRP member, but could also come from an IOP or other observer organization or from among the invited experts.
  20. A Working Group Lead should have proven international expertise in the theme of the Working Group and, ideally, previous experience of the *modus operandi* of the Convention and its bodies and the nature of the scientific and technical materials required by the Convention.
  21. Where a Working Group theme continues in the STRP work plan for more than one triennium, its Lead may, as appropriate, be appointed for a further term.
  22. Working Group Leads should be prepared to represent the Panel in contributing to the work of equivalent expert working groups established by other MEAs on similar topics. Working Group Leads should recognize and confirm the acceptance of such potential time commitments at the time of their appointment.

#### **The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair of STRP**

23. The post of Vice-Chair of the STRP has been created to provide support to the Chair.
24. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP will be either regional members of the Panel appointed by the Standing Committee or the designated representative of an IOP member on the Panel.
25. The Vice-Chair should not be a regional member of the Panel from the same Ramsar region as the Chair; if the elected Chair is a designated representative member of an International Organization Partner, the Vice-Chair should be a regional Panel member.
26. The Chair and Vice-Chair must have the agreement of their institutions that they may devote sufficient work time during the triennium to permit fulfillment of their roles and responsibilities.

27. Upon election, the Chair and Vice-Chair will agree the division of responsibilities in relation to:
- a) oversight of the different thematic areas of work of the Panel, as agreed by the Panel; and
  - b) representation of the Panel at meetings of other MEAs and other scientific and technical initiatives of interest to the Convention.
28. The Terms of Reference of the Chair of STRP are to:
- a) chair the meetings of the Panel;
  - b) prepare, with the assistance of the Bureau, the Agenda, draft STRP work plan, and other papers for presentation to each meeting of the STRP;
  - c) appoint, with the assistance of the Bureau, the Lead for each Expert Working Group established by the Panel;
  - d) maintain contact with the leads of each Expert Working Group established by the Panel and others leading on the preparation of materials for review by the Panel, and, with the assistance of the STRP Support Service, ensure that progress is in accordance with the agreed work plan of the Panel;
  - e) report to the meetings of the Standing Committee on progress by the Panel on its tasks, and advise on any substantial modifications to the work plan;
  - f) report to the Standing Committee on the progress, achievements and recommendations for future *modi operandi* of the Panel during the next triennium;
  - g) make recommendations to the Standing Committee concerning those members of STRP who should be invited to remain on the Panel for a second triennium;
  - h) make recommendations to the Standing Committee concerning the reappointment of organizations with observer status on STRP on the basis of their contributions to the Panel during the triennium;
  - i) represent the Panel, as appropriate, at meetings of equivalent scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of other MEAs, and report to these bodies on the work plan and progress of the STRP, particularly on themes of common interest;
  - j) represent the Panel, as appropriate, at meetings of other scientific and technical initiatives of interest to the Convention; and
  - k) in undertaking j) and k) above, delegate responsibility for such representation to the Vice-Chair, Working Group Leads or others, as necessary.
29. The Terms of Reference of the Vice-Chair of STRP are to:
- a) deputize for the Chair in undertaking the tasks and responsibilities as identified in the Terms of Reference of the Chair;

- b) by agreement with the Chair, lead on ensuring the progress of specific thematic areas of the work of the Panel, as in 28(d) above; and
- c) by agreement with the Chair, collaborate in representing the Panel at meetings of other MEAs and other scientific and technical initiatives.

### **The role of observer organizations**

- 30. The primary role of observer organizations is to bring technical and scientific review capacity on their topics of expertise to the review work of the Panel. However, given the lead technical prowess of such organizations, it may be appropriate that a member or members of their network take the lead in the role of an 'invited expert' to undertake drafting work for the Panel.
- 31. STRP observer status shall be a consistent mechanism for engaging the involvement of all scientific and technical organizations with which the Convention develops formal collaborative agreements.
- 32. The Panel may request that representatives of other relevant scientific and technical organizations be invited as observers to STRP, as it deems necessary, in order to increase the capacity of the Panel in specific subject areas on which it is requested to work.
- 33. Each observer organization shall identify to the Chair of the STRP and the Bureau a named representative who will participate in the meetings and work of the Panel. An observer organization should be prepared to participate in all Panel meetings during a triennium and should send the same representative to these meetings, if possible.
- 34. At each COP, a Resolution concerning the STRP will list the observer organizations to be invited to participate in the STRP work during the succeeding triennium.

### **The role of the Standing Committee**

- 35. The STRP is responsible to the Standing Committee in undertaking its work. The role of the Standing Committee is to:
  - a) at its first meeting of the triennium, appoint the members of the STRP according to the proportional representation established in Resolution VII.2 concerning regional representation and membership from countries other than those appointed to the Standing Committee, and taking into account the recommendations of the STRP Chair concerning the reappointment of members from the previous triennium;
  - b) at its first meeting of the triennium, appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP. Where possible, the Chair should have served as a member of the Panel during the previous triennium, so that she or he will have a working knowledge of the operations of the Panel;
  - c) at its first meeting of the triennium, adopt the definitive list of tasks and priorities for the STRP;
  - d) approve, by circulation, the work plan prepared by the STRP at its first meeting;

- e) at each subsequent meeting of the Standing Committee, receive a report on progress from the Chair of the STRP, and approve any changes to the STRP work plan;
- f) approve for consideration by the meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties the guidelines, reports and draft Resolutions prepared by the STRP; and
- g) approve for consideration by the meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties a Resolution concerning the STRP listing the observer organizations invited to participate in the STRP in the next triennium.

### **The role of the Ramsar Bureau and the STRP Support Service**

36. The role of the STRP Support Service is to:
- a) establish improved links with, and knowledge of, existing expert networks operated by the Convention (Ramsar Experts Database, STRP National Focal Points), IOPs, and other organizations with observer status to STRP and/or with which the Convention has developed links;
  - b) further develop and build the capacity of the network of STRP National Focal Points and their within-country expert networks;
  - c) identify gaps in expert network coverage in relation to the STRP's work, and seek to fill those gaps through identification and establishing linkage with other existing networks and the establishment of new networks as appropriate;
  - d) advise the STRP on appropriate experts from these networks to contribute to the work of the STRP; and
  - e) support the work of Expert Working Groups established by the STRP, on behalf of the Bureau.
37. The STRP Support Service will be operated under a contractual arrangement with the Ramsar Bureau and the supervision of the Ramsar Standing Committee, and will work in an open and transparent partnership with all International Organization Partners, STRP observer organizations, and others as appropriate.
38. The role and responsibilities of the Bureau in relation to the STRP are to:
- a) prepare and make logistical arrangements for STRP meetings;
  - b) assist the Chair of the STRP in preparing draft agendas and other materials for STRP and related meetings;
  - c) advise and brief the Chair on matters of conduct and process of the Panel;
  - d) provide scientific and technical assistance to the Panel's work and its progress;

- e) review and advise the Chair and Panel on the materials it prepares so as to ensure that these are consistent with the expectations of the Contracting Parties and of a style and length consistent with current Convention practice;
- f) advise the Standing Committee on these matters;
- g) oversee the work of the STRP Support Service, as resources permit, for the preparation of substantive guidelines and other reports by external experts, in consultation with the STRP Chair and relevant Working Group Leads;
- h) support the STRP Support Service in its development of the STRP National Focal Points network, so as to ensure that it is able to contribute effectively to the work of the STRP;
- i) identify, with the assistance of the STRP Support Service, costs of preparing each substantive task identified for the work of the Panel, and in the light of priorities for tasks established by the COP and Standing Committee, advise the Standing Committee on which tasks cannot be undertaken without additional resources, and seek such resources, as necessary; and
- j) provide an 'induction and briefing session' for all STRP participants during the first meeting of the Panel in each triennium in order to ensure that they are aware of their respective roles and responsibilities prior to making decisions on progressing the work requested of the Panel, as well as of the role of the Panel in relation to that of the Standing Committee to which the STRP is responsible.

### **The role of National Focal Points**

- 39. The Terms of Reference of STRP National Focal Points, as approved by the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, are retained (Annex 1), with the addition that, upon appointment by the Administrative Authority a National Focal Point should complete and return a short questionnaire (to be developed by the Bureau) in order to identify and make accessible his or her areas of skill and expertise relevant to the work of the Panel.
- 40. STRP National Focal Points shall, as far as possible, contribute to the work of the Expert Working Groups established by the STRP.

### **The process and criteria for the appointment of STRP members**

- 41. Contracting Parties shall be invited to nominate candidates to serve in the STRP in each triennium at the time of distribution of the official documentation for the COP (e.g., three months before the opening of the meeting). When issuing the call for nominations for STRP members, the Bureau will, as far as possible, identify likely topics for upcoming STRP work, drawn from the draft Convention Work Plan, anticipated COP Resolutions, and ongoing responsibilities of the Panel.
- 42. Nominees for appointment should, as far as possible, have international as well as national expertise in their topics, and they must be sufficiently fluent in reading and speaking English to be able to participate fully in the review work of the Panel.

43. Nominees, at the time of their nomination, shall complete a short questionnaire provided by the Bureau as part of the call for nominations concerning their experience and expertise, and also provide a declaration that they are able to commit the necessary time, including attendance at meetings, to fulfill their role as an STRP member. Nominees must confirm at the time of nomination that their institution or employer has agreed that they may commit the necessary time to the work of the Panel and indicate whether they will require financial assistance to attend meetings of the STRP and/or Working Groups.
44. The Standing Committee shall appoint the members of STRP from the list of candidates submitted by Contracting Parties as soon as feasible after the close of the COP, seeking to ensure that appointed members have expertise relevant for the delivery of the priority tasks identified in the STRP work plan.
45. Membership of the STRP shall be as established by Resolution VII.2 – i.e., the STRP shall have the same regional structure and proportional system of membership as the Standing Committee, as established in Resolution VII.1, and the members of the STRP ought, as far as possible, come from Contracting Parties different from those Parties elected to the Standing Committee in order to attain equitable representation on the STRP.
46. In the event that a vacancy for a regional member of the Panel arises during the triennium, the Standing Committee will review other nominees from the region and appoint a replacement member as soon as practicable, if necessary by correspondence should the vacancy arise between Standing Committee meetings.

#### **Continuity of Panel membership**

47. In order to ensure continuity of expertise and working practices, approximately half the regional members of the STRP will be reappointed for a second term, with reappointments being, as far as possible, equitable amongst Ramsar regions.
48. The Chair of STRP, following appropriate consultations with current members, will recommend to the Standing Committee at the end of the triennium the names of those members who should be considered for reappointment. This recommendation shall apply to both regional members and the designated representatives of International Organization Partners. These recommendations will be transmitted to Contracting Parties at the time of the call for nominations for the next triennium.
49. No regional member shall serve more than two consecutive terms.
50. Members being proposed for reappointment must have demonstrated a capability of contributing effectively to the review work of the Panel and have confirmed their willingness to be reappointed.
51. International Organization Partners should, as far as possible, designate the same representative as a member of STRP for consecutive terms for approval by the Standing Committee.

#### **Continuity of STRP tasks**

52. The COP should, in addition to identifying in its Resolutions where it is essential that work required of STRP must be delivered to the next COP, as far as possible indicate ongoing work that should continue beyond the next COP.
53. STRP Expert Working Groups on topics and tasks that will continue for more than a single triennium will, where appropriate, remain in existence for more than one triennium, as recommended by the STRP to the Standing Committee.

#### **Harmonizing the work of the STRP and the subsidiary bodies of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)**

54. The Chair of the STRP, working with the chairs of the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of other MEAs, should seek to identify, in collaboration with the Bureau and the secretariats of other MEAs, clear and agreed mechanisms for input and collaboration among subsidiary bodies.
55. In doing so, the Bureau and the STRP should be involved and participate as much as possible in the mechanisms agreed by the MEAs under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and any other international process dealing with the synergies among MEAs.

#### **Resourcing the work of the Panel**

56. In order to ensure that the needs and priorities of the COP can be efficiently and effectively met by the STRP, a budget for future STRP work should, resources permitting, cover:
  - a) costs of attendance at STRP meetings and Working Group workshops, as appropriate, by members from developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
  - b) drafting and finalization of materials requested by the COP by independent expert consultants, as necessary, for review by the Panel; and
  - c) travel, subsistence and administrative budget for the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair.
57. To ensure the appropriate level of support to the STRP and its National Focal Point network, the STRP Support Service, working under a contractual arrangement to the Ramsar Bureau, has been established to provide expert advice to the Panel and its Working Groups, and as a support service to the network of STRP National Focal Points.

## Annex 1

### Terms of Reference for the STRP's National Focal Points

The Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) was established through Resolution 5.5 of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Kushiro, 1993) to provide scientific and technical advice to the Standing Committee and the Ramsar Bureau, and through them, to the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Through Resolution VII.2 of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1999), the composition and *modus operandi* of the STRP were modified such that the Panel now comprises 13 experts from the six Ramsar regions, designated by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, to provide advice in their personal capacity, and not as representatives of their countries or governments. In addition, the STRP has as full members representatives of the Convention's International Organization Partners, as well as observers from several expert bodies and other international environment conventions.

Through Resolution VII.2, the COP also invited all Contracting Parties to nominate a suitably qualified expert in each country to act as the Focal Point for STRP matters at the national level.

The following Terms of Reference were prepared by the STRP at its 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, held in Gland, Switzerland on 22-24 September 1999 and approved by the Standing Committee at its 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 29 November – 2 December 1999.

1. The main function of the STRP National Focal Point (NFP) in each country is to provide input, and support as appropriate, to the implementation of the Work Plan of the STRP, as approved by the first full Meeting of the Standing Committee which follows each COP.
2. In order to do so, the National Focal Point should, as much as possible, consult with and seek input from other experts and expert bodies in his/her country. The Focal Point is encouraged to use the opportunities of suitable national meetings, newsletters, e-mail, etc., to canvas the views of the expert community, and, when feasible, to organize expert consultations on key issues in the STRP Work Plan. The latter should be done in consultation with the appropriate regional member(s) of the STRP or Working Group Lead.
3. The input of the National Focal Point should be channeled, by preference, through the STRP member leading each thematic area of the Work Plan or through the STRP's regional representatives. When this is not practical, the input of the NFP may also be channeled through the STRP Support Service or the appropriate Regional Coordinator within the Ramsar Convention Bureau.
4. In general, the STRP network of National Focal Points will operate through correspondence, and as much as possible through e-mail. To this effect, the Ramsar Bureau will include the National Focal Points with access to e-mail connections in its list server devoted to STRP members. In addition, the Bureau will create a dedicated section in its Web site for the presentation and consideration of STRP matters.
5. Due to financial limitations, the main working language of the STRP and its network of National Focal Points is English. Nevertheless, the Ramsar Bureau will endeavour to

translate into French and Spanish key discussion documents that NFPs could be particularly encouraged to comment on.

6. STRP National Focal Points in each country are expected to maintain regular contact, and endeavour to identify and undertake activities of common interest, with their equivalent National Focal Points of the technical and scientific bodies of other relevant international and regional environment-related conventions, and especially for those with which the Ramsar Convention has in place a Memorandum of Cooperation or Understanding, namely, the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Desertification, Migratory Species, and World Heritage.
7. The National Focal Points are also expected to be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of projects funded under the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF), as may be required by the Ramsar Administrative Authority in each country and/or the agency implementing the project.
8. The National Focal Points should provide advice to, and participate in, meetings of the National Wetland/Ramsar Committee or similar bodies (Biodiversity Committees, for example) where they exist. They should also assist in disseminating information on the work of the STRP, interpreted as appropriate to the national context, to relevant individuals and bodies in their countries.
9. The National Focal Points should take an active role in supporting national wetland inventory activities and in supporting the efforts of his/her Contracting Party to implement the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*.