

## Subgroups' reports

### Standing Committee 36: Subgroup on COP10

Report on the meeting of 25 February 2008, 10h00-12h45

chair: Mr Boonam SHIN (Korea), Austria, El Salvador, Kenya, Samoa, Switzerland, Thailand, USA, plus a number of observers in attendance

#### 1) Progress report on preparations by the Republic of Korea

Mr Suk Tae HWANG, head of the Korean COP10 task force, presented a detailed overview on the preparations for COP10 in Korea. His illustrated presentation addressed the conference venue in Changwong, its set-up, hotel accommodation, exhibition space, planned field visits and special events to happen alongside COP10.

It is planned that COP10 adopts a “**Changwong Declaration**”. The subgroup proposes that its intent and contents should be further clarified in plenary under Agenda item 12, dealing with COP10 Draft Resolutions.

Korea intends to establish after COP10 a training and capacity-building **Ramsar Centre for East Asia**. The subgroup proposes that its purpose and structure should be further detailed, in accordance with the discussions to be held in plenary under Agenda item 15.3 addressing regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention during the triennium 2009-2011.

Korea mentioned plans for a NGO conference to happen during two days prior to the opening of the COP. This will be organized without direct support by the Korean authorities nor the Ramsar Secretariat. However, the chair of the Standing Committee suggested that the output of this NGO conference will be reported to the COP in an appropriate way during the opening session.

The importance that the Korean authorities facilitate the issuing of visas to participants needing one and residing in countries without a diplomatic Korean mission was stressed and possible means to achieve this were proposed.

#### 2) Progress report on preparations by the Ramsar Secretariat

The Secretariat explained the planned procedure for pre-registration through Internet. There will be two categories of participants: a) delegates from Contracting Parties, and b) observers from non-Contracting Parties, IOPs, other organizations and NGOs and invited experts working with wetland issues. The Secretariat will check pre-registrations and exclude proponents who do not fit in any of these categories.

It was proposed that observer delegations from NGOs, including Korean NGOs (but excluding the Ramsar International Organization Partners, IOPs), should be limited to 5

persons in each delegation, to be listed by the respective head of organization when pre-registering.

The Secretariat stressed the need to have clarity on a number of logistical issues by **mid-April**, in time to prepare the translations for the Diplomatic Note including the formal invitation to the COP and supporting documentation on accommodation, side event facilities, pre and post-conference excursions and others that will be sent to all Contracting Parties in early May.

The Secretariat and the Korean delegation agreed to meet again in the morning of 26 February, to discuss the issues of visa, conference venue setting, accommodation, registration, support to sponsored delegates, and others in more detail during a bilateral meeting, and to clarify the way forward. During that meeting, it was agreed that a Ramsar Secretariat mission will visit the conference venue during the week 7-13 April 2008, including an expert of the Ramsar travel agent supporting sponsored delegates.

Several delegates asked how to provide key topics and results of the COP to a wider audience, including notably NGOs and the private sector. It was suggested that such topics could be addressed during specific key note presentations during the COP as well as in supporting and side events. It was strongly suggested that STRP experts actively take part in such events.

**3) Procedures for selecting the Ramsar Award/Evian Special Prize laureates at the 37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (DOC. SC36/SG COP10-01)**

By the deadline of 31 January 2008, **56 nominations** for the Ramsar Awards 2008 were received in the fields of education (16), wetland management (30) and science (10) with a good geographical spread. The Secretariat will make a preliminary analysis and submit to SC37 a shortlist of proposed candidates. The Standing Committee will treat these nominations in confidence and go into closed session during its 37<sup>th</sup> meeting (early June) in order to decide whom to award prizes and how to announce the winners publicly afterwards.

Some delegates suggested that the themes of COPs should remain major communication tools of the Convention beyond the COP itself, e.g. during a full triennium in between COPs. Wetlands and health, climate change and drinking water supply were felt to be important themes to enhance the Ramsar image with others. STRP experts are currently preparing a specific message on health aspects related to people but also related to wetland ecosystems. It was also suggested that the Secretariat prepares media release texts to be distributed to CPs prior to the COP, in order that the latter can use these messages for promotional purposes at national level.

It was further suggested that the Secretariat encourages the national Ramsar Administrative Authorities to submit COP10 invitations to experts and colleagues in other Ministries (including Health Ministries).

The chair closed the meeting by thanking the Danone-Evian group for their lasting support of Ramsar and the renewed prize money.

## SC36: Management Working Group Report

### Future Secretariat Structure and staffing (DOC. SC36-16)

1. During discussions in the Management WG, 25 February 2008, the following matters emerged:
  - i. general consensus that the proposal for the interim structure for 2008 is acceptable;
  - ii. the need for developing a “partnerships capacity” is generally supported, as a key role for the Secretariat;
  - iii. that the SG’s review and proposals for a 2009-2011 staffing and structure is appropriate in a general sense to consider as a realistic vision for a future structure to deliver the aspirations and development of the Convention in an evolving world and the increasing recognition of the Convention as a global and national/regional player in the sustainable use of wetland ecosystems;
  - iv. that the SG’s proposals for future staffing should be seen as a recognition of needs, and that there are a number of opportunities which can be considered by SC36 concerning how such a structure might be achieved – separate from issues concerning debate on core budget issues – such as encouraging secondments from Parties and other organizations; and concerns that there should not be too many “chiefs” without a concomitant increasing in staff delivering on-the-ground support;
  - vi. the very broad management and leadership role of the current DSG ToR need reworking to streamline the effectiveness and efficiency of Secretariat operations in supporting global and national Secretariat CP support processes;
  - vi. in the light of these considerations, a simpler and clearer senior management structure can be proposed (see attached Annex diagram), whereby the DSG is directly responsible to the SG, and the DSG then co-ordinates each of the other teams proposed, through a lead person in each team;
  - vii. there may be a need to therefore identify which posts and proposals should be taken up in Finance SG discussions, and which can be recognized as realistic expectations for supporting future Secretariat structure up to and following 2011, and which need addressing in SC recommendations to COP10; and
  - viii. that the Secretariat needs to provide further information about current work overloads; and what un-resourced priorities which are set by priorities set by COP (aspirational) decisions (Resolutions) cannot be delivered by current Secretariat resourcing and staffing.

#### ***Recommendation:***

The Management Working Group recommends that the Standing Committee:

- i. endorses the interim Secretariat staff structure for 2008;

- ii. recognizes 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;
- iii. endorses this staffing and structure, subject to its amendment with the simplified senior management structure [annexed to this report], 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
- iv. requests the Secretary General to revise and update, as necessary, the post descriptions and Terms of Reference of Secretariat staff posts in the light of this Decision, and to provide further information to SC37 on a) 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 which have been set by COP decisions (Resolutions) cannot be delivered by current Secretariat resourcing and staffing.

#### **Legal status of the Secretariat (DOC. SC26-15)**

##### ***Recommendation:***

The Management Working Group, after consideration of the paper prepared by the Secretariat, recommends that the Standing Committee:

- i. recognizes that none of the three options so far evaluated by the Secretariat addressed all the issues and problems identified;
- ii. encourages the Secretariat to continue to explore the implications of the three options with *inter alia* IUCN, Switzerland as host country, UNEP and UNESCO, and to report back to SC37;
- iii. have as a guiding principle that nothing in these proposals should increase the costs to Parties in relation to their annual contributions to the core budget.

#### **Transition Committee for Management Working Group**

The Working Group agreed that a transition committee would be helpful to establish, and also noted that aspects of COP9 Resolution IX.24 are implicitly time-limited to the current triennium only.

##### ***Recommendation:***

The Management Working Group recommends that the Standing Committee:

- i. requests the Secretariat, working with the Chair of the Management Working Group to prepare a COP10 draft Resolution for consideration by the 37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, which *inter alia* establishes a Transition Committee in line with Decision SC35-10, and revises paragraphs 7-9 of Resolution IX.24 so as to remove time-limited aspects; and

- ii. requests 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.

### **Options for mechanisms for Ramsar initiatives to “reach the ground”**

The Management Working Group identified a number of concerns in relation to the handling of regional initiatives which are operating within the framework of the Convention (Resolution IX.7), which it also recognizes as a potentially important mechanism for rolling out Convention implementation at national and (sub)regional levels. These include:

- 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 co-operation within each region

#### ***Recommendation:***

The Management Working Group recommends that the Standing Committee transmit to COP10 proposed amendments to the process and operations of regional initiatives, such that:

1. There will be one ‘umbrella’ regional initiative per Ramsar region;
2. Each ‘umbrella’ regional initiative can have as many sub-regional elements as the region desires. These can be organized thematically, geographically, or in any other way that the region desires;
3. Each region will be directly responsible to unite their present and proposed future initiatives under one ‘umbrella’ regional initiative;
4. Regional Standing Committee representatives will take the lead in reviewing and guiding the development of this mechanism, and reporting to Standing Committee on its implementation;
5. Ramsar Secretariat staff will advise and co-ordinate these mechanisms only through the ‘umbrella’ initiative in each region;
6. The SC Subgroup on Finance will revisit the current policy of a three-year maximum of financial support from the Convention’s core budget support for each individual regional initiative, in the light of these proposals and will make recommendations to the Standing Committee and COP.

[Note. This matter was also subsequently discussed by the Subgroup on Finance]

### **Secretary General performance assessment and travel authorizations**

#### ***Recommendation:***

The Management Working Group recommends that the Standing Committee agree that:

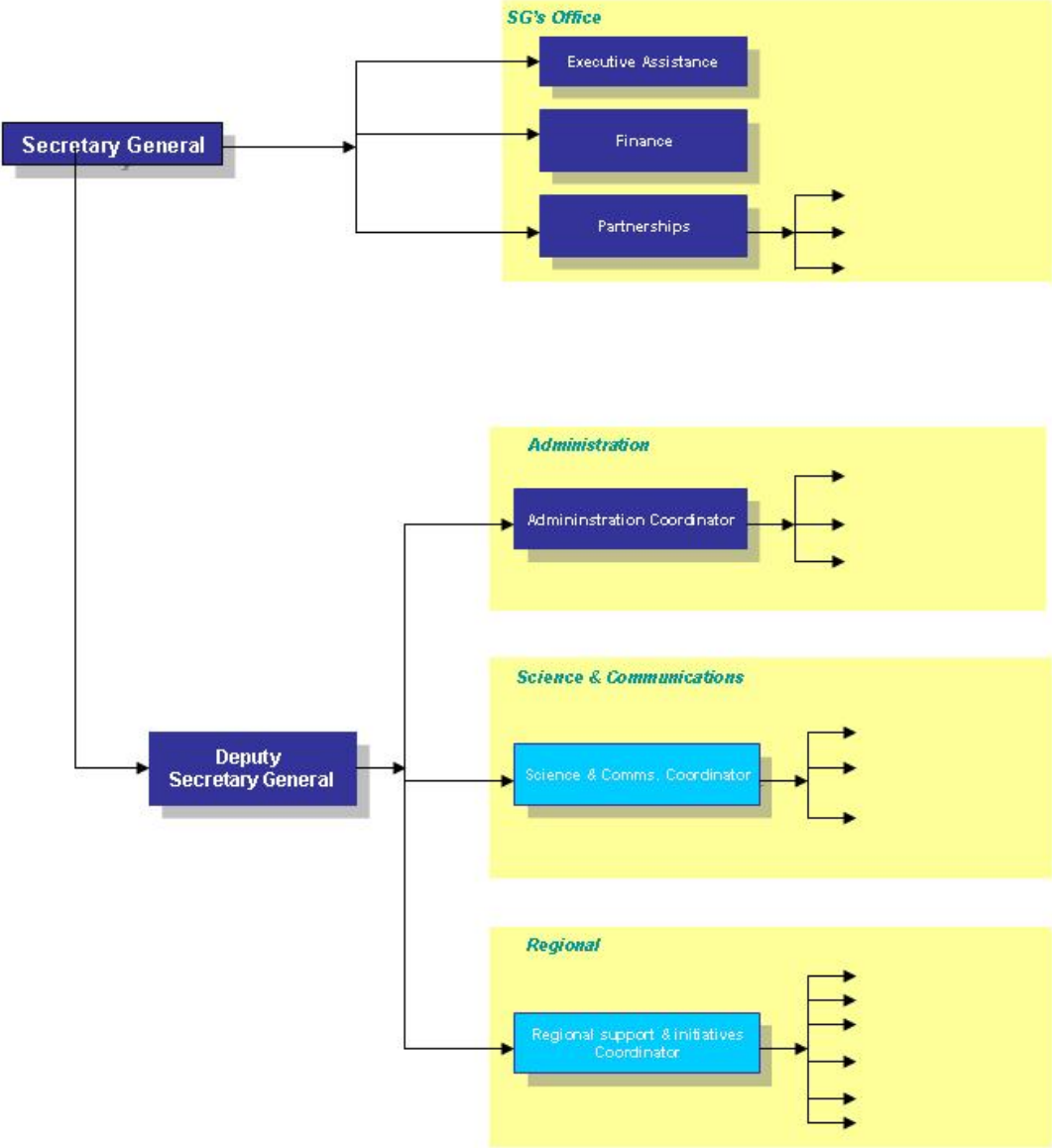
- i. the Secretary General's performance assessment for 2007 is undertaken using the form developed and used by the Executive Team for the SG's probation period, and for the Executive Team to complete performance assessment by the end of March 2008;
- ii. in line with Swiss legal requirements, approvals 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.

#### **Secretariat ombudsman arrangements**

##### ***Recommendation:***

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

Ramsar Convention Secretariat – Mgmt WG:  
alternative Senior Management structure proposal - 2009 onwards



## **SC36: Report of the Subgroup on Finance - DRAFT**

### **2007 Budget review and update (DOC. SC36/SG Finance-01)**

The Subgroup received the report of the Secretary General that the 2007 expenditure, based on the provisional financial accounts in DOC. SC36/SG Finance-01, indicate that the Convention is in good financial health, noting that further information on the 2007 final accounts will be provided to SC37.

#### ***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee notes the provisional 2007 financial accounts, pending final audited accounts to be presented to SC37.

### **2008 core budget (DOC. SC36/SG Finance-02)**

The Subgroup considered the 2008 core budget allocations, which overall had been approved by COP9 decision, but which are now presented following earlier Standing Committee requests as structured in terms of allocation to different output-orientated activities.

In response to a request for clarification as to why SC Subgroup meetings do not have simultaneous interpretation, the Secretariat outlined that whilst participation by observer Parties had in recent years increased substantially, that the allocation for such interpretation in the 2006-2008 core budget was currently sufficient only for the three days of SC plenary. If the Subgroup and SC wished to have such interpretation available for its various Subgroup meetings this would need to be addressed in the core budget proposals for 2009-2011 to be submitted to COP10.

#### ***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee approves the 2008 core budget allocations as presented in DOC. SC36/SG Finance-02.

### **Report on Regional Initiatives (DOC.SC36-23)**

The Subgroup Chair noted that the process and approach for future consideration of regional initiative proposals had been considered by the Management Working Group, and that its report includes proposals on these matters, which will be considered by the Standing Committee in plenary session.

Concerning core budget allocations for 2008 for COP-approved regional initiatives, the Subgroup noted that the requests for such funding (CHF 390,949) considerably exceeded the available core budget 2008 allocation (CHF 279,190). The Subgroup established a 'working group' to develop proposals for SC plenary consideration for equitable allocations within the core budget allocation available.

The working group (Benin, El Salvador, Ecuador, Iraq, Turkey, Secretariat) reports as follows:

- In terms of general guiding principles for recommending allocations, guidance for this funding allocation is provided in Resolution IX.7, within which it was agreed that

Ramsar core budget support for the years 2007 and 2008 should be “at the levels indicated for 2006” (paragraph 9), to be “determined by the Standing Committee based on recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance”.

- At the time of COP9, however, it was recognised that Ramsar funding support need to remain flexible and depends *inter alia* on progress with the operational establishment and the work of the approved initiatives. Resolution IX.12 increased the Ramsar budget line for regional initiatives for 2008, compared to 2007 and 2006, based on the assumption that some initiatives just about to start in 2006, would be operating at full strength in 2008 and therefore need increased Ramsar funding support during this last year of the triennium.
- In line with these principles, the working group agreed the following funding proposal for 2008 in the table below. It is important to note that this covers only the Ramsar core funding part of the finance budgets of the initiatives, and that initiatives have and/or are developing co-financing funding sources. Full financial details on such matters are provided in DOC. SC36-23.

Decision:	Res. IX.7 2006 <i>(All sums in CHF)</i>	2006 expenditure	SC35 2007 allocation	2007 expenditure	requested for 2008	<i>proposed allocation for 2008</i>
WacoWet	60,000	0	59,700	59,000	84,200	68,000
H. Andean	20,000	20,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000
MedWet *	26,000	26,000	15,499	15,499	10,849	10,849
CREHO	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
Iran Cnt.	20,000	20,000	44,745	44,745	80,000	70,000
Pacific Isl.	**	0	40,438	8,400	113,900	28,341
Totals	206,000	146,000	262,382	230,344	390,949	279,190

\* COP9 decided that MedWet funding support from the Ramsar core budget should decrease during the triennium 2006-2008 and specified the annual amounts in Annex II of Resolution IX.7. The annual amounts cannot be changed by SC decision.

\*\* Res. IX.7 did not allocate specific funding to this initiative listed in its Annex I.A. Later, SC35 allocated funding for two projects under this initiative in 2007. Their implementation was, however, delayed (see DOC.SC36-23).

***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee approves the following 2008 core budget allocations to regional initiatives as follows:

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

**Financial implications of the legal status of the Secretariat (DOC. SC36-15) & of the future Secretariat Structure and staffing (DOC SC36-16)**

The Subgroup Chair drew attention to the recommendations of the Management Working Group concerning these matters, notably that the proposals for future Secretariat staffing to meet the needs of the Convention should be recognized as appropriate, regardless of the extent to which they might or might not be funded through the core 2009-2011 budget.

The Subgroup noted that there would be financial implications of various aspects of the options for future Secretariat status, but that these were still being explored by the Secretariat and that further clarification was expected by the time of SC37.

***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee notes that there are potential financial implications of these issues, and requests the Secretariat to provide updated information for consideration by SC37.

**Small Grant Fund and related developments and future operations (DOC. SC36-24)**

The Subgroup considered issues arising from the SGF shift to a portfolio approach (an "SGP"), and the proposals to develop a regionally-structured "Signature Initiative" approach to complement the SGP, in relation to the Management Working Group proposals concerning regional initiatives.

***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee approves the proposals for the "SGP portfolio" and "Signature initiatives" proposals, and requests the Secretariat, working with the Subgroup Chair, to also explore further opportunities for complementary initiatives.

**Budget proposals for the 2009-2011 triennium (DOC. SC36-22)**

The Subgroup considered the two budget suggestions provided in Annexes I and II of DOC. SC36-22 (for a 4% budget growth and for a fully-funding approach to the the Secretary General's proposal for future staffing (DOC. SC36-16).

Following discussions the Subgroup recommends the following:

***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:

- i. requests the Secretariat to prepare for SC37 consideration, in addition to refining the budget options in Annexes I and II, budget proposals for “zero nominal growth” and “zero real growth” budgets;
- ii. also requests the Secretariat to prepare for SC37 consideration the advice on the implications for the core budget and Secretariat operations and work delivery in relation to these zero-growth budget options, including *inter alia* the implications of what Secretariat work would not be delivered, and in relation to the proposed 2009-2011 Strategic Plan deliver and the Secretary General’s performance evaluation issues.

In making these recommendations, the Subgroup recognized that there would likely be significant implications concerning allocation of core budget resources to support regional initiatives from zero-growth 2009-2011 budgets, and in the light of such proposals the Standing Committee representatives should discuss informally how regional initiatives could continue to develop without access to core Convention budget financing support, and report to SC as appropriate.

**Update on private sector partnerships**

The Subgroup recognized the significance of the development of such partnerships but did not have time to further consider their implications.

## Report of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan

### 1. Progress report on the COP10 National Reporting Format (DOC.SCSC35/SG Strategic Plan-01)

The Subgroup noted:

- the progress report on COP10 National Reporting Format
- that the Secretariat has received one National Report to date; and
- a reminder from the Secretariat to all Parties that the deadline for submission of National Reports is 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2008.

#### ***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on the Strategic Plan recommends that the Standing Committee notes the Progress report on the COP10 National Reporting Format.

### 2. Development of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 (DOC. SC36-07)

- i. The Subgroup on the Strategic Plan agreed that:
  - following quite detailed comments from several Parties, incorporation of such comments in the draft to be discussed in the plenary session of this meeting was not possible but would be included in a new draft to be prepared by the Secretariat following SC36 and further debated at SC37; the Secretariat will refer any conflicting changes suggested to the countries concerned and, if necessary, to the Chair and Vice Chair of Standing Committee for resolution;
  - a number of general comments should be shared with Parties through this report at the plenary session on the Strategic Plan.
- ii. The subgroup noted the following general comments for consideration by Standing Committee:
  - the present draft was generally thought to be much improved on the previous version, and the mission, goals and strategies well constructed;
  - the introduction was generally thought to be well written but too long;
  - under paragraph 3, point (i) of the covering note, it was agreed that, in addition to including the summary of achievements and progress in the period 2002-2006 that will become evident from the National Reports analysis, a summary of the deliverables of STRP in the last two triennia should be included;
  - on page 10 of the draft, the bulleted list is 'outward' rather than 'inward-looking': this needs to be edited to better reflect the key aspirations of the Parties;
  - slight rewording of the goals necessary to improve their precision e.g. "To work towards the wise use of wetlands by . . ." becomes "The wise use of wetlands is achieved through . . .";
  - often several different responsible bodies are identified as implementers of the various strategies in the Plan: it would be helpful to indicate *key* implementers wherever appropriate and possibly to indicate the key implementers under each KRA; it may also be helpful to indicate different levels at which implementation will take place (such as national, subnational and supranational);

- while the importance of water security, poverty alleviation, food security and coastal regional programmes is not to be underestimated, the Strategic Plan's main focus should be on the primary objectives of the Convention and activities should be prioritised accordingly;
- there is a need for the Secretariat to make every effort to consider the costs involved in carrying out their implementation role in the Strategic Plan. Perhaps we should we look at the Convention's available financial resources and then develop a realistic Strategic Plan or should we design the Plan and then look for resources (which may well not be available). We should perhaps look at setting targets in order to arrive at a realistic financial assessment of implementation costs.
- Standing Committee should consider how the regional initiatives can assist in the implementation of the Strategic Plan; should they play the central role rather than the currently designated focal points?

***Recommendation:***

The Subgroup on the Strategic Plan recommends that Standing Committee:

- i. considers the general comments made by the Subgroup; and
- ii. requests the Secretariat to integrate the detailed comments from the Subgroup into the draft Strategic Plan for review by SC37.