

**CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**  
**35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**  
**Gland, Switzerland, 14-16 February 2007**

## **Report of the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee**

**First day, 14 February 2007**

### **Agenda item 1: Opening statements**

1. **Paul Mafabi (Uganda), Chair of the Standing Committee**, welcomed the members of the Standing Committee (SC), Observer States, and International Organization Partners (IOPs) and wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day. He congratulated everyone on their countries' World Wetlands Day activities and said that the reports posted so far show that WWD is gaining more prominence as a tool for raising awareness. He noted that, because of the importance of this year's theme of 'wetlands and fish', Uganda is planning a series of celebrations through to World Fish Day on 21 November.
2. **The Chair** observed that SC35 takes place halfway through the triennium and that we need to draw the lessons from COP9 in order to prepare effectively for COP10. He pointed to a number of achievements so far, including valuable meetings of the Management Working Group (MWG), the STRP Oversight Committee, the CEPA Oversight Panel, the IOPs, and the Standing Committee Chairs with the Secretariat staff. He noted that we are in the process of developing a new National Report format and that, as we discuss a new Strategic Plan for adoption at COP10, we should reflect upon the success of the present one. He said that there are challenges that impact on the functions of the Convention, such as the legal status of the Secretariat, the Convention's long-term financing, and a funding mechanism for the Small Grants Fund (SGF). He noted the need to ensure that the MWG established by Resolution IX.24 adds value and does not duplicate efforts, and he welcomed suggestions on that matter. He said that we are in the process of recruiting a new Secretary General and drew attention to the accomplishments of the departing SG, Peter Bridgewater, notably in financial and programme matters. The Chair offered his sincere thanks to the SG and the Secretariat staff for the preparations for this week's meetings.
3. **Jane Madgwick, Wetlands International**, welcomed the participants on behalf of the five IOPs and urged the Committee to take steps to make the Convention become even more visible and effective. She noted that environmental threats are heightening and the need for us to reach out has never been stronger. Recent reports from climate change scientists call for an urgent response from Ramsar, including greater communications, education, and public awareness (CEPA) efforts. The IOPs would support a COP10 Resolution on climate change, as well as greater efforts to establish a relationship between Ramsar and the UNFCCC. On many issues, she said, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has thrown down the gauntlet, and issues like poverty reduction and food and water security need a larger role in Ramsar. Further attention is needed on water-related issues, and the beginning made by Resolution IX.14 on poverty reduction requires specifics. She said that Ramsar's standing in the development world is relatively weak and we need stronger ties with UN agencies, etc. The Convention can make better use of the IOPs' skills and connections. She noted that the IOPs are taking steps together to analyze gaps in the coverage of Ramsar sites and to monitor their status.
4. **Wetlands International** welcomed the Secretariat's work through the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and applauded the new Joint Work Plan between Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). She urged that the new Strategic Plan needs to be relevant to the major emerging threats of the next several years. Concerning new arrangements

within the Secretariat, she said that the Secretariat needs to build a relationship of trust and cooperation with the IOPs and urged that that should be incorporated in the Strategic Plan. She said that the Strategic Plan should be given adequate financial resources to achieve its goals.

5. **Peter Bridgewater, the Secretary General (SG)**, observed that there are a record number of participants at the meeting. He referred to his recent remarks to the UNEP Governing Council to the effect that on the same day, 2 February, World Wetlands Day (WWD) was widely celebrated around the world, the IPCC launched its Fourth Assessment Report in Paris, and France made new proposals on environmental governance. He said that there are three big issues facing the world: ensuring adequate water for everyone, managing and adapting to climate change, and stemming the loss of biodiversity, which are interlinked and all involve wetlands. Wetlands are especially critical in urban areas. The ecological resilience of wetlands must be maintained. He said that the environmental governance system must respond more promptly and coherently, and the UNEP Government Council is the key place to focus on. He hoped that COP10 would focus on these issues.

#### **Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda**

6. The draft agenda, revision 2, was adopted by consensus.

#### **Agenda item 3: Admission of observers**

7. **The Chair** noted that Contracting Parties that are not SC members are welcome as observers and the IOPs are permanent observers on the SC, and there are no observers who require to be admitted.

#### **Agenda item 4: Report of the Secretary General (DOC. SC35-2)**

8. **The SG** drew attention to his report and offered to respond to any questions about it. He said the volume of work reported shows considerable progress and a well-functioning system, though challenges remain. He recalled his first SC meeting, in 1993, when there were far fewer participants.
9. **The SG** made a PowerPoint presentation summarizing and updating his written report. He referred to World Wetlands Day as the best face of the Convention and said that the wider community is picking it up and running with it, and he called 2007 the WWD's best year yet. He noted a supporting mention from the Executive Secretary of the CBD. He said that there are now 154 Parties with more coming soon and he predicted 165 Parties by COP10; that the budget is balanced and the reserve fund nearly restored; that COP10 preparations are well underway; that COP9 Resolutions are being actively implemented; and that Ramsar has a leading role in Biodiversity Liaison Group and water discussions. He reported that many Parties have paid up their arrears; that Danone will renew its support for four more years, especially for WWD; that an arrangement with the Star Alliance may be agreed soon; and that other funding possibilities are being pursued. He noted that cooperation with the GEF is still elusive, but that they have a new CEO who is sympathetic, and he called on the Parties to ensure interaction between their GEF and Ramsar national focal points. He said that a more transparent way of looking at the budget in future is being proposed, but that funding for the SGF remains the conundrum that it has been since 1993.
10. **The SG** reported that the STRP is working at a high level due to the efforts of the STRP Chair and Vice Chair, as well as the Oversight Committee. He said that we need to remain engaged in the follow-on process from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and noted that we are also involved in IMOSEB. He said that there has been progress in CEPA and capacity building and that the CEPA Oversight Panel and the Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar

Convention will be meeting together in June. In environmental governance, he reported that the UN Secretary General has established a “High Level Panel” and said that Ramsar cannot avoid being part of the discussions of that group, which will shape a new landscape in international environmental governance. He said that administrative issues before us include where the Secretariat should be located, an issue that must be discussed in the run-up to COP10. He noted that staff will be impacted by any change and that this must be studied, and he said that Secretariat staff are presently less well remunerated than staff of similar conventions; he noted that we are looking at ways to remedy that, and a COP10 Resolution should address the issue. He drew attention to staff changes, noting that a number of Assistant Advisors are leaving or staying on temporarily in a different capacity, and that a number of new Assistants have newly arrived. He announced that Maria Rivera has accepted to become the new Senior Regional Assistant (SRA) for the Americas and warmly applauded the work of Margarita Astrálaga, who is leaving to become head of the IUCN Malaga office.

11. **The SG** reviewed progress with new Ramsar sites and Ramsar Advisory Missions and reported new cooperative agreements with UNEP-OCHA, UNEP’s GRASP programme, GPA, and the International Ocean Institute, calling attention to the new Joint Work Plan with the CDB that the SC will be asked to endorse. He applauded China’s innovations in which the authorities are working closely with WWF China. He said that he expects the Convention to continue in a leadership position and urged that we must reverse the MA’s assessment that wetlands are faring the worst among ecosystems.
12. **Japan** announced that it will finance the 2006 cycle SGF project from Nepal and noted that it supports many other NGO projects, especially in Asia. Japan said that we need to consider a wider use of existing financial mechanisms for funding the SGF. She called attention to the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), launched by the Japanese and US governments, of which Japan and Palau are presently serving as secretariat, and said that 2008 will be the International Year of Coral Reefs, encouraging Ramsar to participate in that.
13. **BirdLife International** noted that in DOC. SC35-2 para. 61, BirdLife should be added to the partners in the East Asia Australasian Flyway Partnership. He expressed great concern about the failure of Parties to respond to the Secretariat’s inquiries about reported threats to Ramsar sites and felt that responding should be part of the diplomatic basis. He asked whether the SC should encourage a better response?
14. **The Netherlands** underscored the importance of following up on the MA, the main merit of which is its emphasis upon ecosystem services and human well-being.
15. **Kenya** reported on action to combat global warming and indicated that the SG’s report was weak on reporting of activities in Africa, including successful WWD activities; he urged the need to strengthen reporting on Africa: Kenya is now working on a national policy draft, presently with the line ministry, and detailed steps that the Kenyan government has taken in response to problems at several Ramsar sites. He reported that the president has directed the establishment of an interministerial committee for catchment restoration. He felt that the Swiss Grant for Africa should be extended to East Africa, and he urged a greater connection to the GEF. **The SG** replied that Kenya has raised important issues and noted that there is some activity within the STRP on climate change issues – he suggested that there may be a need for discussion or a Resolution at COP10.
16. **Australia** felt that the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership is very important for migratory birds and reported that on 6 September Australia and the Republic of Korea signed a bilateral agreement on migratory birds. He welcomed the SG’s report’s comments on the value of having a Ramsar officer in Oceania and commended the work of the Associate Ramsar Officer based at SPREP in Samoa. He reported that Australia is giving a high priority to updating its Ramsar

Information Sheets (RISs), trying at the same time to describe more fully the ecological character of the sites. **The SG** congratulated Australia and other parties on the excellent development of the Flyway Partnership.

17. **China** noted the mention of the UN-ECE's work on payments for ecosystem services (paras 4 and 5) and cautioned that this is a complicated issue, as it involves a basic principle of the Rio declaration concerning the sovereign rights of states. She felt that we should continue to encourage the wise use principle, and she discouraged discussion of payment for services at COP10. **The SG** responded that the UN-ECE is going to go ahead anyway and that it is important for us to continue to monitor their progress. **China** also felt that the Secretariat should be more active in the progress of the Himalayan Initiative (para 60), especially in encouraging each Party involved to decide whether to endorse this initiative or not. **The SG** responded that the Secretariat is closely watching and active in the Himalayan Initiative and promised to work together.
18. **The Republic of Korea** noted that Korea would like to host a meeting of the Himalayan Initiative and invite India, Pakistan, and China; he felt that financial resources have been one of the obstacles to progressing this and said that Korea would like to help. He noted that 15 countries are said to be in the process of acceding to the Convention and encouraged the Secretariat to continue its active role, particularly with regard to bringing in North Korea, which has important sites on the migratory routes and the DMZ as a biodiversity sphere.
19. **Libya** noted a lack of mention in the SG's report of North Africa, and of Libyan wetlands in particular. He reviewed some of Libya's recent activities in preparing for WWD and designating some protected areas, particularly salt marshes. He said that Libya has some remarkable wetlands, particularly coastal, and would like to cooperate with the world. **The SG** noted that he was sorry that Libya was not mentioned in the report but that he was very pleased to have Libya present now. He pointed out that it is impossible to mention every country's achievements in such a report. He noted that MedWet is presently undergoing an independent evaluation which should strengthen it, and he urged Libya to participate more fully in MedWet as well.
20. **Malawi** reported on successful WWD activities and said that Ramsar is well-regarded there. He highlighted the issue of the help African countries need to implement the Convention. He said that the Convention is not well understood in Africa, in terms of the values and benefits of wetlands, and called upon the Secretariat and the IOPs to do more to help. Local communities need much more support in order to understand Ramsar values and to learn to manage resources wisely. Regarding the SGF, he felt that African Parties should be more supported in updating the RISs. He noted that much flooding can be attributed to mismanagement and called for more support from the Convention and the IOPs. **The SG** noted that increasing support for any region needs the agreement of all Parties to increase the Convention's resources for that purpose.
21. **Gabon** also reported successful WWD activities, including the designation of six new Ramsar sites. He urged the Secretariat to take greater interest in Gabon, which doesn't get much support generally. Gabon has just listed coastal Ramsar sites and would appreciate support for designating some inland wetlands as well. **The SG** drew attention to the first Ramsar-GRASP project, a video which will focus on Gabon.
22. **Argentina** entered the following statement into the record. "In relation to document SC35-2, paragraph 25, Ramsar site No. 1433 "Estero de Farrapos e Islas del Río Uruguay", as it is located in the left margin of the Uruguay River, it is part of the area of influence of an bilateral treaty between Argentina and Uruguay, the 1975 Statute of the Uruguay River, which regulates the issues related to the river and its areas of influence.

A dispute between Argentina and Uruguay arose in relation to the authorization given by Uruguay for the construction of two pulp mills in the left margin of the Uruguay River in the area of Fray Bentos, next to the Ramsar site “Estero de Farrapos e Islas del Río Uruguay”. This dispute is being substantiated before the International Court of Justice, where Argentina has presented its position reflecting its disagreement with the one exposed by Uruguay in its communication dated November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Argentina also questions the content and conclusions of the document prepared by the International Finance Corporation mentioned in the paragraph 25 of the SC35-2 Report.

In relation to Uruguay’s communication to the Ramsar Secretariat, Argentina considers that the industrial projects that have been authorized by Uruguay affect the river and its areas of influence, including Ramsar site No. 1433. Therefore, the inclusion of the site in the Montreux Record should be brought into consideration.”

23. **Uruguay** entered the following statement into the record: “Thank you Mr. Chair. First of all I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the Secretary General for his excellent report and for all the work done during 2006. Regarding point number 25, paragraph 6 of the Secretary General’s report to the 35 SC (Doc. SC35-2) I would like to make a few comments:

As indicated in the report, on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2006 Uruguay received an information request from the Ramsar Secretariat regarding the potential threat posed to Ramsar site No. 1433 Estero de Farrapos e Islas del Rio Uruguay, as a result of the operation of two paper pulp factories.

The Uruguayan government duly responded to this request on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 saying that:

- One of the paper pulp factories (which has not yet been constructed) will be relocated to another area and therefore it poses no risk to this Ramsar site.
- Regarding the other paper pulp factory, which is currently under construction, several rigorous environmental impact assessments have been undertaken by national and international organisations, including the World Bank, which have all concluded that neither the construction nor the operation of this paper pulp factory will cause environmental damage.
- Furthermore, the Uruguayan government highlighted the fact that the paper pulp factory is being constructed downstream of the Ramsar site so there is no risk that the counter-current will reach this site.
- In addition, the Uruguayan government is currently undertaking rigorous environmental monitoring activities of the construction of this pulp mill.
- Finally, this Ramsar site has recently been chosen as a Pilot Area for the biodiversity conservation project which is financed by the GEF and will be soon included in the National System of Protected Areas.
- Given all the preventive measures that are being taken by the Uruguayan government and the conclusions of the series of environmental impact assessments done by very important international organisations like the World Bank, the Government does not consider that there is a justification for the inclusion of this site in the Montreux Record as was suggested.

Thank you Mr. Chair”.

24. **Argentina** entered the following statement into the record: “In relation to Uruguay’s reply on paragraph 23, Argentina restated that the construction of the pulp mills in that area constitutes an environmental threat, including to the Ramsar site.”
25. **The SG** suggested that Argentina and Uruguay should discuss the matter together and agree upon a change of wording for the paragraph. **Argentina** agreed to discuss consensus wording but

wished to have its concerns about the factory noted on the record. **Uruguay** also agreed to discuss consensus wording.

26. **Benin** urged the Secretariat to make a comparison of staff salaries with the CBD, CITES, etc., to help COP10 evaluate the matter. He informed the meeting that Benin has a National Wetland Policy and two site management plans and urged that the Africa team in the Secretariat be reinforced, in order to interact more with countries and report more fully. **The SG** responded that we are planning to prepare such a salary comparison, though the comparison of salary figures alone is not straightforward.
27. **Samoa** expressed thanks to the Ramsar Secretariat for the Associate Ramsar Officer at SPREP, who provides opportunities and promotes the Convention in the region. He felt that more Parties will join in the near future. He also recognized the support from the governments of Australia and New Zealand in promoting wetland conservation, especially in the Pacific island states. **The SG** agreed that having the Ramsar Officer based in SPREP in Samoa is proving to be very valuable.
28. **El Salvador** suggested that an analysis comparing Ramsar sites and Montreux Record sites should be carried out, as it would be useful to know what the situation is at MR sites and whether the mechanism is adequate. **The SG** said that such an analysis would be very valuable but we would need to look at how to do it. He reported that he and Margarita Astrálaga recently visited Chile to consult on the Río Cruces matter and said that the government wishes to use the Montreux Record positively.
29. **The SG** noted that it is often difficult for the Secretariat to get information on the status of Ramsar sites following inquiries – it is agreed that the Secretariat cannot be coercive, but it should be informed about what is happening at the site, what is being done. It is helpful to get an answer, even if only that the Administrative Authority does not know. The SG thanked the Secretariat staff who contributed the material that made up the SG's report and noted their daily work on these issues throughout the year.
30. **The Deputy Secretary General (DSG)** noted that climate change was not identified by the Parties at COP9 as a high priority issue for the STRP in this triennium, but he announced that there will be a two-day workshop on climate change, organized by Ramsar and the CBD and funded by Canada, that will take place just before the STRP midterm workshops in March – a good example of excellent cooperation between the conventions' secretariats and subsidiary scientific bodies under the Joint Work Plan.
31. **The Senior Advisor for the Americas** announced that Costa Rica has just sent a full report to the Secretariat on the situation at the Palo Verde Ramsar site, so that item can be updated since the SG's report.
32. **BirdLife International** drew attention to the RSPB's long support for the Ramsar Advisory Missions as important and tangible contributions by the Convention and presented the SG with a cheque from RSPB for £3,000 for future RAM missions. He urged others to do the same.

**Agenda item 5: Report of activities with the International Organization Partners (DOCs SC35-3 and -4)**

33. **The DSG** apologized for the absence of IWMI due to illness. The documents show the breadth and depth of IOP support for the Convention but are only the tip of the iceberg, as much additional work is done on the ground. The DSG reported on the 2<sup>nd</sup> IOPs' meeting in September 2006, where there was a great deal of discussion of IOP collaboration at COP10, including a linked series of side events on key issues branded so as to show IOP cooperation, as

well as about cooperative involvement in the next World Water Forum. The DSG expressed gratitude to RSPB and BirdLife for seconding Dave Pritchard for three periods during 2006 to assist the Secretariat on issues concerning culture, review of COP decisions, and other STRP priority tasks.

34. **The DSG** reviewed the document's listing of a number of IOP initiatives with the Secretariat and others, most with odd acronyms, and then described ongoing discussions with Wetlands International about the future of the Ramsar Sites Information Service. An innovation for 2007 will be that data inputting to the Ramsar Sites Database will be done by our regional assistants in the Secretariat, freeing up Wetlands International's time to develop other priorities for assisting the Contracting Parties.
35. **BirdLife** described the 'Watching the Wetlands' proposal (DOC. SC35-4), in which the IOPs will be working together more closely in Ramsar sites – monitoring sites across the Convention is a good idea anyway. Annex C shows potential areas of future IOP activity. He said that there have been positive comments from the STRP and listed additional suggestions they have made – he solicited additional suggestions from the SC, by 16 March, as the IOPs will meet again at the STRP midterm workshops.
36. **Turkey** announced that it is organizing the next World Water Forum in Istanbul in March 2009, in cooperation with the World Water Council. There will be a kick-off meeting on 20 March 2007 and then an international congress on river basin management on 22-24 March 2007 in Antalya, and he invited the meeting participants to participate. He noted that he is very aware of the importance of the decisions of Ramsar COP10 for the discussions at the World Water Forum.
37. **Wetlands International**, on behalf of the IOPs, offered constructive comments about coastal reclamation of intertidal mudflats in the Republic of Korea, in which some government decisions have been contributing to decline. She welcomed Korea's joining the East Asian Australasian Flyways Partnership and the leading Korean role in the Yellow Sea Partnership. But she drew attention to the Ramsar priority on intertidal wetlands in Resolution VII.21 (COP7) and encouraged Korea to use the occasion of hosting COP10 to give a clear signal of a policy change on the ongoing and planned conversion of intertidal flats. She said that all of the IOPs pledged their support for the Republic of Korea in its COP10 preparations and have been impressed by the government's engagement with the NGOs.
38. **Thailand** welcomed the IOPs' Annex B and expressed great interest in assistance to the Parties in their monitoring and information-sharing.
39. **Ecuador** acknowledged support from the Ramsar IOPs and invited the IOPs to work more closely with the authorities, especially with those working on Ramsar sites and most especially in updating RISs. The process after site designation has significant technical and economic requirements and can be a bottleneck, especially in developing good maps. The IOPs could have a higher profile in the Neotropical region. Updating with good data should be added to Annex C.
40. **Kenya** expressed the need to strengthen the working relationships between African Parties' governments and the IOPs. He felt that the IOPs need to harmonize their operations in order to avoid duplication, and that the IOPs are not very active in supporting policy development in Africa. He welcomed the IOPs' programme initiatives, especially those involving poverty reduction.
41. **Gabon** thanked Switzerland for its support through the Swiss Grant for Africa and paid tribute to the good will of WWF, which has been very helpful. He appealed to other organizations to help in designating Ramsar sites.

42. **BirdLife** observed that all of the IOPs have memoranda of understanding with the Secretariat, each with an annex of particular priority issues. He drew attention to the new BirdLife annex, which spells out specific areas of assistance, among which policy development is included.
43. **WWF International**, in response to requests from Parties at SC35 to detail future contributions to the Convention, reported that the organization is currently re-examining its global priorities. WWF's small grants support for designation and management of Ramsar sites and development of National Wetlands Policies is presently under review. He reported that a recent review has shown that in six regional initiatives between 1999 and 2006 WWF has contributed SFR 907,000 to Ramsar Parties for the designation and better management of 41 million hectares of wetlands, leveraging an additional 30 million Swiss francs from third-party donors. An additional 19 million Swiss francs is likely in the coming year. Most of this has been devoted to Africa (Niger and Lake Chad basins, Algeria, Lake Malawi/Niassa/Nyassa, Andes and Himalayas).
44. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** invited the IOPs to support the Ramsar Centre on capacity building for Central and Western Asia.
45. **The SG** noted that there will be another meeting with the IOPs after the March STRP workshops and promised more such reports on IOP activities as well as regular out-of-session updates. The SG welcomed Turkey's invitations concerning the World Water Forum and promised to help to see that Ramsar issues are better included in the Forum's agenda than in the past.
46. **Thailand** urged the IOPs to consult their own regional offices before compiling their next report.

#### Agenda item 6: Report of the Culture Working Group (DOC SC35-5)

47. **The SG** reported that he established the Culture WG as directed in Resolution IX.21 and that it has been working well, having produced a possible draft Resolution (DR) and a barebones guidance document. He noted that culture issues have been contentious when connected to Ramsar site designation, but the WG is emphasizing a primary role of culture issues as part of the management of all wetlands. He proposed that the SC ask the WG to continue developing the guidance, which will be a valuable addition, and suggested that, since neither of the two previous Resolutions were perfect, a new DR should be put forward on cultural management which would explicitly repeal the earlier ones (Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21).
48. **Australia** cautioned against allowing the primary purpose of the Convention to be diverted and urged careful thought about this issue. Australia could not accept any socio-economic or trade-related criteria for Ramsar site designation, and is unable to endorse DOC. SC35-5, only to "note" it as a working document. He said that it would not be a good use of time to re-debate these issues, which already had difficult discussions for the two former Resolutions. He urged that the task of the WG should be to collect case studies to assist the Parties in implementing the earlier Resolutions. Australia sees problems in the draft guidance concerning 1.1 Cultural landscapes, 2.1.1 Rice cultivation, and 2.6 Salt extraction. He urged that the next drafts should be brought forward much sooner than proposed to allow for adequate consultation.
49. **Brazil** said that it recognizes the role of culture in the management of wetlands, but echoed Australia's doubts about the proposed documents. Brazil doubted the use of a list of activities to determine the cultural importance of wetlands, especially as the list includes concepts about which no consensus has been reached and about which discussions are ongoing in other fora. He too would like to have the next drafts circulated early, before the regional meetings.
50. **Japan** applauded the work but noted some problems. Concerning repeal of the former Resolutions, she noted that some parts of those were the results of substantial debates and are not found in the present drafts, so she suggested keeping the old Resolutions or consolidating them all

except expired or duplicative parts. Concerning rice cultivation, she suggested that the WG explore the ecological aspects of rice paddies.

51. **Ecuador** noted that cultural values are very important in wetland management, especially for countries with important cultural uses of wetland products, but he recommended handling rice cultivation very carefully, as frequently waterbirds are harmed by rice farmers and pesticides. Fish farming can be a difficult issue, with mangrove destruction and industrial methods. There are also difficulties regarding extractive industries, where traditional practices (as in gold mining) often have adverse effects. He urged that the work should be progressed but felt that much more is needed.
52. **Kenya** argued that this DR is important in the context of community involvement and management but has the potential for creating conflict in some communities, especially in Africa. Kenya is thinking of creating a National Wetlands Committee to sort out just such problems. He recalled that the United Republic of Tanzania did place a reservation on this Resolution at COP9, and stressed the importance of wide consultations prior to the COP to avoid a repetition.
53. **Norway** agreed with the continuation of this work, which is moving in the right direction towards improving management where culture has formed landscapes – as Chair of this group at COP9, she is aware that the debate is not an easy one. She also approved of the CBD practice of reviewing previous Resolutions and retiring earlier ones when appropriate. She urged more preparatory work on these documents in order to avoid long debates at the COP, but felt that the work is moving on the right track.
54. **The SG** reported that the WG is aware of the concerns expressed here. He interpreted the comments to mean that the WG should proceed with the guidance document, but carefully, and he agreed with Brazil about the value of discussion at the regional meetings on this draft. He sensed less enthusiasm for a new DR but felt continued work would be worth the trouble, having taken these cautionary comments on board.
55. **Switzerland** favored continuing the work but suggested involving the World Heritage Center in UNESCO. **The SG** responded that the UNESCO-IHE is the key entry point for UNESCO and is the main conduit for UNESCO as a whole. **Namibia** asked about replacing the Africa member, Algeria, and **the SG** noted that Algeria was the MedWet representative and a replacement is being sought from among all of the North African states.
56. **Australia** agreed to elaborating the guidance document further, but for the DR, he suggested that the work should move forward but that a decision point should be set – there should be an explanation of the value of such a DR before any lengthy negotiations at the next SC meeting. Debate is unlikely to change positions on the normative language of a Resolution, and it would be better to focus on the practical guidance.

**Decision SC35-1: The Standing Committee urged the Culture Working Group to continue its work on a draft Resolution and guidance on the cultural values of wetlands, taking account of the comments made in this meeting, and to propose new drafts of both documents in time for consultation at the regional meetings. The drafts will be circulated to the SC if possible but presented at SC36 at the latest.**

#### **Agenda item 7: Report of the Subgroup on COP10**

57. **Mr Je Ho Yu** made a PowerPoint presentation on the Republic of Korea's preparations so far and timetables for COP10, including information about Korea's progress in wetland conservation and participation in the Ramsar Convention, the administrative structures being put into place, and the facilities that will be available for the COP.

58. **Mr Boonam Shin** presented the report of the meeting of the Subgroup on COP10, which agreed that the MOU covers all relevant points, that a logo will be circulated for comment, that the theme should concern issues of human health, that the Ramsar Award procedures should remain unchanged, and that regional meetings should be held in 2007 rather than 2008 to facilitate funding opportunities.
59. **Namibia** wondered whether the proposed theme, “Wetland benefits for human health and well-being”, would not be too close to earlier themes. **The SG** saw it as a nice evolution from former themes. **The Netherlands** suggested wording that would allow consideration of health risks as well as benefits, and **El Salvador** agreed, noting that people know that wetlands can cause health problems if not managed properly.
60. **The Chair of the STRP** suggested that the more succinct slogan “Healthy wetlands, healthy people” is catchier and opens the way for both positive and negative considerations. **Turkey** and **the Islamic Republic of Iran** suggested further amendments to the first proposal, and the **Senior Advisor for Europe** agreed that the STRP Chair’s suggestion was the most elegant. **The SG** suggested using both the phrase and the STRP Chair’s proposal as a catchy slogan.
61. **Ecuador** noted that the first proposal would require a huge communications effort for local communities in order to ensure that they understand what the SC intends.
62. **El Salvador** said that the STRP Chair’s proposed wording meets his concerns, and **Austria** supported it as a clear, strong message that is easy to communicate.

**Decision SC35-2: The Standing Committee adopted the theme for COP10 of “Healthy wetlands, healthy people”.**

63. Concerning the Ramsar Conservation Awards, the Subgroup on COP10 recommended that the nomination and award procedures should remain unchanged from previous COPs, but urged that previous laureates should be invited to be more involved in the process.

**Decision SC35-3: The Standing Committee confirmed that the nomination and award procedures for the Ramsar Conservation Awards will remain the same as previously and determined that previous laureates of the Awards should be invited to nominate candidates or to form an alumni club and that success stories of earlier winners should form part of the 2008 nominations publicity.**

64. Concerning pre-COP10 regional meetings, **the SG** explained that the SC only needs to note the intention to hold the meetings in late 2007, and he observed that the regions are discussing the best dates and venues now. The exception is Oceania, where the constraints of the lead donors in the region make it more likely that the meeting will be held in early 2008.
65. **The Republic of Korea** took the opportunity to welcome any suggestions from Parties about preparations for COP10. It was noted that the local government would like to host regional meetings or workshops.
66. **The Senior Advisor for Africa** recalled that before COP9 there were too few resources and the timing of the Africa regional meeting depended upon IUCN’s willingness to tie it to one of its own meetings. Additional resources may be required this time. He said that Cameroon and Mauritius have expressed an interest as venues.

**Agenda item 8: Financial matters: Report of the Subgroup on Finance**

67. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, introduced the Subgroup's report, and **the SG** observed that the 2006 budget figures, while not final, indicate a surplus for this year, chiefly because of the campaign to collect arrears of Parties' contributions. He said that the Convention is probably in the best financial state it has ever been in and thanked the Secretariat staff and the Parties.

68. **The USA** explained that the SG had inherited a difficult budgetary situation at the beginning but has done a fine job of restoring financial health. The Subgroup recommends approval of the 2006 budget review.

**Decision SC35-4: The Standing Committee approved the 2006 budget review.**

69. **The SG** explained that payments from Parties with arrears are normally credited to the earliest overdue invoices, but one Party would like its payment to be credited to the most recent invoice and pay off the earlier ones over the next three years, so that it can participate fully in the Convention. **The USA** noted that the Subgroup recommended approval.

**Decision SC35-5: The Standing Committee approved that the Secretariat should agree a repayment plan for contribution arrears with the specific Contracting Party concerned that allows for payment of most recent contributions first.**

70. **The USA** reported that the Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee note that the core budget approved by the COP for 2007 remains unchanged.

71. **The SG** explained the proposed new method for presenting the Convention's core budget in such a way that, by breaking up salaries into programme areas, the relative costs of the work of the Secretariat would be more transparent. Because some Parties wished to see the global amounts included as heretofore, the Subgroup added a section called "RECAP" at the bottom of the proposed framework (last page of the Subgroup's report), which classifies the core budget much as in the former method.

72. The **UK** welcomed this development, as it is important to link expenditure to output. He asked if it would be possible to measure "value for money" by this method. **The SG** responded that there has been a call for linking all the key management documents to the budget and this will allow a better way of seeing if Parties were receiving the best value for the budgetary allocations..

73. **The USA** felt that for all the energy we put into committee deliberations, etc., we don't measure outcomes very well, and he suggested that the MWG might be asked to develop better evaluation processes.

**Decision SC35-6: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to develop a core budget proposal for the next triennium using the approach outlined in the Subgroup on Finance's report; to accompany this budget proposal with an explanatory Information Paper showing the overall allocations proposed for the major areas of expenditure; and to prepare this budget presentation for consideration by SC36 as the basis for the preparation of the budget proposal to COP10 for the 2008-2011 triennium.**

74. Concerning funding for regional initiatives, **the SG** and **the USA** provided background on the mandated funding process and proposed the allocations contained in the Subgroup's Recommendation 5. **The DSG** noted that, because of the volume of requests, not all of the allocations requested could be fully met.

75. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** thanked the Subgroup for its consideration but noted that the allocation for the Ramsar Regional Centre for Central and Western Asia is only half what had been

requested. She provided a thorough review of the Centre's achievements so far and immediate plans, noting that the Centre is not for Iran but for all of Central and Western Asia, which has enormous needs for capacity building. She remarked that the other countries of the region are unable to contribute and that the present political climate makes donor countries reluctant to help. She feared that without adequate support from the Convention the government may decide to cease its support for the Centre, and she asked for a reconsideration of the allocation.

76. **The SG** noted that it's clear that the Ramsar Centre is up and running with meetings and capacity building exercises and said that the Subgroup did not have this report of recent activities to hand when making its decision. He made suggestions for redress.
77. **The USA** agreed that there had been no intention to deny Iran's allocation request, but the information now provided had not been available during its deliberations. He felt that the Centre seems to be doing a great job and that the Convention should help as much as it can.
78. **The Senior Advisor for the Asia/Pacific** presented a fundraising case for the Ramsar Centre, which is serving the largest region of countries that are not yet Parties due to gaps in local awareness about wetland wise use. He said that the Centre is the key to raising awareness throughout the region and needs money to progress.
79. **The SG** suggested that the unallocated funds be added to the Ramsar Centre's allocation, bringing it from SFR 30,000 to 44,475; that the SC look at reallocation of all funding at midyear in case other allocations are not being used; and that the Standing Committee should urge donor Parties to look for additional outside funds for the Ramsar Centre.

**Decision SC35-7: The Standing Committee decided that:**

- i) **Owing to a delay in initiation of implementation of the "WacoWet" Initiative during 2006, the 2006 allocation to this initiative is carried over from the 2007 core budget to be available for allocation during 2007;**
- ii) **From the CHF 262,382 thus available from the core budget for 2007, the following allocations of funding to regional initiatives from the core budget are approved for 2007:**
- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>WacoWet:</b>                                 | <b>CHF 59,700</b>  |
| <b>High Andean Initiative:</b>                  | <b>CHF 22,000</b>  |
| <b>MedWet (as approved by Resolution IX.7):</b> | <b>CHF 15,499</b>  |
| <b>CREHO (Panama):</b>                          | <b>CHF 80,000</b>  |
| <b>Ramsar Centre, Iran:</b>                     | <b>CHF 44,745</b>  |
| <b>Pacific Islands Initiative:</b>              | <b>CHF 40,438*</b> |
- \* for project proposals A and B as provided in DOC. SC35-11 Addendum Annex 4**
- iii) **Henceforth six-monthly progress and financial reports must be provided to the Secretariat from each initiative which has received funding from the core budget, the first such report being required by 31 July 2007, and the SC will then review and reallocate funds between initiatives if appropriate, and a full report for 2007 by 15 January 2008 or a minimum of six weeks in advance of the 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (whichever is earlier); and**
- iv) **In relation for Decision SC34-21, insufficient information is as yet available from all COP9-approved initiatives to determine core budget allocations for 2008, and such allocations should be considered either inter-sessionally or at SC36, taking into**

**account satisfactory progress and reporting of each initiative, and with a deadline for requests for 2008 allocations of 31 July 2007.**

80. **Ecuador** informed the meeting that the main activity for the High Andean allocation will be a workshop in Venezuela in September, which will take place after the deadline for progress reporting. **The SG** replied that that will be taken into account when preparing the mid-year summary for SC.
81. Concerning the BlackSeaWet proposal, **Georgia** fully supported the BlackSeaWet initiative and thanked Wetlands International for its effort but does not understand why Georgia was excluded from the six countries in funding support. Georgia is fully prepared to participate.
82. **The SG** and the **Chair of the Subgroup** explained that the rules stipulated in Resolution IX.7, para 13, are clear: that the Standing Committee is empowered, between COPs, to endorse proposals with zero financial implications for recognition as regional initiatives under the Convention, but to reallocate funding only amongst those already approved by the COP for funding support. Eligibility for future funding must be determined by the COP.
83. **Turkey** applauded the BlackSeaWet initiative as an ambitious project that needs to be supported and should be endorsed, and argued that Resolution IX.7 does allow for reallocation intersessionally. **The SG** maintained that the COP9 Resolution was carefully worded and that the list of initiatives approved for funding at that time was carefully considered. **The USA** noted that this Resolution was a major achievement for the Convention, but resulted in a proliferation of good proposals all at once at COP9. He said that it is for the next COP to consider expanding the funding to include additional good proposals and that endorsement now would put BlackSeaWet on the map for COP10 budget planning.
84. **The Netherlands** noted that the language of the Resolution seems clear, expressing regret that a gap in Netherlands funding regulations has led to the exclusion of Georgia from the funded group, but he felt that Ramsar endorsement could help to attract other funding possibilities.
85. **The SG** remarked that he had other funding ideas that he would like to talk about with the Netherlands, Georgia and Turkey, which would be outside the core budget.
86. **Austria** inquired whether the BlackSeaWet proposal has met the conditions outlined in Resolution VIII.30, paras 8-10, and **the DSG** replied that those paragraphs only referred to proposals for financial allocations, not for endorsement.
87. **Russia** urged that the BlackSeaWet proposal should be considered by the COP and not now, because Russia has never been asked officially to be part of it.
88. **The SG** indicated that the Secretariat understood that all parties were involved and requested that the Netherlands and Wetlands International lead a discussion of all interested parties to resolve any outstanding issues, for consideration of the initiative's endorsement tomorrow.
89. Concerning reporting deadlines for regional initiatives, **the USA** reported that the Subgroup recommended that firm deadlines must be kept to in order to avoid unfairness and delays.

**Decision SC35-8: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a single clearly set-out paper on regional initiatives not less than one month in advance of the meetings of the Standing Committee that will permit its full review and consideration, and in order to ensure that this can be done, the SC decided that the deadlines for submission of progress reports and requests for further funding by involved regional initiatives are**

**immutable, and that no such information submitted to the Secretariat after established deadlines will be transmitted to the Standing Committee.**

90. **The Chair of the Subgroup** reported that the Subgroup on Finance was recommending the creation of a new contact group on the SGF and that the contact group has already met twice. He described the present process of annual SC approvals for all SGF proposals and explained the Subgroup's recommendations for revisions.

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**Welcoming statement by Gérard Cretegny, the Mayor of Gland**

91. **M. Cretegny** welcomed the participants to Gland and described the city's remarkable growth in recent years, which required careful management. He hoped to be able to welcome the participants for many years into the future.

**Welcoming statement by Julia Marton-Lefebvre, Director-General of IUCN**

92. **Ms Marton-Lefebvre** drew attention to the many shared goals between the Ramsar Convention and IUCN and reaffirmed IUCN's commitment to assisting the Ramsar Parties.

**Agenda item 8: Report of the Subgroup on Finance (continued)**

93. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, resumed explanation of the SGF contact group's recommendation concerning the establishment of a new Small Grants Portfolio (SGP) as an opportunity to support SGF project proposals that would be complementary to the existing SGF process. Potential donors would be able to choose individual proposals based on thematic interests and with Secretariat evaluations in a process that could begin before the SC, at its annual meeting, selects others for support from the Fund. The remaining unfunded proposals would then continue to be circulated for possible bilateral support.
94. **Brazil** wondered whether donors might prefer the portfolio method to the extent that the existing SGF procedure would atrophy. **The USA** felt that despite that risk the total funding secured would be greater, and **the SG** noted that this method should appeal to other donors beyond our traditional ones.
95. **China** expressed a need for more consideration for the Parties submitting proposals, by means of a mechanism by which donors and Parties can communicate on their respective priorities. **The DSG** noted that he could envisage a Secretariat role in communicating any stated preferences of donors in the call for SGF applications.
96. **China** felt that 90% of the SGF selection process is carried out by the Secretariat. **The USA** explained that the Secretariat evaluates all proposals by use of objective weighted criteria formulated by the SC and that the SC itself chooses the proposals to be supported. **The USA** solicited editorial amendments to the SGP proposal. **China** offered to participate in the Subgroup's contact group on the SGF.
97. **The USA** explained a second and separate proposal from the contact group, Signature Initiatives, which could complement the SGF on a more regional basis. He explained that, at Ramsar regional meetings, the Parties would be asked to agree a list of (e.g.) three priority initiatives, preferably concrete, and each meeting's initiatives would be communicated to subsequent regional meetings for their consideration, too. The proposals would need to be fleshed out, either at the meeting or by the SRA and regional Parties, into a package for potential donors. These would be concrete initiatives that would be generated by regional consensus. There would be no need for COP

approval, for the respective Parties would already have ownership of their proposals. Once agreed, the Secretariat would work with the Parties to seek funding.

98. **The SG** suggested that the SC should accept these proposals in principle and ask the contact group to continue to develop them, and then come to the SC for further consideration. **The DSG** said that the Operational Guidelines would need to be revised, but if the ideas were adopted soon they could be in place for the 2008 SGF cycle, and the Signature Initiatives could be brought up in the pre-COP10 regional meetings. **The Senior Advisor for Europe** noted that the Secretariat has already used a portfolio approach following SC selections, seeking additional bilateral funding for proposals that were evaluated as worthy but not selected, and this year doubled the number of projects supported. He urged that these new ideas should be put in place for the present SGF cycle rather than waiting for 2008. **The SG** noted that the proposal could be circulated to the SC members for comment and approval as soon as the contact group concludes its work.
99. It was noted that the contact group on the SGF comprises the USA as Chair, China, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Japan, Uganda, and Wetlands International.

**Decision SC35-9: The Standing Committee requested the Subgroup on Finance's contact group on SGF development to refine its proposals for a new Small Grants Portfolio (or similar title) and a new Signature Initiative to be circulated as soon as practicable for SC comment and approval or for discussion at SC36.**

100. **The USA** reported that the Subgroup noted the Secretary General's report on the Evian Initiative supported by the Danone Group. **The SG** explained that Danone has agreed to another four-year term of the Initiative, for about €250,000 a year for communications and outreach activities, especially concerning WWD but also helping with regional initiatives. To **Gabon's** inquiry, the SG noted that allocations are decided by the Guiding Committee of Danone in consultation with the Secretariat. Danone obviously has a special interest in countries in which the company has a presence. He also described the Evian Encounters series of capacity-building meetings in Evian for Ramsar regions. He noted that the Secretariat keeps the SC informed of all of the projects.
101. **China** asked about progress in expanding Ramsar regional funding opportunities, like those for the Neotropics and Africa, into Asia. **Iran** recalled the COP's discussion of the need for a special fund for Asia. **The SG** said that there are ongoing discussions about a possible linkage between Danone and SGF activities.

#### **The BlackSeaWet Initiative**

102. Returning to earlier discussion of BlackSeaWet, the **Russian delegate** reported that, after consultations with the capital, the Russian Federation again confirms its support for both the Wetlands International project and the upcoming Black Sea Ramsar regional initiative. It requests, however, that formal processes be initiated with the Russian Federation at an early stage consistent with the new Russian legislation which demands extra consultation with all relevant authorities from parts of the Federation. She also urged that Georgia, as the SC Regional Representative for the Russian Federation, will enhance this process and should be supported by the Secretariat to engage in the development of this Ramsar regional initiative.
103. **The SG** noted that, with additional consultations needed, it would be premature to make an endorsement decision about BlackSeaWet at this time and urged that it be brought forward to SC36, in time to be taken into account when planning for COP10 budget considerations.

#### **Agenda item 10: Report of the Management Working Group**

##### **Mechanisms for transitions between COPs**

104. **The SG**, citing the need for inherited knowledge in ensuring a smooth transition, explained the MWG's recommendation for the creation of a Transition Committee to allow outgoing and incoming SC officers to meet at the end of each COP. To **Benin's** inquiry, he explained that it would normally meet only that once but could decide to meet again prior to the first full SC meeting if necessary. No new costs would be incurred.

**Decision SC35-10: The Standing Committee decided to recommend to the COP that a Transition Committee be formally constituted, with an agreed agenda, to meet following the COP and first SC meeting of each triennium. The members should be the outgoing and newly elected Chairs and Vice Chairs of the SC and Chairs of the Subgroup on Finance, with the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General *ex officio*. It should be chaired by the incoming Chair of the SC.**

#### **Management of the Secretariat**

105. **The SG** reported that the MWG is making three recommendations on this subject – that the SC note the agreed staff action plan, that it agree that the Chair of the SC should be considered to be the ombudsman for the staff of the Secretariat, and that it note that the issue of staff remuneration and conditions of service should be considered by COP10.
106. **The SG** explained that a “staff action plan” responding to a range of concerns from Secretariat staff was agreed by the staff in September 2006, and he noted that there is a task force charged with monitoring its progress. He explained that presently a Ramsar staff member with a grievance has recourse to the IUCN ombudsman and ultimately to the IUCN Governing Council; this recommendation is meant to formalize the SC's role over Secretariat staff matters, if it should ever be needed. Concerning staff remuneration, the SG promised to bring comparative salary and benefits information to SC36.
107. **Namibia** and **Gabon** inquired about what procedures the SC Chair would use to resolve staff grievances from afar, and whether there would be budgetary implications to a visit. **The SG** cautioned against trying to establish firm rules in advance, because the chief purpose is to establish the right of staff members to feel free to contact the SC Chair if they feel they need to – the Chair can then decide how best to handle the problem, and if he or she feels that a visit is necessary that would be covered from the core travel budget. This would help to establish a clear line for an independent Ramsar within the IUCN framework.
108. The **IUCN** representative felt that IUCN would welcome discussions on this and looked forward to consultations on putting it into practice.

**Decision SC35-11: The Standing Committee noted the agreed action plan amongst Secretariat staff and requested that three-monthly updates on the plan's implementation be provided to the SC Chair and Vice Chair and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance.**

**Decision SC35-12: The Committee agreed that IUCN should be advised that the Chair of the SC should be considered as the ombudsman for the Secretariat staff in cases where an urgent independent intervention is sought to resolve difficult staff issues.**

**Decision SC35-13: The Committee requested that issues of Secretariat staff remuneration and conditions of service, including training needs, be included in budgetary considerations presented to COP10.**

#### **Proposed changes in Secretariat staff organization**

109. **The SG** explained that heavy staff workloads forced some attempt at reorganizing responsibilities, but that the MWG was unable to reach consensus on any proposals. He said that there are three clusters of activity in the Secretariat: 1) administration, 2) science and communications issues, and 3) regional affairs and how we provide service to the Parties in the regions. Heretofore, the DSG has had responsibility for both clusters 2) and 3), but with the growth of the Convention that is no longer possible, and the Secretariat has proposed splitting those responsibilities. He said that one possibility would be to appoint the most senior SRA to be “Chief, Regional Affairs” and to use the existing P1 position that will be unfilled after July to become a “Regional Affairs Officer” to provide additional support for that Chief. This would be for one year and reconsideration at SC36, and it would be budget-neutral. Failing that suggestion, the Secretariat would need instructions from the SC as to how to handle these workloads.
110. **The SG** explained that if the SC endorses the concept that one SRA should act as “Chief, Regional Affairs”, the P1’s TOR would consist primarily of supporting that SRA in his or her regional work, but if not, then the P1’s TOR would be to support all of the SRAs in their work, especially during periods of particular pressure on any among them. The main idea is that we need more help in dealing with regional affairs.
111. **Japan, Iran, and China** urged that this should be discussed only after the arrival of the new SG. **China** foresaw the potential for a conflict among the roles. **Malawi** felt that the positions are rotational and might be unstable, causing one of the regions to suffer. There was considerable discussion concerning a number of misunderstandings caused by the wording of the P1 TOR. **Malawi** and **Benin** felt that more thought needs to be given to the matter.
112. **Switzerland** strongly supported the establishment of the Chief, Regional Affairs post as the Secretariat needs immediate strengthening and this will be a good interim solution, to be reviewed by the new SG and by SC36.
113. **The USA** agreed that the proposal is not a practical long-term solution but rather just a patch – he urged, however, that it would be helpful in the short term and should be accepted for one year, with a strong mandate for a well-thought-out and comprehensive structure to be proposed for SC36 consideration. If we can help the present SG manage the overload, it should help the next SG as well, though we must be careful not to encumber the next one with patchwork solutions.
114. Resuming the discussion in the afternoon, **the USA** reported that a draft text for a decision has been circulated for comment. The first part accepted the creation of the temporary post of Chief, Regional Affairs, but most interested Parties did not accept that. The second part, calling upon the Subgroup on Finance and the MWG to work together to propose a comprehensive plan to structure the Secretariat for the next five years, was acceptable.
115. **Kenya** expressed unwillingness to discuss this draft text without having it circulated in advance; **the USA** agreed to supply the text for circulation and defer further discussion until tomorrow.
116. **Norway** expressed concern about the inability of the SC to reach a decision on this matter. She said that the Secretariat is facing a situation in which it is having difficulty in fulfilling the many tasks required of it, and the Secretariat’s proposal seems to be a good interim solution to relieve that burden. She felt that the SC might be formalizing too much these internal matters. She noted that the Convention is very well run, with an idealistic staff who accomplish a lot of work with limited resources. She felt that they deserve the SC’s thoughtful consideration, so as not to make their work harder. She urged that the SC should consider this to be an internal matter and accept it as an interim solution, and then discuss a more permanent solution at the next SC meeting.
117. **The SG** urged everyone to reflect on the USA’s proposed texts, discuss them with others, and be prepared to make some kind of firm decision tomorrow.

**Ongoing issues for the MWG**

118. **The Chair** noted that the Management Working Group will continue to keep the following tasks on its agenda, with any others that might arise: the role of the Parties in selection of new Secretariat staff; refinements to the Secretary General's Performance Agreement, including input by staff and others; monitoring and encouraging joint actions with the IOPs; and ensuring some contact during the year between the Parties and the Secretariat staff.

**Agenda item 11: Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel**

119. **Bahamas, Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel**, noted the Panel's first meeting in May 2006 and explained the composition of the Panel.
120. **Sandra Hails, the CEPA Programme Officer**, alluded to DOC. SC35-6 rev. 1 and drew attention to both its reminder of the Panel's functions and its report on the first meeting and subsequent work by correspondence. She reported that the Panel has provided input to the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan regarding the CEPA indicators for the next National Report format, and she said that the key task of drafting a new CEPA Programme for COP10 has begun and will be a major focus for the Oversight Panel's next meeting. She noted that the Panel had insufficient time to consider fully the communications activities of the Secretariat, but this will be taken up at the next meeting as well.
121. **The CEPA Officer** reported that the Panel felt the need to ensure no overlap with the business of the Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention, and there will be back-to-back meetings and a joint session on 19 June, to include representatives of the capacity-building regional initiatives. She invited the SC to note this report and to require the regional initiatives that are financially supported to report to the CEPA Oversight Panel on their CEPA-related activities.
122. **The CEPA Officer** requested the SC to reconsider SC34's choice of the WWD theme for 2008, 'wetlands and river basin management'. The Secretariat would suggest that WWD 2008 should focus instead on the COP10 theme of "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People", both as a more interesting and relevant theme in itself and as a lead-up to the COP.
123. **The Netherlands** drew attention to an Advisory Board flyer on 14 capacity building programmes and promised to ask the Advisory Board to forward copies.

**Decision SC35-14: The Standing Committee noted the CEPA Oversight Panel's report and agreed to require that the financially supported Ramsar regional initiatives to report on their CEPA activities to the CEPA Oversight Panel. The SC also agreed to change the theme of the 2008 World Wetlands Day to the COP10 theme of "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People".**

**Agenda item 12: Review of the status of Resolution VIII.45**

124. **The SG** explained that DOC. SC35-7 is just a review of relevant activities for the SC's information.
125. **Japan** urged that this work should continue and requested the Secretariat to pay more attention to providing documents for meetings in a timely fashion. For this meetings and earlier ones, documents, especially financial documents, have been circulated with too little time for essential consultations with capitals. She urged that all documents should be circulated at least 30 days before each SC meeting.

126. **The SG** noted that most documents were ready by the traditional 30 days' deadline but apologized that some of the financial documents were delayed by IUCN's work in finalizing the accounts of the previous year. Unfortunately, that is out of the Secretariat's control.

**Agenda item 13: Report of the Chair of the STRP (DOC. SC35-8 and annex)**

127. **Heather MacKay, Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel**, drew attention to the more detailed document and summarized the STRP's progress over the first year of the triennium. The 13<sup>th</sup> STRP meeting was very successful and established nine Working Groups, each led by a thematic expert. The meeting defined the scope of the work and the budget, and she noted that the rolling work programme of the new modus operandi is working very well. Thanks to the generosity of Sweden and the UK and the core allocation, there are sufficient funds to initiate all of the immediate priority tasks and some but not all of the high priority ones. It was felt that some lower priority tasks could be progressed anyway without additional resources, and the STRP will continue to seek additional funding for unfunded high priority tasks.
128. The **STRP Chair** noted that there will be intensive midterm workshops in March and that the dates of the 14<sup>th</sup> STRP meeting will be determined after the next SC meeting dates are known. She reported that the STRP is successfully leveraging its efforts through collaboration with other organizations and with pro bono work of the IOPs and others.
129. She reported that efforts at regional networking through regional members, Parties, and STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) have been disappointing, and a Working Group was established to help with this, led by the STRP Vice Chair Rebecca D'Cruz. She said that, despite the best efforts, it has been difficult to establish even initial contacts with the NFPs, and felt it would probably be unrealistic to hope to mobilize all of the NFPs to help with all of the work – probably we will be able to engage some of them only in the tasks most relevant to each. The STRP is also working to identify helpful organizations within the countries, and such flexible networking should help to extend the STRP's work into the regions, which is important for feedback on regional priorities and ways of presentation.
130. On emerging issues, the **STRP Chair** noted several, which will be reported on more fully at SC36. There is a watching brief on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – she alluded to DOC. SC35-16 and noted that STRP member David Stroud is our representative on the Scientific Task Force on avian flu. The STRP reaffirmed the importance of the COP9 Resolution on avian flu. She emphasized the growing importance of earth observation and remote sensing and noted our partnership with the European Space Agency, particularly with its GlobWetland project which is providing EO data to managers at 50 Ramsar sites. There was major STRP involvement in the GlobWetland symposium at ESA headquarters last autumn. Concerning climate change, the STRP is recommending that this issue should be brought back onto the Ramsar agenda, as there is a growing need for contextual information on climate change and wetlands in order to develop response options at the site level; she felt that remote sensing might be the best hope for providing this context, and she noted that a Type II partnership involving FAO and IWMI was launched at that symposium.
131. The **STRP Chair** invited the SC to note the STRP's report and endorse the draft STRP Work Plan 2006-2008 included as an annex.
132. **Japan** suggested that the networking of NFPs would be more successful when calling for comment on specific issues rather than generally and drew attention to the need for a time schedule for allowing the NFPs to comment on all of the STRP's draft Resolutions, as called for in Resolution VIII.45. **The STRP Chair** agreed that targeting NFPs on relevant issues will be more successful, and pointed out that the STRP works by means of the Web-based STRP Support Service, as sending out documents for comment is beyond the Panel's budgetary means.

133. **Benin** observed that cultural issues are not included in the proposed STRP Work Plan. **The Chair** explained that the COP did not raise cultural issues as an STRP priority in this triennium but established a Culture Working Group to deal with those matters.
134. **Ecuador** stressed the importance of the work of the STRP and called for capacity building for the NFPs. **The Chair** noted that the need for capacity building has been discussed, but with current resourcing that is not easy to do. She noted that the STRP is producing a brochure for the NFPs to help them to link up with other Ramsar focal points in the Parties.
135. **El Salvador** said that the STRP Work Plan is at the heart of the Convention but asked whether there will be sufficient time and capacity to accomplish all of the tasks listed there. He suggested that before the SC adopts the Work Plan it should learn how the tasks will be carried out. **The STRP Chair** responded that most of the work will be done by experts or collaborating bodies supervised by the STRP, and that the STRP is very aware of the need to prioritize, as there is only so much that can be done with the present budget and leverage with other organizations.
136. **Wetlands International** noted that avian flu is included in the Work Plan at a low priority but said that experience with the Task Force shows that there is a really urgent need for guidance on avian flu and wetlands to go with Resolution IX.23. She said that there is increased knowledge now, but it needs to be brought together to help Parties respond promptly to the threats. Wetlands International proposed, if resources could be found, a joint Avian Flu Task Force and STRP workshop to prepare this guidance for the Parties. **The STRP Chair** thanked WI for that suggestion and promised to bring it up at the midterm workshops in March.
137. **The DSG** said that the revised STRP modus operandi is proving to be very helpful and that in his view this STRP is the most powerfully focused Panel in many years, and that the engagement of the IOPs is very strong. He thanked the Chair for her work.

**Decision SC35-15: The Standing Committee adopted the report of the STRP, including the STRP Work Plan 2006-2008 included as an annex.**

#### **Agenda item 14: Report of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan**

138. **Bahamas, the Chair of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan (SP)**, summarized the Subgroup's meeting and recommendations on the Strategic Plan and National Report format.
139. **The UK** welcomed the intention of a much better focus to the National Report (NR) than in the last one and cautioned against allowing that tight focus to slip into the natural tendency toward expansion while progressing the format further. He noted that many Parties will need to prepare the Ramsar National Report at the same time as they prepare another for the CMS.
140. **The SG** noted that the Subgroup's recommendations give the Secretariat a clear way forward, and that all input will be welcome from SC members and observers as well. He said that the Secretariat will use this meeting's participants list to mail the draft out for comment.

**Decision SC35-16: The Standing Committee decided that the basic framework of the Strategic Plan should be in line with the proposals for this in paragraph 5 of DOC. SC35-9; that the plan should be specific about its audience and how the plan will be used; that some vision of the world by 2014 should be included, in order to provide the global context of the Plan (e.g., trends in global policy and governance and trends in state of wetland ecosystems); that major issues specific to the Plan period should be recognized, such as global responses to the 2010 biodiversity target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, and global responses to climate change; that a short summary of implementation**

achievements and progress during the 2002-2008 period should be included; and that there should be convergence and linkages clearly established between the Strategic Plan and other Convention planning and reporting documents, e.g., the budget, Secretariat Work Plan, STRP Work Plan, and National Report Format, with an attempt, where possible, to indicate costs of delivery of the Strategic Plan.

**Decision SC35-17:** The Standing Committee also decided that the Strategic Plan's five-goal structure should be retained but that, as currently worded, some of these goals are not goal statements, and need to be reworded; and that the language of the top-level section heading of the Plan concerning "Conservation and wise use of wetlands and water resources" also needs rewording to reflect the Convention's business more clearly.

**Decision SC35-18:** The Standing Committee agreed that the Strategic Plan's mission statement should not be amended.

**Decision SC35-19:** The Committee instructed that the Plan be as strategically-focused and as short and succinct as possible; that the new Strategic Plan should be less complex and detailed than the current (2002-2008) Strategic Plan; that the model of the structure and level of detail of Convention's Work Plan 2006-2008 should be followed; and that the Strategic Plan should identify and point at where more detailed sources of information exist, such as in Work Plans, action plans, etc., concerning different aspects of implementation.

**Decision SC35-20:** Concerning time-lines for the Strategic Plan, the Standing Committee decided that the Secretariat should prepare a first draft to be circulated for comment to all members of the Subgroup in mid-2007; that following their comments a second draft should be prepared in early autumn 2007 for circulation to all Standing Committee members and observers; and that a third draft should then be provided to the Subgroup prior to, and for consideration at, the 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee in early 2008.

141. **The Netherlands** recalled Russia's comment about there being too much emphasis in the National Report format on listed sites over the wise use of all wetlands. **The SG** said that that point would be noted.
142. The Subgroup confirmed that the format for COP10 should be based around a series of 'process-oriented' indicators for each of the Convention Work Plan 2006-2008 strategies, rather than attempting to be a comprehensive reporting on each and every action that Contracting Parties, through COP decisions, have given themselves.

**Decision SC35-21:** Concerning the National Reports format, the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to develop further the COP10 National Report format based on the approach and reduced number of indicators presented in the Annex to DOC. SC35-10.

**Decision SC35-22:** The Standing Committee directed the Secretariat, when preparing the NR format, to include, in a preamble, a clear explanation of the purposes for national reporting and the uses to which the COP10 National Reports will be put, amplifying DOC. SC35-10 paragraphs 2 and 3; include a 'free-text' summary section for reporting national implementation progress, based on the questions set out in DOC. SC35-10 paragraph 6; include a 'free-text' section under each Strategy, as an optional section for Parties to provide additional information if they so wish, to cover a) additional information concerning each of the indicators for that strategy, and b) any information concerning other aspects of implementation progress of that strategy; for each specific indicator, to include other 'tick-box' options than a simple Yes/No answer, such as inter alia Partially/ In progress/ completed/ not applicable, etc., depending on the precise formulation of

that indicator; and review and amend the wording of each indicator so as to ensure that its wording is precise and clear, and will yield information useful for assessing and reporting on Convention implementation progress.

**Decision SC35-23:** Concerning specific indicators, the Committee instructed the Secretariat to, under Strategy 4.4, include additional CEPA indicators, covering the full breadth of the Convention's CEPA programme implementation, based on those recommended by the CEPA Oversight Panel, but consolidating these so as to avoid unbalancing the overall report format; under Strategy 1.2 add a small number of indicators concerning the status of National Wetland Policies (or their equivalents); add, if necessary and following the advice of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP), any additional process-oriented indicators that it deems essential for assessing the ecological-outcomes of the implementation of the Convention; and add a short section reporting the availability of national information on the status and trends of the ecological character of wetlands (both specifically for Ramsar sites and for the overall wetland resource), through the provision of 'meta-data' on such information rather than reporting the status and change itself, so as to facilitate the STRP's follow-up work on site and national level information sources for certain of its indicators of effectiveness.

**Decision SC35-24:** Concerning time-lines, the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of DOC. SC35-10 Annex (early March 2007) and provide this to the STRP for consideration at its mid-term workshops. At its mid-term workshops (last week of March 2007) the STRP should review and comment on the format and identify any additional process-oriented indicators it needs for its indicator work. A revised draft should be made available to the Standing Committee member and observers in April 2007, for their comment and approval; the finalized COP10 NRF will be issued to all Contracting Parties in June 2007; and the deadline for the submission of COP10 National Reports will be set as 28 February 2008.

#### Agenda item 15: COP9 outputs

##### Regional initiatives

143. **The SG** noted that these matters have been dealt with already. **Japan** requested a correction in DOC. SC35-11, page 2, to the title of the initiative, which should be Partnership for East Asian – Australasian Migratory Waterbirds.

##### Review of COP decisions

144. **The SG** provided background to the issue and thanked Dave Pritchard for his thorough analysis of all of the Convention's decisions since COP1 in 1980.
145. **Mr Pritchard** said that DOC. SC35-12 represents a first analysis of all of the COP decisions with suggestions as to what could be done about them. He noted that this is not suitable for a mechanical analysis but requires policy interpretation in many places. He said that however the SC should decide to progress the matter, the document will be a useful guide and will be helpful in drawing up new draft decisions. He noted that paras. 42-45 comprise lessons for the future, and he urged the SC to be aspirational, as a thorough overhaul of all the decisions might bring some light and legal clarity to this mass of texts.
146. All subsequent speakers on this issue began with congratulations and appreciation for Mr Pritchard, or "the team", for all of his work on this valuable document.

147. **Switzerland** found the results reassuring, as there seem to be few conflicts between the older and the newer decisions. He suggested that not too much time should be spent in looking back and that the focus should be on the future. He felt that, considering how few problems we seem to have, legal advice should be sought only when absolutely necessary. He supported the idea of a thematically-grouped listing to be promoted more widely, but he saw retiring older resolutions as a waste of time and energy. Switzerland considered that consolidation of decisions should be done only in cases of absolute necessity, not on minor issues – only on a case by case basis as problems come up. He urged that we should not become involved in a long process, but rather focus on the future and agree on an ad hoc basis when really serious problems arise.
148. **Japan** considered it important to streamline the format of future resolutions and decision-making processes and asked the Secretariat to take account of the advice contained in this document.
149. **El Salvador** applauded this document as a valuable guide, a key document of the Convention, which will give us an idea of the situation on every Resolutions, an excellent piece of work. **Ecuador** echoed that view and urged that the work should continue, perhaps by consolidating decisions of some of the earlier COPs and moving on to later ones. Ecuador suggested that only a few issues at a time should be dealt with, progressively, and that we should set some priorities. He also noted that there should be no need for new Resolutions where earlier ones have not yet been implemented, and he felt that Resolution VI.22 on the costs of moving the Secretariat should remain as a continuing concern. Recommendations on the importance of National Wetland Policies should not be retired.
150. **WWF** welcomed the document and urged the SC to convey its thanks to the head of BirdLife International to ensure that it is understood how valued Mr Pritchard's efforts are by the Convention.
151. **Kenya** joined in congratulating Dave Pritchard for the excellent report, which contains useful insights and critiques on key elements. The analysis will be useful in formulating future decisions. In Annex 2, task 107, the review is necessary but there is a need for inputs from Parties on sites considered as potential Ramsar sites. The culture element needs to be included as a qualification element. However, more selection criteria need to be considered.
152. **Norway** expressed appreciation for this informative document and echoed Switzerland's view that not too much time should be spent in looking backward at older decisions. She described the CBD's experience with trying to retire or consolidate older decisions and its conclusion that retirement should be taken up when new ones are being adopted that supersede them.
153. **Argentina** said that, concerning the implementation of the decisions, it would be useful to have an overall assessment of all of them, with a particular view to finding areas of redundancy.
154. **Namibia** urged a case-by-case approach to consolidation rather than a major project.
155. **The SG** noted that any consolidation called for would be done by COP10, after which the Secretariat would ensure that retrospective retirement, etc., would be part of the drafting of all new Resolutions.
156. **The DSG** summarized the possible elements of a decision on this matter, based on the comments so far.

**Decision SC35-25: The Standing Committee expressed its profound gratitude to RSPB and BirdLife International for having released time for Dave Pritchard to undertake his review of the Ramsar Convention's decisions from 1980 to 2005 with a view to rationalization and consolidation.**

**Decision SC35-26: The Standing Committee urged that further work should be encouraged on the review of past decisions, but that legal advice should be sought only if and when major problems should arise, and that it would be worth while to present the Convention's decisions in thematic groupings, with a list of decisions currently in effect. The Committee felt that consolidations and retirements of past decisions should be undertaken only when necessary, but that all new Resolutions should include retirements of superseded earlier decisions when appropriate. The SC encouraged Dave Pritchard to look at what retiring specific blocks of decision might look like, and asked the Secretariat to assess ways and means of analyzing the implementation of past decisions in order to identify any redundancies. And the SC requested a report for SC36 that could be communicated to COP10.**

**Wetlands and poverty reduction (DOC. SC35-13)**

157. **The Senior Advisor for Africa** reviewed the document's summary of the Secretariat's work in connection with poverty reduction – he noted that Resolution IX.14 is one of the most important Ramsar decisions, especially for Africa, but that it called primarily for actions by the Parties rather than by the Secretariat. Nevertheless, much relevant work is under way, especially in conjunction with Wetlands International's Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Project. He said that he will continue discussions with other IOPs to see if other collaborations might be possible. He felt that Resolution IX.14 is too general and that more detailed guidance and tools for the Parties must be provided to help them implement that Resolution.
158. **Wetlands International** cautioned against narrowing the scope of the Resolution any further and urged that there should be a focus on a specific theme like "wetlands, water, and sanitation". She enumerated some of the tools being made available by the Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Project, funded by the Netherlands, including the toolkit (with thanks to Uganda and Gabon); the intersectoral African board, with several modules already for East and West Africa but extensible to other regions; five demonstration projects; establishment of seed funds; and formation of partnerships with aid agencies, designed to be of good value across Africa.
159. **Japan** pointed out that several of the SGF projects did not explicitly identify their poverty reduction components and, as a donor, urged that the proposals should clearly state that connection.
160. **The SG** felt that we should spend some time looking at a more specific follow-on Resolution for COP10 and bring a draft Resolution to SC36 for consideration, and welcomed any input from interested Parties. He cautioned that we must ensure that our Resolution stays within the bounds of our Convention's mission and does not wander off to try to be everything to everybody.

**Decision SC35-27: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to develop a draft Resolution for COP10, in consultation with interested Parties, that provides more specific guidance on wetlands and poverty reduction.**

**Resolution IX.15 on the status of Ramsar sites (DOC. SC35-14)**

161. **The SG** explained that the document represents an Article 8.2 notification to the Parties about the Secretariat's attempts to follow up on information provided about threats and negative impacts on Ramsar sites, and it is provided for the SC's information.
162. **WWF International** provided an extended intervention concerning Ramsar sites in Australia and Greece, noting grave concerns about recent developments in Australia and urging the Secretariat to take several specific steps to seek clarification from the Commonwealth government and urging

Australia to place some sites on the Montreux Record. Concerning Greece, WWF noted that all Greek Ramsar sites still lack management plans and that promises made about improvements at the Evros Delta site when it was removed from the Montreux Record in 1999 have not been kept. WWF asked that its requests should be included in the report of this meeting.

163. **Australia** announced that a substantial study has been got underway for Moreton Bay and that the government will respond to the Secretariat's request when it has been completed. He responded to WWF's information with point by point clarifications and drew attention to a new AUS\$10 billion national plan for water security that will benefit all Ramsar sites in the Murray-Darling basin. Australia provided an amended text for DOC. SC35-14, para 4 i).
164. **Kenya** reported that the delay in responding about Naivasha was due to the government's awaiting a court decision – it is still dragging, but the next court date is in March 2007 and it is hoped that the management plan process will be allowed to continue.
165. **Austria** provided an update on the Lafnitztal Ramsar site, where the situation is now satisfactory.
166. **Romania** made a spirited and detailed intervention concerning Ukraine's actions on progressing the Bistroye canal navigation works in the Danube Delta, drawing attention to a succession of Ramsar and other international recommendations to Ukraine which have been ignored. Romania invited the SC to take all appropriate steps to urge Ukraine to respect Ramsar Resolution IX.15, para 27 iv.
167. **The Senior Advisor for Africa** drew attention to the fact that several Ramsar sites in Africa are threatened by oil and gas exploitation, either ongoing or planned, and foresaw that the Convention will have to respond to these emerging problems, presently in Chad, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya. He said that we are in consultation with UNEP about how to help the Parties respond to these problems.
168. **The Republic of Korea** provided information about the document's mention of Saemangeum – the project was planned long ago, begun in 1991, and sea-wall construction was finished last year. Several ministries are regularly monitoring the situation to minimize the ecological impact and the government is planning an EcoPark and environmentally friendly agriculture. The ROK government believes that intertidal mudflats should be preserved and no large-scale reclamation projects are now being approved.
169. **BirdLife International** found this to be a valuable exercise, obtaining updated reports on site problems in real time, and urged that the same should be requested for SC36. **The SG** agreed and said that these site status updates should be a standing item on the SC agenda.
170. **The SG** summarized that WWF has raised some concerns regarding Australia and has received responses on some of them. He reported that he has recently had talks with the Greek mission, which expressed concern about previous failures to respond to inquiries, but nothing has yet been received in follow-up and he will try to pursue that. He noted Romania's concerns and pledged the Secretariat's help in any way it can for Romania's efforts in bilateral talks with Ukraine. He thanked Parties for the other updates.
171. **The SG** reiterated the SRA for Africa's concerns about oil/gas exploitation in African Ramsar sites, but noted that, with modern technologies, such exploitations need not always be bad. He offered that the Secretariat would prepare a short info paper on this subject for SC36, possibly to eventuate in a DR for COP10.

**Decision SC35-28: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to note the information supplied in the interventions and to follow up on them as requested to, and to**

report back to SC36 on the results. The Committee agreed that the reporting on the status of Ramsar sites should be an agenda item for every Standing Committee meeting. The SC also asked the Secretariat to prepare an information paper on oil and gas exploitation in African Ramsar sites for consideration by SC36. The Committee instructed the Secretariat to keep the supporting materials supplied today on hand in the Secretariat for consultation and to update the information in DOC. SC35-14 for presentation to SC36.

Third day, 16 February 2007

Agenda item 15, continued:

**Resolution IX.22 on Ramsar sites and protected area systems**

172. **The SG** summarized background provided in DOC. SC35-15, specifically concerning an October 2006 symposium in Skukuza, South Africa, which agreed to recommend to IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas a revised definition of "protected area" that would better include inland waters and ecosystem services, and the SG's call for comments on this issue on the Ramsar Web site. He noted that there will be a WCPA "category summit" in May 2007 and that he has been asked speak about Ramsar sites and protected areas – he solicited input for his intervention or a formal comment from the SC.
173. **WWF** noted that WWF was one of the promoters of Skukuza symposium and used the opportunity to promote the Ramsar Convention. WWF feels that the WCPA pays too little attention to inland waters and that there will be substantial synergies if we can close the gap. He noted that there is a disjunction in the management of land-based protected areas as to how the land and water portions of the sites are treated. WWF urged that the SC empower the SG to deliver a strong message to the summit and suggested that the SC might wish to convey a message to IUCN.
174. **The Chair of the STRP** noted that the issue of definition may be of great long-term importance to Ramsar. She noted that the Skukuza definition arises from recent work on aquatic ecosystems and aquatic biodiversity which will be important for identifying Ramsar sites and determining their boundaries. She too urged the SC to empower the SG to take a strong message to the summit and offered to supply useful material.
175. **IUCN** offered to bring this discussion to the attention of the appropriate IUCN staff and urged the SG to continue his discussions with the WCPA staff.
176. **The DSG** promised that the STRP Working Group on site designation will consider this issue at the midterm workshops in March and provide comment. He noted that the WCPA is also holding a marine summit in Washington, D.C., in April and that the Ramsar Convention has been invited to co-lead a session on marine and coastal areas.
177. **The SG** reported that the Secretariat is working on a publication that will select a range of Ramsar sites in each region that fall into one or more protected area categories in order show how IUCN protected area categories can add value. He said that there are some who consider that Ramsar sites are not really protected areas because they may not have local or national legal protection, but they do meet IUCN's definition as areas that are managed according to "legal or other means" and this point needs to be made clearly by the planned publication. He noted that the IUCN categories are derived from an explicit matrix of management objectives. He said that we need to make the attempt to change and to simplify the IUCN definition, and he solicited advice from Parties, IOPs, and the STRP.

**Resolution IX.23, Highly Pathogenic Avian Flu (HPAI)**

178. **The DSG** alluded to DOC. SC35-16 as an update on the STRP's role in monitoring this issue, with David Stroud acting as the Panel's liaison with the EU and the Scientific Task Force convened by the Convention on Migratory Species and others. He encouraged interested persons to consult the Task Force's Web site and noted that the United States is putting significant resources into the Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance (GAINS) with the participation of some of the Ramsar IOPs. He provided a general update on the situation of avian flu vis-à-vis wild birds.
179. **Japan** provided a report on the recent outbreak of avian flu in Japan and the government's prompt responses. It was noted that Japan has pledged funds to help address this problem around the world and works with international organizations on it.
180. **The Netherlands** reported that Bewick's Swan has come under threat in the Netherlands from a less pathogenic form of avian flu.
181. **The SG** said that HPAI is an important issue, especially vis-à-vis human health, and noted that the Secretariat will keep a very close watch on the issue and keep the SC informed.

**Agenda item 16: The Secretariat Work Plan 2007 and Ramsar-CBD Joint Work Plan 2007-2010**

182. **The SG** explained that last year's Secretariat work plan was intended as a trial and that the plan in Annex 1 of DOC SC35-17 rev. 1 follows the same format. He noted that there has been more opportunity for staff interaction in estimating the time needed for each area of work and expected that each year the degree of precision would become greater. He noted the large time estimate for processing new and updated Ramsar Information Sheets.
183. **Benin** noted that the plan contains no reference to the Working Group on Culture. **The SG** responded that the plan is meant to be task-based rather than unit-based and that a number of specific groups and activities do not appear separately.
184. **Austria** welcomed the format of the plan, especially as it has been possible this time to include time estimates.
185. **Gabon** noted that four weeks seems a short time spent on synergies with external bodies, and **the SG** replied that that item refers specifically only to work with the Biodiversity Liaison Group and the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, and that other interaction with external bodies is included in many other items.

**Decision SC35-29: The Standing Committee adopted the Secretariat Work Plan 2007 as annexed to DOC. SC35-17 rev. 1.**

186. **The SG** explained that the draft of the Fourth Joint Work Programme (JWP) between Ramsar and the CBD employs a somewhat different presentation from earlier JWPs, which were very comprehensive and included many potential actions, many of which could not be implemented. The present format is of a framework document of areas of collaboration, so that each year both secretariats can report the specific details of that year's implementation. The JWP includes responsibilities for the Parties and the Conventions' bodies as well as for the secretariats, and it is assumed that the contributions of the IOPs are tacitly included on the Ramsar side. The SG stressed the role of CEPA activities and finding ways and means of promoting capacity building. He observed that this programme does not cite Ramsar's formal role as the CBD's lead partner for inland waters, so that now it can be considered to include collaboration in a number of other CBD thematic areas (coastal, forests, mountains, etc.) which are covered by the term "wetlands" under the Ramsar definition.

187. **The Netherlands** suggested enumerating those other CBD thematic programme areas and drew attention to the need for clarifying when the JWP is using certain terminology (e.g., wise use, sustainable use, ecosystem approach, etc.) under their CBD definitions rather than in general. He said that the FAO's work on the ecosystem approach regarding forests could be useful. **The SG** noted that whenever the plan employs terms that are used in the respective convention texts, it is in the sense that they are used in those texts.
188. **El Salvador** reported that the draft JWP serves to enshrine the work that some of the Central American Parties have been doing for some time, alongside the CBD, in various areas of the plan. He welcomed the document as putting an official stamp on that relationship and foresaw that it would facilitate the Parties' approaches for GEF funding through the close cooperation with the CBD.
189. **Slovenia** felt that the present draft is more focused than previous JWPs but urged that relevant CBD thematic areas of work should not be enumerated, as it would be better to regard wetland issues as cross-cutting issues.
190. **Malawi** felt that the draft JWP is the best way forward and is important because it will help to reduce overlaps and duplication of efforts. He asked whether the programme will give Ramsar Parties direct access to the GEF. **The SG** explained that the JWP will be very helpful in dealing with the GEF as representing wetland work of the CBD that is delivered through Ramsar, but there will still be not direct access.
191. **BirdLife International** noted that the items under "convention bodies" don't always make it clear which bodies have responsibility, and suggested that the STRP should compare the JWP with the STRP Work Plan to identify where further work is required on our side. **The SG** noted, however, that it might be better not to be overly specific, but the JWP will inform the work of both the STRP and SBSTTA in general.
192. **The SG** noted that the Executive Secretary of the CBD will present this draft to SBSTTA in July.

**Decision SC35-30: The Standing Committee endorsed the draft Fourth Work Programme between Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity as found in Annex 2 of DOC. SC35-17 rev. 1.**

#### **The Management Working Group's report concerning changes in the Secretariat's organization**

193. **The SG** reported that the USA had circulated a draft decision with two parts – one regarding the establishment of a "Chief, Regional Affairs" post and the other regarding the need for a comprehensive organization plan for the Secretariat for consideration at the next SC meeting. He understood that there was no consensus on the first one but general agreement on the second, and **the USA** confirmed that response. **The SG** noted, however, that the Secretariat is presently recruiting a P1 position for scientific and technical support and needs also to add a second P1 to provide additional support for the regions; both of those positions are foreseen in the present budget. The second P1 post was meant to support the Chief for Regional Affairs, but if that position is not endorsed, the Terms of Reference will be redrafted to include support for all of the Senior Regional Advisors. It would be for a duration of 18 months.

**Decision SC35-31: The Standing Committee requested the Secretary General to work with the Management Working Group to propose an organizational structure and terms of reference for senior staff to better reflect the strategic priorities and needs of the Convention for the next five years, for consideration by SC36. The Committee also endorsed the recruitment of a P1 post in the Secretariat to support the work of the Senior Regional Advisors.**

**Agenda item 16: The legal status of the Convention**

194. **The SG** summarized the progress of attempts to resolve this problem, as outlined in DOC. SC35-18, and noted the suggestion that the SG be empowered to approach the Director General of IUCN about the Secretariat accompanying the IUCN delegation to international meetings at which it has observer status, with the understanding that the Ramsar staff would be permitted to speak in the name of the Convention and not for IUCN. He reported that there is no problem with UNEP in this regard, that it is only with other UN bodies that we have difficulty being admitted. The other solution, he said, would be for the Ramsar Convention to become part of the United Nations system, about which there are many pros and cons.
195. **The SG** asked the SC to give instruction as to whether he should approach the DG of IUCN about registering for international meetings as part of IUCN but speaking independently and to what extent the Secretariat should pursue other options, including the status quo, joining the UN, etc.
196. **The ambassador of Ecuador** emphasized the importance of this issue and recounted his country's efforts to assist the Secretariat in this matter, including hosting an information session in Geneva for other missions to the UN in October 2006. He foresaw no problem with some of the options and suggested that approaching IUCN might well be a temporary solution, but he suggested that the Secretariat should elaborate an official document for SC36 that contains not only a precise analysis of the positive and negative implications of the various alternatives discussed so far, but a viable long-term solution to address this legal gap. Ecuador felt that the Secretariat should have the legal status of an intergovernmental body, as stipulated in Article 8. He suggested that UNESCO's legal department should be approached once again on the legal issues and expressed his willingness to continue to help.
197. **Argentina** supported Ecuador's comments and viewed the options mentioned as appropriate, whilst pointing out that they are not mutually exclusive.
198. **The USA** supported the idea of approaching the DG of IUCN and noted that yesterday the DG expressed her willingness to help. The USA urged the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive paper for the SC on the problems involved in the current relationship and why the Secretariat feels the need for change, which would help the Parties to judge whether there is a need for change or whether any difficulties can be resolved through changes in the relationship with IUCN.
199. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** recalled the long and difficult process of IUCN's gaining observer status, and failed to understand why the Ramsar Convention should be treated any differently from the other MEAs. He called on all the Parties to come forward and support the Convention's case before international bodies, and he asked for information about which Parties have not agreed to a solution, e.g., at ECOSOC, and why.
200. **Kenya** felt that the future institutional arrangement requires serious thought, so that the Secretariat can have a viable institutional status. He felt that it was not suitable for Ramsar to have the same status as IUCN, as an NGO/IGO hybrid, when it is an MEA. He called for a deeper analysis of the financial and technical implementations of being an independent IGO or even a UN body. He called attention to the anomaly that if Ramsar staff wished to sue Ramsar over some grievance, they would have instead to sue IUCN. But Kenya did not oppose further approaches to UNESCO and IUCN as interim solutions.
201. **Samoa** noted that this has been a problem for a long time and supported the USA's call for a comprehensive paper on exactly what issues need to be addressed, and also urged continued

dialogue with other bodies. He felt that the resolution of legal status will also encourage other countries to join the Convention.

202. **IUCN** echoed the DG's expression of her willingness to engage with the Secretariat to discuss any of these issues, and he too felt that it would be helpful to see a detailed outline of exactly what these issues are. IUCN would welcome a comprehensive paper which includes the pros and cons of the various options concerning a change of status.
203. **Namibia** agreed with the need for a more detailed explanation of what the current problems are and the ramifications of the options, and he wondered whether IUCN also has issues with having the Ramsar Convention as part of it. He asked whether, if Ramsar were to join the UN, that would resolve the issue of staff remuneration.
204. **Japan** noted that the present document is not sufficient for discussion, as much more detail is required. Japan too urged that a comprehensive document be prepared for SC36 and said that any action before that would be premature, although Japan would not oppose further discussions with IUCN in the interim.
205. **El Salvador** felt that more specific detailed information is needed on the advantages of all the options, and also called for a comprehensive paper for SC36. He noted that these are not merely technical questions, as they have political implications as well.
206. **The SG** clarified that the problem is not with the legal status of the Convention, which is duly registered with the UN as a treaty, but rather with the legal status of the Secretariat, which is hosted by IUCN, and he explained that the reason for that is that Ramsar predates the present system of UN-based MEAs. He said that at the time, being hosted by IUCN made perfect sense when "the club" was small, but now that Ramsar has grown, it is time to review the situation very carefully. One problem with IUCN, he said, is that of legal liability, and if it were to be decided that there should be no change, there would need to be a more explicit agreement with IUCN, rather than the present 'understanding', on that part of the relationship.
207. Concerning the reasons for which some Parties have opposed recognition of Ramsar as an intergovernment body, **the SG** said that some Parties are uneasy with a proliferation of independent bodies. He said that he believes that the idea of legal independence for the Secretariat on its own is a waste of time thinking about.
208. **The SG** summarized the discussion by noting two options before us as 1) continuing as we are, but with a new codification of the legal relationship with IUCN, or 2) some other arrangement, for example somewhere within the UN system. He also urged that we should go back to the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law and ask for explicit scenarios, which we could then take back to UNESCO and ask for a firm opinion. In the end, the SG said, the Parties will have to come to consensus, but that will be easier with a full understanding of the issues. He invited any Parties that would like to be involved in further investigation of this issue to let him know, and he noted that the Secretariat is already working very closely with Switzerland as the host country. He observed that no one had spoken against his making a formal approach to the DG of IUCN for a short-term or patch solution.
209. **Switzerland** said that the manner of proceeding summarized by the SG is a good way forward and promised that Switzerland, as host to the Ramsar Convention and to IUCN, will fully support the quest for the best possible solution.

**Decision SC35-32: The Standing Committee agreed to seek the views of the IUCN Commission on Environment Law, UNESCO, and UNEP on the legal status of the Secretariat and invited interested Parties to collaborate, and it called on the Secretariat to**

provide a more informative and comprehensive paper on the problem and options for solutions for its next meeting. The Committee agreed that the Director General of IUCN should be formally approached about interim solutions to ensure that the Secretariat is properly represented at all relevant UN meetings.

**Agenda item 18: The 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee**

210. **The SG** explained the constraints on times and facilities for next year and proposed the week of 25-29 February 2008 for the next meeting. He recalled that for the past two COPs the Subgroup on COP10 has also had to meet some months after the SC meeting in order to finalize the remainder of the COP documents, and that these have turned into very nearly full SC meetings anyway, so he proposed that we plan on a second full SC meeting for around June – these two would be the 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> SC meetings. He noted that 2008 will be a full year for international meetings so it is important that we block out our dates as soon as possible. To inquiries, he said that the SBSTTA meeting is scheduled for the previous week in February and that there would be no problem with the fact that the deadline for regional initiatives' reports is in January. He said that there would be a slight additional cost but it would be manageable within the COP9-approved budget.

**Decision SC35-33: The Standing Committee chose the week of 25-29 February 2008 for its 36<sup>th</sup> meeting and agreed to hold the 37<sup>th</sup> SC meeting in June 2008. The exact starting date in February and optimum suggested dates for June will be communicated later.**

**Agenda item 19: Adoption of the report of the meeting**

211. **The Chair** explained the traditional Ramsar practice, in which participants who wish to make editorial corrections and clarifications to the first two days' reports are encouraged to pass them directly to the rapporteur and to bring up only substantial matters at this time. It is traditional practice, after the approval of the first days' reports, for the Standing Committee to authorize the Chair to approve the third day on its behalf. He noted that the Decisions of the meeting will be circulated by diplomatic notification and posted on the Web in English, French, and Spanish, but that for budgetary reasons the full report will be posted only in English.
212. **Argentina** and **Uruguay** reported that they have passed written statements to the rapporteur for inclusion in the record verbatim.

**Decision SC35-34: The Standing Committee adopted the reports of the first two days of the meeting, subject to editorial proofreading by the Secretariat, and empowered the Chair to adopt the report of the third day.**

**Agenda item 20: Any other business**

213. **Norway** announced that there will be an information conference in Norway, 29 October to 2 November 2007, the fifth conference in a row on biodiversity issues for input to the CBD. This will be on the 2010 target and Millennium Development Goals on sustainable development for inland and coastal/marine areas. There will be discussion of the links between wetlands and climate change, and interested people were urged to contact their national CBD focal points if they should wish to participate.
214. **Ecuador** came to the podium, on behalf of the Americas regions, to present a certificate of appreciation to the departing Senior Advisor for the Americas, Margarita Astrálaga, in recognition for her dedicated work for the region over the past eight years.

215. **The Senior Regional Advisor** thanked everyone for their support and friendship and expressed confidence that Ramsar will continue to be one of the most effective MEAs. She cited the Convention's evolution over the years as new issues and threats have emerged, and she cautioned about the huge responsibility ahead, including the concerns of climate change. She said that from her new position in charge of the IUCN office in Malaga she expects still to be closely involved in Ramsar affairs in the Mediterranean area.
216. **Benin** announced that funding support has been received for a site in southern Benin and that work will start this year.
217. **Samoa** reported that the Parties in the Oceania region have agreed a letter of appreciation for the Secretary General, noting that he has had a great impact on bringing in the small island states to the Convention. He hoped that the SG would stay involved in Ramsar issues and wished him luck.
218. **Gabon** appealed for technical assistance in implementing the Convention and said that Gabon would be very grateful for technical contributions to the documents they are drafting.
219. **IUCN** announced that the Water and Nature Initiative has launched a new publication on payment for ecosystem services and that copies are available. He said that there are hopes that there will be a French translation.
220. **The Islamic Republic of Iran**, speaking on behalf of the Asia region, conveyed special thanks to the SG for his dedication and for his great share in moving the Convention forward. He said that the SG is one of the best directors among the MEAs.
221. **The Chair** noted that the SG will be leaving at the end of his tour of duty in July and updated the meeting on the recruitment of his successor. Six candidates have been selected, and interviews will take place at the Secretariat on 22-23 March 2007. The second selection panel will consist of the Chair of the SC, Malawi for Africa, China and Iran for Asia, the Czech Republic and Switzerland for Europe, Bahamas (the Vice Chair) and Ecuador for the Neotropics, the USA for North America, and Samoa for Oceania, as well as the Director General of IUCN and a representative of the staff of the Secretariat.
222. **Malawi** wished to record the Africa region's appreciation to the outgoing Secretary General and felt that Africa has made great strides because of the special interest of the SG. He wished the SG all success for the future.
223. **Ecuador**, representing the Neotropics, expressed gratitude for the SG's excellent work, which has made a great contribution to the Convention's progress and to wetlands. He hope that we will all still be able to work together and he wished the SG the best for the future, and the same for the Senior Advisor for the Americas.
224. **Austria** thanked the SG for his excellent contributions, on behalf of Europe, and wished him all the best for the future.
225. **Namibia** echoed Malawi, on behalf of the southern Africa subregion, in thanking the SG and noted that the SG presided over the Convention's first Conference of the Parties in Africa.

#### **Agenda item 21: Closing remarks**

226. **The SG** thanked the delegates for their kind words and good wishes. He said that being Secretary General is neither easy nor enviable. Concerning the first COP in Africa, he said that that was a major challenge for everyone involved, but that everyone, including the Secretariat staff and the host country, especially Paul Mafabi, came together as in no other conference of the parties. He

said that, for atmosphere and for the work accomplished, it was a great COP. He said that he is leaving with a great sense of satisfaction and felt that the Ramsar community is more together than other conventions and united in a common purpose. He said that one cannot be a good SG without a good staff and that if the staff is not pulling together the Parties do not get good service. He looked forward to working with everyone into the future.

227. **BirdLife International** drew attention to issues of change and continuity and noted the roles of the IOPs both in bridging the before and after during such periods of change and in providing a link between the Convention's decisions and the work on the ground. He thanked the SG and all who make the meetings run so smoothly and thanked the rapporteur for good reports.
228. **The Vice Chair, Bahamas**, thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication and particularly thanked the staff of the Secretariat, especially Sandra Hails for her work with the CEPA Oversight Panel. He expressed particular gratitude, on behalf of the Caribbean Parties, to the SG and the SRA for the Americas for their contributions.
229. **The SG** remarked that the Convention is now in a good financial state but cautioned that it will only remain so if the Parties pay their contributions and do so on time. He said that we also need the Parties' intellectual contributions and their work on the ground. The SG expressed particular appreciation to the interpreters, who as always have provided a wonderful service.
230. **The Chair** thanked all participants for their frank and candid contributions and for their support for him in his role as Chair. He noted that the COP10 preparations are proceeding very well but that there is still a lot to be done. He thanked the Secretariat staff for their work in preparing the documents and arranging for a comfortable stay, and thanked the rapporteur for preparing the daily reports for each morning. He too thanked the interpreters and he bade farewell to Margarita Astrálaga, saying that we will miss her and trusting that she will continue to support the Convention in new ways in her new role. And he thanked the SG, especially for his flexibility and support for the Chair. He bade Peter Bridgewater and Margarita Astrálaga farewell at this, their last Standing Committee meeting, and wished them good luck in the future.