

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**Meeting of the Standing Committee Subgroup on COP9
Gland, Switzerland, 7-10 March 2005**

Standing Committee Subgroup on COP9

Report of the Meeting

Monday, 7 March 2005

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. **Uganda (Chair of the Subgroup on COP9)** welcomed the participants and looked forward to the meeting's charting the road forward to Kampala in November 2005. The purpose of the meeting is to provide clear guidelines for the Standing Committee (SC) meeting in June, which will make the final provisions for COP.
2. **The Secretary General (SG)** made a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the agenda items planned for discussion over the next few days. He welcomed the participants and expressed pleasure at seeing so many observer delegations present, because the Secretariat needs ample discussion and strong guidance on many issues. He noted that World Wetlands Day has been getting better every year, and this year there have been an increased number of Ramsar posters customized in local languages. He introduced four new interns/Assistant Advisors who have recently joined the Secretariat, and then noted each of the agenda items to be considered.
3. **The SG** recalled that SC30 had had to address a 2003 budget deficit caused by overly optimistic income projections, and he reported that so far 2004 has been in surplus and will likely cover that deficit. He alluded to three budget scenarios for 2006-2008 for discussion and reported that, having studied the issue, he has found that the Ramsar Secretariat is the least expensive of all the environmental treaty secretariats, especially given Switzerland's gift of foreign staff taxes back to the Convention.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

4. The draft agenda was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Update on preparations for the 9th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP9)

5. **The SG** explained that there are two key parts to the preparations: 1) the Secretariat's tasks in running the COP (staffing, documents, translation, interpretation, etc.) and in funding sponsored delegates from OECD-DAC list countries, and 2) the host country's tasks in providing the venue and other in-country arrangements. The SG reported that, thanks to generous donors, especially Switzerland, nearly sufficient funding has been secured for the Secretariat's costs and some for the sponsored delegates. He noted that the preparation of COP materials is progressing on track, and the Secretariat's position is healthy for this point in the timetable. He reported on his recent visit to Uganda, where he found much

enthusiasm and good progress, but ambiguity about the precise venue which leaves other issues unresolved.

6. **The Subgroup Chair** reported on COP9 preparations at the national level and noted that the multi-sectoral National Organizing Committee (NOC) has had seven planning meetings and formed eleven subcommittees; he said that the NGOs have set up a parallel process and are interacting with the NOC. He described the present position of fundraising efforts, with some commitments already made and others awaited soon. He noted, too, that The Netherlands is supporting the preparation and publication of a book on Uganda's work in wetland conservation, that Belgium is supporting the work of the NOC, and that BirdLife International and WWF are supporting the designation of further Ramsar sites.
7. **The Chair** reported that a communications strategy has been agreed, with technical help from IUCN, and that the postal service is developing a commemorative stamp for COP9. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is preparing guidelines on visa procedures, which will include visas upon arrival for countries with no Ugandan consulate and a systematic way of permitting delegates to clear transit countries. He described the symbolism behind the logo that has been chosen for the COP, and said that MKI (the Convention's COP travel agent) is in negotiations with hotels in and around Kampala (see para. 68 below). A number of excursion site visits have been identified. He said that the next steps include tying up the loose ends in fundraising and following up on the proposal for a ministerial segment just after the COP.
8. **The Chair** addressed the main outstanding issue, that of the conference centre, which at the time of Uganda's invitation was government property but has since been privatized to the Serena hotel group. It was to have been renovated last year, but the work has only just begun – it's scheduled to be ready by September but the company will not give a firm commitment at this stage.
9. **Slovenia (Chair of the SC)** congratulated Uganda on the thorough report and cited the need to confirm the venue very soon. She pointed to the need for this meeting to provide guidance for the full SC meeting in June, where final preparations and documents will have to be agreed.
10. **Nicaragua** drew attention to the need for an explanation to accompany the logo, lest its symbolism not be understood, and **Uganda** confirmed that, as the logo is very abstract, that will be provided.
11. **Japan** suggested that some COP9 agenda items end too late in the evening, and **Ghana** asked whether (if Entebbe were to become the venue) commuting time had been factored in; **the SG** explained that it is a draft agenda which can be modified as more is learnt about the venue and facilities. **Spain** inquired about facilities for side events, and **the SG** noted that, though there will be side events, there are questions about how many and how complex they will be that cannot be answered until the venue has been confirmed. He felt that there would likely be fewer side events this time, though, which would not necessarily be a bad thing, especially if some very specific side events can be combined into fewer, more general ones. **Argentina** asked about the expected attendance at COP9, and **the SG** indicated that it was likely to be in Ramsar's normal 800-1200 range, though it was impossible to say at this time.

12. **The UK** inquired about other options for the venue, and **Uganda** explained that there are two: 1) Entebbe has excellent facilities for the COP *per se* but insufficient accommodation nearby, necessitating a long commute from Kampala each day; and 2) facilities 10km from Kampala, with an easier commute and the possibility of a large tent for the plenaries (although the resort has been built upon a former wetland). A decision will have to be made amongst these by mid-April, before the first invitations have to go out by the end of that month. **The SG** noted that, in reality, we would need a decision by very early in April.
13. **BirdLife International** asked about the status of the initiative proposed at SC30 whereby the International Organization Partner NGOs (IOPs) were to develop a portfolio of projects for funding assistance, related to the COP in such a way that they could help in bringing additional sponsored delegates to the COP. It was agreed that, after initial discussions by the IOPs, this plan has not been followed up, and that a contact group will discuss the question during this week.
14. **Iran** offered a number of suggestions for amendment to the COP9 draft agenda and asked for more information about the proposed high-level segment.
15. **The SG** reported that two COP9-preparatory regional meetings have already been held, for Europe and the Americas, and that one for Africa will be held in Arusha in April and one for Asia in Beijing in May. He led the way through the thinking behind the present COP9 draft agenda and noted that the Ramsar Awards ceremony might take place towards the end of the COP to accommodate the presence of the CEO of the Danone Groupe, which is generously offering the monetary Evian Special Prize to accompany the Awards. **The DSG** pointed out that the second essential purpose of Excursions Day is to allow the Secretariat to prepare the finalized texts of the documents to be adopted by the COP in its concluding plenaries.
16. **Iran** suggested that UNEP, CSD, and GEF be invited to report to COP9 on Ramsar-related issues, and **the SG** welcomed that suggestion.
17. **Switzerland** reported that in the preparations for the next meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13), Ramsar has been inserted into the relevant texts, and she urged all Parties to promote the Convention in all fora. She said that Switzerland, Mexico, the USA, Canada, Australia, the Republic of Korea, and the EU countries tried very hard to promote mention of Ramsar in the recent UNEP Governing Council meeting, but unsuccessfully. She noted that Switzerland is preparing a report on the MEAs and water in which Ramsar will be featured prominently.
18. **Papua New Guinea** urged the desirability of having a Ramsar regional meeting for Oceania as well, and **the SG** reported that he would talk with Australia on that point in April and hoped for a decision soon after.

Agenda item 4: Arrangements for a high-level segment to COP9 and the Kampala Declaration

19. To **Indonesia's** query, **Uganda** explained that the Kampala Declaration (KD) should analyze Ramsar's role now and in the future, following the COP, and the Ministerial Segment, planned for Entebbe just after the COP, could then discuss that. The proposal is

for representatives from about 30 countries from all of the Ramsar regions and from the two key African bodies, AMCEN and AMCOW, to discuss, amend as appropriate, and adopt the KD. Uganda's National Organizing Committee has suggested an outline draft and seeks advice on the way forward. **The SG** noted that, formally, the KD will be a COP decision to be forwarded to the Ministerial Segment for discussion and action. A draft text would be discussed at SC31 in June for presentation to the COP. **BirdLife International** recommended that the KD's contents should be harmonized with the STRP's policy advice and priorities.

20. **BirdLife** inquired about NGO participation in the Ministerial Segment, and **the SG** agreed that high-level segments are often too exclusive, without wide participation. He noted that it is Uganda's decision to make but he urged keeping to Ramsar practice of widespread participation as observers, keeping in mind that it is meant after all to be a dialogue amongst ministers.
21. **IUCN** inquired about the relationship between the IOP portfolio and the programme developed by the IOPs and the Secretariat for NEPAD. **The SG** drew attention to the need for balance between a focus on Africa and the COP as a global meeting, and saw those as separate issues. **The Senior Advisor for Africa** noted that the NEPAD programme will be discussed at the Arusha regional meeting, which will decide how to progress it further through Ramsar processes.
22. **Argentina** urged that the KD's section on "African issues" should be amended to "regional issues", given the global nature of the Convention. **Iran** supported that.
23. **WWF International** urged that the Kampala Declaration should make specific reference to and reiterate support for the Wetlands Component of the NEPAD Environment Initiative Action Plan adopted by the African Ministerial Council on Environment (AMCEN) in mid 2003. She stressed the importance of identifying and allocating adequate resources for implementation of this action plan. On the current theme of coordination, WWF suggested that the Ramsar Secretariat should be charged with assisting in tracking and coordinating action towards this action plan.
24. **Iran** supported the high-level segment to attract attention to Ramsar issues and suggested that the heads of international agencies and IOPs also be invited in order to interact with the ministers. He urged that the KD draft be reviewed at SC31, taking into account the results of CSD-13. **Switzerland** urged inclusion of private sector, ecosystem services, and payment schemes into the text, and suggested further that the private sector should be more involved – she suggested that the SG should make contact with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, in order to encourage contacts between the CEOs and the ministers.
25. **Japan** urged that the Ministerial Segment's outcome should be a short and clear message, and **the SG** agreed on the need to avoid the temptation to include everything of concern to us. He welcomed the advice provided and promised to investigate ways of including the private sector more fully. He urged that additional suggestions for the KD draft text be sent to the Ramsar regional advisors for consideration. He noted that the Segment is still "a hypothetical" at this point but was glad to sense the opinion that the Segment is well worth doing. He promised to report further planning to SC31.

26. **Argentina** questioned the KD's mention of valuing wetland resources and marketing issues, and **Uganda** explained the rationale behind the need to be able to counter financial literalists in ministries of finance, who ask "what is the return on investment", with language that describes resources and ecosystem services in economic terms. Questions of adding value and appropriate marketing of wetland products are seen as part of supporting livelihoods.

Decision COP9 SG-1: The Subgroup endorsed the proposal to hold a high-level ministerial segment and requested the Secretariat and host country to proceed with the preparations.

Agenda item 5: Resolution VIII.45 on streamlining COP Resolution processes

27. **The SG** recalled that COP8 discussed ways to streamline COP processes and the USA chaired a virtual subgroup, though the response to its questionnaire was disappointing. He explained the recommendation that a diplomatic note should urge all Parties to submit draft Resolutions (DRs) before the last SC meeting, that proposed DRs with technical content be shown to the STRP for informed advice, and that a COP9 Resolution adopt long-term changes in the process. He also noted that Ramsar has many past decisions that may no longer be useful and could be withdrawn, though that would require study. **The DSG** explained that the STRP is proposing to streamline the resolution process by offering only two key technical DRs, one with annexes of all proposed guidances, the other covering future priorities. **Japan** suggested that Parties should submit at least the title and outline of proposed DRs to SC31. **BirdLife International** drew attention to the related issue of the STRP's dealing with emerging and high-profile issues.
28. **The UK** supported the suggestions and asked whether it would be possible to retire obsolete Resolutions. **The SG** argued that Resolutions can be withdrawn but cautioned against too much haste in doing so – he suggested that the SC propose to COP that the Secretariat make a thorough study of past Resolutions and bring a proposal to COP10. **The DSG** drew attention to the existing index of Resolution and Strategic Plan issues in the "Key Concepts Index" at http://ramsar.org/index_keyword.htm. He suggested that the Wise Use Guidelines (1990) and Additional Guidance (1993), which have since been superseded by more detailed guidance except in three small areas, would be prime candidates for retirement.
29. Concerning involvement of the STRP National Focal Points, as stipulated in Resolution VIII.45, **the DSG** judged that that was overly ambitious given the resources available. Development of the NFP network was cut from the STRP Support Service budget by SC30 and there is presently no capacity to maintain it, and moreover there are scarcely any materials ready yet for NFP review. He intends to circulate STRP materials to the NFPs as they become ready, but it cannot be done sequentially.
30. **Canada** supported suggestions to advise Parties soon to submit DRs to SC31 and to implement existing Resolutions rather than drafting new ones, but urged that the Secretariat should not devote too much time to reviewing past Resolutions for obsolescence but rather to look to the future. **Argentina** also supported the recommendations. **Iran** urged that priorities should not be set in isolation, without cognizance of what is happening in other fora such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the CBD's targets, and the CSD. **Spain** supported the recommendations and

stressed the need for an index to avoid overlapping and to ensure coherence amongst the elements of the Ramsar Toolkit.

31. **Japan** sought clarification about the terminology of decisions, noting that previous SC decisions and COP practice have included both Resolutions and Recommendations, but COP8 adopted only Resolutions. **The DSG** reiterated the distinction, that Parties “resolve” to do something but can only “recommend” that other bodies do something, but he observed that recent Ramsar decisions have all been a mixture of urging and instructing. (Early COPs had only recommendations, since most decisions were directed either at advising Parties with particular site issues or at encouraging development assistance agencies and banks to include wetland considerations.) **The DSG** pointed out that the STRP has been focusing on overarching framework documents intended to help rationalize the body of decisions. **The Netherlands** recommended that the practice of other MEAs be consulted and noted that CITES distinguishes between long-term resolutions and short-term mandates that expire.

Decision COP9 SG-2: The Subgroup on COP9 instructed the Secretariat to send a diplomatic notification to the Parties requesting them to submit all draft Resolutions for COP9 to the Standing Committee in advance of its 31st meeting, and to circulate all such draft Resolutions with technical content to the STRP for review and advice to the SC and COP, and it requested the Secretariat to review the COP Rules of Procedure with a view to institutionalizing that process. The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to draft a COP9 Resolution urging Parties to implement the guidance in existing Resolutions in preference to drafting new Resolutions, to promote dissemination of existing decisions to stakeholders, and to develop an index of existing Resolutions.

Agenda item 6: Report from the STRP and technical Resolutions for COP9

32. **The DSG** conveyed apologies from the Chair of the STRP and outlined the organization of the STRP’s work in the present triennium. He emphasized the extraordinary progress made, despite very few resources, and lauded the great help from Wetland International’s STRP Support Service. He reviewed the outputs now being finalized by the STRP, as explained in DOC. COP9 SG-4, and drew attention to the four framework documents meant to show how and when to use the various Ramsar guidance. He described the proposed Ramsar Technical Reports series as a low-cost way of making available the STRP’s methodological background documents for wider and longer-term accessibility. He noted that, aside from Sweden’s financial support, nearly all of the STRP’s work has been voluntary, as there is still no core budget allocation for the STRP’s work. He observed that some significant areas of work could not be progressed, owing to lack of resources, but that the STRP has made recommendations as to how to move them forward.
33. **Iran** stressed the importance of STRP resourcing for the COP and thanked the active STRP and IOP members. He noted the list of uncompleted tasks and suggested a need to revise the workload mandated by each COP, which should be based on capacity and financial and human resources. He suggested both a reduction of expectations of the STRP and an increase in its resources and enhanced capacity building within the STRP. He suggested greater cooperation with similar work at international level and a greater activation of the NFPs.

34. **The SC Chair** reported that she has been following the work of the STRP closely throughout the triennium and applauded its results, whilst noting that not all members helped equally. She stressed the need for adequate resourcing, and she applauded the Technical Reports series, urging that it be made available in the three Ramsar languages. **The SG** said that it was clear that the STRP programme was overly ambitious, but promised to raise the priority of developing the STRP NFP network in the next triennium.

Decision COP9 SG-3: The Subgroup welcomed the report from the STRP and congratulated the Panel on its successful work. It expressed concern about the STRP's onerous work programme, but welcomed the proposal for a Technical Reports series. The Subgroup approved the plan to bring to the COP two technical draft Resolutions, one containing proposed guidance as annexes and the other recommending future work.

STRP report on the wise use concept (DOC. COP9 SG-5)

35. **The DSG** outlined the STRP's task of reviewing the Convention's key definitions in light of the language currently in use in the environmental community, and noted that the Panel found the Millennium Assessment's process and definitions very helpful. He noted that the STRP's framework documents draw upon the MA's conceptual framework.
36. **BirdLife International** suggested that some valuable elements of Info Papers are worth preserving past the COP, and the **DSG** and **SG** agreed, promising that valuable matter should be republished either in the Technical Reports series or by some other means to be determined after the COP.

Decision COP9 SG-4: The Subgroup on COP9 approved of the approach presently being taken by the STRP in reviewing the wise use concept and requested the STRP and the Secretariat to finalize the documents for consideration by SC31.

STRP's work on water-related guidance (DOC. COP9 SG-6)

37. **The DSG** reviewed the water-related guidance document and said that it provides the thinking behind the validity and importance of the Convention's involvement in water issues, and how Ramsar issues fit into global work on the hydrological cycle (except deep oceans and the atmosphere). The STRP's work will help to explain Ramsar issues to other sectors of the governments.
38. **Switzerland** noted that air pollution from aerosols is an emerging issue which might require Ramsar's attention as relating to the water cycle. She drew attention to the WSSD targets on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and water efficiency and to the distinction between upstream and downstream wetlands. She suggested finding a way to bring the present document to CSD-13.
39. **Canada** supported the document and Ramsar involvement in IWRM but urged that the Convention not lose sight of its origins in conserving wetlands as waterfowl habitat. There is a need to engage the water agenda but tie back to waterfowl conservation at the same time.

40. **The DSG** drew attention to another part of the STRP's work on water and human well-being, "getting the message out", and reported that Vice-Chair Heather MacKay is working with the Secretariat on this CEPA aspect.
41. **Wetlands International** suggested strengthening the IWRM aspects in the Kampala Declaration. **The SG** promised to revisit the KD progressively, particularly after CSD-13. He agreed on the need to retain the Convention's roots in waterfowl habitats and stressed the need to look at the wider picture, as wetlands do not exist in isolation. The Founding Fathers wisely foresaw this necessary expandability of the Convention's mandate.
42. **Switzerland** reported on the recent FAO/Netherlands conference on "Water for Food and Ecosystems" and noted that the theme of agriculture is an increasingly emerging issue requiring close attention.

Decision COP9 SG-5: The Subgroup on COP9 approved of the approach presently being taken by the STRP on water-related guidance and requested the STRP and the Secretariat to finalize the documents for consideration by SC31, and to make draft documents in progress available to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its next meeting.¹

Agenda item 7: STRP *modus operandi* for 2006-2008

43. **The DSG** outlined the STRP12's valuable discussion on its future *modus operandi* and described the Panel's 10 areas of recommendations and its listing of six areas of constraints, as shown in DOC. COP9 SG-7. He noted that whilst the STRP is a "review" panel, it is often put in the position of reviewing its own work. He observed that the Panel's work is still being accomplished by a small number of motivated people, and he drew attention to the lack of participation of some members and observer organizations.
44. **The DSG** provided explanations of the STRP's recommendations concerning better nominations for the Panel, the pattern of its meetings, a six-year rolling programme of

¹ Turkey requested (para. 144 below) the following statement to be recorded: "Turkey would like to express its appreciation to the Secretariat for its fruitful efforts to further develop the activities on the conservation of wetlands in the context of sustainable use of water resources. Turkey attributes great importance to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention since its accession. Turkey also supports the international cooperation in environmental matters. However, Turkey is of the view that transboundary water management is out of mandate of Ramsar Convention. Because each transboundary water course has unique ecological, social and political character, it would not be a valid approach to prepare a guidance on water management without taking into consideration these aspects totally. In addition to that transboundary water management is an issue that should be carefully evaluated by taking into the consideration of technical, political, environmental matters. Therefore, we are of the opinion that the framework guidance on water stated in the document of DOC.COP9.SG-6, should be prepared based on these facts."

"Turkey also would like draw your kind attention to the same document, Box 1, which deals with the core water related guidance documents intended for COP9 and those proposed as priorities for future STRP work. In this context, Turkey would like to reiterate its reservation on Resolution VIII.2 on World Commission on Dams Report adopted during COP8. The Report of the WCD has no worldwide acceptance and it has been subject to criticism of many countries. In addition, the Report consists of references to the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses which has not entered into force. In this context, Turkey is of the view that the Report of the WCD should not be a basic reference document for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention."

work, the appointment of technical advisors for each Working Group, greater involvement of the WI CEPA Specialist Group, core budget allocations for some of the Panel's work and honoraria for the Chair and Vice-Chair, the STRP Support Service, higher priority for the NFP network, and the scope and focus of future STRP work, possibly including additional mandates and responsive problem-solving. He suggested that the STRP prepare a DR on these issues and convey the budget implications to the Subgroup on Finance.

45. **The SG** spoke frankly to the effect that he had edited earlier and stronger versions of this document and toned down its criticism of the non-performance of some of the STRP members. The STRP, though different from the subsidiary bodies of other MEAs, works well but needs maintenance. The Parties need to nominate real experts and, unfortunately, only those with adequate skills in English. He foresaw a danger of Ramsar's losing its hard technical edge that makes it such an effective convention. He said that the NFP network could have been better developed and will be a priority in the next triennium.
46. **Ghana** inquired whether there might not be a way to replace non-performing STRP members mid-triennium. **Japan** shared the concern about non-performing members and urged greater involvement of the NFPs; she raised questions about the mandate of the technical advisors and how they would be selected, and emphasized the importance of the STRP in terms of its financial allocations. She also asked for clarification of the mandate and membership of the working groups which are to be set up just after COP. She emphasized that the priority tasks for STRP should be endorsed by the SC. **Argentina** suggested that it would be better to reinforce the STRP itself before looking for technical advisors to work with it. She expressed concern for the budgetary implications and urged the Subgroup on Finance to examine them closely, and she urged that the suggested additional tasks for the STRP would need full discussion, especially because of the budgetary implications. **The UK** agreed with the need for budgetary discussions and applauded the recommendation on estimating costs of future work requested of the Panel.
47. **Canada** endorsed the proposed recommendations and suggested that they should be itemized in the front of the document. Referring to the small number of people actively engaged within the STRP, he noted that another role is expanding the network of people involved with the Convention. Canada has been working to build a network of Ramsar-related people as a broad community, and many of them view the STRP as a "closed shop" that is hard to break into. He said that research managers would agree that a six-year rolling programme is much more realistic, and he applauded the recommendation on cost estimates of proposed STRP mandates. Canada suggested that all COP Resolutions should be required to include costs estimates of work sought from the STRP, which would end the cycle of unfunded mandates.
48. **Canada** went on to suggest greater attention to the question of how to incorporate aboriginal traditional knowledge, which should be an ongoing STRP concern.
49. **Romania** inquired about why some STRP members were not brought to the mid-term workshops in July 2004. **The DSG** noted that the core budget allocation for the workshops was only half that allocated to the Plenary meetings in 2003 and 2005, and that as these funds were not sufficient to cover the costs of all appointed members from developing countries, the performing members were preferred over the non-performing ones.

50. **Iran** noted that the STRP is the heart of the Convention and needs care. He suggested the need for some regulations for dealing with non-performing STRP members, for example, that the COP might authorize the SC to replace absent members. Iran made a number of other supportive and qualifying comments on parts of the document.
51. **The Netherlands** supported the recommendations and echoed the importance of the STRP, but, concerning resourcing, wondered whether the Parties really want the Panel's guidance, if they are not willing to pay for it. He said that there are similar problems with the other MEAs. He suggested that it is not easy to interest donors in general ongoing work and that it might be better to engage in more project-based fundraising, making it clear what the donors would get out of it.
52. **Papua New Guinea** supported the proposed recommendations and noted that it is difficult to exert authority over Panel members without paying them for their work. He said that the CBD's SBSTTA is confronting similar issues.
53. **BirdLife International** sought clarification about how the mechanism for tracking the accumulation of STRP mandates would work during the COP, and suggested that an outline of its work programme, based upon held-over tasks and draft Resolutions, should be apparent after SC31. **Uganda** suggested that a distinction be made between ongoing core work of the Panel over a continuing six-year cycle and the work mandated by the COP Resolutions.
54. **The DSG** acknowledged that adoption of a rolling programme would open up many ways to redefine the *modus operandi*. He reiterated his view that the work of the Panel has been remarkable, with extraordinary products relative to the work of other subsidiary bodies. He said that if there had been a mechanism for replacing non-performing members, it would have been difficult to find replacements, as the nomination process has been becoming politicized.
55. **The DSG** noted that although appointed members are expected to be wetland experts, two of the present members had called it a great learning experience, and he wondered whether thought should be given to redefining the STRP as a two-tiered membership with a mix of global experts and learners who would return to their countries with that international experience. That would require rethinking, but in the meantime he suggested that the Secretariat and STRP draft terms of reference for a six year rolling programme – he urged that the DR formulation be changed from “report to the next COP” to something like “report to the Parties” to avoid time constraints.
56. **The SC Chair** noted that STRP12 emphasized the interaction between the SC and the STRP and urged a continuous and flexible structure.
57. **The SG** suggested that revivifying the NFP network may be a solution to the perception that the STRP is a “closed club”. He offered that the Secretariat should draft terms of reference based upon DOC. COP9 SG-7 and the present comments, and then look at the financial implications afterwards – it would be difficult to juggle them simultaneously.

Decision COP9 SG-6: The Subgroup on COP9 urged that the STRP and Secretariat further develop the recommendations in the draft *modus operandi* for SC31, with the inclusion of a mechanism for articulating the priorities and financial

implications both before and during COP9. The Subgroup requested that a costed programme should be included as an annex to the draft technical Resolution on future priorities.

Agenda item 8: Synergies with other conventions, and national reporting

58. **The SG** distinguished between synergies between the secretariats and synergies at national level. He outlined the recent history of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (referring to the five biodiversity-related conventions: CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, and World Heritage), and suggested that the Subgroup call for a draft Resolution outlining these relations and seeking a COP mandate for future cooperation with the BLG.
59. Concerning national reporting, **the SG** recalled the UNEP pilot project for learning how to reduce the reporting burden of national governments for all the conventions and the UNEP-WCMC meeting last October, the results of which are summarized in DOC. COP9 SG-8. He urged the utility of a decision endorsing these liaisons, including the results of the CBD's COP7, and a separate Resolution on pursuing harmonization of national reporting.
60. **The Convention Development Officer** made a PowerPoint presentation on the present state of COP9 national reporting – the regional teams will be conducting intellectual analyses of the National Reports (NRs) for their regional overviews, and he is charged with the statistical analyses. He reported that there had been some problems with the NR database, which have now been solved, and he outlined a timetable with the last input to the database on 31 July, processing in August, and analysis by the regional teams' overviews after that.
61. **The Convention Development Officer** noted that there have been some complaints about the form and complexity of the Ramsar NR forms, which has 374 entries, especially difficult in federal government systems and especially difficult given the Ramsar COP's insistence upon multi-sectoral input. He noted that there are many text fields, which are valuable for interpretation but not useful for statistical analyses. He suggested that 15 or 20 or 30 questions or indicators should be extracted from the NR forms as the most important for the regional and global analyses for COP – the full reported data would be stored [and posted on the Web], but for those Parties unable to complete the entire forms, they would be encouraged to respond at least to those key indicators.
62. **Spain** supported the need for synergies among conventions, harmonization of national reporting, and simplification of the Ramsar NRs, and asked what criteria were used in selecting the 15 key indicators. **Slovenia** agreed that synergies amongst conventions is extremely important and reported that Slovenia's NR is not yet ready, awaiting input from other sectors; she emphasized the need to simplify the NRs and to ask what we really want to learn from them. **Iran** has always supported synergies amongst conventions and has noted much progress for Ramsar in international environmental affairs in recent years. Iran noted, however, that no mention was made in the presented document of UN Water, the CBD biodiversity targets, and the Millennium Development Goals, but looked forward to active Ramsar participation in the CSD-13. **The Netherlands** agreed that everyone applauds better synergies amongst secretariats, but cautioned against overestimating their importance, since real synergies begin at national level, which is not so easy since frequently different people are involved and coordination can be difficult. Working on a

new format for CITES reporting, The Netherlands found the Ramsar NR a good example because it is easy to fill out, guiding one through it handily, but a very long list of questions needing much more focus. He stressed that there should be some NR feedback mechanisms for the Parties. **Argentina** supported the approach of preparing two draft Resolutions for COP9 consideration.

63. **The UK** supported a DR on harmonization of reporting and synergies and suggested one resolution and a statement on synergies in the Kampala Declaration. **Japan** welcomed progress on synergies, but reported that Japan is very concerned about the reporting burden for COP9 and requests discussion of what information is really needed. It would be premature to devise Ramsar guidelines in a DR until after the BLG has reported back. **Argentina** also supported the need for synergies among conventions and harmonization of national reporting and reported that its NR is nearly completed, but nonetheless Argentina would welcome fewer efforts needed on national reporting in the future.
64. **The Convention Development Officer** noted that the key indicators have not yet been selected, but they will be based on the COP priorities with agreement from the DSG and regional teams.
65. **Uganda** asked whether the other MEAs are synergizing reciprocally, and **the SG** reported that all of their member States worry about the same burdens and all sense the same overlaps. He suggested that only if the Biodiversity Liaison Group makes progress will a Ramsar COP9 Resolution be sensible. He agreed with the UK that a second draft Resolution might not be needed if he could include a report on progress with synergies in the Secretary General's Report to the COP.
66. **The SG** reported that Ramsar is a member of UN Water, which is an odd internal UN process widened to include outsiders. The Millennium Development Goals and WSSD targets link into Ramsar work on effectiveness indicators, and other measures of the Convention's effectiveness in outcomes will be built into the SG's Report to the COP.

Decision COP9 SG-7: The Subgroup on COP9 requested that the Secretariat report fully to COP9 on synergies with other conventions and international environmental structures, and that it prepare a draft Resolution on harmonization of national reporting in the context of the work of the Biodiversity Liaison Group.

67. **The SG** called attention to the UNEP pamphlet entitled "Issue-based modules for the coherent implementation of biodiversity related Conventions", calling it an innovative way of finding information across biodiversity-related conventions.

Tuesday, 8 March 2005

Presentation from MKI Conference Management

68. **Mikael Greenwood**, representing Algonquin Travel and MKI Conference Management of Ottawa, introduced his colleagues **Gerri-Lynn Sendyk** and **Claudia Deschamps** and described the progress made so far in blocking hotel rooms for COP9 in Uganda, preparing for on-line COP9 registration, and arranging for the provision of other services for delegates. MKI has handled Ramsar's COPs since 1996.

Agenda item 9: Transboundary Ramsar sites

69. **The SG** reported growing interest in the issue of transboundary Ramsar sites (TRSs) and suggested that the Convention may wish to respond either by 1) not responding, 2) providing some form of special recognition for wetlands which happen to have been designated as Ramsar sites on both sides of an international border, or 3) providing recognition for such Ramsar sites which are explicitly managed in a collaborative way by authorities on both sides of the border.
70. **The Senior Advisor for Europe** provided background on the growing interest in the issue, which is grounded in the third pillar of the Convention, international cooperation (Article 5). He noted the meeting in Austria on managing TRSs in November 2004 and the workshop discussion of shared catchments and Ramsar sites at the December Ramsar regional meeting in Armenia. He said that a working group has been established to compile further experiences and that the Europarc network is also looking into the issue for protected areas. He noted recent joint Ramsar site designations in which the Parties explicitly expressed their intention to manage in a coordinated way, and he reported that some Parties are asking about gaining recognition for older Ramsar sites for which cooperative agreements have been signed, e.g., the trilateral platform for the Morava-Dyje floodplain. His experience is from Europe but he understands that there is similar interest in Central America.
71. **Iran** pointed to a need to look into such bi- or trilateral agreements, where they exist, to make sure that they are being implemented. He reported on a GEF-funded project on Aras-Kura for the Caucasus and northern part of Iran, involving governments and NGOs in four countries, as an example of cooperation.
72. **BirdLife International** noted that under present practice each portion of a TRS must meet Ramsar Criteria in its own right and wondered whether it would be better to evaluate the wetland as a whole, even if one or more of the designated parts does not fulfill a Criterion by itself. **The DSG** noted that Article 2.1 could be read to mean that it is the entire wetland that is important, not just the portion within a state's territory, so designation would be permitted anyway.
73. **Switzerland** cautioned that the term "transboundary" is sometimes seen as controversial.
74. **Romania** supported the idea of recognizing TRSs and urged that it should include a mechanism for dealing with situations in which one part of the wetland is adversely affected by actions in another part.
75. **MedWet** drew attention to its recent experience with Prespa Park, Neretva Delta, and some North African sites and noted that value was added in all cases. He urged giving thought to the role foreseen for the Secretariat – it is one thing to encourage the designation of TRSs and quite another if the Secretariat must work with them, which can bring political difficulties and financial implications, especially since donors don't usually include mediators in their project budgets.

76. **Nicaragua** strongly supported a DR, which would be very important for Central America. **Slovenia** supported it as well, but suggested that the recognition be extended to include transboundary catchments with Ramsar sites within them.
77. **The DSG** pointed out that border disputes between contiguous wetland parts could prove tricky for the Secretariat, which is not in a position to arbitrate a solution. One answer would be for the Parties to designate jointly the whole site and treat the boundary between their portions as a management issue.
78. **The SG** summed up the sense of the discussion and noted that further thought should be given to the question of whether part of a wetland that does not qualify in its own right can be designated by right of the entirety of the ecosystem. He said that the COP9 DR would represent a beginning and that confidence on sovereignty issues would be built up over time.

Decision COP9 SG-8: The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft Resolution for consideration by SC31 on dealing with transboundary Ramsar sites, ensuring that it will be facilitative rather than prescriptive and careful in its use of language.

Agenda item 10: Ramsar sites that cease to fulfill or never fulfilled the Ramsar Criteria

79. **The DSG** explained that the issue raised by Resolution VIII.22 comes about because the Convention text established mechanisms for designating and extending sites and for deleting or restricting them only in the urgent national interests (Article 2.5). At COP8 some practical problems were foreseen concerning sites that never met the Criteria, have lost value since designation, or have been left behind by changes in the Criteria, and the COP asked the SC to consider the matter and provide guidance for dealing with such situations. A draft paper (DOC. SC30-13) was prepared with BirdLife's help and tabled at SC30, and it provided discussions of nine scenarios and a draft set of guidance for the Parties in such situations. The key concept is that a Ramsar site should remain on the List whenever possible and that delisting should be a last resort, and that any delisting should be first discussed at the next COP (Article 8.2) where advice may be offered.
80. **Uganda** noted that the issue of site boundaries is not well covered in the Ramsar Information Sheet. **The DSG** drew attention to Resolution VIII.21 on more precisely defining Ramsar site boundaries and noted that technology for doing that is growing less expensive and easier to use. He observed that Article 2.1 allows for non-wetland areas within sites to be designated with the sites in order to maintain the ecological unit, and that we are increasingly seeing such designations which include buffer zones, wider catchments, and so on.
81. **The UK** agreed that such step-by-step guidance will be helpful to the Parties. **Ghana** noted that quite a number of Ramsar sites in the developing world may have lost value because of poor management, and he urged that the DR should not only provide guidance on deletion but also offer help to Parties in addressing the issues that are leading to the need for deletion. He argued that if the site is deleted from the List, it may lie more open to badly managed development. **The DSG** agreed that the purpose of the DR would not be to offer an easy way out; deletion should be only the last resort, and keeping a

threatened site on the List can be helpful in attracting assistance. He noted that it would be helpful if Parties would make use of all the appropriate Criteria at the time of designation.

Decision COP9 SG-9: The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to continue its work on an information paper and draft Resolution, to be considered by SC31, on procedures for dealing with Ramsar sites that cease to fulfill or never fulfilled the Criteria, and to circulate the draft for comment as soon as possible. The draft Resolution should note that maintaining a threatened site on the Ramsar List can help in achieving management measures to respond to the threat.

Agenda item 11: Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and proposed revised approach for 2006-2008

82. **The SG** reported that people have expressed dissatisfaction about the complexity of the current Strategic Plan (SP) and the difficulty in using it as a communication tool and a measuring tool. He explained that he has taken the SP adopted by COP8 and produced a model for a much reduced and more focused version for the second triennium of its term. The mission and five goals have not been changed from the General Objectives, and the Strategies and Key Result Areas (KRAs) are drawn from the SP's Operational Objectives and Actions. The current SP contains too many possible achievements and the new KRAs are more measurable.
83. **The SG** emphasized that the proposal is not meant to be a final version, only to suggest what a revised SP might look like. For lack of time, it does not yet include any indicators. He drew attention to the attached proposal for a DR to enable a revised SP for 2006-2008. He suggested that the Secretariat should work further on preparing a revised SP for 2006-2008 based upon the COP8's SP and try to meld it with the approach proposed by WWF in DOC. COP9 SG-18 on key performance measures of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention.
84. **WWF International** drew attention to a need to check on the Convention's relevance and explained the proposal for an overview of overall performance that would be general and cost effective on a three-year cycle. It would provide a global picture of the Convention, its capacity to support the Parties, the level of its financial grounding, how well the Convention's work is supported by the SC and Secretariat, etc. The Secretariat had asked WWF to add more details to the agenda paper, and thus an additional paper including indicators or key performance measures has now been circulated. The WWF approach does not substantially overlap with the micro-detail of the SG's KRAs or the STRP's proposed ecological indicators, but rather looks at overall performance indicators. She called for discussion of this approach and a draft Resolution for the COP.
85. **Switzerland** found the SG's proposed revised SP to be very ambitious but perhaps too general in some places. He urged that the KRAs be formulated to say what should have been achieved: in some places they are not formulated as results but as efforts. More precise targets are needed in some places, and it would be preferable to include the different bodies of the Convention that would be responsible for each of the achievements. Switzerland indicated that he is happy with WWF's proposed indicators but suggested that milestones be fixed between the COPs. He noted that the proposed revision makes many modifications in the SP that was adopted by COP8, and he wondered whether this approach should be used for drafting a new six-year plan to be adopted by COP9, with COP10 as a midway milestone.

86. **BirdLife International** clarified the relationship between the indicators in the STRP's work and the WWF proposal and noted that both sets of indicators share the problem of having no targets of what should be achieved. He felt that some of WWF's indicators could be integrated with the SG's proposal, whilst others might be added as additional points. He distinguished between means and ends and noted that the proposed KRAs look mostly at means. He urged attention to the coherence and balance of overall delivery of Convention across many indicators.
87. **Japan** agreed that SP 2003-2008 is too complicated and difficult for Parties to use in identifying priorities, and she supported the effort to simplify it. She felt that it is too ambitious to use the same document for both outreach purposes and effectiveness measurement. She urged a look at CITES' brief ca.4-page strategic vision. She noted that the proposed revision reshuffles numbering from the SP and it's not clear why, nor why some actions have been selected and others not, and she inquired about what procedure was used for that selection. She observed that SP 2003-2008 has already been adopted by COP8, so any revision must remain within that current framework. She emphasized the SC's role in the selection of strategic priorities and said that it should be based upon an assessment of what has been achieved during 2003-2005.
88. **Spain** agreed that a simplification or compilation of the SP is needed but noted that, unlike the mission and goals, the KRAs are not linked to the SP adopted by COP8, and these need to be explicitly linked to the full SP from COP8 with its already-selected targets and priorities. He argued that there is insufficient time before COP9 to develop a new six-year SP, given the necessary consultations.
89. **The UK** supported the effort to make the SP more comprehensible for the Parties and inquired how the indicators are related to the existing SP targets.
90. **Canada** agreed that the previous SP was not user-friendly and offered to provide detailed comments for a new draft. He agreed with Japan that the revised SP will never serve as an outreach tool. Canada emphasized the need to involve the Parties in further work on a revised SP and urged that a working group be established to advise the Secretariat, lest it end up as just another paper exercise. Canada saw real appeal in WWF's proposal for performance measures and volunteered Stephen Virc's assistance in continuing to refine the proposal. He suggested that financial implications should be tied in to the SP more closely, to indicate how resources would be deployed towards meeting the goals.
91. **Nicaragua** supported Canada's and Spain's suggestions and urged that a small group be created to work on a new draft.
92. **WWF International** volunteered to work with the small drafting group as well.
93. **Argentina** expressed thanks to the Secretariat and WWF for the proposals, which would be carefully analyzed. She also supported the incorporation of financial considerations in the Strategic Plan.
94. **Wetlands International** pointed out that the four IOPs have recently agreed new MOUs with the Convention based upon the SP's Operational Objectives, and that these would need to be reviewed. She agreed on the need to identify which of the Convention's bodies

are associated with the KRA tasks, and she promised to make concrete suggestions on the KRAs later. She felt that WWF's questions are excellent and need to be asked, but was concerned about overlap and parallel processes. She urged that the next SP should permit measurement of performance.

95. **Japan** said that, if a working group should be established, it should be coordinated with the Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45.
96. **The DSG** observed that the revised SP's focus on a smaller number of key areas will provide a good way to refine or focus the next National Report instrument. Noting that the Convention does not have targets to measure itself against, he drew attention to the CBD's targets now being developed for inland waters and coastal ecosystems; he suggested watching to see whether CBD's results might be useful to Ramsar as well. Concerning the title, he noted that the purpose was only to establish the SP priorities for the next triennium, and a better way could be found to phrase that. He noted that the big COP8 SP only included about half of the mandates found in the Resolutions, and he urged that items to be called for by COP9 should be mapped into this revised SP.
97. **The SG** thanked the participants for a very useful discussion and reiterated that the proposal had only been meant as a model of an approach and not a detailed product. He sensed no support for a new six-year SP and felt that this remodeled SP, homing in on strategic ideas, would be the best way forward. Some of its strategies do not seem to correspond exactly to the Operational Objectives because some of the current SP's terms are not intelligible. He suggested adding references to the 2010 targets and MDGs. He noted that a real SP needs an agreed focus and should be able to be used to explain the Convention.
98. **The SG** summed up the sense of the discussion by noting that the Subgroup would like the Secretariat to look to redrafting the revised SP, to think further about the title, to explain links to the current SP, to use the Subgroups on COP9 and Resolution VIII.45 as sounding boards, to see how budget aspects can be incorporated, and to see if elements of WWF's proposal can be added in. He concluded that the revised SP, once adopted, would be used as a trial for the next triennium to see if the form would be suitable for the next six-year plan.
99. **WWF** sought clarification about how WWF's proposal would be used and who would be involved with the Secretariat in progressing the work. **The SG** noted that the Secretariat will use WWF's proposal whilst redrafting the proposed SP and will link to the two Subgroups for comment. **Argentina** asked when the revised draft will be circulated for comments, and **the SG** said that he hoped before Easter.

Decision COP9 SG-10: The Subgroup on COP9 requested the Secretariat to progress the drafting of a revised Strategic Plan for 2006-2008, based upon the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 adopted by COP8, in coordination with the Subgroups on COP9 and Resolution VIII.45, and to incorporate as appropriate budgetary aspects and relevant elements in the proposal from WWF International on Key Performance Measures.

Agenda item 12: Regional initiatives

100. **The DSG** provided background on the growth of regional initiatives under Ramsar growing out of the successful MedWet Initiative and leading to the guidance provided in Resolution VIII.30. He noted that a DR will be needed for COP9 because the MedWet Unit's arrangements are time-limited. He described several different types of initiatives that are being considered and mentioned the Panama and Ramsar (Iran) capacity building centres and the Himalayan and High Andean Initiatives. Resolution VIII.30 provided a budget line to support initiatives, currently allocated to MedWet, and established that the COP would evaluate any additional proposals. He drew attention to the form proposed in DOC. COP9 SG-12, based upon the Resolution VIII.30 guidelines, for applying for consideration as a Ramsar regional initiative.
101. **MedWet** drew attention to the accomplishments of its initiative, which has developed an impressive programme of activities and, between the Coordination Unit and technical centres, mobilized seven million euros in the past three years, which is contributing to many key Ramsar areas of interest. The Unit tries to supply advice to other proposed initiatives when possible.
102. **Japan** supported the Secretariat's proposal to streamline the application process and said that Japan would be submitting a DR calling for endorsement of a regional initiative on Asian migratory waterbirds. Japan asked for a clear idea of what the priorities are for the Convention's activities over the next three years. **Papua New Guinea** noted that it is a problem for some Parties to meet about developing initiatives and hoped that a regional meeting will be possible. **Iran** noted that some regional initiatives are emerging and arrangements need to be made for dealing with them; he urged that the example of the Water Convention's experience be studied. **Nicaragua** reported that a new DR for the Panama Centre was discussed at the Americas regional meeting, but he has no objection to the proposed form.
103. **Ghana** reported that the African regional meeting will discuss a few proposed initiatives to be put forward, and he asked whether the Secretariat has the capacity to support them. He asked, too, whether there is a linkage between Ramsar and the Global Environment Facility that will help to support them.
104. **MedWet** emphasized the importance of first gaining the support of the participating countries and expressed the view that regional initiatives will not be viable if they are expecting financial support from the beginning. Initiatives require support from participating governments until they have developed a solid fundable programme of work.
105. To **Uganda's** question about what qualifies as a regional initiative, **the DSG** enumerated several kinds – e.g., MedWet-type, basin commissions, transboundary sites, regional-scale capacity building and research institutions – and suggested a need to codify the types. He noted that it would be a challenge for the Secretariat to support initiatives, especially when a budget line is involved or it is expected to advise closely. The DSG noted that the Resolution VIII.30 guidelines stipulate that proposed initiatives need support from the countries involved and a host country identified, already in place. To the question of at what point the initiative should be brought to COP for endorsement, if financial support is sought rather than just encouraging words, the answer is that it must have already been started up.

106. **The SG** noted that the Ramsar officer established within SPREP in Samoa, funded by the USA, Australia, and WWF International, is a useful aid for that region.
107. **The SG** expressed his view that the way forward for Ramsar is in the direction of regional initiatives, but he is alarmed at the number of new initiatives under discussion which have valuable ideas but few monetary resources. He said that the Secretariat cannot deal with these unless the COP budgets for them or donor funding is assured – donor funding is normally time-limited, however, and sustainable funding is difficult to achieve. It is possible, however, that not all proposed regional initiatives need to be seen as permanent – some might be time- or purpose-related and still be valuable.
108. **The SG** asked the Subgroup on Finance to consider the financial implications of additional regional initiatives at its meeting, since it would be a waste of time to develop a complex DR if there is no possibility of funding support. He said that he believes that a viable future for the Convention lies in the regions, linked closely to the Secretariat in Gland, and the challenge is securing sustainable funding.

Decision COP9 SG-11: The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to circulate the proposed application form for regional initiatives to the Contracting Parties as soon as possible, and to ask the Parties to complete and submit the forms by 30 April for preparation for discussion at SC31.

109. To **Ghana's** question about the GEF, **the SG** explained that although Ramsar is not eligible for a formal relationship with the GEF, we do have a link through the Joint Work Plan with the CBD. The present GEF secretariat has become much more amenable to Ramsar issues and the SG hopes that it will become more proactive in supporting wetland work in the context of the JWP. Still, he noted, GEF projects are time-limited and do not solve the problem of finding sustainable financing.
110. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** noted that regional initiatives can expand the capacities of the small secretariat and he urged that the regions be encouraged to develop initiatives. He foresaw the need for a categorization of objectives as well as a common framework or terms of reference to be set before considering each proposal.

Agenda item 13: The Convention's Communications, Education, and Public Awareness programme

111. **The SG** called the agenda item a "fishing expedition" in which the Secretariat sought to sound out the Subgroup's thinking. Ramsar has a comprehensive, active, and necessary programme adopted by Resolution VIII.31, but almost no resources for it in the core budget. Generous donations from the Groupe Danone are invaluable but are directed largely, though not exclusively, to World Wetlands Day. He suggested that the Subgroup look at the CEPA Programme again and be more realistic about its activities relative to its financing.
112. **Slovenia** asked whether this was related to the STRP's CEPA cross-cutting issue. **The SG** noted that the issue was raised by STRP, where it is treated within the context of the Wetlands International Specialist Group on CEPA, and this was useful but not explicitly addressed within the Convention. He asked how much the Parties wish to address this, in light of the financial implications.

113. **Japan** appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to carry out the CEPA Programme despite financial restraints and might be willing to support a new plan, but only if it were to be built upon the existing Plan which was adopted for six years.
114. **The Secretariat's CEPA Programme Officer** noted that the intention is not to review or revise the current CEPA Programme, as it would be the wrong time to do that. She said that the SG is asking about gaining recognition that CEPA is an integral part of wetland management and securing the funding support needed.
115. **Wetlands International** observed that there is a wide range of CEPA projects that Ramsar is directly or indirectly involved in, and she asked whether there has been an analysis of how these fit into the Programme's objectives.
116. **The UK** noted that the National Reports will provide information about how the Parties are progressing with the CEPA Programme and that will affect thinking about how to proceed.
117. **The SG** said that his concern is how to make the current programme more "do-able", given the tendency to see CEPA as somehow separate from what we do rather than as an integral part of everything. He said that he did not sense any enthusiasm for a new draft Resolution but did sense a need for something to be presented to SC31 for consideration. He sensed that the Subgroup would like to continue this discussion and to find a way of highlighting the need to enhance the current CEPA Programme and give it the recognition it deserves, for discussion at SC31.
118. **Uganda** pointed out that CEPA issues are part of the current Strategic Plan, and **the SG** noted that he sees this as going along with the current thinking about revision of the SP for 2006-2008.
119. **Spain** noted that many Parties are already elaborating their own national CEPA plans in line with the Resolution VIII.31 Programme, and he suggested that time be set aside at COP9 to review the CEPA Programme's progress by presenting the national plans.

Decision COP9 SG-12: The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to bring the CEPA discussion forward to SC31, preferably with concrete proposals on the way forward.

Agenda item 14: The role of the Convention in natural disaster prevention, mitigation, and adaptation

120. **The SG** drew attention to Resolution VIII.35 on natural disasters but noted that it was concerned mainly with drought, whilst the recent tsunami showed that there are other kinds of disasters to be considered as well. It raised a number of questions of relevance to the Convention, concerning the role of mangroves and coral reefs in buffering, the effects of salt water intrusion, the sorts of rehabilitation we should be encouraging, etc.
121. **The SG** reported on the tsunami forum that was held at the Secretariat on World Wetlands Day during the STRP12 meetings. He foresaw an increase in the number of tidal events associated with climate change and suggested that the Convention needs a policy setting within which the Secretariat can respond quickly to these. Ramsar is fortunate in being able

to take advantage of the IOPs' structures and expertise, and he has asked Wetlands International to take the lead among the IOPs in collecting and storing the scientific data coming out as a result of the tsunami. The SG said that it would be useful to have a draft Resolution containing a policy framework on how the Secretariat should respond.

122. **Wetlands International** reported on the setting up of the Ramsar Tsunami Reference Group at the SG's requests, which was a large piece of work but very useful. WI developed a common portal for accessing the available scientific assessments in useful forms and established a means for discussing the issues, e.g., the role of mangroves in mitigation, through on-line discussions. A number of projects, funded from many sources, are now being built upon that. WI also reported on the results of the Asian Wetland Symposium last month, where a whole day was spent with more than 400 participants in agreeing seven recommendations that have been widely picked up. She indicated that the debate has now moved from how to protect people from tsunamis to how to manage our coasts, especially with an increasing number of serious events. She agreed that a DR would help by laying out Ramsar's role as an umbrella in such cases, and that could bring greater awareness about Ramsar to other sectors.
123. **The SG** acknowledged the financial support of Japan in the creation of the Ramsar Tsunami Reference Group. **The DSG** noted that another spin-off has been WI's development of a rapid assessment of ecological status field form – the STRP contributed to it and will include it in its assessment materials for COP9. **Iran** agreed that the DR should not be confined to tsunamis but extended to other natural disasters as well, clarifying the role Ramsar can play in mitigating the impacts. **Japan** expressed a willingness to cooperate on the DR but cautioned that the DR must not go beyond the mandate of the Convention. **The Netherlands** appreciated the impressive response of the Secretariat and the Tsunami Group and said that the DR would be important in establishing Ramsar's role relative to the other organizations concerned with such issues.
124. **Switzerland** urged that the framework statement from the International Conference on Disaster Reduction held recently in Kobe, Japan, should be mentioned in the DR, and that it should take advantage of the opportunity to look not only at tsunamis but at flood prevention, etc., as well. She noted that the WMO is preparing a brochure that is relevant to Ramsar. **Argentina** supported the Secretariat's actions in response to the tsunami and the need for a framework for action in natural disasters. **The UK** urged that the DR should include the outcomes of the Cairo meeting of the UNEP task force and the actions of the other MEAs, and care should be taken that we are adding value and not just duplicating their efforts. **Papua New Guinea** supported the need for advice on protecting against large waves, especially by mangroves, and noted the importance of advance warning systems.
125. **The SG** expressed appreciation for those useful discussions. He said that he hoped the DR would address general advice to the Secretariat on how to react to natural disasters, how to link with other international actors, e.g., the UNEP Post-conflict Response Unit, with which we are also working regarding the Iraqi marshes. There was a lack of clarity in the international environmental community on how to respond. He wished there to be no ambiguity about what the Parties want the Secretariat to do. Ramsar has the advantage of collaboration with its IOPs, which all have networks in the affected areas.

126. **Switzerland** urged that the DR should not just address reaction to disasters that have already occurred, but should focus as well on maintaining ecosystems for prevention. **The SG** clarified that he foresaw three elements to the DR: 1) how we react to natural disasters; 2) how to minimize dangers before disasters occur; and 3) how the Convention can provide the right materials for Parties faced with restoration.

Decision COP9 SG-13: The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft Resolution on the prevention and response to natural disasters for consideration by SC31.

Agenda item 15: Use of the term “Secretariat” in place of the traditional “Bureau”

127. **The Chair** requested the Secretariat to introduce the Bureau, and vice versa.
128. **The SG** explained the evolution of the idea and recalled that SC30 asked the Bureau to seek the advice of IUCN’s Environmental Law Centre on changing the terminology used in the text of the Convention. The ELC provided its opinion in June 2004, which advised on a way forward. He said that it is not a trivial issue since it involves the complicated questions of the Convention’s non-existent legal personality and the role of the Secretariat within IUCN. The SG proposed that a DR be presented to COP, in line with the ELC’s advice, which if adopted will resolve the issue of the name, but he cautioned that it will not solve the issue of the Convention’s standing in the international community, nor that of the SG’s ambiguous role vis-à-vis the DG of IUCN. The DR proposed in DOC. COP9 SG-15 allows us to use the name “Secretariat” without having to change the text of the Convention, and we can thus use the same terminology as the other conventions that we deal with daily. **Japan** welcomed the communications between the Secretariat and the ELC and supported the DR.

Decision COP9 SG-14: The Subgroup requested the Secretariat to progress the draft Resolution on the change of name from “Bureau” to “Secretariat” and present it to SC31 for its consideration.

Agenda item 16a: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the current state of play

129. **The DSG** supplied background on the MA process and the state of its progress. (Details of the MA’s concepts and products are included in many other Ramsar meeting reports.) He reported that the STRP has endorsed a final draft of the Ramsar Synthesis Report and requested that some parts of it not be removed, and the Panel requested that a “key messages” page, based upon the Summary for Decision-Makers, should be distributed in an attractive format. The STRP felt that the Synthesis Report will be particularly valuable to the Parties for its section on response options. The MA Board Meeting later this month will finalize the texts, and the Ramsar Synthesis will be launched at COP9.
130. **The SC Chair**, who is a member of the MA Board, said that it was a good experience working with so many different scientists, both natural and social scientists, and she said that the MA’s conceptual framework has been very helpful for the Ramsar Convention.
131. **Wetlands International** agreed that the Synthesis Report will be very useful for Ramsar. She drew attention to the 30 March MA announcement, with the expected press attention, and asked how Ramsar would ensure that wetlands would be included prominently in that

coverage. **The DSG** and **SG** noted that the 30 March date is arbitrary and strange, including 10 launches in cities around the world. It was suggested that those who would be attending the MA Board meeting in New York should try to ensure that Ramsar and wetlands are featured prominently.

132. **Turkey** called the MA a valuable map for Ramsar, but drew attention to the paragraph in the “Key Messages” statement which says that “wetland loss and degradation has primarily been driven by land conversion and infrastructure development (e.g., dams, urbanization, and tourism)”. She urged a more balanced approach to that issue which would take account of the social needs of the developing countries, often lacking fresh water and electricity. She said that collective measures are required to break the vicious circle. **The SG** agreed that the point is an important one, that the issue should be seen within the context of sustainable development, but noted that the “key message” is based solely upon the findings of the report, and according to the report the fact is that these are the primary reasons for wetland loss and degradation.
133. **The SG** reiterated the wish that those attending the MA Board meeting will represent Ramsar interests well and promised to report back to SC31, where the SC can decide how to organize the MA presentation at COP9, ensuring that Turkey’s concerns about taking findings out of context can be addressed.

Agenda item 16b: Handling cultural issues at COP9

134. **The SG** recalled the considerable discussion of cultural issues at COP8 and reported that Parties are divided about whether they should be pursued further at COP9. He noted that the Secretariat is proposing that the role of culture and traditional knowledge in wetland management be included as one of the four Technical Sessions, in order to place these issues within the COP theme of supporting livelihoods. He reported that there may be a side event on culture issues as well, and case studies, especially from Asia and the Americas, would be welcomed.
135. **Switzerland** emphasized the importance of promoting the cultural dimension of wetlands and observed that the Swiss engineering culture has led to long-term problems.
136. **Ghana** noted that the cultural dimension is very pronounced in Africa and asked whether COP9 will try to portray the relevance of African culture to Ramsar and conservation. Would Uganda be doing that or would it be working with other African countries? **Uganda** replied that the issue of how to present African culture at the COP will be discussed at the regional meeting in Arusha.

Agenda item 17: Amendments to the Rules of Procedure

137. **The DSG** explained that two issues will require changes in the COP Rules, either at the start of the next COP or during it for implementation at COP10. 1) The matters under discussion about submitting draft Resolutions will require a review of the 60-day rule for DR proposals from the Parties. And 2) the ELC has pointed out needed amendments concerning the change from the traditional name “Bureau” and concerning ambiguities in Rule 27 about the SG’s role. **The SG** promised that the Secretariat will produce an annotated Rules of Procedure for SC31’s consideration and transmittal to COP9.

Agenda item 18: Any other business

138. There was no other business. **The Chair** thanked the participants and noted that a joint plenary with the Subgroup on Finance will be held two days hence.

Thursday, 10 March 2005

Joint plenary session between the Subgroups on COP9 and Finance

Agenda item 19: Summary of final issues in preparation for SC31

139. **The SG** reported that the Subgroup of Finance has provided good advice to the Secretariat at its meeting on 9 March, and that both Subgroups have identified the key issues for development of the agenda for SC31 and COP9. He welcomed the active participation of observer countries. He noted that there are still some loose ends regarding the infrastructure for COP9.
140. **The Chair of the SC** said that the meetings have provided good guidance and direction for the SC. She noted that the Secretariat has a great deal of work to do but expressed confidence that the documents will be ready in April for distribution to the SC. She said that everyone seems very pleased with the way COP9 preparations are going but she emphasized the necessity of knowing about the venue as soon as possible. The Chair and Vice Chair of the SC have prepared a letter for the Ugandan delegate to take back to his minister, expressing appreciation for the achievements so far and strongly requesting a decision on the COP9 venue before 5 April 2005.
141. **BirdLife International** reported on discussions among the IOPs concerning the suggested portfolio of project ideas related to the COP, in which they have drafted an outline of a plan for the four IOPs and IWMI to coordinate a series of side events over four or five days at the COP on a joint collective basis. The topics are still to be developed, but it is tentatively suggested that the events will focus on issues of monitoring and assessment, wetlands and agriculture, water resource management and environmental flows, poverty alleviation in relation to wetland management, and wetland valuation. A more detailed plan will be presented to SC31, as only one part of the IOPs' contributions to the COP.
142. **Switzerland** felt that those are all valid topics but that wetland valuation is an especially crucial issue, and that wetlands and agriculture is a very important emerging theme.
143. **The SG** congratulated the IOPs on this initiative and said that it marked a new step in the way in which the IOPs present themselves as helpful to the Parties. The joint themes demonstrate the commitment of the IOPs and, as in the tsunami response, the degree of cohesion in working as a group. He detected a new sense of togetherness. He promised that the Secretariat will try to assist but is also grateful that the IOPs' initiative will lift some of the burden from the Secretariat as well. **The DSG** reinforced the importance of wetland valuation, as seen in the work of the MA, because though the value of wetlands' total services far outweighs the value of development, that message is not getting out widely enough.

Agenda item 20: Review of the reports of the meetings

144. **Turkey** made an intervention concerning Agenda item 6 (Report of the STRP's work on water-related guidance), arguing that issues of transboundary water management are not within the mandate of the Ramsar Convention, and also put forward an objection to the STRP's inclusion in DOC. COP9 SG-6 of Ramsar Resolution VIII.2 on the World Commission on Dams among recommended references. She asked that the text of Turkey's intervention be entered into the report of the meeting.
145. The **SG** and **DSG** thanked Turkey for the useful contributions and explained that the meeting report is intended to be a summary of the discussions and not a verbatim transcript. The Convention's standard practice when a verbatim text is wanted is to place it as a footnote linked to the report's summary of Turkey's intervention. (See footnote to Decision COP9 SG-4 above.)
146. **The DSG** explained the Convention's standard practice in the review of the meeting's report, whereby the drafts of all but the final day are agreed item by item, with substantial comments to be made by intervention and editorial corrections to be handed directly to the rapporteur in writing. The Subgroup was invited to empower the Chair to approve the final day's report, and the Secretariat reserved the right to make normal stylistic and editorial refinements when finalizing the report.
147. To the new Decision SG-1 on the COP, **BirdLife International** pointed out that the proposed COP9 "ministerial segment" is not properly a segment of the COP, and it was agreed to find new wording. **Uganda** observed that Decision SG-1 is necessary so that the government has a clear endorsement with which to move its planning forward.
148. **Ghana** asked about potential cost implications for the Secretariat if the ministerial meeting were to take place, and **the SG** replied that there would be some implications for the Secretariat, principally for interpretation, but they would not be significant. The main costs of the ministerial meeting would be borne by Uganda.
149. **Wetlands International** recalled that the SG had requested advice on the COP9 agenda and inquired about a procedure for that, and **the SG** said that any suggestions should be sent to him or any of the regional officers, the sooner the better, in general, especially for any suggestions leading in new directions.

Decision COP9 SG-15: The Subgroup on COP9 adopted the report of the first two days of the meeting and requested the Chair to approve the report of the final day on its behalf.

Report from the Subgroup on Finance

150. **Canada, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, explained that the meeting produced the text of the decisions but not a record of the discussions. He led the way through adoption of the decisions.
151. **Romania** requested that the USA's comments concerning Ukraine's eligibility for Small Grants Fund assistance should be included in the report; **the SG** agreed to include a note of the USA's comments as a footnote to Decision Finance SG-2.

152. **The Chair** pointed out that wholly new scenario budgets will be produced for SC31 and that the present meeting's agenda papers on that subject should be shredded.
153. The Decisions of the Subgroup on Finance (appended) were adopted.

Any other business

154. **Switzerland** announced that Switzerland, Iran, the Ramsar Convention, and the UN Economic Commission for Europe will be sponsoring a side event on 12 April during the CSD-13 meetings in New York, USA. She also announced a seminar sponsored by the UN ECE on water and payment systems scheduled for 27 April in Geneva.

Agenda item 21: Closing statements

155. **The SG, Peter Bridgewater**, expressed his pleasure with the way the meetings have proceeded and with the quantity and quality of advice the Secretariat has received. He foresaw a very exciting COP, one which will consolidate where the Convention is now and chart its direction for the future. He applauded the work on performance indicators, which will demonstrate that the Convention really does make a difference and help determine how to improve. The SG applauded the spirit of cooperation and support among the chairs, members, and observers.
156. **The SG** thanked the Secretariat team for facilitating the meeting so efficiently – he thanked the DSG, the rapporteur, the Senior Regional Advisors, and all of the logistical staff, and particularly thanked the Assistant Advisors for their help and support. He promised to send materials and welcomed input in advance of the SC meeting in June.
157. **The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, Trevor Swerdfager**, also thanked the Secretariat staff; he noted that Ramsar meetings function very well, and he appreciated the amount of effort that goes into that. He applauded the attitude of the SG and his team, and their transparency, especially on financial issues. He noted that he enjoyed meeting with people from all over the world and focusing on their concern for wetlands, which unites them, rather than on what sets them apart.
158. **The Chair of the Standing Committee, Gordana Beltram**, said that good progress was made towards the COP, which is drawing near quickly. She said that the sooner the documents and other preparations are completed, the better. She said that the meetings have provided good input for SC31, and she expressed gratitude to the Subgroup Chairs, the Secretariat, and all the participants. She asked all the Parties represented to help in inputting Ramsar concerns to the upcoming CSD-13, which will be a very important meeting, and suggested that participants talk to their colleagues in other government sectors. She looked forward to further discussions in June.
159. **The SG** announced that in the polling on two sample logos for the Convention, nearly everyone who voted preferred the second option. He said that with the International Decade of Water beginning next month, he felt that it is important to have a new logo ready soon, and he will communicate with the SC about how to move forward.

160. **The Chair of the Subgroup, Paul Mafabi**, thanked the participants for their important contributions and assured them that Uganda is fully aware of the infrastructural challenges that must be met as soon as possible. Uganda will do everything possible to provide the best COP that can be achieved, as the delegates deserve. He thanked everyone for the support shown to Uganda so far and reminded them that more support is still needed. He looked forward to welcoming everyone to Uganda in November and to seeing them at SC31 in June.

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**Meeting of the Standing Committee Subgroup on Finance
Gland, Switzerland, 9 March 2005**

Standing Committee Subgroup on Finance

Decisions

9 March 2005

The Standing Committee Subgroup on Finance decided the following:

Agenda item 2. Core budget 2005

Decision Finance SG-1: The Subgroup on Finance requested the Secretariat to prepare options for the recovery of unpaid annual contributions by Parties and to provide these to the next meeting of the Subgroup on Finance.

Agenda item 4. Small Grants Fund 2004

Decision Finance SG-2: The Subgroup on Finance:

- a) approved the following list of eight A1-rated projects for immediate funding under SGF2004, subject to the resolution by the Secretariat of any clarifications needed on project proposals prior to the issuing of contracts:**

Jamaica (SGF/04/JM/1)
Kazakhstan (SGF/04/KZ/1)
Lesotho (SGF/04/LS/1)
Liberia (SGF/04/LR/1)
Nicaragua (SGF/04/NI/1)
India (SGF/04/IN/1)
Samoa (SGF/04/WS/1)
Slovenia (SGF/04/SI/1)

- b) also approved the following list of six A2-rated priority projects as a reserve list for funding should further funds become available, in order of priority of assessment score:**

Malaysia (SGF/04/MY/01)
Thailand (SGF/04/TH/2)
Côte D'Ivoire (SGF/04/CI/01)
Palau (SGF/04/PW/01)
Mexico (SGF/04/MX/1)

Ukraine (SGF/04/UA/2)²

Agenda item 5. COP9 budget issues – proposal to charge a registration fee

Decision Finance SG-3: The Subgroup on Finance:

- a) does not support the establishment of a COP9 registration fee at this point in time, and requests the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee to consider this matter as a general policy issue for possible COP9 consideration, including in relation to future core budgets for the Convention;
- b) requests the Secretariat and Uganda to consider seeking to cover some shortfall in any costs required through other means including inter alia charging for exhibition space and side event facilities; and
- c) expressed concern that delaying opening COP9 registrations until after the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee would cause undue delays to an efficient registration process, and requested the Secretariat to proceed with arrangements for opening COP9 registration as soon as possible, without the imposition of a registration fee.

Agenda item 6. Status of Ramsar Endowment Fund

Decision Finance SG-4: The Finance Subgroup will prepare a report to the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee summarizing the process since COP8 to date, including reporting that no consensus on establishing such a fund could be reached, as part of a recommendation to SC31 on how to proceed with this issue to COP9. This will include the preparation a draft COP9 Resolution to include identification of alternative funding mechanisms and opportunities for better accessing other existing funding sources.

Agenda item 7. Draft Core Budget proposals for 2006-2008

Decision Finance SG-5: The Finance Subgroup expressed support for further examining different budget scenarios at the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee, including for enhancing regional initiatives and for enhancing technical support; and requested the Secretariat to:

- a) provide a narrative and explanation of the thinking behind the different budget line items, their costs and their underlying policy implications, and to present budget scenarios showing percentage and total sum increases on a year to year basis;
- b) prepare also a scenario option for a zero increase in budget, including explanation of the implications of such a budget; and

² At the request of Romania and assent of the USA, the following text is appended: “With respect to project SGF/04/UA/2, the United States of America, supported by Romania, questioned the appropriateness of funding projects in a country which appeared to be violating its responsibilities under the Convention.”

- c) circulate these scenarios and supporting explanations as soon as possible to all Standing Committee members, so that they may fully consider the options prior to the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee.