

Agenda item 9.1

Report of the STRP Oversight Committee

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to receive and note the report of the STRP Oversight Committee.

1. In Resolution IX.11 on the *Revised modus operandi of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)*, the Contracting Parties established an STRP Oversight Committee to report to the Standing Committee, which continues to have overall responsibility for the work of the STRP.
2. According to the annex to Resolution IX.11, the Parties intended that the STRP Oversight Committee should have the following responsibilities:
 - i) appoint the members, Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP;
 - ii) provide intersessional advice, guidance and support to the operations and work of the Panel;
 - iii) keep under review, and advise the Standing Committee on, the operations of the Panel under this revised *modus operandi*;
 - iv) provide advice to the Secretariat on expenditures under the STRP budget line; and
 - v) confirm the schedule of meetings of the STRP.
3. The membership of the Oversight Committee was established as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP, and the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General *ex officio*. The Oversight Committee is chaired by the Chair of Standing Committee.
4. In early November 2005, the Secretariat issued the call for nominations for the appointment of STRP members for the 2006-2008 triennium. A renewed call was issued following COP9, in early December 2005, to confirm the basis upon which appointments would be made under the new *modus operandi* and extending the deadline for nominations to 15 January 2006. Nominations could be made by Administrative Authorities, STRP National Focal Points, and STRP members and observers. Recommendations on re-appointments of existing STRP members were made by the outgoing STRP Chair.
5. A total of 35 administratively complete nominations were received by the Secretariat. By Ramsar region the nationality of the candidates was as follows: Africa 6, Asia 5, Europe 7, Neotropics 11, North America 3, and Oceania 3. Overall, this may be considered a rather disappointing response, particularly for some regions, notably Africa and Asia. Notwithstanding that nominations could be made by Administrative Authorities, STRP National Focal Points and STRP members/observers of persons from anywhere in the world, most nominations came from national Administrative Authorities, nominating a

person or persons from their own countries. Few nominations were been received from STRP National Focal Points.

6. Following the deadline, the Secretariat technical implementation staff reviewed the nominations and prepared an analysis and recommendations to the Oversight Committee for appointments for each member post, in the categories established by Resolution IX.11 – namely a regional networker on wetland issues for each Ramsar region and a technical expert for each of the seven main priority thematic work areas established for the Panel in Resolution IX.2. These thematic work areas are:
 - i) wetland inventory and assessment, including indicators;
 - ii) wise use and ecological character;
 - iii) water resource management;
 - iv) Ramsar site designation and management;
 - v) wetlands and agriculture;
 - vi) wetlands and human health; and
 - vii) Communications, Education & Public Awareness (CEPA), with a role to provide input to all stages of the Panel’s work on each task from scoping the needs of the identified users to the finalization of outputs, drawing *inter alia* on the Convention’s CEPA networks and those of the Convention’s International Organization Partners (IOPs).

7. The Oversight Committee met by teleconference on 15 February 2006 to make its appointments of STRP members for 2006-2008. The Committee has made the following choices:
 - i) Regional representatives, with networking responsibilities:
 Africa: **Dr Heather MacKay**
 Asia: **Ms Rebecca D’Cruz**
 Europe: **Dr Karen Jenderedjian**
 Neotropics: **Ms Maria Riviera**
 North America: **Prof. Royal Gardner**
 Oceania: **Dr Philippe Gerbeaux**

 - ii) Thematic experts (for STRP priority work areas):
 Wetland inventory and assessment, including indicators: **Dr Teresita Borges**
 Wise use and ecological character: **Mr Randy Milton**
 Water resource management: **Prof. Mike Acreman**
 Ramsar site designation and management: **Mr David Stroud**
 Wetlands and agriculture: **Dr Max Finlayson**
 Communications, Education & Public Awareness (CEPA): **Ms Christine Prietto**

8. The STRP Oversight Committee made no appointment for the thematic expert on Wetlands and Human Health, since it considered that none of the candidates nominated had the necessary level of expertise needed for the priority task under this theme, and it has requested the Secretariat and STRP Chair to develop proposals for ways and means of undertaking this aspect of the Panel’s priority work during the triennium.

9. The STRP Oversight Committee has also approved the following individuals as STRP members representing the Convention’s five International Organization Partners (IOPs):

BirdLife International: **Mr Dave Pritchard**

Wetlands International: **Dr Doug Taylor**

IWMI: **Ms Rebecca Tharme**

IUCN: **Dr Mark Smith**

WWF: **Ms Archana Chatterjee**

10. The STRP Oversight Committee also recognized that there were a number of good candidates with strong expertise in aspects of the Panel's priority work for the triennium who could not, owing to the limited number of posts, be appointed as STRP members for the triennium. The Committee has invited these candidates also to participate as fully as possible, especially through electronic discussions and reviews, in the work of the Panel.
11. The Oversight Committee appointed Dr Heather MacKay to act as Chair of the STRP for 2006-2008, and Ms Rebecca D'Cruz to act as Vice-Chair.
12. In making their appointments the Oversight Committee were mindful of the terms of the Panel's *modus operandi* concerning regional and gender balances and continuity of membership. The overall gender balance of Panel is: appointed members 5 female, 7 male, plus one post vacant, and including the IOP member representatives: 7 female; 10 male. The regional balance of thematic experts is: Africa 0, Asia 1, Europe 2, Neotropics 1, North America 1, Oceania 1. Concerning continuity, four new members (31%) also served as members in 2003-2005. In addition, four of the five IOP representative members were also closely involved in the Panel's 2003-2005 work, thus providing the expected additional continuity from the role of the IOPs.
13. The Oversight Committee also approved the dates for the next meeting of the Panel, its 13th. This will be from 30 May to 2 June 2006 in the Secretariat offices in Gland, Switzerland.
14. At this meeting the Panel will review and develop its work programme for the triennium, based on the high and immediate priority tasks established by Contracting Parties at COP9 in Resolution IX.2 Annex 1 (a list of these tasks is included below). This work programme will subsequently be transmitted to the Standing Committee for its consideration.
15. Prior to STRP13, the appointed thematic experts are being requested to initiate work in developing the scope and approach for each immediate and high priority task within their work areas, and to identify additional experts from the appointed members, other candidates, and STRP National Focal Points to contribute to the work.
16. The Secretariat is currently contacting all bodies and organizations invited by Resolution IX.11 to participate as observers to the STRP, requesting them to nominate representatives to participate in the work of the Panel.
17. Resolution IX.11 confirmed that the STRP support functions, with an immediate priority on the development and engagement of the network of STRP National Focal Points, would be provided from the Secretariat for the 2006-2008 triennium. The Secretariat is currently checking and updating its lists of STRP NFPs, following a substantial number of changes reported by Parties in COP9 National Reports, and will soon be contacting all

focal points to establish their areas of interest and expertise as the basis for engaging them in the different priority work areas and processes for their delivery.

18. In addition, the STRP Support Service Web site, through which the intersessional electronic discussions and development of the STRP's work will continue to take place, is currently being redeveloped to reflect the work areas for this triennium.
19. In Paragraph 10 of Resolution IX.2, the Conference of the Parties "URGES Parties, donors, intergovernmental agencies, International Organization Partners, national NGOs, and others to use this programme, including the costed programme for immediate and high priority STRP actions in Annex 1 to this Resolution, in deciding priorities for their financial and other material support towards the future scientific and technical implementation of the Ramsar Convention." The Secretariat will soon be contacting Parties and other potential donors to establish whether they will be able to support one or more of the costed immediate and high priority tasks set out in Resolution IX.2 Annex 1, the provisional total costs for these being estimated as CHF 440,000. More precise costings, and ways and means for the delivery of these tasks, not all of which may prove to need such funded expert consultancies, will be developed by the members appointed as thematic leads, working with their expert groups.
20. The newly-appointed Chair of the STRP, Dr Heather MacKay, will participate in the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee and thus will be available to provide an update on the progress in establishing and developing the work of the Panel at that time.

Annex

Immediate priority and high priority tasks for the STRP's programme of work 2006-2008

The following 23 tasks were approved by COP9 Resolution IX.1 as immediate and high priority activities for the STRP's work plan for the 2006-2008 triennium. These are divided into two categories:

- i. *Immediate Priority* tasks: those which should be initiated by the STRP as early as possible in the 2006-2008 triennium using available resources; and
- ii. *High Priority* tasks: those which should be initiated during the 2006-2008 triennium as and when the resources available to the STRP permit. Some of these High Priority tasks are also dependent on the prior delivery of Immediate Priority tasks.

Twelve tasks are *Immediate Priorities* for the STRP. These cover the following topics:

- Performing an ongoing strategic scientific and technical “review” function and a “response” function for preparing guidance on emerging issues;
- Reviewing implementation of scientific and technical COP Resolutions;
- Reviewing existing Ramsar guidance, to identify gaps and to repackage/retire guidance as appropriate;
- Reviewing data and information needs for Ramsar sites and other wetlands, and developing guidance on *inter alia* describing wetland ecological character and Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) amendments;
- Establishing mechanisms for the implementation and assessment of the indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention (Resolution IX.1 Annex D);
- Developing an adaptation to the Ramsar context of the “Critical Path” approach for river basin management (Resolution IX.1 Annex C i) and preparing operational guidance to include the application of CEPA tools;
- Preparing guidelines for Parties on the implementation of environmental water requirements for wetlands;
- Undertaking a strategic review of water quality and wetland issues;
- Elaborating and updating the list of appropriate population estimates and 1% thresholds for the application of Criterion 9 (Resolution IX.1 Annex B);
- Preparing guidelines on good agricultural practices and policies for different wetland types;
- Seeking opportunities to prepare materials for outreach purposes, including on mainstreaming Ramsar issues within the water sector; and
- Reviewing the relationships and issues concerning the wise use of wetland ecosystems and human health.

Eleven further tasks are *High Priorities* for the STRP. These cover the following topics:

- Reviewing the case studies in *Towards Wise Use of Wetlands* (Ramsar, 1993) and other relevant case studies, review subsequent implementation progress with these cases, and provide updated studies;
- Further reviewing the harmonization of definitions and terms related to ecosystem benefits/services;
- Preparing advice on delineating and mapping wetlands, in conjunction with the description of their ecological character, including issues concerning digital mapping;
- Preparing further consolidated guidance on the overall process of detecting, reporting and responding to change in ecological character;
- Developing, testing and putting forward for use by Parties further indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention;
- Developing guidance on good practice in the integration of wetlands into Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), based on case studies to be sought from Parties;
- Preparing technical review reports on:
 - i. groundwater-wetland interactions; and
 - ii. the use and management of groundwater to maintain ecosystem functions.Once these reports are complete, review the present Integrated Framework for Ramsar's water-related guidance (Resolution IX.1 Annex C) and prepare detailed technical guidance on developing groundwater management strategies which aim at maintenance of wetland ecosystems and minimizing or mitigating the impacts of groundwater abstraction;
- Developing an interpretation of the term 'under-represented' wetland type and investigate methods for defining targets for representation of wetland types in the Ramsar List;
- Reviewing existing guidance on designation of specific wetland types, assess the need for additional guidance, and as necessary develop such guidance;
- Keeping the Ramsar Criteria and guidelines as a whole under review to ensure that they reflect global wetland conservation and wise use priorities; and
- Ensuring that CEPA issues are fully covered in each of the substantive guidance documents prepared by the STRP through input to the Panel's work from CEPA experts.