

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**26th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 3-7 December 2001**

DOC. SC26-2

Agenda item 5

Report of the Secretary General

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to note and comment upon the report and to take decisions, as appropriate, concerning the issues raised in it.

1. This report covers the period between 27 October 2000, the close of the 25th Meeting of the Standing Committee, and 26 October 2001. It describes major developments that the Bureau is aware of concerning the different sections of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002, and in particular the activities of the Ramsar Bureau.

General Objective 1 of the Strategic Plan: Universal Membership

2. Seven new Parties have joined the Convention during the period under review, one from Africa, three from Asia, two from Europe, one from the Neotropics: **Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba, Cyprus, Mauritius, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan**. There are 130 Contracting Parties at the time of the finalization of this report.
3. Concerning Resolution VII.30, which "CALLS UPON Bosnia & Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to submit to the Depositary a notification of succession to the Ramsar Convention as the other successor states have done", on 3 July 2001 the Director-General of UNESCO received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a notification that his country accepted the Ramsar Convention as a successor State to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia "and undertakes faithfully to perform and carry out the stipulations therein contained as from April 27, 1992, the date upon which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia assumed responsibility for its international relations". Yugoslavia confirmed the status of its four existing Ramsar sites. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 24 September 2001 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the Director-General of UNESCO that the country "considers itself, as a legal successor State of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, bound by the Convention on Wetlands", with effect from 1 March 1992, the date upon which Bosnia and Herzegovina assumed responsibility for its international relations. In accordance with Article 2 of the Convention, the new Contracting Party named as its obligatory first Wetland of International Importance a Nature Park and Birdlife Important Bird Area called "Hutovo Blato". Consequently, the issue raised in resolution VII.30 should be considered resolved.
4. In the case of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee, recognized by Resolution VII.22 "as a forum for collaboration on wetland issues in the Mediterranean and as advisor to the Convention in this region", with the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Cyprus, all

25 Mediterranean states members of MedWet/Com are now Ramsar Contracting Parties. At the beginning of MedWet there were 14.

5. The Secretary General has approached the Administrative Authority in Belgium, the country which holds the Presidency of the European Union in the second semester of 2001, inviting consideration of the idea of submitting a formal proposal to amend Article 9 of the Convention in order to allow regional economic integration organizations to become Contracting Parties to the Convention. If a formal request is received soon, it would be possible to initiate the process of holding an Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to consider the amendment, as required by the Convention, during Ramsar COP8 in November 2002. The issue is under consideration by the Belgian authorities.
6. In Africa, thanks to the voluntary contribution of the Swiss government for activities in Africa, the Bureau was able to provide technical and financial assistance to Burundi, Mauritius and Sudan in preparations for accession. Work has continued with Cameroon, Central African Republic, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe for the same purpose.
7. In Asia, Saudi Arabia has expressed an interest in joining the Convention and has offered to host the Ramsar Subregional Meeting for the Middle East in Riyadh in early 2002. Yemen, Kuwait, and Kyrgyzstan have informed the Bureau that they are in the process of obtaining approval from their respective authorities to join the Convention; Uzbekistan has acceded to the Convention even as this report is being prepared.
8. In the Neotropics, Trinidad and Tobago, in its capacity as the Caribbean Representative in the Standing Committee, hosted the "Ramsar/SPAW Caribbean Training Workshop" in December 2000. The objective of the workshop was two-fold: a) to analyse the obligations and advantages of being Parties to both the Ramsar Convention and to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention, in line with the Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the two secretariats; and b) to provide training on the implementation of the key Resolutions adopted by Ramsar COP7. The workshop was designed for Parties to the Ramsar Convention and to the SPAW Protocol, as well as the other Caribbean countries that are not yet Parties to either instrument. All 10 of the non-contracting parties to Ramsar sent representatives and in some cases this was the first formal communication between the Bureau and these countries.
9. Contacts with the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and St. Lucia indicate that progress is being made towards accession.
10. Argentina ratified the Regina Amendments to the Convention with an instrument of acceptance of the amendments to Articles 6 and 7 (1987); in accordance with the terms of Article 10bis, the amendments entered into force for Argentina on the first day of the fourth month following the date of deposit of its instrument, i.e., 1 October 2001. The Argentine Republic availed itself of the opportunity to renew its reservation concerning the United Kingdom's extension of its ratification of the Regina Amendments "to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and reasserts its sovereignty over those islands" (UNESCO translation).

General Objective 2 of the Strategic Plan: Wise Use

11. The River Basin Initiative (RBI) has continued to progress as a joint Ramsar/CBD project. A Design Workshop was held in Wageningen, the Netherlands, in May, involving both international partner organizations (including Ramsar IOPs and other NGOs, global biodiversity and water resource management organizations, and multilateral and bilateral donors) and a number of country representatives. The workshop reviewed and advanced the present design of the Initiative, particularly in relation to the preparation of a project submission to UNDP-GEF (part funding for the workshop came through a PDF-A grant from UNDP to develop the work).
12. At present, the RBI secretariat provided by the Global Environment Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is set to:
 - a) produce revised information materials and an electronic newsletter to share information on the development of the Initiative as well as on projects, activities and case studies relevant to the Initiative;
 - b) set up a test version of the RBI portal and simple RBI homepage linked to Web sites of key international partners;
 - c) work with RBI partner organizations to collate and disseminate existing information materials, manuals, guidelines and publications through their networks and to CBD and Ramsar focal points;
 - d) organize a side event at the time of the Bonn International Conference on Freshwater in December 2001;
 - e) provide input to the preparations of the Third World Water Forum (Japan 2003) through establishment of a discussion group on the Virtual Water Forum;
 - f) further develop operating partnerships with Convention Focal Points from 80 countries which responded positively to the questionnaire survey and 8 International Organizations which responded positively to the letter of invitation for partnership (IUCN, WWF, UNESCO, WI, ICLARM, IWMI, GWP) and agree on respective roles in implementation; and
 - g) secure additional funding by preparing and following up on funding proposals particularly with DGIS (The Netherlands), GEF, DANIDA (Denmark), and DFID (United Kingdom).
13. The Bureau and members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) have continued to be actively involved in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), including serving in its Board and Executive Committee and actively contributing to the two design workshops that have established the *modus operandi* of the MA. The Secretary General has also been invited to serve on the Budget Committee. More details on the progress of this four-year, 20 million US dollars, international scientific study, subtitled "A joint assessment of condition and change in ecosystem goods and services undertaken for the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Wetlands, and other partners, facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme", can be found in DOC. SC26-7.
14. The Bureau has initiated cooperation with the European Space Agency in the framework of its TESEO Project: Treaty Enforcement Services using Earth Observation. At least four projects will be started, each with a maximum budget of 250 K Euro and a maximum

duration of 15 months. Each project will correspond to a theme related to an international environmental convention. At least the four following themes and corresponding conventions will be covered: wetlands (Ramsar), carbon (Kyoto Protocol), desertification (UNCCD), and marine pollution (MARPOL 73/78).

15. The main goals to be achieved within each project are:
 - identification of the main national and international bodies involved in the implementation of the treaty and exhaustive collection of their needs in terms of information products derived from Earth Observation (EO) technology;
 - identification of the potential and limits of existing and future (planned or not) EO technology to contribute to match end-users' requirements;
 - definition of a set of novel EO-based products and services aimed at supporting the implementation of the treaty;
 - development of the technical capabilities (data analysis techniques) to provide novel EO-based products and services to end-users within the context of the considered international treaty;
 - development of at least two Prototype Products aimed at demonstrating the capabilities of existing and future EO technology to support end-users in the implementation of the main actions and policies foreseen in the considered treaty;
 - general recommendations for future European EO missions and programmes.

16. The STRP Working Group on Restoration unveiled a Web resource on wetland restoration. Dr Bill Streever, representing the Society of Wetland Scientists on the STRP, announced that the restoration mini-site was ready for external review and invited case studies to help populate the "Approaches to wetland restoration" section of the site (especially case studies from outside the US and Australia). The address for the page is http://ramsar.org/strp_rest_index.htm.

17. In the case of Africa, a major initiative has been the preparation of a 3 million Euro project proposal submitted to the European Commission and entitled "Enhancing the capacities of 15 African countries for a better implementation of the Ramsar Convention through wise use of wetlands". This proposal has been jointly prepared by the Bureau's Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation and the Regional Coordinator for Africa. The Wetlands International office based in Senegal is proposed as the implementing partner of this project. The 15 African Parties targeted in the project have been contacted during its preparation and all have expressed in writing their commitment to implement the project.

18. Uganda launched its Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan 2001-2010 on World Wetlands Day 2001. This may be the first case in which a country makes wetlands one of the key sectors in the overall strategy for poverty eradication. The financing of the Strategic Plan in the next 10 years contemplates 49% internal investment, 49% donor support and 2% contributions from other sources.

19. In relation to legislation and institutions, Chad has completed a study of the legislative framework and a proposal has been made for adoption of new laws and regulations on wetlands.

20. Concerning institutional arrangements, as a result of technical and financial support from the Ramsar Bureau (through the Swiss Grant for Africa), Guinea has established a National Wetland Committee and Chad has completed a review of institutions for wetland management with financial support from the Ramsar Small Grants Fund (SGF). Following visits by the Regional Coordinator, Madagascar has strengthened the Ramsar National Committee and Algeria and Senegal have expressed their willingness to establish National Wetland Committees. Morocco has recently established a National Wetland Committee and Niger has established a consultation process in order to involve the members of the National Wetland Committee in all aspects related to wetlands. Burundi has created a National Ramsar Committee, and Sudan has established a National Steering Committee to accelerate the process of accession.
21. Burundi, Guinea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, and Tanzania have received guidance from the Bureau for preparation of activities that involve the members of the National Wetland Committee. Togo received advice on the involvement of the National Wetland Committee in the implementation of the recommendations of the recent Ramsar Advisory Mission. Madagascar received advice in the formulation of the National Wetland Policy/Strategy and the formulation of the management plan for the Manambolomaty Ramsar site.
22. Benin has developed the first draft of its National Wetland Strategy; and a stakeholder meeting is planned for November 2001 to discuss and improve the draft. Kenya is proceeding with the development of a National Land Policy and a National Wetland Policy; Botswana has developed a National Wetland Policy with technical input from the Ramsar Bureau, which should be adopted by the government and the Parliament soon.
23. Zambia has produced the first draft of a National Wetland Strategy, with financial assistance from the Ramsar Swiss Grant for Africa. A workshop has recently examined the draft.
24. Concerning the integration of conservation and wise use of wetlands into national planning processes, land use and river basin management, six GEF projects are under preparation for management of wetlands in the Lake Chad Basin, including the whole Lake as a transboundary Ramsar site. Another GEF project is under preparation with selected Ramsar sites or potential Ramsar sites to be managed for the implementation of both the Ramsar Convention and the CMS/AEWA. This project is coordinated by Wetlands International and involves six African sites.
25. Discussions are under way with the Niger Basin Authority for innovative actions on the Niger River through GEF projects in five countries. WWF International, Wetlands International, and the Nigeria Conservation Society (NCF) are assisting the Authority in the so-called "Niger Basin Initiative".
26. The Bureau is proposing, through the Ramsar Swiss Grant for Africa, to support the key stakeholders' workshop in order to consider the designation of transboundary Ramsar sites in the Lake Malawi/Niassa/Nyasa basin. This will be done in

collaboration with WWF and the relevant institutions in Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

27. Turning to Asia, China announced at the end of 2000 that the China National Wetlands Conservation Action Plan has been published for implementation. The State Forestry Administration (SFA), as the focal point for implementation of the Ramsar Convention in China, announced that the Action Plan, after consultation among 17 Ministries/Commissions, has been approved by the State Council for immediate implementation.
28. Wetlands International has initiated a global programme for wise use training and capacity building in Asia, with the Ramsar Bureau as a partner.
29. The Ramsar Bureau has contributed to the Asian Wetland Symposium jointly organized by the Ramsar Centre Japan, Wetlands International Asia Pacific, and the Ministry of Environment, Malaysia, and participated in the Central Asian – Indian Flyway Workshop and Central Asian Outreach Workshop in Uzbekistan.
30. Concerning Europe, in April 2001 the Bureau published on the Ramsar Web site an overview of the progress made in the region with the development of National Wetland Policies and the establishment of National Ramsar/Wetlands Committees in 47 European countries, based on information provided by Contracting Parties in 1998-1999 and in their National Reports for COP7.
31. The UK announced Ramsar sites policies for England (on 14 November 2000) and Wales (on 2 February 2001) providing strong legal protection to these sites.
32. The Bureau contributed to an EU-WWF seminar held in Brussels in November 2000 on “The role of wetlands in river basin management” and to two meetings of the Ecology Experts Group of the Danube Convention (ICPDR) held in Budapest in February 2001 and Croatia in July 2001.
33. The Bureau also participated in two meetings of the Wetland Restoration Working Group of the International Navigation Association (PIANC). The guidelines prepared by the Working Group will be finalized in early 2002.
34. In the Neotropics, Colombia has approved its National Coastal and Ocean Policy and has drafted the national inland wetlands policy, which is ready for approval following a long consultation process. Costa Rica and Trinidad and Tobago have adopted their National Wetland Policies. The Bureau provided comments for the National Wetland Policy of Paraguay and its approval is pending.
35. Brazil has made serious efforts to get a National Wetland Committee going – Paraguay’s Committee was formed and is quite well organized under the auspices of a private foundation, the Fundación Bertoni.
36. Advice provided to Contracting Parties on the occasion of visits by the Regional Coordinator for the Americas included:

- 36.1 Trinidad & Tobago. Conversations were held with the administrative authority on issues related to the Nariva Swamp Montreux Record case, potential designation of two new Ramsar sites, the role of the regional representative for the Caribbean, communication and training opportunities in the region, non-contracting parties in the region, preparations for subregional meetings in preparation for COP8, and completion of Ramsar-funded projects in Trinidad, among other topics. Field visits were undertaken to the Nariva Swamp and to both wetland areas considered potential Ramsar sites (Bucco Bay and Caroni Swamp).
- 36.2 Chile. A workshop on the role of the private sector in the management of wetlands took place in Antofagasta, Chile. Conversations were held with the National Forests Corporation (CONAF) and the Head of the Environment Commission of Chile regarding the Chilean wetland strategy that is pending for approval from this office. Additionally, discussions were held on the possibility of carrying out a project to design a regional wetland strategy for the northern regions with the support of the private sector.
- 36.3 Argentina and Paraguay. The Bureau attended OAS' Hemispheric Conference on Reducing the Vulnerability of Trade Corridors to Social and Natural Disasters in the Latin American Region, followed by a visit to Asuncion, Paraguay, where a workshop on Ramsar issues took place with the newly-established National Wetland Committee. The visit included the Bureau and the South American representative in the Standing Committee, Argentina. Later the Bureau provided comments on the draft national wetland policy that was passed on for approval at the ministerial level.
- 36.4 Canada, Mexico and USA.. The Bureau attended the meeting of Canada/Mexico/US Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management. Discussions were held on: the Canadian Information System for Environment Taskforce; the priorities of the US for the upcoming year and new administration; Mexico's re-organization of the Environment Ministry (SEMARNAT) and the expected changes as a result of their new administration; possible US-Mexico joint designation of Laguna Madre as a Ramsar site; implementation of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA); Canada's funding of the North American wetland assessment; and a network of all Ramsar sites administrators/managers in North America with the purpose of reinforcing cooperation, exchange of information, and research protocols.
- 36.5 The Bureau was invited to participate in the US (NGO) Ramsar Committee annual meeting and make a presentation about key issues to consider in the forthcoming years in the Americas Region. Discussions were held with the American NGOs Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy about future plans for joint work. In addition, discussions were held with the Chair of the IUCN Commission on Protected Areas on future cooperation on marine protected areas with MAB and WHC. Information on all marine Ramsar sites was provided to the Commission to assist them with the identification of a site for a possible case study.

General Objective 3 of the Strategic Plan: Awareness of Wetland Values and Functions at All Levels

37. The Bureau has taken the following initiatives to assist Contracting Parties with the implementation of the Convention's Outreach Programme.
- 37.1 It has produced additional guidance presenting a variety of concepts, advice and practical tools aimed at assisting with a review or action planning exercise for wetland communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities. This has been developed in response to paragraph 9 of Resolution VII.9, which calls on Contracting Parties to "undertake a review of national needs, capacities and opportunities in the field of wetland CEPA, and based on this to formulate their National Wetland CEPA Action Plans for priority activities which consider the international, regional, national and local needs". The additional guidance has been distributed to all CPs in the three official languages and is available on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/outreach_reviewsactionplansI.htm.
- 37.2 An Outreach mini-web site has been established within the Ramsar Web site (http://ramsar.org/outreach_index.htm) with sections in each of the three official languages. The mini-web site contains sections on:
- Latest News from the CEPA Focal Points on implementation of the Outreach Resolution
 - Nominated Wetland CEPA Focal Points in Ramsar Contracting Parties
 - Additional Guidance on Reviewing and Action Planning for Wetland Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA)
 - National CEPA Action Plans
 - The Ramsar CEPA List (see below)
 - Wetland Education Centres
 - Resource Materials
- 37.3 The Bureau is operating the Ramsar CEPA List, an e-mail discussion group (one for each of the Convention's three languages) aimed at assisting CPs in exchanging wetland CEPA news, views, information and inspiration;
- 37.4 A Powerpoint presentation specifically on Ramsar and CEPA that National Focal Points has been developed and made available on request.
38. The Wetlands Link International (WLI) network of wetland centres should be re-launched by the end of the year. The Bureau has assisted by sending out a survey to CEPA Focal Points (or Administrative Authorities where there are no NFPs) to identify Wetland Education Centres in their countries and provide their contact details.
39. In total, 69 Contracting Parties have designated their government CEPA Focal Point and 53 their NGO CEPA Focal Point.
40. A workshop for European CEPA National Focal Points was held during the Ramsar European Regional Meeting in October 2001 to discuss further the needs and details of implementation of national CEPA programmes.

41. A good example of developments in this area is the inclusion in the textbook for the 6th grade in Japan, under the subject of environmental protection and humans, of a text related to wetlands and Ramsar. The textbook's article is accompanied by illustrations and by an additional page showing the Ramsar sites in Japan, with photos and a map, and explanatory text about the Convention.
42. In December 2000 and January 2001 there was a tremendous demand of the materials produced by the Bureau for World Wetlands Day 2001. The activities reported to the Bureau in celebrating the Day are listed in the Web site at http://ramsar.org/wwd2001_index.htm. For WWD 2002, with funds from the Evian Project, the Bureau has produced an attractive set of materials which has been dispatched to some 5000 addresses by the end of October 2001 (see DOC.26-17 and the Web site at http://ramsar.org/wwd2002_index.htm).
43. The Ramsar travelling exhibit has been reproduced on a set of eight big posters and was distributed to all CPs. The exhibition has proved to be very popular, and there has been considerable demand for it.
44. One issue of the Ramsar Bulletin was published during this year (in July).
45. The Ramsar Web site continues to be the main communications tool of the Convention and to receive very positive comments for its quality in design, content, and daily updating. As of September 2001, an average of 1,400 users were visiting the Web site per day (about 42,000 visitors per month), and more than 5,100 individual Web pages were being viewed per day (155,000 pages per month). The average user spends between 16 and 17 minutes on the Ramsar site per visit. The Bureau has been trying to obtain corporate sponsorship for its Web site in order to generate additional resources for the programme of outreach activities. Unfortunately, so far this has not been successful. Support from Standing Committee members on this matter will be welcome.
46. The Ramsar Bureau is preparing a high quality book showcasing the world's wetlands, a production made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Governments of Spain and Switzerland. The book, to be launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002, will be a photographic portrayal of the world's wetlands, with images chosen to illustrate the beauty, the vitality, productivity, and diversity of wetlands. While the book will have universal appeal, the primary target group is world leaders, including Heads of State, Ministers, Ambassadors and CEOs in the corporate sector. Anticipated to extend to approximately 150 pages, the book will contain a minimum of text in Spanish, French, and English, relying upon its photographs to convey the message that wetlands are community assets worth protecting through conservation and wise use. Accompanying the book will be a CD-ROM with a screen saver using the same images that are found in the book.
47. The Bureau issued the call for nominations for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award in July 2001, with deadline for nominations on 31 December 2001. The Award was established in 1996 by Resolution VI.18 in order to recognize and honor the contributions of individuals, organizations, and governments around the world towards promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It was awarded for the first time at the 7th Meeting

of the Conference of the Parties (San José, Costa Rica, 1999). The Standing Committee, in October 2000, revised the criteria and procedures for adjudicating the Award and determined to select three winners for presentation at the 8th Conference of the Parties. The Committee gratefully accepted the offer of the Danone Group (France) to complement the Ramsar Award with the Evian Special Prize, a cash prize of US\$ 10,000, which will be granted to each of the three laureates who will receive the Award at COP8.

48. The Europae Archaeologiae Consilium and the Centre for Wetland Research, UK, have published a book entitled “The Heritage Management of Wetlands in Europe” with a Foreword by Ramsar’s Deputy Secretary General. The Bureau has been in close consultations with the Council about the ways and means in which the Convention could assist in the conservation of the value of wetlands as archaeological archives.
49. The Bureau has continued distributing the Ramsar Tool Kit of eight handbooks on the wise use of wetlands. For example, 400 sets were distributed in the Neotropics, with a requests for reactions on the quality and usefulness of these tools.
50. In Africa, WWF’s Living Waters Campaign has assisted Algeria and Niger in the production of audio-visual materials on wetlands, and discussions are underway with the Niger Basin Authority for the production of video and other materials on the Niger River Basin.
51. The initiative on awareness on invasive species in Africa, jointly prepared with IUCN and other partners, has not moved forward as expected. Intensive consultation is underway with IUCN, OMPO, Wetlands International, the Center for African Wetlands (Accra, Ghana), CMS/AEWA, BirdLife International, and WWF International in order to reactivate the implementation of the initiative.
52. The Bureau is exploring with Wetlands International a possible collaboration on the preparation of a subregional communication strategy in West Africa.
53. Zambia has completed an SGF-funded project entitled “Wetlands, People, and Biodiversity”. The project set up a pilot Wetlands Outreach Programme in the Kafue Flats, one of the two Ramsar sites in Zambia. The Outreach Programme focused upon on promotion of local awareness and action concerning the cultural, ecological and economic value of wetlands. It included guided study tours into the area, production of educational materials and posters, a schedule of 13 weekly 15-minute radio programmes, a number of meetings and training workshops, and an inventory of income-generating activities which have an impact on the natural resources of the region. These form the basis for promoting community participation and action in sustainable development and environmental rehabilitation, such as stimulating discussion of environmental problems, development of ecotourism at a local level, thus also reducing poverty among the communities.
54. In Europe the Bureau has been involved in:
 - the Wetlands In Spatial Planning (WISP) Interreg EU-funded project regrouping Ramsar sites and other wetland protected areas in UK, Denmark, Sweden, Norway (i.e. around the North Sea) and working on management planning and visitor

management and best practice guidelines. The final meeting took place at Hornborga Ramsar site, Sweden, in April 2001;

- the Living Lakes Partnership on water management and traditions in lake areas; and
- the “Danube Water School” international educational programme, supported by Swarovski Ltd (Austria).

General Objective 4 of the Strategic Plan: Capacity Building

55. The Secretary General has continued to serve as chair of the Board of the International Courses on Wetland Management and on Wetland Restoration organized annually by RIZA in Lelystad, The Netherlands, and Bureau staff has lectured again at the 2001 Management course, as in the past. A similar course has been organized this year in Kenya.
56. A “Training Course on Wetland Management for Wetland Conservationists from the New Independent States of the European Region” was held on 9-23 September 2001 in Armenia. The course was intended for managers from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine. Staff of central and regional state environmental bodies, nature reserves, NGOs, research institutes and universities, international organizations, business, in total 19 participants, were in attendance. Financial support came from the Ramsar SGF and the Royal Dutch Embassy in Ukraine.
57. In Oceania, a training course on “Successfully integrating wetlands into multiple land-use planning frameworks” was held 3-10 June 2001 in Darwin, Australia, with participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Fiji, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand. This activity is part of the Australian Government’s initiative announced at COP6 in 1996, as a Ramsar 25th Anniversary pledge, to establish an Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers Training Program. The program has now been under way for nearly two years, operating out of the Northern Territory University in Darwin, and has supported training programs both in Darwin and ‘on-site’ in several countries of the region.
58. In Africa, OMPO (Western Palearctic Migratory Birds) has organized two training courses on wetland management with technical assistance from the Bureau and financial assistance from the Ramsar SGF. The courses were intended for wetland managers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Togo. A set of significant materials has been produced and it would be useful to disseminate these materials for a wider use by other Ramsar Contracting Parties.
59. Training has been provided by the Ramsar Bureau to the National Ramsar Committee of Mauritius on how to use the Ramsar guidelines on policy development and implementation, wetland management plan development and implementation, and strengthening community participation. One major lesson that materialized from the Mauritius visit is that a clear definition of wetlands is needed in each country because a good and common understanding of “what are wetlands” has a great impact on what people can or cannot do with their lands that include wetland ecosystems. The definition is also important because it helps to appreciate the real values of wetland ecosystems and consequently it can encourage decision-makers to translate this recognition into policy, laws and programmes.
60. An inventory training workshop was held in Uganda in December 2001. This was the second Ramsar African training session on National Wetland Inventory. It was intended

for English-speaking African officers and was funded from the Ramsar Swiss Grant for Africa. The first training session, attended by French-speaking Contracting Parties in Africa, was held in Cameroon in March 2000 and financed from the Evian Project. The participants decided to use the inventory system designed by MedWet.

61. Following an agreement signed by Libya and the MedWet Coordination, MedWet will provide training on wetland inventories to local staff, and will assist Libyan authorities in carrying out a national inventory.
62. In the framework of the GEF-FFEM MedWetCoast project, a training course on wetland inventories has been planned for early 2002 in Lisbon, focusing on the use of the MedWet Inventory System, in which technicians from six Mediterranean states will take part.
63. In Asia, Saudi Arabia has offered to host a Regional Training Course on Wetlands at their Environmental Training Center in Riyadh. The Bureau will pursue this offer.
64. China is implementing the SGF 1999 project, "Training Needs Assessment for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use". A progress report has been submitted.
65. The Bureau has participated in the preparation of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy/Action Plan for 2001-2005.
66. Nepal is developing and furnishing a wetlands centre in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) through the support of SGF 1999.
67. Within the framework of the Evian Project, the 4th Evian Encounter will take place in November 2001, this time for high level officials from Arab speaking countries, both Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties. Previous Evian Encounters have involved Latin America, English-speaking Africa, and French-speaking Africa.
68. In Europe, four SGF projects related to training have been completed in Bulgaria, Georgia, Latvia, and the Russian Federation, and three new projects have started in Armenia, Croatia/Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Moldova.
69. A National Training Course on the conservation and management of wetlands according to Ramsar principles took place in the Russian Federation, organized by the Wetlands International-Russia Programme with financial support from the Dutch Government.
70. In the Neotropics, a total of 23 projects were completed during the period under review, with the support of the Wetlands for the Future Initiative funded by the US Government. The completed projects were:

Argentina. a) "Wildlife techniques for monitoring wetland biodiversity and management of the littoral Mesopotamia of Argentina"- Short term training workshop to provide local professionals with knowledge on designing, conducting, interpreting and evaluating research projects concerning ecological integrity. b) "Planning, Preparation and Implementation of a permanent postgraduate course in wetland management and sustainable use in South America" - Successfully incorporated to the Wildlife Management Master Program of Cordoba University. 20 participants of different provinces attended the course. It was decided to implement more specific university level courses in the Master Program about the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the subtropical and temperate regions of South America. c) "Training workshops for the integrated management of

highland wetlands of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru: Introduction and coordination of ecological conditions and indicator species monitoring techniques.” - Training of technical staff in monitoring techniques and assessing alternatives of wise use for them to become trainers and coordinators of wetland management in the High Andes wetlands. d) “Wetlands used by Neartic migratory birds in Península Valdés, Patagonia, Argentina” – Field research on migratory birds in the Valdés Peninsula that resulted in 4 thesis, 7 university internships, a website, a database, science fair poster and documentary footage.

Brazil. a) “First Brazilian meeting on Ramsar sites” – Meeting of Brazilian decision-makers to brief them on the Ramsar Convention resolutions and recommendation for conservation and wise use of wetlands in Brazil, importance of wetlands in Brazil, cooperation among agencies for wise use of wetlands and initiating the procedure to form a national Wetland committee. b) “Mangroves dynamics in the Lagoon Estuarine Complex of Canaéia-Iguape, Sao Paulo” – Study on mangrove ecosystem, including the use of satellite images and aerial photographs. c) “Mangrove bark tannin and the artisanal earth cooking pans” - Study of the impact on mangroves of the extraction of their bark for the elaboration of paint used in local pottery confection. d) “Guidelines for Qualification of teachers of Public and Private Schools from Sepetiba Bay Region, with emphasis in the area of Guaratiba Biological and Archeological Reserve (Rio de Janeiro) aiming the establishment of Environmental Education programs” – Training in environmental education techniques for school teachers and NGOs, with emphasis on the importance of mangrove forests.

Chile. “Dissemination and implementation of the concept of wise use of highland wetlands (bofedales) in the Ayamaras communities of Chile’s first region” – Educating the Ayamara communities that depend on the highland wetlands by translating to their native language the relevant information, agreements and resolutions of the Ramsar Convention.

Costa Rica. a) “Promotion of the conservation of wetlands in Mesoamerica; Development of a public opinion movement” – Production and distribution of didactic material on ecological, social and economical importance of wetlands, including the elaboration of an exhibit to be moved throughout the region in museums and relevant meetings. b) “Local capacity building on the management and restoration of wetlands” – Workshops, field research and meetings to raise awareness among local communities neighboring the wetland system of the Lower Tempisque river. In support of ongoing restoration projects by the “Raices” Association. c) “Strengthening of communications in the Mesoamerica region as an instrument to improve the management and conservation of wetlands and coastal zones in the region” - Improve the quality of the services offered by the Documentation Center on Wetland and Coastal Zones, establishment of an user’s web in the Mesoamerican region and training for various sectors on wetlands, coastal zones and the use of the database. d) “Neotropical Centre for Wetland’s Training Workshops and other capacity building activities in wetland management in cooperation with NGOs and Universities”. Publication of “El beneficio de los Humedales en America Central: El Potencial de los humedales para el desarrollo” e) “Training in river bank and creek restoration techniques in Central America” - Training of 24 professionals from 6 Central American countries in restoration and integrated management techniques.

Ecuador. “Logistic support to field work by students of Guayaquil’s School of Biology” - Support of research activities on ecological processes that are applicable to the management of this wetland area, and simultaneously help provide training in wetland research methodologies. Six sub-projects were developed (each one with the participation of two students).

Guatemala. a) “Home page for the Bocas del Polochic Wildlife Refuge Ramsar Site” - To connect the BPWR to the Internet, in order to improve access to information on wetlands and protected areas in Guatemala, and to allow the establishment of contacts with people whose experience can be used to improve the management of the Refuge. b) “Firewood consumption study at the Bocas del Polochic Wildlife Refuge Ramsar site” - To better understand the current usage of firewood

from de BPWR, particularly in the community of El Estor, Izabal. The species mainly used were identified and a wise use plan will be developed for them.

Nicaragua. “Training for decision-makers of the Gran Lago Cocibolca municipality for the conservation and management of wetlands.” – A series of workshops with decision-makers of this important wetland ecosystem with the objectives of raising awareness of its economical and ecological value and identifying possible joint strategies to combat its deterioration.

Panama. “International Course on Design and analysis of biodiversity management projects” - With the participation of 4 national and 6 international instructors, training of 23 professionals and university students from 10 Latin American countries. Field work session took place in the Golfo de Montijo Ramsar Site.

Peru. “Workshop on wetland conservation and implementation of a capacity building action plan in Peru” - Training in wetland conservation for Ramsar site managers, government agency officials and NGOs, and production of a Capacity Building Action Plan for Peru.

Workshops. a) “Workshop on wetland conservation of the South-East Pacific Ramsar Sites” - 41 participants from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Wetlands International and the Ramsar Bureau attended the workshop. Each country presented a summary of its country report, highlighted priority areas of cooperation as well as possible priority sites for designation as Ramsar sites. b) “Central American Marine Turtle Workshop, Belize, 9-15 October 2000” – Organized by the ANAI Association, gathered 69 participants from around the world to plan strategies and activities for improving the status of sea turtle conservation and research in Central America. c) “Ramsar/SPAW Caribbean Training Workshop” – Attended by over 35 participants from 19 countries. Main objectives were to provide training on the implementation of the key Resolutions adopted by the last Conference of the Parties to Ramsar (COP7), and to analyze the obligations and advantages of being Parties to both the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention.

71. During the period under review, a total of 22 new projects were approved with the support of Wetlands for the Future Initiative.

General Objective 5 of the Strategic Plan: Effective conservation of sites included in the Ramsar List

72. The most significant development in relation to the conservation of Ramsar sites during the period under review was the decision by the Government of Germany to invoke Article 2.5 of the Convention, which allows a Party to reduce the boundaries of a site for reasons of urgent national interests, in a case involving the excision of 170 hectares (from a total of 675 hectares) of the Mühlenberger Loch Ramsar site, an extensive area of tidal mudflats on the Elbe River near Hamburg, to make room for expansion of the industrial complex of DASA (Airbus Industries). The key pieces of correspondence on this matter between the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Germany and the Bureau have been copied to Standing Committee members.
73. In summary, the developments have been as follows.
- 73.1 On the basis of information received at the Bureau to the effect that there were plans to excise a portion of this Ramsar site, the Secretary General expressed

concern about this situation in a letter to the Administrative Authority (AA) dated 25 November 1998. On 27 January 1999 the Bureau reiterated its concerns.

- 73.2 The AA replied on 11 February 1999 explaining how the issue was going to be dealt with within the context of the Habitats Directive of the European Union. The Bureau responded on 15 March 1999 requesting information on how the German Government was planning, in addition, to respond to the requirements of Articles 2.5, 3.1, 3.2 and 4.2 of the Ramsar Convention. On 5 July 1999 the Bureau received a reply indicating that the question of invoking “urgent national interests” was still pending, awaiting the applicant’s obtaining the planning permission.
- 73.3 After participating in a technical meeting organized by NGOs and a field visit to the site, the Regional Coordinator for Europe wrote to the AA on 14 October 1999 with a series of observations on the values of the site and on the process that had thus far been followed to choose a site for this industrial development.
- 73.4 On 18 October 1999 the Secretary General wrote to the Commissioner for the Environment in the European Commission expressing concerns about the future of the site. The Commissioner responded on 8 November 1999 informing the Bureau that the issue was following the due legal course within the Commission.
- 73.5 In an opinion delivered on 19 April 2000, the European Commission ruled that the adverse environmental impact of extending a factory belonging to the DASA group on the Mühlenberger Loch in Hamburg can be justified on the grounds of overriding public interest.
- 73.6 On 23 January 2001, the Administrative Authority wrote to the Bureau transmitting a letter from the German State of Hamburg, dated 11 December 2000 and also addressed to the Bureau, in which the State informed the Bureau that “the boundaries of the Mühlenberger Loch, which was designated a RAMSAR [*sic*] site with the diploma of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature on 9 June 1992 are to be changed in accordance with the project plans approved on 8 May 2000. This is expected to occur before the end of 2000”. The letter provided further information on the reduction of the area of the Ramsar site and included a copy of a plan for compensatory measures for the Deutche Airbus extension, as required by Article 4.2 of the Convention.
- 73.7 The Bureau responded on 16 February 2001: a) requesting, for the sake of good order, that the Federal Ministry should be the one formally communicating to the Ramsar Bureau Germany’s decision to reduce the boundaries of the Ramsar site in question and the proposed compensation; and b) elaborating in detail on the application of the “urgent national interests” clause and on the proposed compensation.
74. It should be noted that, in the meantime, the proposed development at the Mühlenberger Loch was challenged in court and the issue reached the highest court in Germany. The court passed judgement in favor of the continuation of the project.
75. After several exchanges with the AA, the Bureau, in collaboration with Germany’s Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, organized a

Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) on 24-26 September 2001 in order to examine the manner in which the “urgent national interests” clause in Article 2.5 was invoked and study the compensation measures proposed. Accompanying Ramsar’s Regional Coordinator for Europe were an international legal expert, David Pritchard of BirdLife International, and an expert on mudflats ecology, Dr Mike Pienkowski, in addition to a representative of the Federal Ministry, officials of the Hamburg Environment Authority, and representatives of the German NGO NABU/BUND.

76. The RAM report will point out general issues linked to Articles 2.5 and 4.2 and will analyse the case of the Mühlenberger Loch and the proposed compensation. The compensatory measures are at this stage far from being completed (in the legal, technical and scientific sense), and therefore the conclusions and recommendations of the RAM could still be of use in dealing with this case; they may also be useful, in a more general sense, for similar cases in other countries. The RAM report may already be available at the time of the Standing Committee meeting.
77. In a development also related to the “urgent national interests” clause of the Convention, the Government of the United Kingdom announced on 12 July 2001 its decisions on the first of its Multi-Modal Studies examining some of the most severe transport problems around the country. The study looked at transport issues in Kent and the area around Hastings in southeast England. Although the proposed highway bypasses would offer the opportunity for environmental improvement within Hastings, they would themselves cut through areas of designated high environmental value. Stephen Byers, Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, said: “Both ‘A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England’ and the Ten Year Plan provide a strong presumption against harming sensitive sites including sites of special scientific interest, AONBs and habitats given international protection. The requirements of the Ramsar convention would only permit damage to the Pevensey levels site in the ‘urgent national interest’ and the Ramsar policy statement issued by DETR in November 2000 makes it clear that derogation of the urgent national interest can be used only where there are no alternatives and the benefits of the development demonstrably outweigh the acknowledged international status of the site. In my view, the balance of the arguments presented in favour of the bypasses is not sufficient to outweigh these very strong environmental requirements. I believe, therefore, we must look for alternative means to prevent the further decline of the area and to optimise its economic potential.”
78. Subsequently, in a letter of 23 September 2001, the UK invoked its urgent national interests to construct flood defence works affecting the Humber Flats and Marshes Ramsar site. In addition to disturbance caused during the works, the extension of the existing wall will cause a direct loss of 0.15 hectares of mudflats. The letter indicates that “in accordance with the Ramsar Policy statement which was published last year, an assessment of these proposals has been carried out and the advice of English Nature sought on the implications of these schemes for the conservation objectives of the site. The assessment concluded that these schemes in combination would adversely affect the integrity of the Humber Flats and Marshes Ramsar site. Notwithstanding the negative outcome of the assessment, the UK authorities have concluded that these works should be approved in the urgent national interest. They are satisfied that there is no less damaging alternative solution that would deliver a satisfactory level of coastal defence”. The letter also contains details about the compensation measures being envisaged. The Bureau has not yet responded to this communication, but on first evaluation it would seem that the

UK government has taken all the necessary steps to follow the letter and spirit of the Convention.

79. Attached as Annex II is a report from the Ramsar Sites Database Manager at Wetlands International on the status of the database. As indicated in the report, progress has continued in the development and updating of the database, with 351 Web pages devoted to it in the Web site of Wetlands International (www.wetlands.agro.nl/rdb.htm). In addition, the on-line version of the 1999 edition of the Directory of Ramsar sites is a “living document”, constantly updated. The database staff maintains a running detailed assessment of the status of Ramsar site Information Sheets (RIS) and site maps, and has prepared and maintains an assessment of the status of designation of under-represented wetland types.
80. As indicated in the report, the Ramsar Database Unit continues to provide extensive information servicing to the Ramsar Bureau and a wide external audience, including Contracting Parties, international organizations, academia, NGOs, and independent experts.
81. The Bureau and Wetlands International have continued their efforts to increase the quality of the information on Ramsar sites, in particular in relation to the implementation of paragraphs 14-18 of Resolution VII.12 calling on a number of Parties to submit missing or incomplete information on their Ramsar sites and/or to update the information concerning sites that have been designated before 31 December 1990.
82. In Africa, no progress has been made with the updating of Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) of sites that were designated prior to 31 December 1990. In conjunction with Wetlands International, a list of wetlands that need updated RISs and maps has been established and the Bureau has sent a letter to the concerned CPs.
83. The Bureau has continued to work with countries that have recently joined the Convention and whose RIS of the first Ramsar site was not completed.
84. In Europe, all CPs were contacted based on an analysis of the quality of Ramsar site information (RISs and maps) held at the Bureau, with a request to update or send missing information, when necessary.
85. Concerning the Montreux Record of Ramsar sites “where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference”, the following developments have taken place:
 - 85.1 Algeria has included the Oasis de Ouled in the Montreux Record.
 - 85.2 Argentina included Lagunas de Llanquanelo in the Record.
 - 85.3 Bulgaria. A RAM was sent to the Srebarna Ramsar Site, in conjunction with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, October 2001, to consider possible removal from the Record.
 - 85.4 India has requested the removal of the Chilika Lake Ramsar site from the Montreux Record. After discussion in the STRP, the Bureau is planning a RAM at the end of this year to study the question.

- 85.5 Iran. The Bureau has discussed with the AA the possibility of including the four sites selected for the GEF project in the Montreux Record.
 - 85.6 Mauritania is planning to include the Parc National du Diawling in the Record.
 - 85.7 Senegal has updated the information on Djoudj, following a RAM mission in September 2000, and is undertaking an action plan to control invasive species in the Ramsar site.
 - 85.8 Togo. A RAM was carried out in the Parc National de la Keran. Togo is planning to include the site in the Record.
 - 85.9 The UK has included the Ouse Washes Ramsar site in the Record, and a RAM will be sent in November 2001.
86. RAMs were sent to the following two Ramsar sites, even though they are not in the Montreux Record: Delta del Ebro, Spain, and the Shumava Peatlands, Czech Republic. The reports of the Missions are available on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/index_ram.htm.
 87. A seminar and on-the-spot appraisal was organized in Georgia concerning the Kulevi petrol port development inside the Central Kolkheti Ramsar site in Georgia. Contacts are being maintained with the Administrative Authority about compensation measures and a possible RAM in 2002.
 88. No reports have been received from the following European CPs with sites in the Montreux Record: Austria (Donau-March-Auen); Belgium (De Ijzerbroeken te Diksmuide en Lo-Renige; Schorren van de Beneden Schelde); Bulgaria (Durankulak Lake, Srebarna); Croatia (Kopacki Rit); Denmark (Ringkøbing Fjord); Germany (Wattenmeer, Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer & Dollart); Greece (Amvrakikos gulf, Axios, Loudias, Aliakmon delta, Kotychi lagoons, Lake Vistonis, Porto Lagos, Lake Ismaris & adjoining lagoons, Lakes Volvi & Koronia, Messolonghi lagoons, Nestos delta & adjoining lagoons); Italy (Stagno di Cagliari, Stagno di Molentargius); Poland (Jezioro Siedmiu Wysp, Slonsk Reserve); Spain (Tablas de Daimiel); and Ukraine (Karkinitzki & Dzharylgatska Bays, Tendrivska Bay, Yagorlytska Bay).
 89. In the Neotropics, all Contracting Parties in the region with sites listed in the Montreux Record were contacted. Guatemala informed the Bureau that it considers that the El Tigre site should stay in the Record for the time being and that it is seeking funding to cope with the existing threats.
 90. Trinidad & Tobago has requested the removal of the Nariva Swamp from the Montreux Record. The Bureau responded that, while recognizing the Forestry Division's efforts in tackling the major concerns at this Ramsar site, and considering the important role of the new National Wetland Policy in the continuation of the Nariva Swamp recovery and management, its recommendation was that the site should be removed from the Montreux Record only when the National Wetland Policy has been approved by the government.
 91. Concerning changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites in Africa, complaints were received as follows:
 - 91.1 Botswana. The Bureau received communications from NGOs expressing concerns about the strategy that Botswana has adopted for the control of tsetse flies in the Okavango Delta, which involves extensive aerial spraying of insecticide within the

Delta. The Bureau wished to know how this spraying activity will affect the Ramsar site and expressed its concerns through a letter sent to the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Botswana. The Ramsar Bureau has suggested that the issue be given more attention in the ongoing design mission toward an integrated management plan for the Okavango Delta. The Bureau suggested the consideration of whether the planned spraying constitutes an activity “likely to cause change in the ecological character” of the Ramsar site, and urged the AA to consider Resolution VI.1 concerning the procedure for Montreux Record listing under such circumstances relating to Article 3.2 of the Convention text. The Bureau expects to receive an update of the whole strategy and the official position of the Ministry regarding this matter.

- 91.2 Morocco. The Ramsar Bureau has received a publication on Morocco’s wetlands and birds. The study identifies 14 key sites that are vital to the conservation of threatened waterbirds at national and international levels: four coastal wetlands, four Middle Atlas lakes, three large reservoirs and three other interior wetlands. These 14 Key Sites are of great value for other aquatic life as well, especially the most important sites for Crested Coot, an indicator of freshwater hotspots of aquatic biodiversity. Two of these wetlands are Ramsar sites (Lac d’Afennourir and Merja Sidi Boughaba), eight of these wetlands are unprotected, and at least six are in great danger of losing their value within a decade if specific conservation action is not taken. The study’s calculations show for example that about 44% of the area of mountain lakes have been destroyed over the past 20 years. The Ramsar Bureau has also received indications from one NGO expressing concerns on the ongoing degradation of wetlands in Morocco, including Ramsar sites. The Ramsar Bureau is now requesting the position of the government about these concerns and hopes to receive an official position and the actions that are planned in this matter.
92. Issues related to changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands in Asia were as follows:
- 92.1 Bangladesh. The Bureau received information that the ecosystem of Sundarbans wetland, which is located around the mouth of River Passur facing the Bay of Bengal, is under threat from oil exploration activities. This mangrove forest is the first Ramsar Site in Bangladesh and, according to the information received, the development activity may have a negative effect on the hydrological system of the Sundarbans and their adjacent area. The Bureau expressed its concerns through a letter sent to the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Bangladesh. The AA informed the Bureau that the issue was discussed in the several meetings with other concerned Ministries in Bangladesh and they assured the Ministry of Environment and Forest that no exploration activities would be carried out within the Sundarbans forest. They also informed the Bureau that they had placed a strong objection in writing to the Ministry of Energy and asked them to clarify the factual position about the agreement between the Shell Oil Company and the Ministry of Energy on oil and gas exploration, and informed them that it may affect the Ramsar site.
- 92.2 China. The Ramsar Bureau has received information through WWF-Hong Kong and some local NGOs that the ecosystem of Long Valley wetland, which is located at the Shenzhen River catchment opening, is under threat due to a planned railway project. This wetland area leads to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site in Hong

Kong, and, according to the information received, the development activity might have a negative effect on the hydrological system of the Mai Po Marshes and their adjacent area. This issue was reported to the Standing Committee in 2000, but the Bureau has not received any further information from the Administrative Authority.

- 92.3 China. The Bureau received information through WWF-Hong Kong and some local NGOs about the intertidal marsh ecosystem at Seac Pai Wan, located between the Islands of Taipa and Coloane, Macau, is under threat due to current road construction and land reclamation work. According to information received, this development activity may be seriously damaging the hydrology and ecology of this important coastal tidal wetland system. The Bureau drew attention to the stipulation under the Convention's Article 3.1 to employ the "wise use" principle for all wetlands. The Bureau also referred to the COP's Resolution VII.21 on *Enhancing the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands* and to Resolution VII.16 concerning *The Ramsar Convention and impact assessment*. The Bureau expressed these concerns through a letter sent to the focal point in the Department of International Cooperation, State Forestry Administration, with a copy to the chief executives of the regions. The AA has informed the Bureau that Macau's Administration has indicated that the Seac Pai Wan marsh between the islands of the Taipa and Coloane would provide 600 ha of land after reclamation. Macau's rate of population increase is among the highest in the world, but the government gave adequate consideration to equilibrium between the need for urban and economic development and for environmental protection. A conservation zone with ecological conditions will be created. The total area for greening and the ecological zones will occupy as much as 60% of the total planned area.
- 92.4 Japan. Some time ago, the Bureau expressed concerns about the threat to the ecosystem of Isahaya Bay and Tidal flats, located in Nagasaki Prefecture, due to the Isahaya Bay Reclamation Project. This Project covers an area of 3,550 hectares of upper Isahaya Bay, which has been enclosed by a sea wall barrier, and within that enclosure there is a proposal for the construction of an inner seawall in order to create 1,840 hectares of agricultural land and a 1,710-hectare reservoir. According to information received, this development has caused some negative effect on the hydrology and ecology of this coastal wetland system. Subsequently, the Bureau received information to the effect that the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment have decided to review the Isahaya reclamation project, and that the sea walls were going to be opened on an experimental basis. The Bureau wrote to the Minister of the Environment expressing satisfaction with these developments.
- 92.5 Republic of Korea. The Bureau had received information through NGOs that the ecosystem of the Saemangeum mud flats, which are located between the Mankyung and Donggin Rivers, could be under threat due to a planned 33 km-long sea dike construction project. According to the information, this development activity may have a negative effect on the hydrology and ecology of this coastal wetland system. These mud flats host a variety of migratory birds as a key staging and wintering point on their long-distance migrations. The information indicated that more than 50% of the bird population of the Republic of Korea visit this wetland system. The Bureau expressed its concerns through a letter to the Minister of Environment with copies to other concerned Ministries and our focal point. The Bureau has received a general

circular letter with a brochure about the reclamation project, justifying the need of reclamation of wetland area for food production and water storage.

- 92.6 Sri Lanka. The Bureau had received information through our partner organization and local NGO that the ecosystem of Bundala Ramsar site, which is located towards the western part of Habantota District, is under threat due to development activity including banana cultivation in the buffer zone of the National Park and illegal shell mining within the protected area. The Bureau expressed concerns in a letter to the Administrative Authority about the possible negative impacts on the site, because these lagoons provide subsistence fisheries to the inhabitants in the periphery. Cattle grazing and ecotourism are also economic benefits for the local communities living around the Bundala wetland. After a number of exchanges with the AA, resources from an SGF project are being applied to minimize the threats and pressure of the local community through education and awareness programmes and assessment of the biodiversity of the wetland.
93. Concerning changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites in the Neotropics, complaints were received from several NGOs regarding the following sites:
- 93.1 Argentina, Lagunas de Llanquanelo. Following last the situation reported last year case, the Administrative Authority requested the inclusion of Llanquanelo in the Montreux record, as well as RAM to the site, now scheduled for the end of October 2001.
- 93.2 Ecuador, Isla Santay. The Administrative Authority was contacted and indicated that the proposed recreational and touristic project approved for the site will be in accordance with Ramsar guidelines for wetland management, including community participation before and after its establishment, as long as it complies with the Environmental Impact Study and the Management Plan.
- 93.3 Honduras, Sistema de Humedales de la Zona Sur. In a continuation of a case that began last year, the developer of the shrimp aquaculture project in El Carey, Ramsar site No.1000, has been fined with the largest ever fine for environmental damage of one million Lempiras and has been ordered to restore the site as he found it initially.
- 93.4 Trinidad, Nariva Swamp. A complaint was received regarding a tourist development in the site, which would cause serious damage to the site. The AA was contacted and informed the Bureau that the Minister has been advised on what actions to take to prevent the possible damage.
- 93.5 Venezuela, Ciénaga de los Olivitos. The Administrative Authority was contacted and informed the Bureau that they responded to the NGO by clarifying that the actions of the salt extraction operation at the site are authorized and in accordance with their national legislation.
94. Twelve CPs in Europe were contacted concerning Resolution VII.12, paragraph 37 (changes in ecological character of Ramsar sites reported at COP7); responses have been received so far from three of them: Czech Republic, Hungary, and the UK.

95. In the area of Ramsar site restoration, following discussion with the Ramsar Bureau Algeria is planning to undertake a restoration scheme for one of the newly designated Ramsar sites in the Algerian Sahara: the Oasis de Ouled Saïd. The need for a special intervention is perceived as an urgent matter. One of the reasons for the designation of this site was to raise awareness of the values of the site but also to reach a consensus on the need to undertake a programme for a management plan that includes actions aimed at removing the threats to the site. The major threat to this site is caused by wind erosion with sand dune intrusion on the site.
96. Greece is proceeding with a large project for the restoration of Lake Carla in the centre of the country (completely drained in the 1960s to convert the area into agriculture land), with EC funds. The ecological merits of this restoration scheme have not yet been assessed.
97. Spain is carrying out a multimillion-dollar hydrological restoration project at the Doñana Ramsar site, the Doñana 2005 Project; discussions are under way on the possibility of sending a RAM to review the progress made with the project.
98. In the USA, the Congress approved nearly 8 billion US dollars for a long-term restoration project for the Everglades Ramsar site.
99. Also in the USA, the US National NGO Ramsar Committee maintains small grants awards for actions in US Ramsar sites. Seven U.S. Ramsar sites received small grants averaging US\$ 1500 in the first round of the Program in 2001, which is financed by the Committee with matching funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
100. In relation to management plans for Ramsar sites in Asia, Iran has completed the PDF-B phase of the GEF funded project. The Bureau has acted as international service provider and as a member of the project Steering Committee. Four Ramsar sites have been selected for the preparation and implementation of management plans, including CEPA programmes. The country is also preparing an Integrated Management Plan for the Hara Biosphere Reserve with financial support from the SGF 1999.
101. Lebanon is developing a viable economic framework for the management of Ammiq and Tyre wetlands with the support of SGF 2000, and Cambodia is implementing a project on the Development and Implementation of a Management Plan for the Boeung Chhmar Ramsar Site, also funded through SGF 2000. Nepal has submitted a draft management plan for Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Buffer Zone which is a part of the project supported by SGF 1999. The Bureau has provided comments on the draft plan. The Philippines has provided a draft management plan for the Nuajan Lake National Park prepared with support through SGF 1998.
102. Armenia completed a project entitled "Implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan in the management of wetlands in Sevan National Park", which was a follow-up to the SGF 1997 project "Inventory of Armenian Ramsar Sites", with a focus on the Lake Sevan Ramsar Site. During the SGF97 project, the threats and values of Armenia's main wetlands were assessed, and based upon these findings, six draft management plans were elaborated for wetlands in Sevan National Park.
103. Bulgaria completed the SGF-funded project "Development and Implementation of a

Management Plan for Lake Srebarna Ramsar Site”. The project resulted in a management plan (in both Bulgarian and English), elaborated by the best Bulgarian experts and based on a comprehensive monitoring program of physical, chemical and biological features. The most significant parts of the Plan were discussed with the main stakeholders and their recommendations incorporated in the final version.

104. Latvia completed the SGF-funded project “Measures to improve the Management of the Teici Nature Reserve Ramsar site and surrounding wetlands”. During the project implementation, the Teici Wetland Foundation (TWF) was established as the financial instrument for purchasing/leasing and managing land for nature conservation around the Teici Reserve Ramsar site. The SGF project contributed to the purchase of two most valuable land properties in Teici and provided seed money for future work.
105. The Russian Federation completed the SGF-funded project “Development of a monitoring programme and draft management plans for the four Ramsar sites located on the Kamchatka Peninsula”. The management plans have been elaborated according to the Ramsar guidelines for management planning and contain information about the state of biological diversity and nature resource users for the four sites.
106. Spain has prohibited lead shot in protected wetlands. The ban came into force on 1 October 2001 and applies both to Ramsar sites and to other wetlands protected under regional or national legislation. This includes the great majority of key sites for marbled teal, white-headed duck, and wintering waterbirds in general. The Royal Decree has been challenged in court of the Spanish Hunters Association. The Bureau has written to the Minister of Environment offering it support in the court case.
107. Through the MedWetCoast project, management measures are being developed for 15 sites in five states (Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia) and the Palestinian Territories, following a detailed diagnosis of each site.
108. In the Neotropics, Peru completed the SGF project “Participatory elaboration of the Master Plan for the Junín National Reserve Ramsar Site”, and Trinidad & Tobago the emergency assistance project “Nariva Swamp – Rehabilitation of the Block B area”. Further fund allocations from the government of Trinidad & Tobago and continuation of the works are expected.
109. IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) is working with WRI and other agencies to develop a Protected Areas Learning Network, to help policy makers and area managers adapt their policies, strategies, and practices to the threats and opportunities posed by global change. The core purpose of this project is to work with on-going field sites where local partners are experimenting with options for dealing with climate change, sea level rise, fragmentation, decentralization, and other factors of change. The project is giving special priority to sites that are part of the World Heritage, MAB, Ramsar, and other established networks of “hot spots” for biodiversity conservation. The target/stakeholders are policy makers and area managers, and the CBD (article 8) at CBD COP7 in 2004. They have expressed an interest to work with Ramsar, and specifically, to focus one or more of the Field Learning Sites on Ramsar sites of high biodiversity value. The Bureau has responded positively and suggested a number of Ramsar sites.

110. The Participatory Management Networking Service, a joint service of IUCN, the Ramsar Bureau and WWF, managed by the IUCN Social Policy Group, has changed its name to the Participatory Management Clearinghouse and has made a great deal of progress in assembling abstracts and references for published materials sorted into the categories: Collaborative Management, Indigenous Peoples Management, and Community-based Management, cross-referenced by regional emphases and cross-cutting themes. The Internet-based resource project was endorsed by Ramsar Standing Committee Decision SC25-8 and continues to make progress. The Web site is at <http://iucn.org/themes/pmns/>.

General Objective 6 of the Strategic Plan: Designation of New Ramsar Sites

111. In the period under review, 72 new Ramsar sites were designated and the area of three sites has been enlarged. This represent 8,867,338 hectares of new Ramsar area. As of 31 October 2001, there are 1107 sites in the Ramsar List, covering 87,230,796 hectares. This represents more than double the number of sites that were included in the List in the previous year (31) and over two million hectares more of newly-designated area in comparison with the previous year.
112. Annex I contains the list of new inclusions in the List. Twelve new sites correspond to the seven new Contracting Parties. Additions to the List by the other Contracting Parties were as follows: Africa 16 (none in the previous year); Asia 17 (6 in the previous year); Europe 17 and 3 extensions (8 in the previous year, of which 7 were in the UK and now 6); Neotropics 5 (9 in the previous year); Oceania 4 (one extension and no new sites in the previous year); and North America 1 (none in the previous year).
113. In addition, India and Argentina have submitted RISs to designate five and one new Ramsar sites respectively. These are in the process of verification by the Bureau. Sweden has indicated that the RISs for 20 new Ramsar sites have now been approved for transmission to the Bureau.
114. These figures indicate that Contracting Parties have been more active in designating Ramsar sites and in delivering their pledges at COP7 (almost 400 new sites were pledged by 56 CPs). Yet more effort is still required if the Convention is to achieve the target agreed upon at COP7 of having 2000 sites in the List at the time of COP9 in 2005.
115. Concerning under-represented wetland types in the Ramsar List, the Slovak Republic designated a subterranean karst system and Hungary designated one adjoining cave-karst, making this a transboundary site. The other under-represented types, such as mangroves, coral reefs, peatlands and seagrass beds, were not included in the new designations.
116. A Symposium on mountain wetlands was held March 2001 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention and the 40th anniversary of the World Wide Fund for Nature. It was sponsored by the Government of France and WWF and funded through the Evian project. A selected number of Contracting Parties from mountain regions were invited. The Symposium generated draft guidelines for the designation of mountain wetlands as Ramsar sites (see DOC.26/COP8-12).
117. Georgia submitted the final report for the SGF-funded project "Conservation of Javakheti Plateau wetlands in Southern Georgia". During the project, most of the important lakes in

Southern Georgia meeting the Ramsar Criteria have been identified for potential inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance. All the stakeholders have been involved in elaboration of draft management plans for Lakes Khanchali, Madatapa, and Bugdasheni during the project. In order to protect the highly threatened transboundary alpine and subalpine wetland ecosystems in Georgia and Turkey, Georgia is looking forward to future cooperation with Turkey to designate a transboundary Ramsar site in the area.

118. The Bureau wishes to express its particular appreciation to WWF's Living Waters Campaign, which has made Ramsar sites designation the keystone of its actions, assisting in the designation of very significant sites in Africa, Asia, and the Neotropics, including, for example, the 10 new sites in Algeria and the Bolivian sector of the Pantanal.
119. In October 2001, BirdLife International published an exhaustive inventory of "Important Bird Areas and potential Ramsar Sites in Europe" as an inspiration to CPs to achieve the global target of designating 2000 Ramsar sites by the year 2005.

General Objective 7 of the Strategic Plan: International Cooperation

120. Cooperation with the four International Organization Partners – BirdLife International, IUCN–The World Conservation Union, Wetlands International, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – has continued to represent a very important asset for the Convention. They have made contributions in all areas of the Convention's work: policy and legislation, Ramsar site designations, participation in Ramsar Advisory Missions and contributions to their costs, contributions to the STRP work, development and implementation of field projects, launching of new initiatives, financing of projects submitted to the Ramsar SGF, and active participation in the Ramsar Regional Meetings.
121. The Bureau produced in early 2001 a report on "Ramsar and Agenda 21" for submission to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) for the review and assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This 100-page paper reviews the history and contributions of the Convention on Wetlands in terms of seven of the "thematic review clusters" (decision-making structures, major groups, EPA and training, marine and coastal, freshwater resources, biodiversity and sustainable use, and UNCED-related and other conventions). Each chapter reviews Ramsar progress and global contributions in the appropriate categories, with case studies and supplementary examples, and ends with lists of Rio+10 challenges for Ramsar and recommended "course corrections" for the post-Rio+10 process. Copies of the report were sent to all Contracting Parties, inviting them to take it into account in their preparations for the World Summit (see DOC.SC26-6 (b)).
122. The Bureau has continued to attach a very high priority to its cooperation with the other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), based on two main considerations: a) if the MEAs work in close synergy, this should facilitate their implementation by Contracting Parties; and b) on the ground, the issues and problems are all interconnected and as a consequence the conventions would achieve their respective aims more effectively if they promote and support a holistic approach.
123. Having said that, the Bureau is finding that: a) it is not always easy to establish a fluid and effective cooperation for a number of reasons, including the different *modus operandi* and

governing structures and the different “cultures” that each convention has developed over the years; b) synergies will require more time than expected, and more political commitment from the Contracting Parties, before bearing fruit; and c) practicing synergies requires considerable staff involvement: the Ramsar Bureau, with its present level of staff and funding, feels that it is reaching its limits on its capacity to establish joint actions and programmes with other conventions and institutions.

124. This issue is also addressed in DOC.26-6 (a) about the process related to International Environmental Governance. Documents DOC.26-6 (b) and (c) provide more details about the Bureau’s involvement with the preparatory process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (South Africa, September 2002) and the Ecosystem Management Group established by the UN General Assembly.
125. On the issues of harmonized reporting on the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, the Bureau attended a UNEP Biodiversity Planning Support Programme Workshop on Legislative Complementarity and Harmonisation of Biodiversity-related MEAs, held in London 21-23 May 2001. The workshop was also attended by CBD, CITES, CMS, and WHC, Chile, Cuba, Ghana, Hungary, India, Kenya, Peru, and UK. The key issues discussed were how to harmonize between the conventions on biodiversity planning, legislative measures, institutional framework, and public education and awareness. A set of guidelines will be published as an outcome of this workshop.
126. In addition, UNEP has taken responsibility for undertaking a limited number of trials of harmonized reporting in a number of countries. This issue has also been taken up by the Environment Management Group established by the UN General Assembly. A more detailed report on this matter is contained in DOC. SC26-6 (c).
127. A third Ramsar/CBD Joint Work Plan is in preparation. More details on this issue are contained in DOC.SC26-5.
128. The Bureau continues to contribute to the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, which is now acting as the regional mechanism for the application of CBD. A CBD regional conference on “Biodiversity in Europe” is planned for Budapest in February 2002.
129. In the Neotropics, the Bureau has discussed with CBD the linking into a Clearing House Mechanism to serve the educational and technical needs of the region, use of Ramsar designations as a conservation tool for marine ecosystems, a network of experts in marine protected areas, coral reef ecosystems, meeting with other conventions (CITES, Climate Change, CBD) in preparation for Rio+10 activities, sharing the results of ICZM work by the STRP, and closer collaboration with the Global Programme of Action for Activities on Land-based Sources of Pollution, with which CBD has an MOU.
130. Also in the Neotropics, discussions were held with The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International (US-based NGOs), the South-East Pacific Commission, CMS and the Desertification Convention Secretariat, regarding possible areas of cooperation in the region. Contacts were also made with the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), established in the framework of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), concerning possible cooperation with Ramsar on their Marine Protected Areas network programme.

131. During the period under review, the Bureau has signed new Memoranda of Understanding or Cooperation with:

- the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
- (ICPDR)
- the Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention)
- the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)
- Ducks Unlimited (USA, Canada, and Mexico)

Note: The texts of all agreements signed by the Bureau can be found on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/index_mou.htm.

132. The Bureau attended for the first time the annual meeting of the Subcommittee on Water Resources of the United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). The ACC is the UN mechanism that tries to ensure coordination within the UN system, and the Subcommittee on Water Resources, as the name indicates, coordinates the work of the UN family in the area of water. Some 15 agencies are members of the Subcommittee, which has been in existence for some 30 years. It would take time to develop a relationship with the agencies, but the Subcommittee provides important windows of opportunities that Ramsar could use, in particular in the area of education and capacity building. Many of the agencies are very involved in curriculum development in order to include water-related issues in the educational systems and in capacity building. If Ramsar works with them, it should be possible to include the Convention's concerns, in a manner that will be very difficult, if not impossible, to do on its own.
133. In the Mediterranean, the Convention participates through MedWet in the Global Water Partnership (GWP-Med), in which MedWet has been designated as one of its core members. MedWet is now responsible for carrying out a number of activities in the context of the Work programme of GWP-Med, as well as for designing an Associated Programme on Water, Food and Environment.
134. On the basis of the MoU between the Barcelona Convention and Ramsar, MedWet participates in the Mediterranean Committee on Sustainable Development and works closely with the regional activities centres of UNEP/MAP (mainly RAC/SPA, PAP/RAC and Plan Bleu), in areas such as inventories, water, training, Libyan wetlands, and the SAP/BIO GEF project.
135. The Convention, through the MedWet Unit, has played a catalytic role in the establishment of the Coordinating Committee for the tri-national Prespa Park in Albania, Greece, and The FYR of Macedonia, and has been named permanent member of the Committee. The Committee, involving representatives of the governments and NGOs from the three countries, has already met three times and is working on different aspects of a sustainable development plan for the area, including the preparation of a Strategic Action Plan and the development of a large GEF project through UNDP.

136. In the same area of the Balkans, collaboration has begun between Greece and The FYR of Macedonia for Dojran Lake and among Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey for Evros / Maritsa / Meric River, with the assistance of MedWet.
137. Efforts for collaboration assisted by MedWet have also started between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia on the Neretva River, and between Albania and Montenegro on Shkodra Lake.
138. MedWet has taken the initiative to establish a network of regions (sub-national units), assisted in a first phase by the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat. Already eight regions of France, Italy, and Spain participate and are developing a joint Interreg project. Two additional networks (for wetland sites and for national NGOs involved in wetlands) are being established.
139. In Portugal, the government has announced the establishment of a national wetland centre, which will collaborate closely with MedWet and participate in its Technical Network, focusing on inventory issues.
140. In similar developments in Europe, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Austria have signed a memorandum of cooperation for the Ramsar site in the Dyie-Morava floodplains, and an agreement on cooperation in establishing and running a Ramsar centre in Trebon (Czech Republic) was signed between Austria and the Czech Republic. Three Ramsar sites are situated within this crossborder area. The Ramsar centre in Schrems is planned as a cooperation between nature conservation, environmental conservation, tourism and agriculture.
141. The Bureau is contributing to the establishment of a Baltic Wetlands Initiative (BaltWet) through the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) Habitat Group, and to the further development of a Draft Agreement on Cooperative Linkages on Coastal Wetlands and Waterbird Habitats between Ramsar and HELCOM.
142. The Bureau and the MedWet Coordination Unit are also supporting the establishment of a Black Sea Wetlands Initiative (BlackWet), spearheaded by Wetlands International. Strong support for this initiative was provided by the eight Black Sea range states (Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine) during the recent Ramsar Pan-European Meeting (Bled, Slovenia, 13-18 October 2001).
143. A Ramsar/Man and the Biosphere joint Web site was unveiled on World Wetlands Day 2001. In a press release issued on this occasion, the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, announced the launch of a new joint Web site dedicated to providing accurate information on the world's wetland sites that are both Biosphere Reserves under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The new Web site, hosted by MAB, has brief texts and links to longer texts on each of the 60 sites that are inscribed in both Lists.
144. In Asia, the Bureau contributed to the Central Asian-Indian Flyway workshop, jointly organized by the CMS Secretariat and Wetlands International, and participated (and provided financial support to five participants from developing countries) in the Asian Wetland Symposium, jointly organized by the Ramsar Centre Japan, the Ministry of

Environment of Japan and the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment of Malaysia.

145. Concerning international cooperation in the field of financial assistance, the Senior Advisor on Environment and Development Cooperation has undertaken the following actions:
 - 145.1 has contacted all 16 OECD/DAC development cooperation agencies (some of them several times) to seek support for the Ramsar Trust Fund but with very limited results (see DOC. SC26-12 on the Trust Fund). He also met personally with several donor representatives during the IUCN donors meeting;
 - 145.2 prepared *Guidelines on project identification, preparation and drafting*, which were translated into the three Ramsar working languages and distributed to all developing countries and countries in transition;
 - 145.3 provided advice and supported several IUCN wetland projects for submission to the EU environment budget line;
 - 145.4 provided advice and revised a number of wetland projects from Ramsar CPs and helped to identify funding sources;
 - 145.5 prepared the draft of Ramsar Trust Fund proposal, circulated it broadly and consulted with several partners and experts on how to best create the Fund;
 - 145.6 visited the European Commission in Brussels several times and prepared with the Regional Coordinator for Africa a 3-million-Euro project proposal that was submitted to EuropAid (EC), related to the strengthening of the Convention's activities in 15 African countries (the proposal is still under consideration);
 - 145.7 established a close relationship with the EU Environment Directorate General and in particular with the Life Third Countries financial instrument. The Bureau is expected to submit a MedWet project proposal for financing soon. He is also supporting an IUCN wetland proposal to be submitted to the same financial instrument.
 - 145.8 approached the GEF insistently asking for Ramsar to be able to participate in the GEF Council meetings in an observer capacity, and sought the support of Ramsar CPs which are GEF Council members for that purpose. A resolution was eventually voted at the Council asking that Ramsar be invited to the meetings when wetland projects are under discussion and review;
 - 145.9 visited some major US environmental NGOs that work internationally, such as WCS, Conservation International, and The Nature Conservancy, to seek their support and advice on how best to raise funds for the Ramsar SGF in the US. He approached some US foundations for the same purpose. The general conclusion was that it would be very difficult to fundraise in the US for a fund managed by an organization with headquarters in Europe;
 - 145.10 approached and discussed support to the Convention with the World Bank, but for the time being this avenue does not look promising, although the Bank is providing loans for a considerable number of wetland projects;
 - 145.11 the GEF Secretariat was also approached to seek support for the SGF, but this type of support does not fall within the GEF's purview;
 - 145.12 visited the Netherlands development cooperation agency and there was agreement on a renewed and strengthened collaboration, including more financial support to wetland projects in developing countries;
 - 145.13 prepared a policy paper for the forthcoming United Nations University book on "Financing Global Sustainability", and will be invited to participate as speaker in

- a workshop at the UN Financing for Development Conference in Mexico in February 2002;
- 145.14 worked with the EU on a major rural development project in the Northeast of Brazil (Euro 10 million) and managed to have Euro 1 million exclusively dedicated to wetland conservation, including preparation of management plans for two Ramsar sites;
- 145.15 held discussions with the Swiss development assistance agency which promised a stronger financial support to the SGF or to the Ramsar Trust Fund;
- 145.16 is preparing a workshop in Brussels with several major organizations members of the European Partnership for the Environment (EPE), European Commission Directorate Generals, and bilateral cooperation agencies on linking poverty alleviation to wetland conservation through the setting up of local environmental funds;
- 145.17 has started to explore the issue of sustainable trade of wetland products, making initial contact with International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), the European Commission, UNCTAD's BioTrade Initiative and others; and
- 145.18 has acted as lead person for the identification of counterpart funding sources for a UNDP/GEF wetland project in Iran, in which the Bureau has acted international service provider.
146. In North Africa, MedWet is assisting the five states in the region to develop a series of complementary projects for establishing the North African Wetland Network of national MedWet Units. Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia have agreed in principle, while Algeria has taken concrete steps in establishing its national focal unit of the network.
147. In Botswana, the Bureau continued to work with IUCN and DANCED (Denmark), Sida (Sweden), and the national government on the completion and implementation of the integrated management plan of the Okavango Delta Ramsar site. This is an opportunity for testing the ecosystem approach and building partnerships between national institutions.
148. In Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Sudan, the Bureau continued to work with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, UNDP, the World Bank, WWF International, IUCN and GEF in a series of sustainable development and conservation projects.
149. In Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania the Bureau encouraged collaborative work with WWF International, USAID, and Ramsar on Lake Malawi (declared a Ramsar site in Malawi).
150. In relation to invasive species, the Bureau is working with IUCN, OMPO, Wetlands International, the Center for African Wetlands (Accra, Ghana), CMS/AEWA, BirdLife International, and WWF International in order to stimulate action from River/Lake Organizations.
151. The Bureau is working with the Niger Basin Authority, WWF International, Benin, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria in the preparation and implementation of transboundary actions.

152. In Brazil, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has approved an \$82.5 million credit to boost protection of the Brazilian Pantanal, one of the world's largest wetlands. To be matched with local funds, the \$165 million conservation effort is to be carried out by the Brazilian Environment Ministry and the country's Environment and Natural Resources Institute (IBAMA).
153. In Thailand, Wetlands International - Thailand Programme is about to embark upon a four-year programme called "Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Thailand". Funded by the Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED), this will provide an opportunity to encourage the further uptake of the Ramsar Convention, not just in Thailand but with neighbouring partners as well. The Programme is also developing, in collaboration with the British Voluntary Services Overseas, a Regional Environmental Education Programme which will focus on wetlands in the region as defined by the Mekong River Commission, i.e., Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.
154. To explore a new way of working with its development assistance partners, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its development assistance mechanism, DGIS, has concluded an agreement with Wetlands International over cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. DGIS is providing Euro 2.2 million to Wetlands International for an initial period from 1 April 2001 to 30 June 2002, for delivery of a Programme on Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands. Beneficiaries of the fund will include DGIS target countries and neighbouring countries sharing a common resource, such as water catchments or fisheries. The programme also gives direct support to eligible International Conventions and Agreements including: Ramsar/Wetlands International Joint Work Plan, Ramsar/CBD Joint Work Plan, CBD/Ramsar River Basin Initiative, Ramsar Training and Advisory Service, World Commission on Dams Report and follow up actions, Work Plans with other relevant conventions (e.g. under preparation, notably CMS – the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and Their Habitats).
155. The Netherlands Committee for IUCN has announced a new Small Grants for Wetlands Programme (SWP), which can financially support projects in the conservation and wise use of wetlands that are executed by small NGOs in some 26 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The funds are provided by the Dutch Government. Projects should be in line with Ramsar and CBD principles and be related to the wise use of wetlands. A close relationship has been established with this fund to avoid duplication with the Ramsar SGF.
156. The Society of Wetland Scientists has initiated its Ramsar Support Grant Program Awards and its International Committee announced the names of the winners of the grants programme for 2001, which offers four US\$ 5,000 grants annually to SWS members in developing countries who are engaged in work aimed at implementing the Ramsar Convention, funded jointly by the SWS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The winning projects for 2001 are Uganda, Slovak Republic, Argentina, and Peru.

General Objective 8 of the Strategic Plan: Institutional Mechanisms and Resources of the Convention

157. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) held its 10th Meeting in Gland on 25-29 June 2001, with the participation of almost all its members and a large number of invited experts and observers (see DOC. SC26-3).

158. The Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) held its 4th Meeting in Portugal on 21-23 May 2001. The meeting, attended by over 60 members and observers from throughout the Mediterranean Basin, was organized and fully funded by the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Portugal, the Instituto da Conservação da Natureza (ICN). The meeting included a Technical Session on Mediterranean salinas. The Conclusions of the meeting can be found on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_medcom4_conclusions_e.htm. Issues related to the future funding of MedWet are dealt with in document SC26-15.

Staffing issues

159. The current Bureau staff chart appears in Annex III. There have not been staff changes in the Bureau during this year, except for the interns who are contracted for a 12- to 18-month period.
160. The Spanish Government has seconded a Technical Officer to assist with the preparations of the Technical Sessions of Ramsar COP8 (60% of his time) and on MedWet-related issues (40% of his time). Carlos Villalba joined the Bureau on 1 September 2001 and continues until 31 December 2002.
161. Following the decision of the Standing Committee to accept the offer of the Government of Greece concerning the MedWet Coordination Unit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Bureau and the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works on 28 March 2001. The MedWet Coordination Unit was established in a prestigious building in Athens on 15 July 2001. Spyros Kouvelis (Greece) was appointed MedWet Coordinator after a search and selection process involving the MedWet Bureau (Spain, Portugal, and Tunisia), the Greek Ministry, and the Ramsar Bureau. The Unit budget was modified to allow the hiring of Nejib Benessaiah (Tunisia) as Policy Advisor working 40% of his time, while Thymio Papayannis, the past MedWet Coordinator, continues to serve as Senior Advisor on Mediterranean Wetlands (at 30% of his time, until 31 December 2001), ensuring a smooth transition. The other two positions at the Unit, to be seconded by the Biotope and Wetland Centre (EKBY) in Greece, are still pending due to delays in the signature of the contract between EKBY and the Ministry.
162. The programme of Regional Meetings agreed by the Standing Committee at its last meeting is progressing well. In September and October 2001 meetings have been held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) for South America; in San Pedro Sula (Honduras) for Central and North America and the Caribbean; in Bangkok (Thailand) for East Asia, and in Bled (Slovenia) for Europe. Other meetings are planned in Lusaka (Zambia) in November 2001 for Southern Africa; in Teheran (Iran) in February 2002 for West and Central Asia; in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), in early 2002, for the Middle East; in Algiers (Algeria), in early 2002, for Central and Northern Africa; and in Cotonou (Benin), in early 2002, for West Africa and Island States. Funding for these last two meetings is not yet fully secured.

Finances

163. The financial situation of the Bureau continues to be normal. Annual dues are being paid by Contracting Parties regularly, with only a few exceptions of delays and/or arrears in payment. Fiscal Year 2000 was closed with a small surplus. Income and expenditure during

the current year up to 31 August 2001 and the forecast till 31 December 2001 indicate that the fiscal year should also be closed with a balanced budget, as approved by the Standing Committee.

164. Generous voluntary contributions have again been received in 2001 from the Swiss and US governments. The annual voluntary contribution from the Swiss government is used for projects in Africa, while the 2001 voluntary contribution from the US includes allocations for the Wetlands for the Future Initiative (projects in Latin America and the Caribbean), a contribution to the Small Grants Fund, and support for the Ramsar Regional Meeting held in Honduras.
165. Generous contributions have also been received for the Ramsar Regional meetings in cash and in kind from Argentina, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Honduras, Hungary, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden (Sida), Switzerland, Thailand, UK, Zambia, and the MAVA Foundation, and from the private sector in the countries that have hosted Ramsar meetings.

ANNEX I

Ramsar sites designation
27 October 2000 – 26 October 2001

AFRICA: 17 new sites

Algeria	10 sites
Kenya	1 site
Mauritania	1 site
Mauritius (new CP)	1 site
Niger	3 sites
Tanzania	1 site

ASIA: 25 new sites

Azerbaijan (new CP)	2 sites
Indonesia:	2 sites
Pakistan:	8 sites
Lebanon:	1 sites
Sri Lanka	1 site
Tajikistan (new CP)	5 sites
Thailand	5 sites
Uzbekistan (new CP)	1 site

EUROPE: 13 new sites and 3 extensions

Belarus:	2 sites
Bosnia & Herzegovina (new CP)	1 site
Cyprus: (new CP)	1 site
Hungary	2 sites
Slovak Republic	1 site
Romania	1 site
Portugal	2 sites
UK	6 sites and 2 extensions*
Switzerland	1 extension

* Two of the sites designated by the UK are in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). Argentina has expressed its rejection to these designations because it considers that this sites, “by belonging to the Islas Malvinas archipelago, they are part of the Argentine national territory”.

NEOTROPICS: 6 new sites

Bolivia:	3 sites
Cuba (new CP)	1 site
Colombia	1 site
Ecuador	1 site

NORTH AMERICA: 1 new site

Mexico	1 site
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OCEANIA: 4 new sites

Australia	4 sites
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