

Report of the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee

First day, 27 February 2008

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. **Paul Mafabi (Uganda), Chair of the Standing Committee**, welcomed the participants and introduced Mr Anada Tiéga as the Convention's fourth Secretary General, who took up his post in August 2007. He congratulated the Parties on the successful World Wetlands Day and mentioned a number of actions that he and the Executive Team have carried out in the Committee's name since the 35th meeting (SC35) in February 2007. He called attention to a number of emerging challenges facing us at this crucial time concerning climate change, extractive industries, the need to engage other sectors, agriculture and food security, regional initiatives, and capacity for implementation of the Convention. Among key issues on the agenda for this meeting he highlighted the new draft Strategic Plan, the legal status of the Secretariat, long-term financing for the Convention and the Small Grants Fund, and a number of governance issues.
2. **Ger Berkamp (IUCN)** welcomed the participants to the IUCN headquarters on behalf of the Director General and emphasized the increasing need for the Secretariat, the Parties, and the International Organization Partners (IOPs) to work together and reach out to others outside of our immediate circles. He noted that wetlands constitute "nature's infrastructure" that provide the backbone for addressing development issues, requiring constant reframing and linking to major societal issues. He described the IUCN World Conservation Congress set for Barcelona in October 2008, intended to develop a compelling vision of how the world can be in the next two decades, and he invited all to participate in the water and wetlands fora that will be featured there. He also urged Ramsar to engage with the 5th World Water Forum to be held in Istanbul in March 2009, and he urged the delegates to inform national and local authorities about the role of wetland conservation in the water debates. He expressed confidence that the planned extension of the IUCN headquarters in 2008-9 would continue to provide Ramsar with the best hosting services possible.
3. **Denis Landenbergue (WWF International)**, speaking on behalf of the five IOPs, noted that the Convention will be 40 years old in 2011 and said that we must ensure that by that time there will be no one who does not know about the "Ramsar and wetlands message". He drew attention to the planet's burgeoning population and increasing urbanization, which will put ever increasing pressures upon wetlands, and he noted a number of urgent issues, including climate change and extractive industries, that call for redoubled efforts on our part. As opportunities for highlighting the role of wetland conservation and wise use in climate mitigation and adaptation, he noted that the present Bali Road Map discussions about a post-Kyoto climate treaty need strong advocacy for the importance of non-forest carbon stocks in other wetland types, and he announced a mountaineering expedition now underway to plant Ramsar, Uganda, and WWF flags on the top of the Rwenzori Mountains, one of only three glaciated mountains in Africa, soon to be designated as a

Ramsar site. He called for improved use of Article 3.2 and the Montreux Record and urged reaching out to non-Ramsar-related fora with our message, including the media. To do so effectively, he said, the Secretariat's capacity to act needs to be strengthened, and the IOPs urge the SC to give strong support to the proposals for increasing Secretariat resources and the development of partnerships.

4. **Denis Landenbergue** presented Paul Mafabi, Heather MacKay, Tobias Salathé, and Dwight Peck with leather document folders from NigerWet, which he described as the Ramsar regional initiative that has not asked for funding.
5. **Anada Tiéga, the Secretary General (SG)**, thanked the Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee and STRP members, the IOPs, and the Ramsar staff for their contributions and summarized a number of challenges facing the Convention. He focused on the perception of wetlands by the Parties at all levels and in all sectors, and among the international community, noting that the relevance of Ramsar principles is often undermined because many people do not understand the full breadth of what we mean by "wetlands", and he called for improved teamwork at national level. He highlighted opportunities presented by issues like payment for ecosystem services and climate change and stressed the importance of partnerships, with the IOPs, with the UN, and with the business sector. He called on our IOP representatives to be our ambassadors to other programmes within their organizations.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

6. **The Deputy Secretary General (DSG)** proposed to add an item on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (DOC. SC36-27) as agenda item 12.8.
7. **Argentina** asked to raise an issue from the report of SC35. **The Chair and the DSG** explained the procedure by which Ramsar SC reports are adopted at the end of each meeting and indicated that it would not be appropriate to revisit matters that have already been adopted. **Argentina** noted that it was a small matter and that the Secretariat had invited Argentina to bring it up at this meeting. Subsequently, it was agreed to add the phrase "as reflected in paragraphs 22, 23, and 24" to paragraph 212 of the SC35 report at Argentina's request.
8. **The USA** pointed out that a number of important matters have been grouped in agenda item 15 on Friday, leaving no time for contact group discussions if necessary. It was agreed to switch all of item 12, Thursday morning, with all of item 15 from Friday morning.
9. The agenda, with the addition of item 12.8 and the substitution of item 12 by item 15 and vice versa, was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

10. **The DSG** noted that Parties that are not members of the SC and the IOP representatives do not need to be admitted as observers, and that of those present only the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the director of the Ramsar Regional Centre for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) need to be accepted.
11. All observers were admitted by consensus.

Agenda item 4: Preparations for the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP10)

12. **Mr Boonam Shin, Chair of the Subgroup on COP10**, drew attention to the report of the Subgroup's meeting on 25 February, which has been distributed. **Mr Suk Tae Hwang** made a PowerPoint presentation on the preparations so far, as had been discussed in detail by the Subgroup, covering events so far this year, the preparation of the venue, transport, available accommodations, field excursions, visa issues, exhibits and costs. He said that further information will be available on Korea's COP10 Web site in May. He discussed the creation of a Ramsar Regional Centre for East Asia and explained the value of a Changwon Declaration from COP10 that would highlight major issues and raise the profile of wetland conservation. He reiterated Korea's dedication to helping the Convention raise awareness of Ramsar principles through COP10.
13. **The SG** thanked Korea for the presentation and noted that in his recent visit to Korea he was impressed by the dedication of the personnel there. He reported that there has been an additional meeting since the Subgroup's to focus on priority issues and noted that the Secretariat will be sending a logistics team for a visit in mid-April and again in August.
14. **The DSG** noted a needed change in the COP10 agenda to allow for four parallel regional meetings from 9 to 12 a.m. on Tuesday, 28 October, followed by a continuation of the Americas meeting and a MedWet/Com meeting from 1 to 4 p.m. Thus the Opening Ceremony will probably be scheduled for 5 to 7 p.m. that evening.
15. **Gabon** noted that the diagramme of the venue showed a room allocated for the European group and asked whether a room would be allotted for African groups as well. **Korea** explained that there will certainly be rooms for all four of the regional meetings.

Agenda item 4.3: Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

16. **The DSG** outlined the procedure defined by SC35 for selecting winners of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards, as outlined in the Subgroup's report. The Secretariat will evaluate the 56 nominations and present its analysis to the Subgroup on COP10, which will then make its own recommendations to SC37. The SC members at SC37 will meet in closed session as a jury and select the winners. Following the winners' acceptance, the names will be announced with suitable publicity, and the Awards will be conferred at the Opening Ceremony at COP10. The DSG expressed gratitude to the Danone Group for providing once again the Evian Special Prize of US\$ 10,000 for the winners of each of the three categories.

Agenda item 4.2: Preparation of draft Resolutions (DOC. SC36-6)

17. **The DSG** reviewed the procedures for preparation of draft Resolutions (DRs), as determined mostly by Resolution VIII.45, and introduced the document on that subject prepared by the STRP, noting all of the relevant deadlines. He urged that that document should be made more widely available as a guide for future COPs as well. He noted that the COP9 method of grouping all STRP guidance documents as annexes to one simple DR proved to be somewhat complicated and unwieldy, and he proposed that for COP10 each guidance should have its own, similarly very simple enabling DR. He reviewed the

principles that the STRP agreed should be part of the drafting of all DRs and invited the SC to adopt those for the future.

18. **Brazil** suggested preparing a booklet with these procedures and principles for COP10, similar to one produced for the CBD's COP8.
19. **Ecuador** urged that the 27 July statutory deadline for mailing out all draft Resolutions to the Parties (i.e., three months prior to the opening of the COP) should include the French and Spanish as well as the English versions of the documents. **The DSG** indicated that the 27 July deadline applies to all three working languages of the Convention. There will be a later mailing of additional information documents, such as implementation reports, but all documents requiring negotiation for adoption by the COP (i.e., all DRs) must be sent by the 27 July deadline.

Decision SC36-1: The Standing Committee noted the document deadlines indicated in DOC. SC36-6 and endorsed the procedures and principles on draft Resolutions included in the annex to that paper.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Secretary General

20. **The SG** drew attention to his written report in DOC. SC36-2 and made a PowerPoint presentation with highlights and additional points. Briefly, he welcomed four new Parties in Asia and noted a large number of new Ramsar site designations, including Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) for more than 40 from Mexico now being worked on by the Americas team and a number still in the pipeline from Asia, for which we have only one staff member until a new Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) has been recruited. Staff evaluation of RISs and dialogue with Parties to ensure that Ramsar site data meets the standards set by the Parties in numerous Resolutions is often a time-consuming and laborious process.
21. **The SG** reported that he has taken the opportunity of recent regional meetings to meet with decision-makers and organizations in various countries. He reviewed a number of cases of reported threats to Ramsar sites and indicated that we are in contact with the Administrative Authorities (AAs) in those Parties, in a positive way, to try to find out what we can do together to remedy the problems. He said that Romania submitted a paper for this meeting on the problem in Ukraine but there has not been time to evaluate it for distribution, and Romania will make an intervention later in the meeting.
22. **The SG** reported that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) informs us that they are currently supporting work on 40 Ramsar sites and more at basin scale. He intends to develop our relationships with the GEF and regional development banks as a priority.
23. **The SG** stressed the need for up-to-date and reliable information from the Parties about their Ramsar sites and other wetlands, and he emphasized the need for a common understanding of what we mean by the term "wetlands", calling on everyone to explain the scope of our definition and mandate widely to other sectors.
24. **The SG** noted that he intends to review all of our 34 existing memoranda of understanding and determine the meaningfulness of each. He wishes to reach out to the

- business sector but stressed the need to draft a policy framework for the SC's approval before proceeding further in that regard.
25. He expressed gratitude for all voluntary contributions to the Convention's work and thanked Switzerland and the USA for their support for work in Africa and the Neotropics. He urged the need for similar arrangements for the other regions. He stressed the need for more collaboration with the media but said that that is best accomplished at the national level, and he urged the AAs to consider how best to make use of the media in their countries. He called for a change in our method of national reporting, since our AAs tend to report only on their own activities and progress and thus miss a great deal of relevant information from other agencies and organizations. This, he said, demonstrates the great importance of National Ramsar/Wetland Committees, and he urged the AAs to work with other organizations and agencies as much as possible.
 26. He said that the Ramsar guidelines should be used as a coherent body of tools and not in isolation.
 27. In response to a number of requests from participants, **the SG** indicated that his presentation will be made available as one of the products of this meeting. All of the following interventions began by thanking the SG for his informative report.
 28. **China** provided an update on Ramsar sites and its National Ramsar Committee. **The SG** thanked China for the new information and noted that he recently visited China and met 70 wetland managers as part of the Yangtze basin efforts.
 29. **Panama**, on behalf of the Caribbean countries, noted how hard the Secretariat staff works and promised that the GRULAC countries will do their best to implement the Convention.
 30. **Ecuador**, noting the new Ramsar sites and more than 40 new RISs from Mexico, expressed concerns about the increasing workload of the Americas regional team and asked the SG to provide appropriate technical assistance to help the team with those RISs. Ecuador noted that Argentina's Guanacache Ramsar site will be significantly extended. In addition, Argentina provided the following statement for the record: "Ecuador also informed that Argentina sent a report with the actualization of the Ramsar Information Sheet of the Ramsar site National Park Pilcomayo in January 2007. Finally stressed one comment sent by Argentina, on the importance of requesting the intervention of the Administrative Authorities on the evaluation of projects supported financially for the private sector in the developing countries on the framework of the Ramsar Convention." **The SG** replied that he appreciates the need for assistance for the Americas team with the RIS overload and will meet after this meeting to discuss possible remedies. He offered assurances that the Secretariat will not enter into agreements with the business sector without an agreed strategy from the SC.
 31. **Australia** reported that the review mentioned in para. 45 of DOC. SC36-2 has been completed, forming a snapshot of Ramsar sites, and the report is being prepared. The snapshot will be used to provide updates to Australia's RISs. Australia made an Article 3.2 notification in December 2006 about the Coorong Ramsar site and will report on that to COP10. He reported that Australia is designating its 65th Ramsar site, the Paroo River. **The SG** welcomed this new information and looked forward to the next report.

32. **Iraq** thanked all the Parties for their congratulations on Iraq's accession and looked forward to working together towards the implementation of the Convention. Noting the SG's mention of threats from climate change and desertification, he urged Ramsar to seek a framework agreement amongst all the relevant conventions to work together. **The SG** pointed out that the Executive Secretary of the Convention to Combat Desertification recently visited the Ramsar Secretariat and we have agreed a number of collaborative steps.

33. **Benin**, on behalf of the Africa group, applauded the SG's ambitious programme for implementation but wondered whether we have agreement at all levels about what we want to achieve. We face budgetary constraints that may make the programme unsuccessful. The major challenge for Africa is the degradation and disappearance of wetlands and the need for restoration – for that we need a way to strengthen regional structures and provide training for the national focal points. **The SG** responded that he is aware that the ambitious programme requires additional resources, which we will seek, and he urged the Parties to take the lead on some of the issues. He is aware of the challenges facing Africa, especially concerning extractive industries, and he agreed with the priority need for restoration and for capacity building, citing a potential collaboration with CITES in that regard.

34. **BirdLife International** recalled BirdLife's and RSPB's long support for Ramsar missions to find solutions to site problems and expressed frustration about the high number of Article 3.2 inquiries for which there was simply no response from the Parties. Article 3.2 is clear about the obligations on this point, and he felt that this level of non-response is simply unacceptable. He urged the SC to push for better communication with the Secretariat on site issues. **The SG** reinforced this concern and urged the Parties to take steps to improve communications on site issues. He emphasized that we are not seeking to lay blame, only to try to help find solutions in a positive way.

35. **The Republic of Korea** drew attention to the SG's mention in para. 13 of the "Green Growth" process in Asia and noted that the Korean government has supported that movement since its adoption in 2005 in Korea. Korea provides capacity building programmes and encourages increased cooperation among nations for the integration of sustainable growth into national economic strategies. **The SG** said that he will seek Korea's collaboration about Green Growth, and he reported that he inquired about Saemangeum and was assured by the Korean delegation that a monitoring programme is in place, the results of which will be communicated. **The Korean delegation** promised to incorporate wetland issues into the Green Growth movement.

36. **Switzerland** noted that Ramsar has been working with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) on a world mangrove atlas and urged a joint side event at COP10 on that issue.

37. **Switzerland** thanked the Secretariat for its involvement in the UNECE development of payment for ecosystem services recommendations, which are meant for wider application in other regions. There will be an event during World Water Week in Stockholm in August, and Switzerland is seeking countries with examples of such cases.

38. **Switzerland**, too, applauded the ambitious programme outlined in the SG's report and urged the Parties to help. She invited the SC members to provide tips to the Secretariat, before the end of this meeting, about where and with whom the Secretariat might connect

- to make further progress. **The SG** expressed appreciation for Switzerland's help on many issues, especially with the WHO and with World Water Week.
39. **Italy** reported that Italy has submitted documentation on two Montreux Record sites and hopes to have them removed from the Record soon. **The SG** looked forward to reading this new documentation.
 40. **The Netherlands** urged that for the SG's next report there should be more coverage of the IOPs' activities in support of the Convention. **The SG** promised to ask the IOPs for more information on their Ramsar-related activities for his next report.
 41. **El Salvador** discussed the importance of the views of the communities about what it is we do. They want to see results, specific actions, and their expectations may go beyond what the Administrative Authorities and the Secretariat can do, given our budget constraints. We need a strategy for ensuring that we have the required capacity at the community, national, and global levels. **The SG** noted that there is not much the Secretariat can do to assist with capacity building at the local level, but agreed with El Salvador's concerns.
 42. **Brazil** urged that we should focus on a few high priorities at the COP, such as legal status, wetland management, etc., and avoid losing our focus on too many additional issues. **The SG** indicated that we will try to place emphasis on the highest priority matters, but there are many pressing issues to be covered at the COP.
 43. **Austria** agreed on the need to ensure that everyone understands what we mean by "wetlands", especially those in the water management sector, and we must increase our communications efforts. He expressed concern that the number of CEPA national focal points (NFPs) has not increased since COP9. In Europe wetlands are facing heavy pressures from hydropower planning and navigation projects (e.g., for the Danube). He noted that the EU provides a good legal and financial framework and we need to take better account of that, and we should make better use of cooperation with regional conventions, such as, in Europe, the Alpine, Danube, and Carpathian conventions, and explain the Ramsar mission to them. It is very important that we make better use of our regional and national contacts of the STRP, the STRP NFPs. **The SG** responded that the CEPA Oversight Panel is working on increasing the number of CEPA NFP nominations. Concerning hydropower issues, the SG felt that we need to think about how to promote better use of existing infrastructure and make the best use of existing human-made wetlands. Concerning regional conventions, he noted that we are already working closely with the UNECE convention on transboundary water courses.
 44. **Malawi** applauded the Secretariat's efforts to engage with the regional development banks, both to raise funds and to raise the profile of the Convention. We need to raise the profile of the Convention, and we need better fundraising to support communities impacted by, for example, the Zambesi flooding. He thanked the IOPs and the FAO for their assistance. **The SG** thanked Malawi for his support regarding regional banks and agreed that we need to raise the Ramsar profile via river basin management.
 45. **WWF** agreed that it is time to raise the profile of the Convention and suggested that the Secretary-General of the United Nations be invited to address COP10, or at least to send a message. **The SG** agreed to discuss that suggestion with the Korean delegation.

46. **The USA** noted that this is the last SC meeting for Dave Pritchard as a representative of BirdLife and paid a strong tribute to all of Dave's work for many years for the Convention; he said that no one has committed as much time and support for Ramsar as has Dave. **The DSG** wholly supported that and noted that, despite Dave's change of work circumstances, we are still hopeful of keeping him involved in Ramsar matters. There was robust applause.
47. **Switzerland** expressed appreciation for the high quality of the meeting documents and assumed that the participants have read them, and he suggested that, therefore, we need not spend time repeating the information in them and should devote our time to discussing the issues raised. **The USA** agreed and distinguished between those documents needed for important decisions and those that are merely providing informational updates that don't require action. He applauded the great efforts by the Secretariat to put all of the information in writing and suggested that the meeting time should be devoted to a brief recounting of the highlights of the main issues in each, so that more time can be freed up for debate on key matters.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

48. **Heather MacKay, Chair of the STRP**, drew attention to DOCS. SC36-3 and SC36-8 and acknowledged the efforts of the STRP members, IOPs, observers, and invited experts, and singled out Dave Pritchard especially. She noted the financial assistance of Sweden and the Korean national, provincial, and Changwon city governments. She noted that there was a fruitful first meeting of the chairs of the biodiversity-related conventions' subsidiary scientific bodies in July 2007, and another is planned for May 2008. The STRP has been able to progress all of its immediate and some of its high priority tasks, and some of the less urgent ones as well.
49. **Heather MacKay** reported that a consultant has completed a review of the use of the existing Ramsar guidance, which will be available soon. There was a disappointing response from the AAs and other NFPs, many of whom couldn't even be reached by a working e-mail address. She noted the European STRP NFPs meeting hosted by Austria and urged similar workshops in other regions. STRP14 discussed various alternatives for energizing the regional NFP networks, and some suggestions will be made for SC37.
50. The STRP modus operandi, with its new flexibility, has worked very well, and the STRP will make only a few recommendations to SC37 for improvement.
51. Among emerging issues, **the Chair of the STRP** mentioned earth observation and global wetland observation systems, climate change and wetlands, avian flu, mining/extractive industries, and restoration. She recognized the help of Africa SRA Abou Bamba, who spent time intermediating with the STRP and the African Parties' needs – a short briefing paper on extractive industries was presented at the African regional meeting and a more detailed paper will be ready for COP10.
52. **Heather MacKay** noted that the different regions have different priorities and different support needs, and she predicted that the need for implementation support will increase. Many people are asking for ongoing implementation support, not just guidelines.
53. **Gabon** noted that the meeting documentation is in English only and so cannot be read by some delegations. **The DSG** stressed the importance of that point and said that the reason

is simply the lack of capacity and money – the Secretariat would need more staff to prepare the documentation and more money for the translations. He urged the Parties to keep that issue in mind during budget talks.

54. **Gabon** stressed that African Parties need capacity building and urged that STRP meetings should be held in the regions for that purpose. **The STRP Chair** agreed with the desirability of holding meetings away from the Secretariat, as the Changwon workshops proved, but noted budget constraints. She said that the STRP is proposing technical supporting workshops at the COP and perhaps for the regional meetings as well.
55. **Australia** drew attention to the contributions to the STRP's work by a number of Australian wetland experts and by the provision of Australian work on similar issues, as for example on describing ecological character. **The STRP Chair** expressed gratitude for Australia's contributions.
56. **Austria** conveyed the key messages of the European STRP NFPs' meeting: 1) communication and networking of NFPs was welcomed; 2) there is a huge gap between European STRP NFPs and the global STRP, and the bridges are not working well; 3) NFPs should be more involved in all wetland work nationally. There is insufficient awareness among the Parties of what kinds of skills are needed for the NFPs. The STRP has worked out a list of skills that all NFPs should possess, and this should be circulated for comment, adopted by the STRP, and sent to the AAs. He suggested that the NFP terms of reference should be included in the STRP *modus operandi*. **The STRP Chair** agreed on the need to strengthen the NFPs and undertook to add the NFP TORs and skills list to the *modus operandi*.
57. **Brazil** expressed concern about the designation of artificial wetlands as Ramsar sites, which may be detrimental, and suggested that they should be treated differently. **The STRP Chair** noted that there is some existing guidance on artificial wetlands and suggested separate discussions on this issue.
58. **El Salvador** noted that mining/extractive industries issues are important for many countries and urged the STRP to develop information and guidelines for dealing with those issues. **The STRP Chair** noted the briefing paper now on the Africa meeting part of the Web site and encouraged a more detailed discussion of what kind of guidance is needed. She welcomed additional comments and urged the Parties to communicate with the STRP through the Senior Regional Advisors.
59. **Iraq** and the **Russian Federation** pointed to the need for adapting the STRP's products for a wider audience, including decision-makers, and disseminating them better. **Russia** stressed the role of the AAs in bringing the STRP's work to the attention of corporations and other sectors, presented in such a way as to reach outside the Convention. Russia agreed with Austria that the NFP terms of reference should be included in the *modus operandi*. **The STRP Chair** agreed and said that the STRP is considering including a key messages for decision-makers with each of its guidances and reports, either as a preamble or as a separate document. **The DSG** reported that the STRP is also considering a series of "STRP Briefing Notes" for that purpose.
60. **The DSG** paid tribute to the remarkable Panel, especially this triennium, which is the envy of the other environmental conventions, and especially to the remarkable Chairperson.

Decision SC36-2: The Standing Committee welcomed the report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and looked forward to considering the products of the Panel's work at SC37.

Agenda item 7: Report of activities with the International Organization Partners

61. **The SG** reported on the state of planning for joint activities with the IOPs for the IUCN Congress and Ramsar COP10, to be called “supporting events”. Some issues have been identified, such as biofuels, and there will be further discussions.
62. **Thailand** drew attention to the issue of tropical peatlands, which should be addressed at the World Conservation Congress. She urged the IOPs to assist in identifying funding resources and to hold donors’ meetings in association with other meetings. **The SG** noted that tropical peatlands will be included in the biofuels discussions. He pointed out that organizing donors’ meetings is not easy, but he will discuss that with the IOPs.
63. **The Netherlands** noted that some of the IOPs’ activities seem to be missing from the report of the IOPs’ meeting in DOC. SC36-4.
64. **Ecuador** called for a change in the wording of DOC. SC36-4, page 8, action 4, from “reach out to the local areas, beyond Ramsar’s national focal points” to “reach out to the local authorities, through Ramsar’s national focal points”. The IOPs should focus on local activities but these should be channeled through the Ramsar national authorities. **The SG** appreciated Ecuador’s point but noted that no revisions of that particular document are foreseen.
65. **Japan** expressed appreciation for the IOPs’ support and encouraged enhancement for achieving the original objectives of the Convention.
66. **Brazil** questioned the reference to larger site diplomas. **The DSG** explained that, for various reasons, the Secretariat began providing smaller Ramsar site diplomas a few years ago, and WWF feels that they do not photograph as impressively upon presentation as the larger ones used to do.
67. **Wetlands International** observed that the Bali Road Map or Action Plan opens doors for interpretation in terms of tropical peatlands. The role of wetlands needs to be clearly spelt out, and WI asked for the assistance of the Ramsar Parties in UNFCCC meetings to ensure that wetlands will be better represented. It is important that the COP10 DR on wetlands and climate change convey a strong statement before the UNFCCC COP in December, and we need to send a signal to the World Bank that wetlands, and not only forests, are important for storing carbon. Wetlands International will be happy to provide the needed information to the Parties to pursue that.
68. **The DSG** added that the STRP is acting fast to draw together a summary of the role of different types of wetland and in different regions as carbon stores, which we will have in hand later this year.
69. **The USA** urged that the word “lobbying” be removed from this document and all future Ramsar documents, because of its negative connotations for many people.

Agenda item 8: Report of the Culture Working Group (DOC. SC36-5)

70. **The SG** thanked the Culture Working Group for its efforts and noted that no DR is now planned – rather the intent is to make available a document that might be useful to anyone but need not be adopted by the COP. Comments on the present draft are solicited before SC37.
71. **Australia** supported that recommendation (no DR and just made available), but added that the paper should be referred to the STRP before finalization.
72. **Ecuador** appreciated the good work of the WG but noted that there are still many concerns about the present draft, as identified at the PanAmerican regional meeting. These need to be considered by the Parties before it can be made available on the Ramsar Web site.
73. **BirdLife International** noted that Resolution IX.21 called for the WG to prepare this guidance and suggested that its work should be a continuous and ongoing process. The future status of the Culture Working Group will need to be clarified.
74. **Brazil** agreed with Ecuador and cited numerous issues of concern with the present document, e.g., that the typology includes nearly all human activities and should not entertain matters outside the scope of the Convention that might provoke conflict with other agreements, most notably those involving trade.
75. **Argentina** “also backed what was said by Ecuador, about not publishing the document of the Working Group as it is now. Argentina added that if this document continues to be the basis of the work, it will have to take into account that the references to the preservation of the traditional production methods are acceptable as far as they do not involve the development of agriculture financing mechanisms of production, and are according to WTO rules.”
76. **The SG** observed that we need decisions on whether to present the paper in a DR and what role the Working Group should have in future. The Working Group noted the objections from the PanAmerican regional meeting and asked for specific and precise changes to be made in the text, rather than general concerns. When the draft is presented to the STRP, the STRP NFPs will have an opportunity to comment on it via the STRP Support Service.

Decision SC36-3: The Standing Committee decided that there should be no draft Resolution bringing the cultural guidelines forward to the COP. The SC invited all Parties with concerns about the current draft to provide specific advice and suggested text to the Cultural Working Group by 31 March 2008, and it requested the STRP to review the revised document and determine how best to make it available. The Committee confirmed that the work of the Culture Working Group should continue in future, after COP10, in order to help inform the operations of the Parties in implementing the Convention and in helping the STRP to focus on issues that require a cultural perspective and understanding.

Agenda item 9: Draft Strategic Plan 2009-2014

77. **Bahamas, Vice Chair of the SC and Chair of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan**, reviewed the report of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan, already distributed, and highlighted some of the Subgroup's chief recommendations. **Brazil** noted that Brazil has provided other amendments to the wording to the Secretariat.
78. **Turkey** felt that the present draft is a good basis for discussion and promised to convey detailed views to the rapporteur. She felt that the introduction is too long and should be summarized in one or two pages, and that the Plan should focus on the Convention's core mandate, the sustainable use and conservation of wetlands, and not dwell on other goals. She underlined the importance of the "one size does not fit all" concept, encouraging Parties to adapt the Plan for their own priorities and needs.
79. **The Republic of Korea** suggested that the COP10 Changwon Declaration could highlight the major issues of the Strategic Plan. Korea drew particular attention to the importance of the Plan's references to transboundary wetlands. ROK is working towards creating an Eco-Peace Park along the DMZ with North Korea, and urges the Secretariat to continue trying to bring North Korea into the Convention. Korea is considering holding a COP10 side event on transboundary wetlands and would welcome learning the names of experts to be invited.
80. **The Netherlands** felt, in line with the report of the Subgroup, that the introduction is too long, and proposed some other changes to the wording. **China and the Russian Federation** made additional suggestions for amendment. **Ecuador** urged consideration of "regional goals and strategies" as well.
81. **Bahamas** noted that the Subgroup considered whether regional initiatives should play a greater role in implementing the Plan. The Subgroup Chair urged Brazil, China, the Netherlands, and Turkey to submit text to the rapporteur to be included in the next draft of the Plan. He agreed that the introduction is too long and that will be remedied, and the mission statement will be placed more prominently. He invited further comments and amendments.
82. **The SG** replied to Turkey that the objectives in the draft Strategic Plan do not represent a running away from the core business of the Convention, for we need to work on the causes of wetland degradation – the immediate, underlying, and root causes (e.g., poverty reduction) – and not just any single 'mandate' of the Convention.
83. **Turkey** thanked the SG for that explanation and reiterated Turkey's dedication to the sustainable utilization of wetlands. She referred to the title of the Convention, in which the main focus of the Convention is upon wetlands – she felt that food security, poverty reduction, etc., must be taken into account, but they are secondary to that main focus.
84. **The SG** stressed that the Strategic Plan is meant to be a strategy that needs to understand all of the causes of wetland loss and degradation – otherwise we are dealing only with the symptoms. We need to understand all of the user groups, in order to change their behaviors when necessary.
85. **The DSG** noted that Convention's preamble states the purpose of "Desiring to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future", and as

demonstrated by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, that requires engagement with the drivers of that loss. We need to address the threats to wetlands in order to fulfill the text of the Convention.

Decision SC36-4: The Standing Committee requested all Parties with specific comments to submit suggested text to the rapporteur now or in the next week and instructed the Secretariat to take those comments into account in redrafting the Strategic Plan, in light of the Subgroup's recommendations, for consideration by SC37.

Agenda item 10: Report of the Subgroup on Finance

86. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, remarked that the new Secretary General has proved extremely good to work with in terms of financial transparency, openness, even in the smallest matters.
87. **The USA** reported that the Subgroup recommended that the SC note the provisional 2007 accounts, as found in DOC. SC36/SG Finance-01, pending final audited accounts to be presented to SC37.
88. **The USA** explained the item on “arrears”, a provision for unpaid dues from the Parties, and said that a table of arrears will be provided for SC37. The Subgroup recommended approval of the 2008 budget shown in DOC. SC36/SG Finance-02.

Decision SC36-5: The Standing Committee approved the 2008 core budget allocations as presented in DOC. SC36/SG Finance-02.

89. On the legal status of the Secretariat (DOC. SC36-15), **the USA** reported that the Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee should note that there are potential financial implications of these issues and request the Secretariat to provide updated information for consideration by SC37.
90. On the future staffing of the Secretariat (DOC. SC36-16), **the USA** reported that the Subgroup wished to point out that we can agree to a staffing structure separately from its financial costs – the two aspects do not need to be agreed simultaneously. Thus, the Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee note that there are potential financial implications of this issue and request the Secretariat to provide updated information for consideration by SC37.
91. **The USA** listed the additional financial matters that will be considered under agenda item 15 tomorrow morning.

Agenda item 11: Report of the Management Working Group

92. **The Chair of the Standing Committee** reviewed the report of the MWG meeting and suggested that a decision on the Secretariat structure and staffing should be deferred for tomorrow's debates.

93. Concerning the proposal for a transition committee for the MWG, **the Islamic Republic of Iran** requested additional information about the financial implications of such a committee.

Decision SC36-6: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat, working with the Chair of the Management Working Group, to prepare a COP10 draft Resolution for consideration by the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee, which *inter alia* establishes a Transition Committee in line with Decision SC35-10, including estimates of the financial implications of such a committee, and revises paragraphs 7-9 of Resolution IX.24 in order to remove time-limited aspects; and requested the Secretariat, working with the Chair of the Management Working Group, to prepare a COP10 Information Paper reporting, as requested in Resolution IX.24, paragraphs 7 and 9, on aspects of the work of the Management Working Group.

94. **The Chair** reported on the Subgroup's recommendations concerning the performance evaluation of the Secretary General and travel authorizations.

Decision SC36-7: The Standing Committee agreed that the Secretary General's performance assessment for 2007 will be undertaken using the form developed and used by the Executive Team for the SG's probation period, and that the Executive Team will complete that performance assessment by the end of March 2008; and that in line with Swiss legal requirements, approvals for travel by the Secretary General will be made by the Chair of Standing Committee, following submission by the Secretary General of travel requests, including identification of purpose and related costs.

95. **The Chair** explained the need for amendments to the existing arrangements concerning his role as ombudsman for Secretariat staff, which was required by specific circumstances prior to the new Secretary General's arrival. **Ecuador** asked what procedure would be used if IUCN staff were also involved in a matter of dispute, and **the DSG** explained that IUCN has procedures in place for its own staff, but we might want to involve our Chair, too, if that would be helpful.
96. **The USA** explained that this issue arose because IUCN's procedures were inadequate to the situation we faced at that time. The bottom line is merely to give the staff an additional option for redress.

Decision SC36-8: The Standing Committee agreed a clarification to Decision SC35-12, whereby staff issues arising will be addressed in the first instance through established IUCN staff procedures, and the SC Chair will act as ombudsman if and when a staff issue arises which is not covered by IUCN staff rules and procedures.

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97. **The DSG** drew attention to the draft report of the first day's plenary session and invited participants to pass routine corrections directly to the rapporteur. Substantive issues can be brought up at the time of adoption of the report at the end of the meeting.

Agenda item 15: Progress on policy and procedural COP10 draft Resolutions and guidelines

98. **The DSG** drew attention to DOC. SC36-21, which provides an overview of draft Resolutions and other documents that are presently expected to be presented for COP10.

Agenda item 15.2: Financial and budgetary matters

99. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, introduced DOC. SC36-22 with the Secretariat's two proposed options for core budgets for the 2009-2011 triennium, one for 4% growth and the other for full funding of the SG's staffing proposals, and he reported that the Subgroup recommends that two additional scenarios should be prepared for SC37, showing zero nominal growth and zero real growth. The Subgroup also requested the Secretariat to prepare an analysis of the expected services that could not be provided in the event of a zero growth budget.
100. **Australia** wished to record that Australia would support the Annex I budget proposals, with an explanation of the impact of that upon services, and felt that the Annex II budget is too much.
101. **Benin**, on behalf of the Africa group, said that what we all want is an ambitious Ramsar Convention on an equal footing with other similar conventions, and he said that that requires sacrifices and extra efforts. He noted that we are considering an ambitious Strategic Plan and asked whether we are not prepared to work with the Secretary General to achieve it. There are more new Parties and still more preparing to accede soon. He felt that zero growth is not realistic in light of the goals we all agree upon – we have to be realistic about budgetary constraints, he said, but we do need some growth.
102. **Gabon** thanked Switzerland for its financial assistance for Africa, which is much needed. He suggested among possible solutions that the Secretariat should investigate ways of gaining access to the GEF. **The SG** responded that we are working with the GEF and wish to assist the Parties in approaching the GEF directly, but the Secretariat cannot do so because GEF funds cannot be used to cover operating costs of the Secretariat. **Gabon** agreed that he was referring only to regional initiatives, not to the Secretariat's operating costs.
103. **Switzerland** urged that before the next SC meeting the Parties should consider the possibility of making secondments to the Secretariat to help alleviate staff workloads.
104. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** noted that one of the implications for the core budget would be that funding would not be available for the regional centres, and if so, we need to ensure an independent source of funding for them. If the umbrella idea for regional initiatives goes ahead, the centres will need more support, not less.
105. **The USA** acknowledged that regional initiatives and centres are a growing part of the budget and said that the challenge is to determine how much of the core budget to put into these. The SC needs first to discuss the MWG's proposal on the umbrella concept for regional initiatives, so that we will then know in June exactly what our budgetary needs will be in this regard. **Iran** urged that the wording should be revised and become more impartial so as not to prejudge the outcome of the future deliberations on the proposal of

having an umbrella initiative, and the regional centres should continue to benefit from the core budget.

106. **The DSG** recalled that the present budget lines for regional initiatives are intended only as start-up funds, time-limited to a maximum of three years, after which the initiatives should be self-sustaining. **Iran** urged that there be a discussion concerning distinguishing between the regional centres as delivery mechanisms for the Convention and regional initiatives with the three-year limit.
107. **The USA** looked forward to receiving the two zero budget options requested and would welcome discussions of voluntary contributions from the Parties. **Italy** wished the Secretariat good luck in preparing the requested budgets.

Decision SC36-9: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare for SC37 consideration, in addition to refining the budget options in DOC. SC36-22 Annexes I and II, budget proposals for “zero nominal growth” and “zero real growth” budgets. The Committee also requested the Secretariat to prepare for SC37 an analysis of the implications of those zero-growth budget options for the core budget and Secretariat operations, including an estimate of what Secretariat work would not be capable of being delivered if one of them were to be adopted.

Agenda item 15.3: Regional initiatives

108. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, recalled that at this time we are only dealing with the distribution of funds for regional initiatives for 2008, not their organization, and he noted the Subgroup’s table of recommended allocations.
109. **Samoa** inquired whether unused funds allocated for 2007 could be carried forward to 2008. **The DSG** explained that the 2007 figures have not yet been confirmed by the auditors and he recommended that any surpluses should not be committed until SC37, after the auditors’ report. He noted that under Resolution VI.17 surpluses are meant to be put into the Reserve Fund. In Samoa’s case, though, he said, the money meant for the Ramsar site managers’ workshop in 2007 would still be available this year.
110. **Australia** noted that little has been spent on initiatives in the Pacific Island region, for various reasons. Whilst recognizing that there are more requests for funds than funds available, he expressed concern at the small amount accorded to the Pacific Islands. He pointed out that the original request had been for US\$ 118,000 and he suggested ways in which that might be pared down in various sub-activities to a total of about US\$ 70,000. **The DSG** observed that that is considerably more than had been recommended by the Subgroup and asked Australia’s views on what compensating cuts could be proposed for the other regions.
111. **The Chair of the Subgroup** recalled that equity among regions over the long term has always been a primary concern, but certain regions took the initiative to develop and submit their proposals earlier than others. The goal should be to achieve equity over time, not in any single triennium, where the proposals must be weighed on their merits. The critical point is not who gets the money first, but rather which initiatives will be sustainable, because the core budget support will dry up after a few years. He said that it is not the case that if a region fails to get the money now it will not get it at all; they will have

a better chance of funding support if they wait until their proposals are well developed and ready.

112. **Australia** requested the Subgroup on Finance to go back and review its recommendations in light of this discussion. **The Subgroup Chair** invited the Subgroup on Finance to meet at lunchtime to consider Australia's request.
113. **WWF** noted that there is a discrepancy between the Ramsar core budget timelines and the patience needed for approaching the GEF, where approval can take 5-6 years. **The SRA for Africa** reported that there have been changes at the GEF and the process has been restructured to reduce the waiting time to 12 months at the longest.
114. **Argentina** referred to the report filed by the High Andean Initiative and delivered a number of additions and updates to the activities mentioned there. **The Subgroup Chair** noted that that information belonged in the original DOC. SC36-23 report and invited Argentina to submit text that could be added to that as an annex. **Ecuador** noted that Argentina's information has already been submitted to the Secretariat.
115. **Malawi** said that the Africa group supports the regional initiatives and supports the concept of one "umbrella" initiative per region that should be internally managed. He understood that the budget is intended to supply start-up money and that the regions must take over to make them sustainable. He said that Africa will continue to request funding and resources for other initiatives. **The Chair of the Subgroup** welcomed those remarks for when the meeting takes up the MWG's recommendations.

Agenda item 15.4: Small Grants Fund and future operations

116. **The USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, explained the two proposals included in DOC. SC36-24, for a Small Grants Portfolio (SGP) and a regionally-structured "Signature Initiative". He said that, given that the traditional SGF "unrestricted funds in a pot" approach has become almost completely unsuccessful over recent years, the portfolio approach would allow a second chance for funding for projects that have been fully evaluated as worthy and approved for funding by the SC, but for which no SGF funds are available. The USA addressed the question of potential regional bias among donors by stressing that these are projects that would otherwise not be funded at all. To the question of whether potential donors might prefer to wait to handpick their own proposals and thus not put unrestricted money into the SGF pot, he noted that that would be a stronger argument if there were any significant amounts of money in the pot at present.
117. **The Chair of the Subgroup** estimated that there would be virtually no additional financial implications of the portfolio approach. The Signature Initiatives would be regional in nature, not country-specific – each region would agree a priority issue and propose a project to raise funds for. He proposed that the Secretariat should work out an estimate of the costs, which would be small, for consideration at SC37.
118. **Brazil** said that the Parties should have a say in all allocations in a fair and balanced way. She urged that an agreed percentage should be taken off all projects funded through the portfolio and contributed to the SGF pot.

119. **The SRA for Europe** explained that the portfolio has been trialed by the Secretariat over two annual cycles and has worked quite well. The bottom line is that we want to get as many projects funded as possible. The projects are evaluated according to the rules laid down by the COP, so all portfolio projects are worthy. The SC would decide on priorities for allocations for all good proposals, to the limit of the available SGF funds in the pot, and the remaining ones would be shopped around by the Secretariat so that any additional potential donors could pick any one they would like to for direct funding support. **The DSG** noted that increasingly donors are not permitted to commit unrestricted funds into a pot, and direct support for an identifiable project will better suit donors who wish to publicize their assistance.
120. **The Chair of the Subgroup** requested the Secretariat to prepare a chart of the SGF's history over time for SC37.
121. **Switzerland** supported the SGP concept but agreed about the danger of hastening the decline of the SGF. He asked whether the portfolio would be actively promoted or passively made available, and he foresaw a potential danger of competition with fundraising for regional initiatives. **The Chair of the Subgroup** responded that to date the Secretariat has been promoting the portfolio, with some success, but anyone could participate in that effort. He applauded the attractive layout of the portfolio and said that all of the delegates could help in getting it into the right hands. Concerning competition with regional initiatives, he noted that the SGF is heavily slanted towards small projects on the local and national levels, not regional – there might be some overlap, but not much.
122. **El Salvador** said that there is a need for broader criteria and procedures for the portfolio approach and a need to consider how it relates to the SGF. He supported the SGP approach, which would appeal to donor interests. He called for another document to explain the differences between the SGF and the SGP.
123. **Sandra Hails, the CEPA Programme Officer**, observed that instead of providing an alternative to the SGF's failing money-in-a-pot approach, Brazil is suggesting that the SGP should be caught in the pot approach as well. She suggested that the SC ask recent donors how they would feel about taking over direct funding for a project and having a percentage taken off for another purpose.
124. **Ecuador** noted the practical difficulty of more complicated administrative processes if conditions were set and a percentage taken off for the SGF. Life would be more difficult for the Secretariat. He supported these two complementary parts of the same administrative management.
125. **The SG** reported that in 2007 the Secretariat evaluated a large number of proposals and assessed 18 as worthy of funding. Only four could be funded, however, so the rest were included in the portfolio, which was sent to 70 donors. So far we have received one positive answer, from Japan. He argued against taking a percentage off, which would be hard to explain to potential donors. He said that the primary aim should be to get funding.
126. **Japan** said that, from the donors' point-of-view, the portfolio approach is working well now. Japan supported a project in Nepal last year and has taken up one in Fiji this year.

127. **Argentina** said that there is a project in Argentina in the present portfolio that was not approved by the National Ramsar Authority and asked that it be withdrawn from the portfolio. **The SRA for the Americas** said that that project had come to us through regional bodies and was not endorsed by the AA as required in the rules, and she promised that it will be removed at once.
128. **WWF** suggested that a good target audience of potential donors lies in the business sector, but they prefer adopting a pet project over putting money into a pot. We should develop a mechanism for public recognition of project donors as an incentive. **The SG** replied that we will not go to the business sector until the SC has agreed a clear strategy. He described the Danone “Ecoles de l’Eau” programme, supporting three Ramsar site projects, and said that it has consumed so much staff time that we have asked Danone to provide staff help to the Secretariat. **The SC Chair** urged that either the Secretariat or the Management Working Group or both should move forward with a draft strategy on relations with the business sector.
129. **The Chair of the Subgroup** said that the Subgroup will meet again to discuss Brazil’s proposal for a percentage to be taken off portfolio projects for the SGF.

Agenda item 15.5: Status of Ramsar sites

130. **The DSG** introduced DOC. SC36-25, the report on Ramsar site issues requested by SC35 for all future SC meetings, and he noted that under Article 8.2e the Secretariat is required to make a similar report on all alterations to listed sites to each COP. He said that the majority of the Article 3.2 reports of human-induced changes or likely changes in ecological character come from third-party correspondents. When these are received, the Secretariat contacts the relevant AAs seeking clarification. The table in SC36-25 indicates that in many or most cases, the Parties simply fail to reply.
131. **Australia** said that a full report on the situation at Moreton Bay is being prepared. **Turkey** indicated that reports on the two sites mentioned have been provided to the Secretariat, and they show that no negative effects have been found.
132. **Romania** referred to DOC. SC36-25 para. 5 iv) concerning Ukraine and the Bystroe navigation channel and said that Ukraine has not responded to the international requests embodied in Resolution IX.15. Ukraine has failed to provide documentation as required, has not offered compensation or mitigation of negative effects, has not responded to Romania’s concerns, and has completely disregarded all of the recommendations in Resolution IX.15 and the concerns of the Bern Convention and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. Ukraine has announced that there are no negative effects of the development, despite the findings of all other studies, and has brought discussion to an end. Romania asked the SC to take steps to induce Ukraine to reopen dialogue and requested a new Resolution at COP10 on this matter.

Decision SC36-10: The Standing Committee noted the information on Ramsar site problems included in DOC. SC36-25 and thanked the Parties that offered additional information; it urged the other Parties listed in the document to provide updated information by 15 April 2008 for consideration at SC37.

Agenda item 15.6: Review of COP decisions

133. **The DSG** referred to DOC. SC36-26 and described Dave Pritchard's comprehensive review of past COP decisions presented to SC35. Given Mr Pritchard's change of work circumstances and the lack of capacity in the Secretariat, he sought advice on how to progress this work further.
134. **Dave Pritchard** indicated that the document presented to SC35 was a first compilation, on which more work would be required. He had hoped to provide illustrative examples in one thematic area to show what a revision of the decisions would look like and to expand the section on good practice approaches to drafting Resolutions, some of which can now be found in the draft Resolution procedures endorsed by this meeting. He felt that it would be unlikely that he could progress this work in time for SC37 but held out hope that perhaps something could be provided on an informational basis for COP10.
135. **Thailand** appreciated Mr Pritchard's work and suggested that the Secretariat should summarize that work and produce a synthesis report for SC37. **Japan** suggested that the Secretariat should create an information paper based on DOC. SC35-12 with an analysis of what still needs to be done.

Decision SC36-11: The Standing Committee noted the current state of progress on the review of COP decisions and requested the Secretariat to discuss with Dave Pritchard the options for providing information to COP10, and to report to SC37 on progress in that regard.

Agenda item 13.1: Legal status of the Secretariat

136. **The SG** provided a summary of the present situation in this matter, as shown in DOC. SC36-15. He noted that of the three options so far identified – 1) IUCN, 2) UN, and 3) independent international organization – there are positives and negatives to each, so tradeoffs will be required. He promised to provide a full report, with pros and cons and financial implications of all of the options, for the next SC meeting.
137. **Brazil**, on behalf of the GRULAC countries, said that the GRULAC countries are concerned by the delay in resolving this important issue and urged the SC to make every effort to resolve it once and for all at COP10.
138. **Ecuador** made a declaration and thanked IUCN for its support over the years, and requested the Secretariat to draft a comprehensive document on the pros and cons of all of the options, including a cost-benefit analysis, maintaining discussions with Switzerland and relevant organizations in the meantime. Ecuador urged that this should be settled at SC37 so that a solution can be adopted by COP10, giving to this matter the highest priority.
139. **Malawi** thanked IUCN for its support but suggested that it was time to move on. The Africa group feels, he said, that it doesn't make sense for an intergovernmental treaty to be managed by an NGO, that Ramsar's visibility is compromised, and that the staff, especially the African staff, have problems with visas, bank loans, etc. He called for a study of staying with IUCN or moving to the UN for discussion at SC37.
140. **The USA** shared the concerns expressed and encouraged the SG to continue to seek more information to form the basis for a decision. The USA believes that the best approach

would be to continue to talk with IUCN, Switzerland, and UNESCO, and he said that the document shows good progress already. The USA does not yet see the need for a change from the valuable and synergistic relationship with IUCN and called for an accounting of the benefits of the current relationship to set alongside the list of problems. The criteria for decision should be: 1) what will be the impact on implementation of the Convention, globally and at national level?; 2) what will be the impact on the staff?; and 3) what will be the cost implications for the Parties? He expressed concern about losing a triennium's momentum of work during a transition and about staff continuity, and he suggested that we should think more about how to clarify the relationship with IUCN, perhaps revisiting the existing hosting agreements. Concerning visa issues, he suggested outreach to the consulates in Geneva to try to build ongoing relationships that might alleviate our problems.

141. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** noted that the Convention has a structural flaw that needs to be resolved and doubted that any of the three options would resolve all of the problems. He recommended that the SC request the SG to continue discussions with the host country and IUCN but felt that the UNEP option might turn out to be the best one.
142. **Switzerland** raised a few questions about problems cited in the document and reported that the work permit situation for spouses has been resolved. She reported that she has met with the Foreign Affairs office and noted that the SG will be meeting with all of the relevant Swiss authorities on 10 March, and she suggested that simple solutions are quite likely to come from that meeting, though they may require a Resolution from the COP. She looked forward to good news for the next SC meeting.
143. **Argentina** expressed the view that it does not promote changes to the structure that might have serious financial implications.
144. **IUCN** expressed its continuing commitment to hosting the Secretariat and to continuing dialogue to resolve any outstanding issues, remaining confident that all difficulties can be worked out satisfactorily.
145. **Ecuador** clarified that Ecuador is not backing any particular option but merely wished to emphasize the need for a permanent solution. He thanked Switzerland and IUCN for their efforts.
146. **Chile** said that all of the GRULAC countries are concerned that the legal status issues have not been resolved and urged that they should be settled by COP10. Chile urged further consultations with UNEP.
147. **The SG** thanked all of the Parties for their support and thanked China for facilitating his participation in the high-level segment of the CSD-related workshop on desertification in Beijing in January 2008. He urged the SC members to help with the Secretariat's visa problems by approaching their own Foreign Affairs ministries. He promised to continue consultations with Switzerland, IUCN, UNEP, UNESCO, and the other IOPs and to provide further information for SC37.
148. To one of Switzerland's questions, **the SG** explained that some staff are reporting perceptions in their municipalities, and perhaps services withheld, because of the fact that by agreement with the Swiss government the Ramsar staff do not pay taxes to the state, but

rather an equivalent amount to the Convention budget. **The Swiss delegate** offered to help smoothe the staff's relations with their municipalities.

149. **The SRA for Africa** described some of the problems encountered by Secretariat staff, especially those from the southern hemisphere, regarding visas, tax issues, bank loans, hiring new staff, etc. He said that our work in the field does not enjoy the logistical support provided to other conventions' representatives.

Decision SC36-12: The Standing Committee noted the work in progress regarding the legal status of the Convention and urged continued dialogue with Switzerland, IUCN, UNEP, and UNESCO – the Committee requested the Secretariat to provide additional information on the three options, including financial implications, that will permit SC37 to make a recommendation to COP10 on this matter.

150. **Austria** announced that Austria would like to raise the issue of the frequency of COP meetings and has distributed a paper on that subject for discussion tomorrow under Any Other Business.

Follow-up issues from the morning plenary session

151. Regarding budget allocations for regional initiatives, **the USA, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, reported that the Subgroup had a long discussion of the recommendations from Australia concerning the distribution of funds for 2008 and decided to leave the Subgroup's recommendation as it was first reported.
152. **Australia** expressed its appreciation to the Subgroup on Finance for considering Australia's views on the funding of the Pacific Island Initiative and noted its understanding of the financial constraints faced by the Subgroup. Nevertheless, Australia expressed its deep disappointment that additional funds could not be provided for the initiative and would monitor this issue closely in the future.

Decision SC36-13: The Standing Committee approved the following 2008 core budget allocations for regional initiatives:

WacoWet	CHF 68,000
High Andean Initiative	CHF 22,000
MedWet	CHF 10,849
CREHO	CHF 80,000
Iran Centre	CHF 70,000
Pacific Islands Initiative	CHF 28,341;

clarified that the Pacific Islands allocation for 2008 does not include the unused funds from 2007, which will be brought forward; and requested the Secretariat to discuss with the Pacific Island Initiative to which of its proposed projects the 2008 approved funds would be allocated.

153. Regarding the Small Grants Fund, Portfolio, and Signature Initiative, **the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance** reported that the Subgroup discussed Brazil's proposal at length and reached no conclusion. He said that Brazil has drafted text on the percentage of portfolio funds to be set aside for bolstering the SGF, encouraging further discussion at SC37 and postponing a decision at this time.

154. **The DSG** pointed out that SGF funds have been steadily declining but the workload has not, with a huge load of 60 proposals having to be evaluated carefully by the regional teams just to achieve funding for four of them. He felt that this ridiculously low yield for such a major amount of staff time was not a cost-effective use of scarce core funds, and said that if the present situation continues he will recommend that the SGF be closed down entirely.
155. **El Salvador** stressed that the portfolio approach gives a good opportunity for approaching donors, and all will benefit. He urged that an agreement should be reached at this meeting, and not postponed, so that the SGP can get started as soon as possible. Adjustments can be made in future if necessary.
156. **Ecuador** recalled that the Convention has a number of mechanisms to allow it to take decisions, including the regular valuation of the financial mechanisms. He urged a decision to adopt the portfolio mechanism at this meeting and a careful review of progress in subsequent meetings to see how well it is working. However, we should take care to maintain the SGF.
157. **The Chair of the Subgroup** explained that there was a positive and constructive discussion of Brazil's proposal but that Brazil's position was not widely accepted. Brazil had the option to disagree but not block consensus, but did not choose to take that. He noted that we have not called for a vote since 1999 and would all prefer that all Parties would be on board with any decision.
158. **The DSG** noted that, on present trends, by 2009-10 there will be zero funds in the SGF anyway. **The Chair of the Subgroup** noted that the SC must now decide either to postpone a decision or vote on it now.

Decision 36-14: The Standing Committee took note of the proposals for the SGP portfolio and Signature Initiative and encouraged further discussions to be held at SC37 with regard to their functioning and their relationship with the Small Grants Fund.

Agenda item 13.2: Future Secretariat structure and staffing

159. **The SG** drew attention to the proposals in DOC. SC36-16 and expressed agreement with the Management Working Group's recommendations.
160. **Japan** supported the 2008 structure to be continued in the next triennium and requested an analysis of the current staff positions and work load.
161. **Kenya**, for the Africa group, said that the Convention is progressing and faces many challenges, and to attain a higher profile as a key convention it needs more work on important issues and synergies. There is an urgent need to strengthen the Secretariat's regional support capacity, especially for Africa, to be under the SG or DSG but not under a new position. He also recommended secondments to increase staff capacity, and he expressed a need to understand better the Terms of Reference of the SG and DSG.
162. **Ecuador** supported the need for a Partnerships Development Officer and a Science and Communications Coordinator, but felt that administrative and regional support coordination should be covered by the DSG. Ecuador stressed the importance of

strengthening the regional teams within the Secretariat – each regional team needs its own technical assistant.

163. **Iraq** agreed that the Secretariat staff needs to be strengthened and stressed the need to help implementation with regard to the regional centres. More help is needed for regional support.
164. **The SC Chair** sensed general support for increasing the staffing, especially at the technical level, and supporting the regional officers.
165. **Iran** observed that the proposed Management Working Group structure adds another layer of bureaucracy and coordination, when what is needed is technical support for on-the-ground work.
166. **Benin** called for more technical support for work in the field. He said that we agree that the Convention is measured by what happens regionally, and the regional teams must be adequately resourced. He requested clarification of the roles of the SG and DSG and called for more regional coordination. He said that at a time of budget concerns the Secretariat needs people where they are needed, not another layer of bureaucracy.
167. **The SG** saw no competition between the proposal and what has been said, as the expected result of the partnership development unit should be more funding to assist the Parties on the ground. He cited CITES' elephant monitoring programme, directed from the Secretariat but carried out on the ground. The SG said that the necessary role of the DSG is obvious, and he explained the present division of complementary responsibilities. In practice, the Secretariat identifies a leader ad hoc for each task. TORs for those posts can be provided if needed.

Decision SC36-15: The Standing Committee

- 1) endorsed the interim Secretariat staff structure for 2008;
- 2) recognized that the SG's review and proposals for a 2009-2011 staffing and structure are appropriate in a general sense to consider as a realistic vision for a future Secretariat structure to deliver the aspirations and development of the Convention;
- 3) endorsed this staffing and structure, subject to its amendment with the simplified senior management structure, noting that nothing in this decision relates to issues concerning core budget matters to be considered further by SC37 and COP10 in relation to any core funding allocations for additional posts indicated; and
- 4) requested the SG to revise and update, as necessary, the post descriptions and Terms of Reference of Secretariat staff posts in the light of the discussion, and to provide further information to SC37 a) on what options exist for additional staffing other than from core budget allocations; b) on Secretariat current work overloads, and c) on what un-resourced priorities that have been set by COP Resolutions cannot be delivered by current Secretariat resourcing and staffing.

Agenda item 14: CEPA issues for COP10

168. **Bahamas, Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel**, summarized the Panel's work since SC35.
169. **Sandra Hails, the CEPA Programme Officer**, drew attention to DOC. SC36-17 and highlighted key issues to be decided at this meeting. The Panel recommended that its composition should be expanded to two government and two NGO national focal points, and the Panel, having studied the over-stretched communications capacity of the Secretariat, recommended that the SC should keep that in mind.
170. **Thailand** urged that the Panel's future priorities should include identifying more opportunities to collaborate with the CBD under the Joint Work Plan; the Panel could also identify options for mobilization of additional financial resources for CEPA activities through the use of opportunities identified under the JWP. **The CEPA Officer** noted that there is already some interaction with the CBD on these matters, but that fundraising issues are not now part of the Oversight Panel's terms of reference.
171. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** suggested that one of the regional centres should be included in the membership of the Oversight Panel and that the centres should report to the Panel on their progress. **The CEPA Officer** noted that there is already one rotating representative of a regional centre on the Panel, from CREHO this triennium and probably from another for the next one. She observed that the regional centres presently fall under the regional initiatives and so they are already required to report to the Panel on their activities.

Decision SC36-16: The Standing Committee noted the report of the CEPA Oversight Panel and agreed that the Panel membership should be amended to include two government and two NGO national focal points. The Standing Committee approved the list of the Panel's future priorities:

- **Review of CEPA implementation demonstrated through the National Reports submitted to COP 10.**
- **Review of Ramsar regional initiative reports to clarify the role they play in delivering objectives under the CEPA programme.**
- **Identification of changing priorities and associated issues for the Ramsar CEPA Programme, using the two reviews above in conjunction with the priorities identified by the STRP.**
- **Response to any additional advice following the response from Standing Committee and COP10 to the draft CEPA programme.**
- **Continuation of work with the Advisory Board on identifying priorities for capacity building for wetland management.**

Agenda item 14.2: Advisory Board for Capacity Building

172. **The SG**, who serves as chair of the Advisory Board, provided background on the Board and explained that a draft framework on capacity building is now under review and will be presented to SC37.
173. **The Netherlands** explained the history of the Advisory Board, having grown out of the RIZA Institute's many years of offering Ramsar-oriented training courses in wetland management and restoration. He agreed with the SG that further internationalization of

the Board and further integration into the Ramsar community would be desirable. **The SG** solicited SC input, when the framework has been circulated, in identifying organizations that might make suitable additions.

Agenda item 14.3: Draft CEPA Programme

174. **The CEPA Officer** explained that the present draft CEPA Programme is intended to build upon experience but not change so much as to shift the goal posts on practitioners in the field. She noted the Panel's recommended change in the CEPA acronym to include "participation", as well as a change in the way key implementers are shown in the Programme. The Panel recommended approving the Programme provisionally but keeping it open to include developments from the Advisory Board's outcomes in March 2008.

Decision SC36-17: The Standing Committee thanked the CEPA Oversight Panel for its work on the draft CEPA Programme 2009-2014 and requested the Panel to prepare a final draft for consideration by SC37.

Agenda item 14.4: Review of World Wetlands Day

175. **The CEPA Programme Officer** drew attention to DOC. SC36-20 and requested an SC decision on the suggested World Wetlands Day themes for the next few years: for 2009, Wetlands and River Basin Management, and for 2010, Wetlands and Climate Change. She suggested trying to work in Denis Landenbergue's reminder that 2011 will be the Convention's 40th birthday, providing some opportunity for applauding Ramsar's achievements and analyzing its weaknesses at global and national levels.
176. **Thailand** recalled that 2010 is the Biodiversity Year and proposed Wetlands and Biodiversity as the theme for that year, and Forested Wetlands for 2011, the international forest year. **The CEPA Officer** and **the DSG** observed that Ramsar materials for WWD 2010 must be going into design and production by June 2009, long before there will be any 2010 target documentation to draw upon.
177. **The SG** asked for the Parties' help in assessing World Wetlands Day – how much we are achieving, how effective, who we are reaching. We need a results-oriented evaluation and SC input to that would be helpful.
178. **The Netherlands** suggested that it might be better to suggest national themes sometimes rather than global ones, given regional differences, and felt that "river basin management" is not a catchy theme. **The CEPA Officer** distinguished between the "theme", a broad subject, and the catchy "slogan", which will be developed later.
179. **China** listed a number of WWD activities celebrated this year and suggested that the 2009 and 2010 themes should be switched.
180. **Uganda** asked what we are doing to mark the 2010 targets? **The DSG** described our participation on the steering committee of the GEF-BIP on developing assessment indicators and other 2010 target initiatives, as well as the STRP's work on effectiveness indicators. **Uganda** urged that, outside of WWD, we should participate meaningfully in public 2010 target activities. **The SG** urged the SC members to provide information on their Ramsar sites that might be helpful in this regard.

181. **Thailand** noted that themes set up in English are often difficult to translate into local languages. **The CEPA Officer** said that that is a perennial problem and the Secretariat has trouble agreeing even upon English, French, and Spanish equivalents. She suggested that Thailand's suggestion about forests for 2011 should be carefully considered.
182. **Ecuador** queried how the consultant was contracted and funded for the review of the effectiveness of World Wetlands Day, as mentioned in DOC. SC36-20. **The CEPA Officer** explained that the funds were in the CEPA Programme budget and the consultant was selected from among several tenders. The final report will be ready by mid-May 2008.
183. **Switzerland** and **Austria** approved of the river basin management theme for 2009 and made suggestions for how to develop that, and **the Netherlands** suggested a focus on rivers. **The SG** invited Parties near the Amazon to show that the Amazon forest is supported by a network of wetlands and rivers, as is the Congo in Africa.
184. **Thailand** requested the Secretariat to set out the themes in common words so that global themes can be translated for local people. She noted that in some places floods are not disasters but life-giving seasonal occurrences. She suggested making use of the Ramsar/CBD poster on wetlands and biodiversity.

Decision SC36-18: The Standing Committee adopted "wetlands and river basin management" as the suggested theme for World Wetlands Day 2009. The Committee provisionally accepted "wetlands, biodiversity, and climate change" for WWD 2010 and "forests" and the Convention's 40th anniversary for WWD 2011, subject to confirmation by SC37.

Agenda item 15.3: Regional initiatives

185. **The Chair** reviewed the Management Working Group's analysis of problems regarding regional initiatives, to wit:
- proliferation of initiatives in several regions;
 - uncontrolled increase in funding requests;
 - increasing demands on Secretariat core staffing to mentor and support initiatives;
 - funding allocations inequitable between Ramsar regions; and
 - process promotes fragmentation of (potentially competing and overlapping) initiatives, rather than cooperation within each region.
186. **The Chair** introduced the MWG's recommendation focused on a single "umbrella" initiative for each region.
187. **The USA** explained the implications of the bullet points above and emphasized the need to create incentives for regional initiatives to cooperate rather than compete for funds. **The SG** supported the idea of umbrella initiatives, chiefly because the Secretariat does not have the capacity to deal with a large number of initiatives – he recounted the Secretariat's trials in dealing with MedWet issues, and said that the Secretariat can provide input to regional initiatives but cannot take the lead.

188. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** supported the idea of umbrella initiatives but wondered how they would actually function in managing the initiatives in their regions.
189. **El Salvador** called for more information about MedWet to help guide our thinking, in order to know how this concept might work. **The SG** explained that MedWet already serves as an umbrella, overseeing many technical centres that work with the Initiative.
190. **The SRA for Europe** called for clarity in the terminology, since “umbrella” sounds like some sort of governing body or committee. He provided extensive background on the history and organization of MedWet and cited a book on the first 15 years of that initiative.
191. **The SG** noted that since MedWet includes European, African, and Asian countries and organizations, it might serve as a model for Asian and African subregions.
192. **Benin** suggested that there should be a working group to think about all of these matters before the next SC meeting, or the Secretariat should prepare a detailed information paper. The situation is not yet clear: how will the umbrella fit with the other subregional efforts?
193. **The USA** explained that the umbrella concept will have to be customized for each region, but what is important is that it should give direction to what the components should look like. He suggested that there should be a session at COP10 to produce a general structure for each regional initiative – the challenge would be to outline guiding principles on sustainability, governance, networking, growth of partnerships, support for Ramsar, etc.
194. **The Chair** sensed a feeling that more information is needed, especially on the structure and functioning of the proposed umbrella concept, but he noted that the Secretariat has already sent out the call for initiatives for next year, with a deadline of 31 March. **The SRA for Europe** and **the DSG** saw no incompatibility between that call for initiatives and further development of the umbrella concept.
195. **El Salvador** emphasized that the primary objective is the effectiveness of the Convention in the regions and subregions and noted that the umbrella concept is not the only option – there might be others.

Decision SC36-19: The Standing Committee requested the Management Working Group, working with the Secretariat, to prepare a proposal on “umbrella” regional initiatives to be considered at SC37.

Third day, 29 February 2008

Agenda item 12: Progress on scientific and technical matters

196. **The DSG** drew attention to DOC. SC36-8 rev. 1, which updates the overview of expected STRP products following the STRP14 meeting. He noted that the STRP recommended that SC36 approve DOC. SC36-27 on highly pathogenic avian influenza so that it could be finalized and sent for translation soon, thus relieving some of the burden following SC37. He noted that the Committee also needs to consider the best way to progress the Changwon Declaration proposed by the Republic of Korea.

197. **Heather MacKay, Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel**, gave a PowerPoint presentation showing all of the proposed STRP products for this triennium, including in Annex 1 three that will have a substantive draft Resolution (DR) and others that will be in the form of guidance annexed to simple DRs urging Parties to use them. For ease of reference, each of the guidance products will have its own DR number. She noted that the STRP recommended not developing DRs on wetlands and agriculture and wetlands and extractive industries because, though they are important issues, the STRP is not yet ready to speak authoritatively on those subjects. Progress on that issue would, however, be reflected in the STRP Chair's report to COP10.

198. **The STRP Chair** pointed out that the remaining annexes list anticipated Information Papers and/or "Advisory Notes", Ramsar Technical Reports (RTRs) in preparation, and other materials such as the field guide for managers and the leaflet on national focal points.

199. **The DSG** noted how effective the current STRP process is in responding to COP priority requests. He said that there is a lot of material and that all of the timelines will be very tight, especially in June and July.

200. **Germany** inquired about why the extractive industries DR has been deferred, given the importance of the issue. **The Chair of the STRP** explained that there is neither time nor capacity in this triennium to do the technical work that would be required for a Resolution that would contribute value – adding that issue to the STRP's future priorities will form the basis for a strongly-worded DR for COP11. She noted that it is a contentious issue with many implications that has come to the STRP only recently. **The DSG** agreed that a hastily developed DR could raise many problems.

201. **El Salvador** said that 'wetlands and extractive industries' is a matter of great urgency. He understood the need for a solid scientific basis for the DR, but investments are moving ahead quickly, and the Parties in the region do need technical guidance as soon as possible. He suggested that the STRP might be able to pool efforts with other bodies working on this issue.

202. **Benin** observed that extractive industries has been a key issue longer than avian flu has, and the adverse effects of extractive industries on wetlands have been known since before the 1960s. He called for a higher priority, noting that bibliography and materials are already available, and urged that the issue not be left to COP11.

203. **Iraq** drew attention to the problems affecting many international rivers and marshlands resulting from increasing demands, lack of freshwater, and pollution. He recalled the principles of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 and quoted the Stockholm Declaration to the effect that states have a "responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction". He expressed the view that "the UN Convention on Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997) will ensure the utilization, development, conservation, management and protection of international watercourses . . . for present and future generations", and urged Ramsar Parties to accede to that convention in order to ensure sustainable marshlands and to recognize the interlinked relation between rivers and marshlands.

204. **Brazil** said that it would not be appropriate for any DR to mention the 1997 convention, given the controversy surrounding it. **The DSG** noted that the recent CBD SBSTTA-13 meeting discussed this issue in similar language to that cited by Iraq, but there was no consensus there on what should be transmitted to the CBD COP, with a lot of bracketed text. He urged that Ramsar should wait and see what happens at the CBD COP in May and then decide at SC37 what to include and how to proceed on this issue. He urged the Ramsar national focal points to discuss this matter with their country's CBD NFPs before both COPs, in order to harmonize national approaches. **The Chair of the STRP** recalled that the Ramsar Parties have always stressed collaboration and harmonization with the other water conventions and agreed that the outcomes of the CBD's COP9 in May should be awaited.
205. **The Republic of Korea** drew attention to the human health issue of shellfish gathered at low tide from the beaches, and said that it would be useful for the STRP to study the human health implications, in terms of coastal development, of low tide ecosystems and the quality of food. **The Chair of the STRP** invited Korea to send case studies and information on low-tide shellfish to the STRP's Max Finlayson for inclusion in the human health DR. **The DSG** echoed the importance of intertidal systems and noted that there will be a related DR on global waterbird flyways.
206. **BirdLife International** recalled that the Resolution IX.2 scientific work plan noted all of the other bodies to which actions were assigned and asked whether the Parties found that to be a useful approach, one worth continuing in the DR on future implementation of the scientific and technical aspects of the Convention. He wondered whether that DR would include a complete compendium of subjects or only the additional elements proposed to be added for the next triennium. He noted that we have a mechanism to track the STRP's progress with those 'future implementation' topics but not for what falls to other bodies, and he urged that that might be included in the National Reports form.
207. **Wetlands International** drew attention to the lack of awareness among practitioners about the issues associated with urban wetlands, many involving sanitation, and the problems caused by poorly managed waste and over-extraction. She described Wetland International's work in this regard and offered the support of WI and its partners to the STRP to develop a DR on urban wetlands with a focus on sanitation.
208. **Viet Nam** affirmed the high priority for guidance on the growing challenges of urban wetlands, especially in developing countries.
209. **The Chair of the STRP** recognized the support for a Resolution on urban wetlands but pointed out that with the volunteer STRP's current workload the Panel would need help. She offered to join a small group discussion to identify potential contents of such a DR. **The DSG** expressed appreciation for Wetlands International's offer of help and urged that such a DR should cover the increasing impact on existing, previously rural wetlands and the importance of restoration of urban wetlands.
210. **Malawi**, on behalf of the Africa group, noted that Africa is especially vulnerable to climate change impacts due to a lack of resources, and he called for practical solutions to mitigate the effects. He requested the STRP to produce a training package on emerging issues before COP10.

211. **China** recommended that more information should be provided for the next COP on assessment of ecological function, site monitoring, and wetland restoration. **The Chair of the STRP** noted that suggestion and promised to raise it at SC37 as part of the proposed work programme for the next triennium.
212. **The DSG** suggested that the Changwon Declaration should be presented to the COP in the form of a draft Resolution and urged that Korea might form a small drafting group with the Secretariat and the STRP, perhaps in the person of the Panel's Vice Chair Rebecca D'Cruz, and bring a first draft to SC37.
213. **The DSG** explained that the proposed Ramsar Technical Reports (RTR), because of limited resources, are intended to be published in PDF format on the Web and in English only unless further support for translations and printing copies can be found. He urged the participants to help find resources to publish the two highest priority RTRs in print form and in the three Ramsar languages. [Note: The Secretariat now has Spanish and French translations of the first three RTRs, thanks to funding from the Swedish government, and needs only the time to prepare them for publication.]

Agenda item 12.8: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

214. **The DSG** drew attention to DOC. SC36-27 and explained that the STRP had noted that there is a lot of guidance available on HPAI but it is widely scattered. The STRP's task group, led by David Stroud, have compiled a guide to that guidance and circulated it for comment amongst other members of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds. The STRP considers it to be almost final now and urged the Standing Committee to adopt it for transmittal to COP10 at this time, so that it may be finalized, edited, and moved along for translation prior to the rush of other STRP guidance after SC37.
215. **The UK** thanked the STRP and others for the document and fully supported adopting it for final development and consideration by the COP.
216. **Ecuador** welcomed the document and suggested that, to improve it, references should be added concerning the incidence of HPAI on a regional basis. He noted that Wetlands International has been working with bird species in South America and that information would be useful for monitoring programmes. He urged long-term support for such monitoring programmes, which are generating essential data. He also suggested that the document should make reference to the socio-cultural aspects, because local communities play a key role in the spread of avian flu. He said that it is important to develop transparent means of communication that are not affected by interest groups, e.g., from the poultry industry, in order not to stifle discussion. **The DSG** responded that he will ask the STRP to look at long-term monitoring, and to cross-reference to the DR on waterbird flyways as well.
217. **The SG** proposed that there should be a very short summary of the document as well, to highlight the key messages to the media and others. **The DSG** noted that the STRP intends to provide key messages for all of the guidance documents.

Decision SC36-20: The Standing Committee approved the STRP's guidance on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza for finalizing, editing, and translation, taking into account the present discussion, for transmittal to COP10.

Agenda item 12.2: Wetlands and human health

218. **The DSG** explained that this work has moved forward quickly under an STRP Working Group led by Prof. Finlayson. He noted that a whole range of issues were progressed through the workshop held in Changwon in November 2007 and that a final drafting meeting is scheduled for early April. He reported that experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) are contributing sections to the report, as the SC recommended. He anticipated a DR on this issue, which will include a summary and key messages from the full report that will be published as an RTR.
219. **The Netherlands** inquired whether the results of the Wetlands International symposium on wetlands and human health held in Shaoxing, China, in November 2007 will be fed into the STRP's report. **The DSG** confirmed that the outcomes and recommendations of that symposium have been incorporated in the STRP's work. **Wetlands International** reported that the proceedings of the Shaoxing symposium are in the final editing stage and urged that they be made widely available, including on the Ramsar Web site. She looked forward to the STRP's comprehensive report but noted that the issue is part of a wider complex of issues including livelihoods. She reported that beginning in 2009 Wetlands International, supported by The Netherlands, will launch the next phase of its Wetlands and Livelihoods programme, with a focus on human health.
220. **Kenya**, on behalf of the Africa group, stressed the importance of the relationships between wetlands and human health and emphasized the importance of a DR for COP10. He urged that the DR should call for increased collaboration with the WHO and suggested that the next SC meeting should be briefed on that partnership. He called for more programmes in the region, with Ramsar as the catalyst.
221. **The DSG** affirmed the linkages among health, livelihoods, and poverty reduction and said that the DR could cover all three. He said that the report will be honest and acknowledge that sometimes wetlands cause health problems, but it concludes that poorly managed and degraded wetlands cause still worse problems. It will include some material about wetland ecosystem health but not too deeply. He raised the possibility that the Secretariat might explore asking the WHO to make a keynote presentation at COP10 and promised to consult with the Republic of Korea about that.
222. **Japan** expressed concern about how much the Ramsar Convention should be involved in human health issues and urged that care should be taken to avoid overlap with the work of the WHO, FAO, etc. **Brazil** supported that concern. **The Chair of the STRP** explained that the STRP document is intended to inform the Ramsar constituency specifically, in order to enable them to interact with the health sectors and other sectors knowledgeably.

Decision SC36-21: The Standing Committee urged the STRP to develop its work on wetlands and human health further, for consideration by SC37.

Agenda item 12.3: Wetlands and poverty reduction

223. **The Chair of the STRP** reported that the STRP has noted the interrelationships between poverty reduction and human health issues and saw no need for a separate DR on poverty reduction. She solicited advice on combining them into a joint DR.
224. **Brazil** suggested using the term “poverty eradication” rather than “poverty reduction”. Brazil urged an independent DR because of the importance of the issue, as affirmed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.
225. **Wetlands International** agreed that more might be lost than gained by combining the issues in a single DR and urged that a separate, cross-referenced DR should point more clearly to actions to be taken to reduce poverty. She strongly urged the necessity of developing the DR with the participation of the development sector and offered Wetlands International’s assistance in the coming months.
226. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Africa** reported that Benin, Ghana, and Mali will be meeting in Ghana at the end of March, with support from Wetlands International, to work on a new DR on poverty reduction, and they will take the present comments into account. Information will be solicited from the Parties and the DR will be submitted to SC37.
227. **The DSG** noted the preference for a separate DR and suggested that Wetlands International, as a member of the STRP, continue to pursue the drafting with the Parties named and bring the DR to SC37 for consideration.
228. **Japan** urged that activities should be prioritized within the available resources.
229. **El Salvador** observed that poverty reduction is quite a complicated matter and that there are more issues to be taken into account. He felt that we need a clear focus on what we want to do. We understand wetlands’ role in providing income, etc., he said, but sometimes wetlands adversely affect the quality of life. He said that we need to find ways to measure and monitor the socio-economic effects of wetlands, with quantifiable indicators, so that we can be precise about the positive and negative effects.
230. **The SC Chair** summarized that there is a clear preference for separate draft Resolutions on poverty reduction and on human health, showing the clear linkages between them.

Decision SC36-22: The Standing Committee requested Wetlands International, representing the STRP, to work with Benin, Ghana, Mali, and any other interested Parties and the Senior Regional Advisor for Africa to develop a draft Resolution on wetlands and poverty reduction for consideration by SC37.

Agenda item 12.4: Wetlands and agriculture

231. **The DSG** reported on two major areas of activity in response to Resolution VIII.34. Based upon the IWMI-led Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture, IWMI is preparing a Ramsar Technical Report on the results and their relevance to Ramsar. The “Guidelines on Agriculture, Wetlands, and Water Resources Interactions Project” (GAWI project) being carried out by the FAO, several Dutch institutes, and the STRP is developing a framework on interactions that will be published by the FAO, Ramsar, etc., during 2008. The STRP affirmed the importance of the issue but determined that because the work is ongoing it would be premature to develop a draft Resolution, so

- the Panel plans to provide key messages in an Info Paper and move on to develop the requested guidance for COP11. He argued that we must avoid having DRs that merely provide an update on progress.
232. **Thailand** pointed out that the Millennium Assessment emphasized that invasive alien species are also major problems often in association with agriculture and pest control. She suggested that the STRP should include those concerns in its work on agriculture.
233. **The Netherlands** reported that financial support for the GAWI research by the Wageningen University research group is now assured for 2008, but the sponsors would welcome additional support for the future. The GAWI project will make presentations at the World Water Week and the 5th World Water Forum.
234. **The DSG** reported that the CBD and Ramsar secretariats, IWMI and the GAWI partnership held a side event at the recent CBD SBSITTA meeting, and a report is available on the Ramsar Web site (http://www.ramsar.org/mtg/mtg_cbd_sbstta13_side.htm). He noted that invasive alien species will be part of the STRP's recommendations for its future work.
235. **The DSG** noted that he understands that Asian Parties are preparing a DR on rice paddy. **The Republic of Korea**, describing the values of rice paddy, confirmed that Japan and Korea will submit a DR on sustainable rice farming.
236. **Malawi** called for a paper on measures to quantify the benefits and negative impacts of agriculture in wetlands. He said that there is a need to look at the sensitivity of wetlands to agricultural issues, especially in drought conditions.
237. **Brazil** noted that agricultural issues involve not only food production but also the conservation of natural resources. The government of Brazil has begun a project to encourage sustainable food production in the Pantanal.
238. **Thailand** called attention to the problem of biofuels, for example in the way in which palm oil production is competing with wetland values, especially in southeast Asia.
239. **Ecuador** agreed that wetlands and biodiversity are under threat from biofuel production. Ecuador offered to participate in drafting a DR on rice paddy, citing the need to replace deleterious practices in rice farming with sustainable methods. **The DSG** reported that the FAO and IWMI would also like to work with Korea and Japan on the draft Resolution and showcase that issue at the COP.
240. **Argentina** drew attention to several passages in DOC. SC36-11 concerning ecosystem services and argued that, if there is a question of payments for these services, they must conform with international law, notably as in the World Trade Organization. Argentina recognized the value of the work in progress but urged that it should move forward based on the Parties' comments.

Decision SC36-23: The Standing Committee noted the progress of the STRP's work on wetlands and agriculture and endorsed the STRP's proposal not to bring a draft Resolution to COP10, but rather to continue to work on guidance for consideration

by COP11. The SC urged Parties to consider helping to find resources to continue the work of the GAWI project beyond 2008.

Agenda item 12.5: Wetlands and climate change

241. **The Chair of the STRP** recalled the COP8 Resolution VIII.3 on climate change and noted that the world has changed since then, with better information available, and that the issue has moved up the agenda. She noted the forthcoming Ramsar Technical Report, with its executive summary, as products coming through to COP10. The STRP's work highlighted the need for better data on the global distribution and status of wetlands, as making large strides towards global wetland data will be increasingly important at global and regional levels in designing climate change interventions and response options. She sought advice on the extent to which biofuels should be addressed in the DR on climate change, noting a danger that placing too much emphasis on biofuel issues might overshadow the bigger picture.
242. **The SG** suggested that we could consider both areas even if there would be some repetition. It would be useful to consider biofuels under both agriculture and climate change, not just one of them, or we might lose the opportunity to show the links between biofuels and food security competition and the increasing effects of climate change.
243. **Ecuador** agreed that the emphasis must concentrate on people's understanding of the relations between wetlands and climate change, and said that the STRP should focus on the chemistry of wetlands and climate change with up-to-date statistics.
244. **Wetlands International** wished to address climate change as the driver of biofuels but recognized the need for proportion. She suggested that the DR should have two parts: 1) the role of wetlands in climate change mitigation and awareness raising and 2) an urgent call to action, incorporating biodiversity, livelihoods, and carbon storage.
245. **Switzerland** advised that, after the CBD debates, the DR should be as concrete as possible concerning biofuels and avoid lengthy general discussions that would be controversial. There should be one or several DRs, for different wetland types, on how to avoid the effects upon wetlands from climate change responses.
246. **Malawi** called for assistance for Africa in reducing the effects of climate change and asked for that concern to be taken into account in the DR.
247. **Switzerland** recalled that there is a new cycle beginning at the Commission on Sustainable Development with, after a review year, a focus on biofuels next year. She argued that we should ensure that wetlands are part of that discussion. She preferred the word "agrofuels" to "biofuels".
248. **WWF International** suggested including a specific reference to high altitude and polar wetlands as indicators of climate change effects, and he noted a close relationship with the regional initiative on the High Andes and the developing initiative on the Himalaya. He recalled that COP10 will take place during the International Polar Year and recommended that the Secretariat consider developing new relationships with climate change-related organizations such as the Arctic Treaty.

249. **WWF** announced that a team of mountain climbers representing Uganda, DR Congo, and WWF have unfurled the Ramsar and other flags at the summit of the Rwenzori Mountains, and said that he hopes to receive photographs of the event before the end of the meeting.
250. **Brazil** argued that biofuels are a complex issue that is better left to other bodies to deal with, but failing that, she urged that the text should be very concrete. She shared the concerns about wetlands and climate change but urged that the document strike the right balance, emphasizing that the main cause is the emissions of fossil fuels.
251. **Germany** agreed that the climate change DR should be concrete, to avoid a very big document. The threats to wetlands from biofuels are different and can be treated separately. She noted that there is discussion about climate change in many fora and suggested that the DR focus on specifically Ramsar issues.
252. **Argentina** welcomed the document, which he felt would help to stimulate cooperation and exchange of information on wetlands and climate change. He agreed with Brazil that the issue of biofuels should be left to other fora that have that as their primary competence.
253. **Samoa** raised concerns about wetlands and climate change and pointed out that the Pacific Islands are especially vulnerable to sea level rise.
254. **The SG** urged the STRP to work on global wetlands including in relation to land use patterns and human settlements. He asked the SC to consider the collaborative relations between the STRP and the IPCC, and he argued that we need to come up with a definition of wetlands that people can understand.
255. **The Chair of the STRP** expressed appreciation for all of the comments, especially about the need for precise wording, and promised that they will be taken into account in the first draft of the DR. She called attention to the briefing paper on wetland restoration in relation to climate change that is being developed for the STRP by Kevin Erwin.

Decision SC36-24: The Standing Committee noted the progress of the STRP's work on wetlands and climate change, encouraged the Panel to take the SC's comments into account and develop a draft Resolution for consideration by SC37, and requested the Panel to consider how best to reflect 'biofuel' issues in this or a separate draft Resolution.

Agenda item 12.6: Wetlands and extractive industries

256. **The Chair of the STRP** noted the comments and concerns that had been voiced earlier on this topic and suggested continued discussion at the COP. She reported that the STRP noted that one of the greatest problems has been the weakness of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment in dealing with the mining sectors. The Panel tried to determine how to help the Parties as quickly as possible with the limited resources available. The Chair observed that the Convention already has guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment, and the weakness is on the governance side, which is a matter for the Parties to resolve themselves.

257. **The STRP Chair** explained that timescales in the extractive industries business have contracted in recent years, and that because of the rise in commodity prices, industrial projects are moving more quickly from exploration to production, leaving less time for EIAs to collect baseline and other information, including wetland inventory data. There is thus less time to influence mining decisions. This reinforces the importance of having wetland inventories already available.
258. **The Chair of the STRP** indicated that the Panel is open to the idea of having a draft Resolution but would ask that it be very specific. The STRP suggests that a capacity building session be held at COP10, covering, for example, what questions to ask a mining company.
259. **The DSG** urged that if there is to be a DR on extractive industries it must be very clear and precise, but he noted that the timeline for drafting and submission, and review by the STRP, is very short. He recalled, however, that the Rules of Procedure do permit the COP Conference Committee to allow for emergency DRs to arise at the COP from issues emerging from discussions during the meeting, and he suggested that that procedure would allow more time for consideration and drafting. He suggested that SC37 might agree an outline for the DR and mandate the STRP to progress the drafting for consideration directly by the COP. **Germany** supported that proposal.
260. **The SG** interpreted the situation as an opportunity for the SC to support the necessity of undertaking comprehensive wetland inventories and assessment, including risk assessments, and having wetland monitoring plans in place. Without these, EIAs will lack the needed baseline information. He felt that the Parties need this clear understanding, and that the business sector would be willing to help pay for that. Thus, he felt that this presents an opportunity that the Parties should take advantage of to prepare themselves for the situations they will have to face.
261. **Austria** suggested that if the need is felt to have a DR on this issue, the STRP National Focal Points should be contacted to help with it.
262. **WWF International** noted that DOC. SC36-13 provides a list of 10 Ramsar sites in Africa now under threat from extractive industries and others are expected from all regions. He noted a recent letter to the Secretariat from WWF Russia about threats to Ramsar sites there. An issue to be dealt with is the reliability of the EIAs, and who carries them out, because these can be very variable. He felt that it is important for the Administrative Authorities to keep a close eye on the EIA and that systematic monitoring of EIAs should be included in future guidance.
263. **WWF** suggested that the Secretariat should consider liaising more systematically with the extractive industries, attending their conferences and raising the profile of the Convention. He cited an example of an upcoming conference in South Africa. **The DSG** observed that this additional suggestion that the Secretariat should engage with still more organizations strengthens the need for approving the proposals for increased staffing capacity.

Decision SC36-25: The Standing Committee affirmed the need for a COP10 draft Resolution on wetlands and extractive industries but recognized that the STRP is not presently in a position to take on additional tasks. The Committee expressed its interest in employing the mechanism of bringing an “emerging issues DR” directly

to the COP; it recognized the STRP and its Chair for their rapid response on this issue and invited the STRP Chair to prepare an outline of a DR for SC37 consideration.

Agenda item 12.7: Ramsar Sites Information Service

264. **The DSG** described DOC. SC36-14 as an update note on things to look for from the RSIS. There have been minor adjustments in how data is inputted to the Ramsar Sites Database, resulting in freed up funds for Wetlands International to work on developing more tools for assessing gaps and priorities in Ramsar site coverage. A new front end for the RSIS Web site is now under development. He described recent progress by WI, the European Space Agency, and the Secretariat to develop public data on site boundaries, rather than just site centre coordinates, and there are hopes to extend this to other regions. The STRP and WI are working to use GoogleEarth to provide centre points and eventually site boundaries. Further work on the Parties' information needs on Ramsar sites and potential restructuring of the Ramsar Information Sheet will be priority STRP tasks in the next triennium. The DSG expressed gratitude to Wetlands International for all of its efforts.

Agenda item 16: Future meetings of the Standing Committee

265. **The DSG** reminded that SC35 agreed the dates of SC37 for 2-6 June 2008 and of SC38 as the day preceding the opening of the COP, when the SC will become the COP Conference Committee. He called upon everyone to confirm their SC37 hotel books promptly, because the European football championships will be taking place in Switzerland and Austria just afterward.

Agenda item 17: Adoption of the report of the meeting

266. **The SC Chair** explained that Ramsar practice has long been that the SC will amend and adopt the draft reports of the first two days and empower the SC Chair to adopt the third day's report on their behalf. This allows the finalized report to be made available to the Parties in three languages within days rather than months. Editorial corrections should be submitted in writing directly to the rapporteur, and substantive issues can be raised to the plenary. He noted that the final report will be circulated in English and the SC decisions contained in it will be translated into French and Spanish as well.

267. **The Chair** went through the two days' draft reports and called for substantive amendments.

268. **The Netherlands** inquired whether the SG's PowerPoint presentation will be made available along with the meeting report, and **the DSG** affirmed that it, and perhaps all of the presentations, would be made available in some form.

269. **Argentina, Australia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Iran, Japan, and the Netherlands** suggested amendments and promised to provide text to the rapporteur.

Decision SC36-26: The Standing Committee approved the first two days' reports of the meeting and empowered the Chair of the Standing Committee to approve the third day on its behalf.

Agenda item 18: Any other business

270. **Turkey** announced that the multi-stakeholder 5th World Water Forum will be held in Istanbul, 16-22 March 2009, with the theme “bridging divides for water”, and invited all to participate.
271. **Austria** introduced the outline of a draft Resolution (DOC. SC36-AOB1) calling for the Convention to shift from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle. With COP meetings only every four years instead of three, there would be more time for regional implementation, the Secretariat’s capacities would not be stretched so thin, there would be regional meetings midway through each cycle to maintain contact, National Reporting burdens would be reduced, and there would seem to be no negative financial implications. Within the wording of the text of the treaty, a change from 3 to 4 years could be accomplished with a Resolution of the COP. Austria invited comments as to whether this idea would be worth pursuing.
272. **The DSG** affirmed that the change could be made by a COP Resolution and welcomed some of the benefits of the idea. **Australia** said that on a preliminary basis the idea would be worth considering and suggested that it could free up the Secretariat to devote more time to core business. **Ecuador** agreed that it was an interesting proposal and suggested that the Standing Committee meetings should be rotated through the regions rather than held at the Secretariat facilities. Ecuador expressed doubt about how the mention in the draft DR of National Ramsar Committees would be relevant to this proposal.
273. **The DSG** responded that ideally the SC meetings should be rotated through the regions, for several reasons, but the obstacle has always been the additional cost, because the entire Secretariat staff needs to be involved in the operation of the meeting. The idea would be worth considering further if the core budget were expanded to include such costs or the host country would be expected to provide those resources.
274. **Iran** inquired about the effect upon the budget cycle and **the DSG** confirmed that the budget, as well as everything else, would move to a four-year cycle. He suggested that the SC could request the Secretariat to investigate all of the financial implications of the proposal.
275. **Malawi** argued that the Convention needs to gain a higher profile and worried that in the four years it might be forgotten. But he felt that the proposal might ease some of the Convention’s financial difficulties and he noted that it would be positive if there were more financial resources for the regions. He requested a deeper financial analysis of the proposal for SC37 consideration.
276. **Austria** thanked the Parties for their support and affirmed that the intent is not to narrow the implementation of the Convention but to enhance its profile and implementation, especially at the regional and national levels. He noted that there is always an implementation gap the year after each COP and observed that the other strong institutions of the Conventions would be unaffected.

277. **The Chair** indicated that the delegates seemed to welcome the idea in principle but felt a need for further analysis, especially of the financial implications and including a consideration of any possible disadvantages.
278. **The DSG** noted that Ramsar COPs had traditionally been held in the northern spring or early summer, but that in 2002 conflicts with Spain's presidency of the EU occasioned a change to November, which was continued at COP10 in Uganda in 2005. He listed a large number of problems caused by this northern autumn scheduling – from budget cycles to holiday conflicts, document preparation, unnecessary additional burdens on staff, and so on. He urged that reverting back to northern spring COPs should be studied.

Decision SC36-27: The Standing Committee welcomed Austria's suggestion of changing from a 3-year to a 4-cycle in meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and encouraged Austria and the Secretariat to develop for SC37 a draft Resolution on the matter, and to provide further analysis of financial implications and any potential disadvantages as well as advantages of the concept. The SC requested the Secretariat to provide an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of moving back to a northern spring scheduling of COPs, for consideration by SC37.

279. **The DSG** encouraged any Parties contemplating an offer to host COP11 to make themselves known soon.
280. **The Chair of the STRP** offered the STRP's services in hosting a training session at COP10 on the use of Environmental Impact Assessment for mining issues. She requested the Secretariat to find space and scheduling for that and invited additional resources to bring in additional experts.

Decision SC36-28: The Standing Committee welcomed the STRP's offer to host a training session at COP10 on the use of Environmental Impact Assessments in dealing with the extractive industries and requested the Chair of the STRP and the Secretariat to develop the idea further and report to SC37.

281. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** suggested that a set of common guidelines be developed for the regional meetings, as presently they are all done differently. **The DSG** noted that flexible and generic guidelines might be useful, taking into account "regional specificities", since each of the regions has different priorities, interests, and capacities.
282. **WWF International** noted that at the time of the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico, Mexico designated some 30 new Ramsar sites for the occasion. WWF suggested that Turkey might consider designating a number of new Ramsar sites, which have already been identified, on the occasion of the 5th World Water Forum, and offered WWF's assistance in preparing them if wished.

Agenda item 19: Closing remarks

283. **Switzerland** expressed satisfaction at how well this SC meeting has gone, with its excellent atmosphere and the Secretariat's high level of competence and flexibility, living up to its reputation for the quality of its support, especially in reporting. He said that the SG has proved to be a good leader of his staff, as there is a strong sense of a real team, highly

motivated. He felt that this should inspire the Parties to commit themselves to this most useful Convention.

284. **The Secretary General**, on behalf of the Secretariat, thanked the participants for a wonderful week and hoped that this spirit of cooperation and progress will continue. He said that successful organizations have leaders at all levels of the organization. He asked the AAs to bring major wetland issues to the attention of other agencies in their countries and expressed the belief that this sense of teamwork and partnerships is very important, because each staff member, each organization within the Parties, has something to offer.
285. **The SG** thanked the Ramsar staff for their support, and he thanked all the Parties, IOPs, STRP members, interpreters, and the audio technician for their contributions. He offered special thanks to Switzerland, especially for its help regarding the legal status of the Secretariat, and to Ecuador as well, and thanked the rapporteur for preparing the daily reports of the meeting.
286. **Bahamas, Vice Chair of the Standing Committee**, thanked the SC members and looked forward to a successful COP10. He thanked Korea and Switzerland, the SG and his staff for their hard work in getting participants to Gland, and he thanked the CEPA Oversight Panel for its hard work and support, especially Sandra Hails. And he thanked the new SRA for the Americas, María Rivera, for her work with the region.
287. **The Chair of the SC** recalled WWF's announcement about the climbing expedition to Rwenzori in Uganda, a World Heritage site and soon to be a Ramsar site, and projected photographs of the summit team holding up the Ramsar, WWF, Uganda, and other flags at the summit in what looked to be a severe blizzard.
288. **The Chair** thanked everyone, in many languages, and said that the SC has made a lot of progress this week but clearly there is a lot of work to do to prepare for the next SC meeting and the COP. He urged continued support for the Secretariat's work and hoped to hand over a "finished product" to the next Standing Committee at COP10.