

**Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
10th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel,
Gland, Switzerland, 27-29 June 2001**

10th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Summary of the Decisions

AGENDA ITEM 5: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

Following a presentation on the present structure, objectives, and directions of the MA, it was suggested that for all the major global MEAs, including Ramsar, the Assessment could fulfill the role that the IPCC has performed for the UNFCCC. There was discussion of the areas in which it could be especially pertinent to Ramsar questions involving wetland issues.

Decision STRP 10.1: The STRP recognized the strong links between a series of issues on which the Panel is working, in particular on ecological character of wetlands and assessment methods, and the programme of work of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, encouraged the MA in its work, and expressed its intention to contribute to that process through an ad hoc working group for the purpose. The STRP designated Max Finlayson and Doug Taylor as STRP focal points in order to establish a permanent relationship between the MA and the STRP, and invited its members to channel input to the MA through them.

AGENDA ITEM 14 (transposed): Working Group 11 on ecological quality, assessment methodologies, and early warning systems

The Working Group presented some 12 recommendations for strengthening the Ramsar guidance, harmonizing it in terminology and with other Ramsar guidelines, filling gaps, and supplementing it as needed, especially with guidelines on technical aspects of delineating, mapping boundaries, and evaluating goods and services of wetlands. Greater cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on rapid assessment of biodiversity was encouraged.

Decision STRP 10.2: The STRP requested its Working Group on Ecological Character to seek comment on its working paper and prepare a document by the September deadline

on gaps and harmonization of Ramsar guidance on ecological character for circulation to STRP and transmission to the Standing Committee.

Decision STRP 10.3: The STRP recognized the value and relevance of the CBD's work on rapid assessment and confirmed its intention to contribute to that process, by means of input from the Working Group on Ecological Character.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Working Group 12 on climate change

The Working Group described the revised structure of the agenda paper on climate change and wetlands (STRP 10/2) and indicated that the paper will be accompanied by a draft Resolution and an Executive Summary (which will serve as a guidance document annexed to the resolution).

Decision STRP 10.4: The STRP endorsed the Working Group's proposed rearrangement of its work into a draft Resolution, an Executive Summary for guidance to the CPs, and the comprehensive review of wetlands and climate change as requested by COP7, and approved of the Group's new structure for the comprehensive review. The Panel accepted the Group's timetable.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Working Group 10 on water allocation

The Working Group presented the workshop improvements to its agenda paper on water allocation and management (STRP 10/3) and described its intention to supply a guideline document of 10-15 pages; a technical resource document of about 40 pages to support it; a draft Resolution for COP8; a brochure; and perhaps a training video.

STRP Decision 10.5: The STRP approved the proposed structure for the revised guidelines and comprehensive review of water allocation management, to be completed under the agreed timetable for STRP outputs.

STRP Decision 10.6: The STRP recognized the need for further study of the role of land-use planning in floodplain and river basin guidance and urged that a call for such further study be included in the draft Resolution enabling the water allocation guidance.

Timetable for STRP outputs

STRP Decision 10.7: The STRP accepted the proposed timetable for outputs in principle, except where stipulated otherwise, and agreed that, after circulation of final drafts to STRP and others for comment, the STRP Chair is authorized to approve final drafts for

transmission to the Bureau for editorial preparation in advance of the Standing Committee meeting (3-7 December 2001).

The agreed timetable is here.

AGENDA ITEM 9: Working Group 2 on the World Commission on Dams

STRP Decision 10.8: The STRP resolved to provide a draft Resolution for COP8 supporting the World Commission on Dams report, accompanied by a redraft of Working Paper STRP10/4 which will include 1) enhancement of section 1 with explanation of the importance of the WCD report for Ramsar authorities; 2) a list of the most useful WCD documents (its summary, 28 technical documents, and full report), and 3) revision of section 3, according to the agreed timetable for STRP outputs. The STRP invited Richard Holland (WWF), with assistance by Ger Bergkamp (IUCN) and Parastu Mirabzadeh (CBD), to lead on drafting the proposed Resolution and sections 1 and 2 and circulating these to Working Group 2. The STRP invited Max Finlayson to lead on drafting section 3 in coordination with those mentioned above.

AGENDA ITEM 10: Working Group 10 on peatlands

Decision STRP10.9: The STRP endorsed the present thrust of the Global Action Plan for Peatlands (GAPP) and urged a redraft concerning the assignment of responsibilities within the agreed timetable for STRP outputs. The Ramsar Bureau was requested to draft a Resolution for COP8 to adopt the GAPP and to include support for certain other peat activities in progress and a request for additional guidance on the wise use of peatlands to be prepared for COP9.

AGENDA ITEM 11: Working Group 9 on wetland management planning

Decision STRP10.10: The STRP approved the structure and contents of the new guidelines, subject to incorporation of text concerning the points raised by the Panel, under the agreed timetable for STRP outputs. The STRP agreed with the proposal by the Working Group on Management Planning not to pursue a selected bibliography of relevant citations, but rather to include a set of up-to-date links on the Ramsar Web site and encourage input to CIESIN's Ramsar Data Deposit. (See also Decision STRP10.22.)

AGENDA ITEM 12: San José Record of well-managed Ramsar sites

Decision STRP10.11: The STRP endorsed the draft plan for the San José Record, with the substitution of a fixed term for sites to be maintained on the Record before re-nomination, and requested the Bureau to draft an enabling Resolution for COP8 and transmit both to the Standing Committee for consideration.

AGENDA ITEM 7 (transposed): Working Group 1 on integrated coastal zone management

Decision STRP 10.12: The STRP approved the proposed structure, plan, and timetable of the Principles and Guidelines on integrated coastal zone management.

AGENDA ITEM 13: Working Group 6 on wetland inventory

Decision STRP 10.13: The Panel approved the proposed structure and contents of the Framework for Wetland Inventory, to be progressed according to the agreed timetable, and requested the Working Group to accompany the document with a draft Resolution.

It was agreed that the draft Resolution on this matter should stress the importance of wetland inventory, urge Contracting Parties to carry out inventories if they haven't, urge the donor community to support wetland inventory efforts, then adopt the framework for the Parties' use.

AGENDA ITEM 15: The Montreux Record

Decision STRP 10.14: The Panel decided that for each request for removal from the Montreux Record, the Chair will appoint an STRP Subgroup, which may involve STRP members and invited experts, to carry out the review of the case on behalf of the STRP. The Panel also advised that Parties should be invited to complete the Montreux Record questionnaire in all cases when a new site is added to or removed from the Record.

AGENDA ITEM 18: Working Group 8 on wetland restoration

It was noted that the Group's mini-Web site at http://ramsar.org/strp_rest_index.htm is ready for the public in most respects, lacking only a few planned items which will be delayed or which will not be possible to complete.

Decision STRP 10.15: The STRP endorsed the draft Resolution and Principles of Wetland Restoration, with the agreed amendments, to be delivered under the accepted timetable, and recognized that the Working Group will not be in a position to deliver the proposed restoration experts database and paper on small dams.

There was discussion of alternatives for carrying the subject of wetland restoration forward at COP8 in the absence of a Technical Session subtheme on this issue: 1) organizing a workshop during the Global Biodiversity Forum scheduled for 15-16 November 2002 just prior to COP8; 2) initiating discussion in plenary on day two of COP8; and 3) hosting a side event during COP8.

Decision STRP 10.16: The STRP recommended that the development of a general glossary of Ramsar terminology should be included in the STRP programme of work for the triennium 2003-2005.

AGENDA ITEM 16: Working Group 3 on impact assessment

The Working Group reported that most of its seven tasks in the Work Plan were mandated "subject to resources being available", and in fact resources were not secured for pursuing the chief outputs. The Group summarized progress in several of the other tasks.

Decision STRP 10.17: The STRP noted the report of the Working Group on Impact Assessment and recognized that the Group will be unable to produce the requested reviews because of a lack of resourcing.

AGENDA ITEM 17: Working Group 4 on incentive measures

The Working Group reported that no technical document will be produced, as the required resources were not found, but the requested annotated bibliography on incentive measures has been developed by IUCN's Environmental Law Centre and has been added to the Internet resource kit hosted on the IUCN Web site. The Web-based data deposit has been maintained by CIESIN and the Working Group requested that the Bureau periodically check for accuracy.

Decision STRP 10.18: The STRP noted the Working Group's report and acknowledged that the review of incentive guidelines requested by COP7 will not be produced for COP8, due to a lack of resourcing. The Panel endorsed the proposed text of the draft Resolution and agreed that incentives should not be included as a theme in COP8's Technical Session 4.

AGENDA ITEM 19: Working Group 5 on invasive species

There was considerable discussion particularly as to whether the COP should encouraged to adopt CBD's "Guiding Principles" on alien invasive species for its own guidance; to adapt existing guidelines to produce a separate, specifically Ramsar set of guidance; or to include in a Resolution endorsing the Guiding Principles an annex which would interpret them for Ramsar managers. It

was agreed that an information paper describing each of the existing sets of guidelines should also be provided for COP8.

Decision STRP 10.19: a) The STRP endorsed the plan to produce an information paper for COP8, with assistance from the Global Invasive Species Programme, which will introduce invasive species issues and then describe each of the important existing sets of guidelines. The Bureau was invited to take the lead in producing this document. b) The STRP decided to recommend to Standing Committee that COP8 be invited to adopt a Resolution endorsing the CBD Guiding Principles for Ramsar use, with an annex to the Resolution on how Ramsar managers can best use them in wetland circumstances. The Working Group on Management Planning will lead in drafting the Resolution and its annex on "wetland management and invasive species", with assistance from the STRP Working Group on Invasive Species and the CBD and CMS secretariats.

AGENDA ITEM 20.2. CIESIN and the Ramsar Data Gateway

Following demonstration of the prototype "Ramsar Wetland Data Gateway", <http://sedac.ciesin.org/ramsardg/> and <http://sedac.ciesin.org/rivers/ramsar/> under development by the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University, USA, and other Internet-based tools for making Ramsar sites' data available, the Panel discussed its progress and offered suggestions for future directions.

Decision STRP 10.20: The STRP commended CIESIN for the progress made in the development of the Ramsar Data Gateway and requested to be kept informed of further developments, so as to have the opportunity to provide advice on this matter.

AGENDA ITEM 20.1: Review of the Ramsar Sites Database

Wetlands International illustrated recent developments with the Ramsar Sites Database (RSD), particularly with regard to Web-based availability of site information and maps at several levels. There was considerable discussion of the extent to which improvements to the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) used to describe Ramsar sites and its "Explanatory Note and Guidelines" are needed and feasible.

Decision STRP 10.21: a) The STRP urged the Standing Committee and the COP to encourage CPs once more to further improve the quality of the Ramsar sites data. b) The STRP urged the Ramsar Bureau to take energetic steps to promote the use of the Wetlands International Web-based products from the Ramsar Sites Database. c) The

Panel requested Max Finlayson to discuss the need for and feasibility of changes to the Ramsar Information Sheet. (See Decision STRP10.23.)

AGENDA ITEM 11: Further from the Working Group on wetland management

The Working Group tabled a further revision of the draft management planning guidelines and a draft of the key elements for a Resolution recommending them for the use of Contracting Parties. It was noted that the new version has broadened the focus from nature conservation objectives to multiple uses and that the role of stakeholder involvement has also been strengthened. The Panel and the Group discussed the desirability of organizing a workshop during the Global Biodiversity Forum to be held immediately before COP8.

Decision STRP 10.22: The STRP endorsed the draft 'Guidelines on management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands' in principle, as well as the elements for a draft Resolution, subject to further refinement by the Working Group and the Bureau, under the agreed timetable for outputs of the STRP.

Follow-up to the discussion on the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS)

Decision STRP 10.23: The STRP accepted Max Finlayson's offer to make a comparison between the RIS data fields and the core fields of the draft inventory guidelines, within the next three weeks, so that the Working Group can report to STRP on the need for RIS revisions promptly. Proposed changes to the RIS and the 'Explanatory Note and Guidelines' (to be prepared by Wetlands International) should be presented to Standing Committee for endorsement and transmission to COP8.

Follow-up on Agenda item 20.3: Biogeographical regionalization

There was considerable discussion of whether guidance was needed by the Parties concerning the use of "biogeographical regionalization"; in the end, there was no consensus that further study of biogeographical regionalization should be pursued in future by the STRP, and no decision was taken.

AGENDA ITEM 21: Guidelines for the identification and designation of under-represented wetland types for the Ramsar List

AGENDA ITEM 21.2: Draft guidelines for the designation of peatlands

Decision STRP 10.24: The STRP endorsed the Working Group's second revised draft of the peatland designation guidelines, subject to further refinement under the agreed timetable. Panel members were invited to submit further comment on the issue of representativeness for inclusion in a Resolution on the existing Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the Ramsar List.

AGENDA ITEM 21.1: Draft guidelines for the designation of mangrove and coral reef wetland types

Decision STRP 10.25: The Panel endorsed the content of the draft guidelines for mangrove designations and requested further consultation with the CBD secretariat and other expert bodies. The STRP requested the Bureau to go over this and all of the other guidance documents to ensure editorial and structural consistency. The Working Group will finalize the document according to the agreed timetable for outputs.

Decision STRP 10.26: The Panel endorsed the content of the draft guidelines for designation of coral reefs and requested further consultation with the CBD secretariat and other expert bodies. The STRP requested the Bureau to go over this and all of the other guidance documents to ensure editorial and structural consistency. The Working Group will finalize the document according to the agreed timetable for outputs.

Decision STRP 10.27: The STRP requested the Bureau to prepare a general preamble for the whole suite of habitat designation guidance documents, containing the general points that are common to all of them and need not be repeated in each. This preamble will become part of the draft guidance to be adopted by COP8 and should be drafted according to the agreed timetable for STRP outputs.

Decision STRP 10.28: The STRP requested the Working Group leads to identify the most significant and relevant agreements and initiatives for the habitat types for which guidance is being prepared, by 15 August 2001, and asked the Bureau to tabulate those for inclusion in the preambular document to the suite of guidance.

Decision STRP 10.29: The STRP encouraged the Working Group on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) to continue its work on preparing site designation guidelines for seagrass beds, acknowledging that this goes beyond the approved STRP Work Plan 2000-2002, in accordance with the normal procedure of circulation for comment and revision within the Group and the STRP, under the agreed timetable for STRP outputs.

AGENDA ITEM 21 additional: Draft guidelines for the designation of mountain wetlands

WWF International provided background on the Ramsar/WWF Living Waters Campaign workshop in March 2001, funded under the Evian project, which set out to clarify a definition of what mountain wetlands are and how they fit into the existing Ramsar classification system, with a view to proposing a Resolution and draft guidance document for COP8.

Decision STRP 10.30: The STRP noted the draft document on the designation of mountain wetlands for the Ramsar List and recorded its opinion that further work is needed. The Panel expressed concern about a tendency to expand the definition of wetlands (in this instance, to glaciers). It encouraged the document's drafters to ensure its harmonization with the structure and presentation of other designation guidelines.

AGENDA ITEM 21.3: Draft guidelines for the designation of wet grasslands

Decision STRP 10.31: The STRP determined to recommend to Standing Committee that the proposed specific designation guidance on wet grasslands should not go forward. The Panel requested Wetlands International to draft a relevant paragraph on managed wet grasslands for inclusion in the existing Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the Ramsar List. It requested the Bureau to inform the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Belgium [the proponent of this work] of this recommendation and seek its views, inform the Standing Committee, and recommend an alteration to the title of COP8's Technical Session 3.2.

AGENDA ITEM 23: Proposed changes to the *modus operandi* of the STRP

The Panel discussed the draft revision of the STRP's *modus operandi* in the context of the questions raised by STRP9 about the nature and amount of work included in the STRP Work Plan. Amongst the document's recommendations are: creation of a Vice Chair role to help to spread the Chair's work load; the suggestion that for most weighty matters a major expert should be brought in to draft a documents for STRP's review, rather than relying too much upon volunteer efforts; that continuity be ensured by turning over only half the Panel's membership each triennium. It was urged that a tentative work plan be outlined before the STRP nominations for the next COP so that needed areas of expertise can be taken into account, and that cooperation with other MEAs' subsidiary bodies be built into the STRP's work plan.

Decision STRP 10.32: The STRP endorsed the draft proposal for the *modus operandi* of the STRP, with the amendments discussed, and urged that the document be significantly shortened.

Once revised, the proposal will be circulated to the Standing Committee Subgroup established for this purpose in preparation for the discussion at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 26: Draft report of the present meeting

Decision STRP 10.33: The STRP approved the draft report of the first two days of plenary sessions, subject to amendments passed to the rapporteur and editorial refinement by the Bureau. The Panel delegated the Chair to approve the draft report of the third day's meeting on its behalf.

AGENDA ITEM 27: Any other business

Decision STRP 10.34: The STRP welcomed news of the Dutch publishing house Kluwer's intended series of publications on technical wetland issues and wholeheartedly encouraged these efforts, and called upon Panel members to forward any suggestions for inclusion in the series to Dr Finlayson.