

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
11th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel,
Gland, Switzerland, 8-11 April 2003

11th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Report of the Meeting

8 April 2003

Agenda item 1: Welcome and opening statements

1. Welcoming remarks were made by **Max Finlayson**, Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), **Gordana Beltram**, Chair of the Standing Committee (SC), and **Delmar Blasco**, Secretary General (SG) of the Convention. **The SG** urged the Panel to provide advice to the Parties that is above all "practical". **Max Finlayson** said that since its founding in 1993, the STRP has demonstrated its ability to fulfil the Conference of the Parties' needs, scientifically independent but responsive to the tasks defined by the Standing Committee; he noted the need for a balance of continuity and new ideas in the Panel's membership.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

2. **Tatiana Minaeva** inquired about the criteria used by the SC in determining the priorities for the STRP's work, suggesting that, for example, peatlands had been given a lower priority than needed, and she urged that the COP be asked to establish criteria for setting priorities in future. There was further discussion of the need for the STRP to respond to the SC's statement of its needs and the desirability of asking the COP to set a firm procedure. **The Chair** and **Secretary General** emphasized that the STRP was bound by the decisions taken by the Standing Committee, and welcomed the priority setting that had occurred. The Chair agreed to support greater dialogue with the Standing Committee through its Chair.

3. The agenda was adopted with the addition under item 11 of a new item: "Criteria for setting priorities for the work of the STRP", plus certain rearrangements of the timing of some items.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

4. **Nick Davidson**, Deputy Secretary General (DSG), welcomed the observers from organizations listed in Resolution VIII.28 and introduced several additional observers: Francisco Rilla Manta, selected by the SC to serve as soon as another new Party accedes from the Neotropics region, but formally an observer until then; Randy Milton, an unofficial alternate for North America; Habiba Gitay and Valerie Thompson from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; Rebecca Tharme from the International Water Management Institute; and Peter Bridgewater of UNESCO's MAB Programme and Ramsar Secretary General-designate. These observers were admitted by consensus.

Agenda item 4: Brief introductions

5. All participants introduced themselves and their main areas of interest, and in some cases the organizations they represent.

Agenda item 5: Briefing session

6. **The Chair** drew attention to the dual role of STRP regional members, serving as independent scientific experts and not representing their countries, on the one hand, and at the same time serving as liaisons with STRP National Focal Points and expert networks in their countries and regions or subregions.

7. **The DSG** made a PowerPoint presentation providing a brief overview of the history of the Convention, its objectives, the roles of its bodies, and the mandates from the Strategic Plan and COP8 Resolutions.

8. **David Barker** opened discussion of the Convention's broad definition of wetlands and its inclusion, specifically, of lakes of all depths. **The SG** noted that Parties accept the Ramsar definition when they accede but are free to develop their own definitions of wetlands in their own instruments such as national wetland policies.

9. **Carmen Revenga** inquired whether an assessment had been carried out of the effects of the guidance documents adopted by the COP in the past. No formal assessment has been made, but **the Chair** reported increased awareness of Ramsar technical guidelines in scientific circles; he added that the Ramsar guidance is also as important for raising awareness of wetland issues as for the use of the guidelines themselves. **The SG** drew attention to the Convention's essential role in providing advice to the Parties and helping them to incorporate that into their own structures, and assured the STRP that with time its contributions would be seen to be substantial.

10. **Margarita Astrálaga** observed that at the regional level it is clear that some of the guidelines are being very well used, but others scarcely at all, and she drew attention to the problem of the target audience. **The DSG** expressed the need both for simple policy guidelines for government officials and for more detailed, stepwise methodological and technical guidance for some purposes, hopefully accompanied by simpler 'guidance to the guidance'.

11. **Rebecca Tharme** inquired about the process by which information on Ramsar sites reaches the Bureau. **The DSG** described the site designation process, with its Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS), and the Article 3.2 process of informing the Bureau of changes in ecological character. **The SG** drew attention to the increasing prominence of compliance with the Article 3.2 obligation and the Parties' need for simple, clear monitoring mechanisms to help them to fulfill it and maintain the health of their sites. **The Chair** observed that it is difficult to ascertain a minimum amount of data needed for a given task, but on the ground it may not be fruitful to seek maximum data at great cost.

12. **The Chair** made a PowerPoint presentation on the role of the STRP in the Convention, the process of its work, the rough timeline, and the tasks before this meeting. Noting the priorities set by the SC in DOC. STRP11-5, he said that the STRP can also raise additional issues. He called for a realistic work plan, not one so ambitious as to be impossible to fulfill. He described the role of the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) and the need to engage them in providing input.

13. **Eckhart Kuijken** inquired about the relation between the timetable for the STRP's work and the discussion of draft documents at the pre-COP regional meetings. **The SG** noted that, though there were 11 regional meetings before COP8, it is too early to know when, or even whether, there will be regional meetings for COP9. If there are regional meetings, depending on their timing, it will be necessary to bring to them the draft documents that the STRP may have produced. **The DSG** observed that it would be possible to seek the views of both the NFPs and the Administrative Authorities whether or not there will be regional meetings. **The SG** urged the wisdom of the widest possible consultation and consensus-building prior to the COP. **Jorge Jiménez** noted that it can be difficult to find a balance among the different agendas of the different bodies of the Convention, and that if consultation is too wide it could become ineffectual. He said that, since the STRP's work is voluntary, there is some pressure on the Parties not just to ignore the Panel's views, since if that were to happen too often the members might begin to disengage.

14. **David Stroud** pointed to the distinction between the SC's role in developing policy guidance and the STRP's in technical guidance and noted that there are many areas of overlap. **The Chair** shared those doubts about a clear distinction between "policy" and "technical" guidance, and recommended a case-by-case discussion. **The DSG** noted that the Panel's mandate to draft the Resolutions as well the technical guidelines further blurred the policy/technical distinction. **Habiba**

Gitay reported the same difficulty having to be faced by many international bodies, such as the IPCC. She saw a need for the STRP to be "policy relevant but not policy prescriptive", by using "if then else" type of scenarios, for example. **Heather MacKay** suggested that the STRP take on the role of presenting to the SC various scenarios and their implications, with which **the Chair** agreed, with a caution about the time required to fulfill that function.

15. **Dave Pritchard** noted that the STRP's role is not only advisory, but also to review the Convention's policy from a technical point of view, highlighting gaps, for example, and pointing out where the Convention's technical base is weak.

16. **Doug Taylor** made a PowerPoint presentation on the STRP Support Service, provided by the International Organization Partners (IOPs) with Wetlands International leading. He demonstrated the Web site currently being developed and the functions it will provide to assist the Panel's work, and stressed the Service's intention to match STRP tasks with expertise from the Partners' own expert networks and others.

17. **Jorge Jiménez** underscored the importance of seeking additional expertise, especially beyond the circles of people already involved in the Convention's processes. **The SG** added that the Support Service should seek out several kinds of balance among recommended experts, including regional, language, gender, etc., and should avoid an Anglo-Saxon bias caused by the relative ease of locating experts from that background. **The DSG** urged the participants to provide Wetlands International with contacts of experts from their respective regions to be included.

18. **Gordana Beltram** made a PowerPoint presentation on the six priorities and two cross-cutting issues established by SC29 in February 2003, from among the many tasks suggested for the STRP. The chief determinants, in addition to the needs for guidance, were resources and capacities, to avoid overloading the STRP, the SC, the COP, and eventually the Parties. **The DSG** noted that this is the first time the SC has established priorities, a difficult discussion for the SC but very valuable. The previous STRP had argued strongly that too much had been taken on for COP8. He noted that some issues that are important in the Convention as a whole might not have a high priority among STRP tasks, only because no specific outputs had been requested of the Panel.

19. **Andreas Grünig** questioned whether progress could be made on matters such as inventory without due attention to under-represented types such as peatlands. **Tobias Salathé** pointed out that the six priorities don't exclude peatlands - rather they focus on core issues which impact upon all wetland types, including peatlands and others, a more fruitful approach than focusing upon any one type. **The SG** recalled that peatlands policy was a major issue for the last STRP and COP8 - the STRP did its work with the GAP guidelines and plan for a Coordinating Committee, and now it is up to the Parties to carry out their part of it.

20. **The SG** explained that, as a subsidiary body, the STRP has no choice but to find a way to provide the guidance requested by the SC in the name of the COP, rather than determining for itself what guidance the COP should need. If the STRP has the capacity to achieve those goals with some left over, it can also take up any further issues it may wish to. **Jorge Jiménez** reaffirmed the need for prioritization, since there have not been enough resources to achieve all the tasks requested by the COP. At the same time, he saw room for improvement in the process, and felt that the STRP has a right to see clear criteria used for prioritizing its tasks; he urged that the STRP should have input into the prioritization process, rather than having just to accept a mandatory list of tasks. **Tatiana Minaeva** suggested that the outgoing STRP should make recommendations on STRP priorities to the SC. **Heather MacKay** suggested that further discussion of this issue be held under Agenda item 11: Strategic Issues and requested Tatiana Minaeva to take the lead in preparing suggestions to be discussed. **Gordana Beltram** welcomed advice for the SC on how the process can be improved.

21. Following adjournment for lunch, the **Chairs of the STRP and the SC** returned to the emerging sense of a need for increased dialogue on prioritization of the STRP's tasks.

22. **The DSG** made a PowerPoint presentation on the additional ongoing tasks of the STRP outside of the specific priority issues, notably new tools for wise use, review of the Ramsar Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance, seeking input from NFPs, advising on regional participation requests, advising on SGF projects and evaluating projects for other bodies, advising on future needs of the Ramsar Sites Database, advising on Montreux Record cases and perhaps participating in Ramsar Advisory Missions, and collaborating with other MEAs' subsidiary bodies.

23. **The SG**, speaking to STRP budgetary issues, explained that the core budget includes money to support eligible delegate travel to full meetings, and for a limited number of Working Group meetings, and to contract the STRP Support Service. Any other funding needed will have to be sought, but he was optimistic of being able to find donors to assist in hiring experts, holding WG meetings if necessary, attending other meetings, etc., if required. He urged the Expert Working Groups, when planning their work, to identify any additional resources that would be needed, so that the Bureau can produce as soon as possible a fundraising proposal covering all needs of the STRP in this triennium.

Agenda item 6: Development of STRP Work Plan 2003-2005 and establishment of Expert Working Groups

24. **The Chair** and **the DSG** led the meeting through the six proposed Expert Working Groups and participants expressed their willingness to join those within their areas of interest.

Decision STRP11-1: The STRP determined upon the membership and co-leaders of each of six Expert Working Groups - 1) Wetland inventory and assessment, 2) Wise use concept, 3) Water resource management, 4) Ramsar site designation, 5) Managing Ramsar sites, and 6) Assessing the effectiveness of implementation of the Convention - as found in Annex 1.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

25. **Valerie Thompson** and **Habiba Gitay** made a PowerPoint presentation on the history and objectives of the MA, the organization of the work and of the planned outputs, and the areas of mutual relevance of MA and Ramsar work. Habiba Gitay offered to act as a liaison, making available relevant MA annotated outlines and chapter drafts, especially subsections, to the STRP.

Third World Water Forum

26. **The SG** offered a rather grim assessment of the 3rd World Water Forum, echoing the Dutch Minister of Environment's view that "no more water for the poor" would result from it. He was particularly disappointed with the Ministerial Conference and its Declaration and saw no need for a 4th WWF. He was chagrined by the lack of awareness of the environmental dimension of water issues and noted that the WWF3 opening statements contained no reference at all to ecosystem issues. He felt that valuable exchanges took place among participants, but that a new approach would be needed to advance ecosystem issues in the 'water debate'. He noted that the World Water Council and Japan's Ministry led on preparations for the Forum, and that Ramsar was not fully involved in that process because of the approach of COP8, though other environmental bodies, like IUCN, were fully involved.

27. **Heather MacKay** called the WWF3 outcomes very relevant to Ramsar by demonstrating that mainstream water debates still do not recognize wetlands as sources of water. She expressed the need for a strategy for bringing this awareness to the water industry, international development agencies, etc.

28. **Carmen Revenga** reported that the prior working group meetings and the Forum itself were chaotic. She said that many groups made efforts to bring ecosystem issues into the discussions but she was doubtful about whether the World Water Council tried to incorporate them - certainly much less so than at the 2nd Forum in The Hague. The WWF3 was more slanted towards the water industry. But she was encouraged by the presence of so many grassroots interests such as farmers who seemed to be getting the message.

29. **Jean-Yves Pirot** reported that IUCN had had a large delegation at the WWF3 and had been trying hard both before and during the Forum to insert key words, like ecosystem, environmental flows, Ramsar, etc., none of which were incorporated in the Ministerial Declaration. He stressed the need for more planning and more help from friendly governments. Despite some positive signs, such as coalitions forming amongst participants, the environmental community seems not to be reaching the water community, and the WWF3 was used by the hydropower lobby to push hundreds of large dam projects to meet the objectives of the World Summit on Sustainable Development - the World Commission on Dams report and the environmental impacts of large dams were almost entirely disregarded. He called for a renewed effort to seek a balanced way forward and to promote more actively low-cost, small-scale infrastructure.

30. **Peter Bridgewater** described the WWF3 as a general failure of all the environmental conventions, not just Ramsar. He cited a need for the environmental interests to alert the political community to how we are helping to provide solutions, and called for a stronger focus on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) in order to reach the public at large. He felt that the environmental conventions and the NGOs need to join forces to present their common views of the importance of ecosystem issues in the water debate.

31. **David Barker** felt that the WWF3 reflected a gridlock which disappointed everyone, including the large dam lobby as well as environmentalists. The process failed, and thus there were no offers to host another such meeting. He said that gridlock on policy issues does offer opportunities; for example, he pointed to the hundreds of people who participated in discussions on lakes and the "World Lake Vision" as a response to the water industry's views as offering glimmers of hope.

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Agenda item 6.2: Cross-cutting issues - Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA)

32. **Tunde Ojei** and **Doug Taylor** explained Wetlands International's offer of the assistance of its reorganized EPA Specialist Group, both to feed CEPA issues into the STRP's work and to design a work programme to include the priority tasks listed in Annex II of Resolution VIII.31. The Specialist Group had been involved with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's Wetland Links network, but has been dormant for the past few years. Christine Prietto (Australia) has indicated an interest in helping to reinvigorate the Group.

33. **Wendy Goldstein**, IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication, which is already working with CBD in a similar capacity, expressed support for the role of the CEPA Specialist Group and offered the CEC's collaboration as a way of expanding its integration with the Convention and its Parties. **Juliane Zeidler** of the CBD Secretariat noted the fruitful cooperation between CBD and

IUCN's CEC and encouraged WI's proposal. **The DSG** pointed out that all of the MEAs attach a high priority to CEPA issues and urged the Specialist Group to pursue linkages with other conventions as well, and he urged interested STRP members to join the Specialist Group.

34. **Anada Tiéga** noted the high priority accorded to CEPA in his work with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as an important precursor to issues of water supply and quality. He requested greater attention to water quality standards and monitoring and offered to liaison with Wetlands International on these issues.

35. **The SG** identified two issues for the Specialist Group: 1) to contribute to the CEPA Programme adopted by Resolution VIII.31 and 2) to contribute a CEPA dimension to all of the STRP's Working Groups. He urged having a specific focus on STRP work within the Specialist Group rather than just including that as part of larger concerns. Concerning point 1), he noted that the work programme and *modus operandi* of the Specialist Group must take into account the existence of the CEPA network of governmental and non-governmental focal points designated by the Parties, in line with Resolution VII. 9.

36. **Peter Bridgewater** described the experience of UNESCO's MAB Programme in working with CBD and IUCN's CEC and echoed the need for greater coordination among the conventions on CEPA efforts - though their messages and audiences are slightly different, the processes are the same.

37. **Maria-José Viñals** said that Susanna Calvo, CEC's Vice Chair and Ramsar CEPA Focal Point for Spain, would be interested in collaborating. **Habiba Gitay** asked that discussions on collaboration be held with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment as well. The Chair urged all of the Working Groups to think about how CEPA can be built into all of the issues before them.

Decision STRP11-2: The Panel welcomed the offer of assistance on CEPA issues from Wetlands International's EPA Specialist Group and urged further progress in bringing that to fruition, with the advice that it should be reconstituted as a 'CEPA' Specialist Group and contemplate the full involvement of the Ramsar CEPA network in its work.

Agenda item 6.2: Cross-cutting issues - Agriculture

38. **Jean-Yves Pirot** indicated IUCN's enthusiasm for progressing the agriculture issue further, in cooperation with the Chair of the Standing Committee and Wetlands International, following the adoption of Resolution VIII.34, but there was still a need to find a mechanism to do that. **The SG** urged that agriculture-related aspects should be incorporated into the work of all Working Groups, either through the establishment of an STRP-led Working Group (as has been suggested for

CEPA through WI's Specialist Group), or by ensuring that each STRP Working Group on the priority areas includes an expert (perhaps external) on agriculture issues. **Carmen Revenga** felt that, rather than establishing a new Group, it would be better if each of the five relevant Groups included agriculture as one of its task items, and **Rebecca Tharme** suggested that the Working Group on Water Resource Management take the lead in ensuring a common approach on agriculture among all the Groups.

39. **Alfred Oteng-Yeboah**, CBD's SBSTTA, described SBSTTA's work on agricultural issues as one of its five thematic areas. **The SG** said that the STRP's considerations on agriculture should build upon what CBD has already accomplished. **Tobias Salathé** agreed but cautioned against losing sight of specifically Ramsar issues, e.g., that sometimes agricultural practices are beneficial for wetlands. **David Stroud** recalled that Resolution VIII.34 requested the STRP to identify and disseminate good agricultural practices and policies in the Parties.

40. After further discussion of whether an additional Working Group or outside experts or organizations would be needed to oversee the agricultural aspects in five of the six priority area Working Groups, the Panel decided to follow the **Vice Chair's** suggestion to pursue the matter in each of the Working Groups, then collate the results later and decide whether additional assistance should be planned for.

Agenda item 6.1: Content of and approach to top priority areas

Working Group 1: Wetland Inventory and Assessment

41. **The Chair** explained the priority areas that have been identified for Working Group 1, with the inclusion of monitoring issues formerly assigned to Group 5. Discussion included the desirability of covering early warning issues; the importance of socio-economic valuation for influencing decision-makers; similar or related work presently being done by other institutions, including the World Fish Centre, Millennium Assessment on socio-economic valuation of wetland services, UNDP and GEF on climate change adaptations; and the desirability of focusing upon "dominating land use practices".

42. It was agreed that all Working Groups should be attentive to the need for a mechanism to coordinate areas of overlap with other Groups. It was suggested that the listed tasks are ambitious and might need prioritization within Group 1. **The SG** felt that it would be impossible to keep up and interact with all external processes and products on related issues and urged the Support Service to be selective in identifying helpful resources for the Groups. **The DSG** urged STRP participants to mention other relevant processes, materials, and people that could be used as

resources. **The SG** urged all Groups to add a task for identifying "new and emerging issues" within their subject areas.

European Space Agency

43. **Diego Fernandez-Prieto** made a PowerPoint presentation on the ESA's project on "Earth Observation Applications to Wetland Management", describing its background, present status, useful outputs, and pilot projects. Discussion covered the technical potential of this technology for assisting managers and policy-makers and any possible limitations for its application in developing countries in terms of costs and capacities.

Japanese Space Agency

44. **Doug Taylor** made a PowerPoint presentation of Wetlands International's contacts with NASDA, the Japanese Space Agency, concerning a one-year programme of possible NASDA support for Ramsar work, particularly with regard to EO imagery of seasonal inundation mapping of selected wetlands, disturbances, and global inventory, perhaps with Wetlands International as an intermediary between the Agency and Ramsar users. **The DSG** urged Working Groups to consider what kinds of information of this type they feel might be needed.

Working Group 2: The wise use concept

45. **The Chair** explained the priority areas that have been identified for Working Group 2. **Steve Edwards** of IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) urged that attention be paid to CBD's "principles of sustainable use" and noted the need for ground testing the concept to ensure that results are practical.

46. **Tobias Salathé** drew attention to the Convention's previous work on the wise use concept, including the *Wise Use Guidelines* (1990) and the Dutch-funded Wise Use Project that resulted in the Additional Guidance and a book of case studies, *Towards the Wise Use of Wetlands* (1993), http://ramsar.org/lib_wise_1.htm. He spoke of the need, not only for management tools, but for legal, institutional, and economic tools at national level as well. **Tatiana Minaeva** noted the need also to urge international organizations to include wise use in their regulations and policies. She also suggested that Hans Joosten and Donal Clarke, the authors of the new IMCG publication, *Wise Use of Mires and Peatlands*, could be helpful to the Group.

47. **Habiba Gitay**, **Steve Edwards**, and **David Barker** commented on difficulties with the term "ecosystem approach", valuable as an analytical tool but not necessarily at the practical level. **Juliane Zeidler** described the CBD's work on the concept, with a workshop to be held in May,

for which working documents are available for comment on the Web, and further discussion at SBSTTA9 in November, in preparation for CBD's COP7. **Peter Bridgewater** stressed the need to follow what CBD is doing closely but also to remain aware that this evolving technical work might alter radically or disappear for more political reasons at the SBSTTA- or COP-level; it would be unwise to bind Ramsar's progress too tightly to CBD outputs still in progress. Rather, he felt, the focus should be on Ramsar's own wise use tradition, already firmly established and well known, refining and improving it where necessary but retaining it as the key Ramsar concept.

Working Group 3: Water resource management

48. **The Chair** explained the priority areas that have been identified for Working Group 3. **Anada Tiéga** noted the need for guidance on the similarities and complementarities between river basin management and integrated water resource management (IWRM). **Heather MacKay** urged the Group to provide guidance not only on how to determine environmental flows but also on how to implement them. **Jean-Yves Pirot** drew attention to forthcoming publications on environmental flow methodology and environmental flow practice and a brochure on groundwater recharge according to wetland types, the publication of all of which could be delayed to allow for input from the STRP. The network of experts which has been built up, including Mike Acreman, could be helpful to the STRP.

Working Group 4: Ramsar site designation

49. **The Chair** explained the priority areas that have been identified for Working Group 4. **The DSG** drew attention to the CBD's desire for the STRP to harmonize the criteria between the two conventions, especially as regards socio-economic criteria; he noted that the CBD's request is rather wider than the COP's mandate to the STRP. **The SG** urged the STRP to respond to the CBD's wider request rather than to the COP's narrower one.

Working Group 5: Managing Ramsar sites

50. **The Chair** explained the priority areas that have been identified for Working Group 5. **Anada Tiéga** urged a review of the Montreux Record Questionnaire, which has become outdated. **The DSG** noted COP8's request for the preparation of a simple Article 3.2 questionnaire as well, and urged that any revision to the Montreux Record Questionnaire should be linked to this. **The SG** drew attention to the Group's mix of mandates for guidance and reports and asked all of the Groups to give preference, when choices have to be made, to preparing guidance on how to do things over providing reports on the status of things; reports could also be included and listed as requiring outside expertise, if resources permit. **David Stroud** recalled that Resolution VIII.18 called

for a report on alien invasive species for COP9 and suggested providing a simple form for the Parties to use in reporting on that theme, perhaps linked to an Article 3.2 form.

Working Group 6: Assessing the effectiveness of implementation

51. **The Chair** explained the priority areas that have been identified for Working Group 6. **Teresita Borges** observed that it is difficult to get a view of the conservation status of a Party's Ramsar sites from the National Report. **Dave Pritchard** noted that most Strategic Plan targets are process-oriented rather than based upon outcomes. He said that the Group had an opportunity to contribute to the WSSD target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and suggested that the Convention on Migratory Species' building of performance indicators into its Strategic Plan might be useful to the Working Group, as might be the CBD's progress in assessing the effectiveness of the SBSTTA's recommendations to its COP. **Alfred Oteng-Yeboah** reported on the CBD's work on implementing the WSSD's targets for reducing biodiversity loss and mentioned the conference in London in May, organized by CBD and UNEP-WCMC.

52. **The SG** reported that the National Planning Tool / National Report Format is presently being sent to the Parties, including "indicators" for all of the Strategic Plan's Actions and a request for a response to all that are relevant. National targets for the Operational Objectives are to be sent to the Bureau by 30 June 2003. He pointed to a need for more general indicators on implementation, "simple and pragmatic", which will be complementary to those Action-oriented indicators already included in the NR Format, because it is difficult to assess real progress from those alone. It would be good if the Working Group could finalize those additional indicators by November 2003, so that they can be adopted by the Standing Committee at its January 2004 meeting and then communicated to the Parties for use in conjunction with the NR Format for COP9.

53. **Tatiana Minaeva** reported on the feeling of those in the Russian Administrative Authority that the NR Format does not reflect the status of the conservation of all wetlands in the country.

54. **David Barker** expressed doubts about representatives of observer organizations being able to accomplish all of the tasks being requested. **The DSG** explained that the main role of those representatives is as a conduit into their networks, and their contributions to the work of the Groups could take many forms, from drafting to peer review to identifying others within their organizations able to assist the Working Groups.

Agenda item 7: Break-out planning sessions for Expert Working Groups 1, 2, and 5.

Agenda item 8: Report back to plenary on progress made

55. **Carmen Revenga** for Working Group 1, **Steve Edwards** for Group 2, and **Frank Alberts** for Group 5 reported on their Groups' progress in framing their work plans.

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Agenda item 9: Break-out planning sessions for Expert Working Groups 3, 4, and 6.

Agenda item 10: Report back to plenary on progress made

56. **Rebecca Tharme** for Working Group 3, **David Stroud** for Group 4, and **Dave Pritchard** for Group 6 reported on their Groups' progress in framing their work plans.

Agenda item 6.3: Content of and approach to the Standing Committee's lower priority areas of work

57. **The Chair** recalled that the listed tasks are not necessarily lower priorities for the Convention as a whole, but they are to be pursued by the STRP only if some organization expresses willingness to take the lead or another mechanism should be defined.

6.3.i Environmental and strategic impact assessment

58. **Andrea Athanas** reported that the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) has been collaborating with Ramsar prior to COP8 (as with CBD), and has recently received partial funding from The Netherlands for a three-year project to continue in related work, especially in capacity building, including producing guidelines. The project provides for Ramsar's participation on its steering committee, so that the Convention and the STRP can provide input. There is a very good fit to some parts of the STRP tasks, though the synthesis of lessons learnt might need additional resources as well as STRP review. She offered to act as a liaison on the Steering Committee, on behalf of Rita Hamm, the IAIA Director.

59. **Dave Pritchard** offered to update his 1996 review of impact assessment issues in previous Ramsar COP decisions for the SC to bring to the COP as an information document.

60. **The SG** cautioned that the SC will probably try to reduce the amount of paper transmitted to the next COP and would also be unlikely to send information papers to the COP that don't deal with matters directly relevant to draft Resolutions. He pointed out that information papers can be transmitted directly to the Parties at any time, outside of the COP process, and substantial papers could also be included in the Wise Use Handbook series as additional materials. Dave Pritchard felt

that the option of transmittal to the COP ought to be kept in mind, in case there would be significant interest from the SC.

61. **The DSG** noted that the CBD, Ramsar, and the IAIA will be holding a symposium at the IAIA annual meeting in June 2003.

Decision STRP11-3: The STRP accepted the offers of the IAIA and BirdLife International to progress the tasks on environmental and strategic impact assessment for the Panel's review.

6.3.ii Peatlands

62. **The DSG** observed that the Bureau has the lead role in establishing a Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands (GAP), in collaboration with the STRP and other relevant organizations, and that Committee has the mandate of preparing an implementation plan.

63. **Randy Milton** reported that a contact group meeting was held on 10 April 2003, with representatives of the IMCG (Grünig), Wetlands International (Taylor), STRP (Minaeva), Canada (Milton), and the Ramsar Bureau (Davidson and Salathé), on the establishment of a Coordinating Committee to move the GAP forward. The Global Peat Initiative (GPI) has identified financial support for a meeting to establish an initial membership and modus operandi of the Committee. The Ramsar Bureau has agreed to work through its STRP Support Service to facilitate this initial meeting with the IMCG, IPS, interested Contracting Parties, and others, which should be held before October 2003. A key outcome, in addition to the modus operandi, will be a draft implementation plan identifying priority action items. The final plan will focus the Coordinating Committee's effort to identify synergies with other initiatives and potential funding groups. An additional outcome of the Committee is to review and prepare for COP9 actions to be undertaken by Contracting Parties and organizations to implement the GAP. **Tatiana Minaeva** urged that an information paper also be prepared for the COP or directly to the Parties.

Decision STRP11-4: The STRP took note of Randy Milton's proposal about the way forward to assist the Ramsar Bureau in establishing a Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands and requested a report to the STRP following the planned initial meeting.

6.3.iii Climate change

64. **The DSG** recalled that the COP called for collaboration with the IPCC and UNFCCC and decided to request the IPCC to prepare a technical paper on climate change and wetlands, with the STRP

then to prepare a synthesis of that for the COP. If IPCC were to be unable to do that, STRP was asked to prepare a synthesis subject to "rigorous peer review". **The SG** regretted that the Bureau has failed to contact the IPCC before the STRP meeting but will do so promptly. He said it was clear that some Parties prefer to go through the IPCC, which is in a better position to provide well-resourced expert advice, than through the STRP. He invited the STRP to first approach the IPCC and make all possible efforts to enlist the IPCC's support, and then, if this approach should fail, the STRP Chair and the Secretary General should propose contingency plans to respond to the COP Resolution. **The DSG** pointed out that even if the IPCC should wish to undertake that task, a lengthy approval process might be involved through the UNFCCC and its subsidiary body before it could be added to its work plan, and the Chair noted that, following its completion, a lengthy peer review process would also be required before such a study could be released.

Decision STRP11-5: The STRP requested the Bureau to approach the IPCC about whether and when it could prepare a technical paper on climate change and wetlands. If the IPCC cannot do so, the Secretary General and the Chair of the STRP will propose an alternative to the STRP and SC.

6.3.iv Restoration and rehabilitation

65. **The DSG** recounted the STRP's previous work on this topic, chiefly led by Bill Streever of BP and the Society of Wetland Scientists, resulting in guidelines and a mini-Web site. He listed five tasks from the COP: briefly, a) information on new research and methodologies, b) training opportunities and modules, c) additions to the mini-Web site, d) further tools and guidance and a glossary, and e) guidance on compensation for wetland loss.

66. **Jean-Yves Pirot** reported that IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) has been discussing with the Bureau taking the lead on tasks a), c), and d); a donor has today approved generous support for the CEM's work, so that offer can be pursued further. **Dave Pritchard** said that BirdLife would offer to review work on item e) (compensation issues) but could not take the lead. **Doug Taylor** noted WI's wish to contribute on item b) (training), but hadn't yet had an opportunity to consult with RIZA and the Chair of the WI Specialist Group on Wetland Restoration. **The Chair** expressed the wish to consult further with the SWS as well, and **Randy Milton** offered to sound out Canada's interest in participating at national or provincial level on compensation for wetland losses. **Heather MacKay** suggested making contact with South Africa's "Working for Wetlands" initiative for help with training modules, particularly on restoration. **Guangchun Lei** noted that the WWF network is presently running some hundred restoration projects in 43 river basins, which might provide a fruitful source of case studies, and **Sian Owen** promised to investigate that possibility within WWF.

Decision STRP11-6: The Panel accepted the offers of collaboration listed in paragraph 66 above and requested the Bureau and the STRP Support Service to follow up these expressions of interest.

6.3.v Invasive alien species (Alien invasive species)

67. **The DSG** recalled the STRP's work on this issue prior to COP8, which provided an extensive guide for Ramsar managers on many of the resources available on invasive species, but which due to the problems around the approval process of the CBD guidelines on invasive species was not transmitted by the SC to the COP. The COP has asked the STRP to "continue to contribute" to practical guidance. He noted that the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) now has a permanent secretariat in Cape Town and that IUCN's East Africa Regional Office (EARO) has just published a useful brochure on African invasives with Ramsar support. **The Chair** drew attention to strong growing interest in the threats from invasive species in aquatic ecosystems.

68. **Jean-Yves Pirot** reported that the Ramsar Bureau has been proposed as a member of the GISP board and invited the Bureau to discuss the COP's needs with IUCN, especially EARO, and the GISP. He said that IUCN is very willing to assist Ramsar, as the issue has been named a priority for IUCN, and awaits further discussion of Ramsar's needs. **Christoph Zöckler** offered to discuss the STRP's needs with a WCMC colleague who has just been working on these issues, and **the DSG** noted that the STRP's draft material prepared for COP8 could be revisited, and that the Bureau could be asked to forward that material to GISP for its use. **Alfred Oteng-Yeboah** of SBSTTA expressed confidence that the political differences over the CBD's COP6 decision on its Guiding Principles would soon be resolved.

Decision STRP11-7: The STRP determined to take no further action on invasive species issues until after contacts have been established with the GISP, and asked the Bureau to forward to the GISP the draft documents prepared for COP8.

6.3.vi Participation in wetland management

69. **The DSG** provided background on the Resolution VII.8 Guidelines, the IUCN/Ramsar/WWF Participatory Management Clearing House (PMCH), and the Joint Work Plan with CBD concerning this issue. Resolution VIII.36 asks the STRP to prepare methodologies or guidelines on "Participatory Environmental Management" (PEM).

70. **The SG** suggested that the STRP ask the Parties that sponsored Resolution VIII.36 and those involved in its drafting to prepare material for the STRP to review, which, if found by the STRP to be acceptable, could be transmitted to the SC for consideration by the COP.

71. **Jean-Yves Pirot** noted that the PMCH, while useful, is now outdated and that IUCN proposes to provide further funding for updating the Web site; if successful, traditional and indigenous knowledge could be added to that endeavor. **Margarita Astrálaga** reported that the sponsoring Parties, with IUCN-Sur and IUCN-Mesoamerica, are preparing a project for donors to implement Resolution VIII.36, and an STRP request to them might help with the success of that proposal. **Alfred Oteng-Yeboah** and **David Stroud** suggested that the workshop proposed for Working Group 4 on site designation might be used to pursue aspects of traditional and indigenous knowledge when considering cultural and socio-economic criteria.

72. **The Chair** wondered how to reach a global approach to further work on Resolution VIII.36; Margarita Astrálaga agreed that since that Resolution was sponsored by Latin American Parties, there might inevitably be some regional limitation. **The SG** suggested that the STRP request those Parties and institutions to do their utmost to incorporate cases, issues, and perspectives from all regions.

Decision STRP11-8: The Panel agreed to invite the sponsoring Parties of Resolution VIII.36 and those involved in its drafting to prepare methodologies or guidelines for effective implementation of PEM, as requested by the Resolution, for STRP review at its second meeting in 2004. As far as possible, these materials should incorporate a global perspective on PEM, applicable to all regions.

6.3.vii Incentives

73. **Jean-Yves Pirot** reported that the IUCN Economics team is committed to upgrading its Web-based resource kit on incentives, which has been dormant. The team would be interested in collaborating on other tasks but would not be in a position to take the lead.

74. **Alain Lambert** reported that some time ago he established an informal network on incentives and disincentives, which quickly grew to 98 members and thus became labor-intensive. The purpose was to collect material on all kinds of incentives - cultural, religious, economic, social - to be reviewed by the group and published as a book. Some interesting material has been collected, but the SC felt that the initiative should be left to the STRP. If the STRP were interested, he would be willing to reactivate the group, but would prefer to support the STRP rather than to take the lead. He also reported that the CBD will host a meeting on incentives next June which might result in a working group among all the MEAs, which would of course not devote itself entirely to wetlands.

75. **The Chair** concluded that, in the absence of an offer to take the lead, it was difficult to see how the STRP could proceed, though he welcomed IUCN's planned initiative in updating its Web site.

Decision STRP11-9: The STRP decided to take no further action on incentive measures during this triennium.

6.3. viii Guidance on designating under-represented wetland types

76. **The DSG** explained that such guidance is intended to supplement the general designation guidance contained in the Strategic Framework by shedding light, according to a succinct formula, on the specificities of particular wetland types, as is found in Resolution VIII.11 for peatlands, wet grasslands, mangroves, and coral reefs. He noted that Working Group 4 will be working on a definition of "under-represented" and suggested deferring action until that task has been completed.

77. **The SG** urged that the STRP should welcome any volunteers willing to prepare supplementary designation guidances for any wetlands types, whether or not they are under-represented, which the STRP could then review and transmit to SC if they would be helpful to the Parties. **The DSG** recalled the difficulties of getting such heterogeneous volunteer efforts into shape before COP8 but agreed that there are now good models for drafters' use.

78. **Heather MacKay** volunteered some background work on the ecological roles of artificial reservoirs and dams, with advice on what guidelines might be needed, but could not lead on the guidelines themselves. **Wetlands International** offered to assist. **Christoph Zöckler** and **Carmen Revenga** said that WCMC and WRI could assist WI in working with coastal and marine types. **Randy Milton** said that Canada might be able to assist on seagrass beds and intertidal flats. **David Barker** offered LakeNet's assistance on artificial reservoirs and dams.

79. Following further comments, **the Chair** summarized that WCMC and WRI were offering to lead on producing designation guidance on coastal and marine types, and that funding support to cover staff time would be welcome; that Heather MacKay, David Stroud, and LakeNet were offering to make an initial analysis of the ecological role of artificial reservoirs and dams for STRP's review, with WI's help concerning waterbirds; and that Randy Milton was offering to consult Environment Canada and the provincial agencies about contributing guidance on intertidal flats and seagrass beds, perhaps with help from David Stroud's contacts with the WCMC's author of recent work on seagrass. The Chair reported that the International Society for Salt Lake Research (ISSLR) was interested in promoting the listing of salt lakes.

80. **Dave Pritchard** suggested that, since none of these type are necessarily under-represented in the Ramsar List, these efforts be kept separate from the Working Group's work on that definition. The DSG suggested that these efforts could be incorporated into the STRP's work plan under Working Group 4 on site designation.

Decision STRP11-10: The Panel accepted the offers listed in paragraph 79 above in relation to artificial reservoirs and dams, coastal and marine wetland types, intertidal flats, and seagrass beds, and requested the Bureau and the STRP Support Service to follow up.

6.3.ix Sharing expertise and information

Decision STRP11-11: The Panel determined that the STRP Support Service will be charged with transmitting all relevant STRP information to the STRP National Focal Points.

Agenda item 6.4: Work to be deferred to the 2005-2008 triennium

81. Concerning wetland assessment, **Carmen Revenga** reported that Working Group 1 is suggesting that the Bureau and the SC find a way to move this forward in the 2003-2005 triennium for COP9.

82. Concerning water allocation and management, **Heather MacKay** confirmed that these matters would be addressed by Working Group 3.

83. Concerning Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), **Sian Owen** reported on a study of ICZM by the Dutch Government that might be directed into areas that would respond to Ramsar's needs; Doug Taylor is a member of the steering group for that study, and both will consult with the project leaders. **The DSG** reported that the CBD is also working on guidance on ICZM issues.

Decision STRP11-12: The Panel decided to monitor the current work of the Government of The Netherlands and the CBD with a view to the COP's request for case studies and further guidance on ICZM and wetlands.

84. Concerning monitoring of Ramsar sites, it was noted that the UNESCO MAB Programme is still developing its Biosphere Reserve Integrated Management (BRIM) procedures.

Decision STRP11-13: The STRP determined to defer further work related to MAB's BRIM until this methodology has been completed, whether in this or the next triennium, and Working Group 1 was requested to monitor MAB's progress.

85. **Dave Pritchard** drew attention to another task in DOC. STRP11-5, that of contributing to the dissemination of information on wetland-dependent species and their sustainable harvesting. He noted the work of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), which could be disseminated to the STRP National Focal Points in fulfilment of this task. **David Stroud** noted that at

a global waterbird conference set for Scotland a year from now, sustainable harvesting will be on the agenda.

Decision STRP11-14: The STRP charged the Support Service with disseminating information concerning wetland-dependent species and their sustainable harvesting to the STRP National Focal Points.

86. **Juliane Zeidler** observed that there were some items in the CBD/Ramsar 3rd Joint Work Plan that had not been mentioned in the Standing Committee's priorities for the STRP, e.g., how the STRP might contribute to the CBD's programme of work on forest biodiversity, and **Heather MacKay** suggested the need for a mechanism for ensuring that actions called for in the Bureau's work plans with CBD and several other bodies will be incorporated into the SC's consideration of priorities.

11 April 2003

Agenda item 11: Identification of key additional strategic issues

87. **Anada Tiéga** emphasized the importance of water quality and monitoring, especially given the high priority of issues of water supply and sanitation for Africa. He noted that water quality is often seen as a matter of chemical intervention, and there is a need for scientific information to demonstrate the role of wetland ecosystems. In Africa, pesticides are in use that were banned elsewhere thirty years ago, and a way is needed to determine water quality for drinking, agriculture, and wildlife - information, and then a mechanism and a monitoring system with standards, is important not only for Africa but globally as well.

88. **Heather MacKay** distinguished between two key issues: the role of wetlands in improving water quality, about which there exists much information that needs a report to bring together, and the water quality requirements of wetland ecosystems, about which information already exists concerning rivers, standing water, and estuaries.

89. **The DSG** noted that, since some attention paid to persistent organic pollutants two triennia ago, the Convention has focused upon issues of water quantity rather than quality, and he called that a key gap. **The SG** cautioned against adding new work for this triennium and urged the STRP to encourage the SC to add this issue to the work of the next one. He suggested that the STRP designate someone to prepare a paper for the SC outlining all of the issues it feels should be taken up in 2005-2008.

90. **Tatiana Minaeva** and **Doug Taylor** suggested that water quality could be taken up as a cross-cutting issue to be borne in mind by several of the Working Groups.

91. **David Stroud** reported that the European Union's Water Framework Directive provides an integrated framework for the protection of all waters, both surface and groundwaters, the establishment of quality standards (including those for emissions), and the management of water at river basin scales (which may be international). The Directive sets environmental objectives in an international legally binding instrument to deliver not only adequate water supply for wetlands but also the prudent use of water for human use. The implementation of the Directive by the EU may thus be of wider interest in other areas of the world, and accordingly a valuable case study.

Decision STRP11-15: The STRP requested Anada Tiéga, Doug Taylor, and David Stroud to prepare a short note for the Chair, to be included in the Chair's report to the SC, which presents the case for including water quality issues in the Panel's future agenda.

92. On additional issues to be considered, **the SG** recalled that there has been interest in additional site Criteria based upon amphibians. **The Chair** recalled that work on fisheries and wetlands has been suggested, and **Rebecca Tharme** noted that some work will be done on that issue by Working Group 1. **The Chair** noted that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment would provide further information on wetlands and fisheries. **The Chair** also recalled that the WSSD's targets for significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 need consideration, and **David Pritchard** promised that Working Group 6 would keep that in mind and will provide input to the CBD/UNEP-WCMC meeting on that subject in London in May 2003; **Christoph Zöckler** expressed the willingness of UNEP-WCMC to work with the STRP on the response to the WSSD targets over the next two triennia.

Decision STRP11-16: The Panel requested David Pritchard of BirdLife International to represent the STRP at the May 2003 CBD/UNEP-WCMC meeting on WSSD targets for reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, and requested UNEP-WCMC to provide feedback to the STRP through Working Group 6 on the development of indicators for the WSSD 2010 target.

93. **The DSG** urged that there should eventually be brief supplementary guidance for identification and designation of Ramsar sites, similar to that adopted by COP8 for coral reefs, mangroves, peatlands and wet grasslands, for the whole range of wetland types and features.

Decision STRP11-17: The STRP requested the Chair to notify the Standing Committee of the need to include the development of brief guidance on the whole range of wetland

types and features in future programmes of work. Working Group 1 was requested to provide information on fisheries and wetlands as part of their work plan.

94. **The DSG** drew attention to the need for a mechanism for ensuring that collaborative tasks called for in the various joint work programmes drawn up by convention secretariats are considered for inclusion in the COP's mandates to the STRP. The secretariats of CBD and Ramsar have concluded that most tasks in the 3rd Joint Work Plan are covered, but two stand out: 1) concerning the CBD's work on the valuation of goods and services of inland water ecosystems, which could be borne in mind by Working Group 1; and 2) concerning CBD's work on forest ecosystems, for which it hoped to have input from STRP especially regarding peatlands and wooded wetlands.

95. **The DSG** wondered whether the STRP would be able to assist the CBD in its work on forest ecosystems, perhaps with regard to peatlands. **Tatiana Minaeva** indicated that the Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands would try to do that. **The Chair** again noted that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment would provide some information on the valuation of inland water ecosystem services.

Decision STRP11-18: The STRP accepted Tatiana Minaeva's offer to ask the Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands to seek ways of inputting to the CBD's work on forest ecosystems and noted the production of reports from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

96. **Heather MacKay** emphasized the need for a strategy for bringing wetland ecosystems issues to the attention of the water sector and asked if that were part of current CEPA planning. **Doug Taylor** replied that this would be an additional CEPA task for the Specialist Group that would require further resources, and **Sandra Hails** suggested that the Specialist Group's capacity building mandate could assist CEPA National Focal Points in reaching out to the water sector in their own countries.

97. **The SG** echoed the importance of this issue for the Convention but wondered whether the STRP was the proper body to take it up. **Doug Taylor** recalled that this issue was prominent in the River Basin Initiative design meeting in 2001 but momentum has since been lost on it; he suggested going back to the participants in that meeting to rekindle that interest. **Anada Tiéga** suggested increasing work with river basin organizations and trying to influence the GEF's work on international waters in this direction. **Stephen Njuguna** suggested a CEPA effort to reach out to National Ramsar/Wetland Committees where they exist and seek their help in approaching the water sector in their countries.

98. **Heather MacKay** offered to take the lead in developing a strategy for mainstreaming Ramsar issues within the water sector, which would seek to develop guidance for COP9 on how the Convention can improve the uptake and integration of wetland conservation, protection and biodiversity issues in the water sector, particularly in water resource management, but also in relation to provision of basic water services. This effort would 1) with assistance from the STRP Support Service, set up a small e-mail group for discussion on proposed strategies, issues, etc., including interested members of STRP, Parties, and key members of the water sector at international and national level; 2) synthesise outputs of the discussion group, develop an issues paper for circulation and comment, to form the basis for guidance for COP9 on what strategy and possible action plan should be adopted by the Convention to pursue engagement with the water sector; and 3) draft a guidance document for review by STRP and discussion at next STRP meeting.

Decision STRP11-19: The STRP gratefully accepted Heather MacKay's offer to take the lead in developing a Ramsar Convention strategy for mainstreaming Ramsar issues within the water sector.

99. **The Chair of the Standing Committee** recalled earlier discussion of the STRP's sense of the need for criteria for the SC's establishing priorities for the future work of the STRP, and she reported on the results of a contact group meeting that produced DOC. STRP11-29. In that paper, it was suggested that full use be made of two current methods for making the Panel's views known to the COP and SC: a) the STRP should ensure, when agreeing draft Resolutions for the next COP, that its suggestions for future needs are fully identified in them, and b) the results of the STRP's strategic review of emerging scientific issues should be included in the Report to the COP from the Chair of the STRP. These suggestion should be taken into account by the first full business meeting of the SC after each COP, and that meeting should be attended by the Chair of the previous triennium's STRP.

100. **Dave Pritchard** added that STRP advice on emerging issues should not be limited to suggestions for future tasks for the Panel itself, but rather should be wider in scope, highlighting scientific challenges for the Convention as a whole.

Decision STRP11-20: The Panel adopted the text of DOC. STRP11-29 on enhancing current procedures for ensuring that the Standing Committee is made aware of the STRP's advice in regard to its future work, which recommends that the STRP include its advice on future work priorities in its draft Resolutions and that the Panel's strategic advice on emerging scientific issues be included in the STRP Chair's report to the COP. In addition, the Chair of the outgoing STRP should be present at the first full business meeting of the SC to present the Panel's views, and the SC should be requested to provide an explanatory note to the STRP setting out its rationale for the priorities it establishes for

each triennium. The STRP's advice on emerging scientific challenges should not be limited to the STRP's own work but rather extend to the Convention as a whole. The Panel asked that DOC. STRP11-29 be transmitted to the Standing Committee.

101. **The Chair** reminded the Panel that this paper comprises only advice to the SC, and the SC Chair promised to transmit the document to the Committee in an appropriate manner.

Agenda item 12: Agreement on procedures for delivering on-going STRP tasks

102. Regarding engaging STRP National Focal Points, it was pointed out that that falls primarily to the STRP Support Service. **The SG** added that STRP members should make contact with NFPs in their regions and STRP members should agree upon a division of Parties within their regions. The Service will take care of transmitting documents, etc., but STRP regional members should establish dialogue with NFPs and seek input personally.

103. Regarding advice on regional characterization, **the SG** provided background on Resolution VII.1 on Ramsar's regionalization, in which it was laid down that Parties near the borders of regions would be allowed to request to participate in the work of the adjacent region, whilst remaining formally within their original region. Israel was authorized to participate in the work of the European region, and that is still in force. Presently there is a request to COP8 from Azerbaijan to participate in the work of the European region as well. According to Resolution VII.1, this request will be granted provided that it is not objected to by the STRP. It is presumed that that requirement is related to issues of biogeographical regions and their common interests.

Decision STRP11-21: The STRP determined that, in the absence of criteria for deciding the issue and of a common scheme of biogeographic regionalization for the Convention, the Panel has no objection to Azerbaijan's request to participate in the work of the European region.

104. Concerning advising Administrative Authorities on their Small Grants Fund projects, it was noted that this refers specifically to the STRP NFPs and that it has never happened.

Decision STRP11-22: The STRP noted the ongoing task of providing advice on Small Grants Fund projects and determined to consult with the STRP Support Service on how to proceed if such a request should be received.

105. Concerning providing STRP assistance to Parties and bilateral development agencies in screening and evaluation of wetland projects, it was noted that this, too, had not yet been requested.

Decision STRP11-23: The STRP noted the ongoing task of providing screening and evaluation of wetland project proposals and determined to consult with the STRP Support Service on how to proceed if such a request should be received.

106. Concerning the ongoing STRP task of keeping the Ramsar Sites Database under review, **Doug Taylor** made a PowerPoint presentation on the current status and future development of the RSD, which is maintained by Wetlands International under contract from the Ramsar Bureau.

107. **The Chair** inquired about how much work would be needed to alter the structure of the RSD if the present work of the STRP should require changes in the fields and data needed in the Information Sheet (RIS). **Doug Taylor** replied that restructuring the RSD itself would take very little effort, but that if re-interpreting all of the past data in light of new fields were required, a great deal more work might be needed. He noted that the new design of the RSD should reduce routine labor on it and leave more time for such re-interpretation if it should be needed.

108. **Andreas Grünig** asked whether there were plans to incorporate remote sensing data into the RSD. **Doug Taylor** replied that remote sensing data comes in many forms and thought it was not feasible for WI to try to maintain libraries of imagery, etc. He saw that as more of a collaborative effort with other organizations. **Andreas Grünig** urged that links be built into the RSD pointing to the sources of further raw data.

109. **Christoph Zöckler** recalled that UNEP-WCMC had been storing digital information on Ramsar site boundaries until about three years ago, with data on about 600 sites. **Doug Taylor** noted that, given the uncertain state of much Ramsar site boundary data, especially for earlier designations, the digitalizations made by UNEP-WCMC were sometimes not very reliable, and frequently relied upon unofficial data not necessarily acceptable to the Parties. He noted that the power of GIS raises the importance of having a high standard of Ramsar maps, and he reported that the European Environment Agency is considering scanning or acquiring digital information from European Ramsar Parties to be projected onto a base map, which might serve as a model for other regions.

110. **The DSG** noted that existing Ramsar site map data is usually not sufficiently precise and not geo-referenced, so that digitalization of existing maps may give misleading information. He recalled that, as UNEP-WCMC recognizes, some of its early digitalizations were done on different scales and using different methods, sometimes from data not supplied by the Parties. To a question on language issues from **Teresita Borges**, **the DSG** reported that RISs must be submitted in English, French, or Spanish, but that for resource reasons the RSD is maintained only in English; other RISs are translated into English by the Bureau and clearly marked as unofficial translations. WI will use

the original language versions, as well as the English translations, when it makes the RISs available on-line.

111. **Rebecca Tharme** stressed that it is essential to establish base maps in order to assess change in wetland status, and **Doug Taylor** replied that WI and UNEP-WCMC, aware of that fact, are discussing the need to find a global base map for projecting Ramsar information upon.

112. **The Chair** noted that there are two roles for the RSD: 1) It is a record of the Parties' information on their sites, sometimes inadequate, and sometimes with insufficient interest in updating it. In general, the Convention is not getting high quality information on Ramsar sites, and a substantial effort is especially needed to get good maps, though that would be costly; and 2) It should respond to other people interested in getting reliable information on Ramsar wetlands.

113. **David Stroud** observed that Working Group 6 plans a user-needs analysis on the RSD and suggested that many Parties may lose interest in providing up-to-date information on their sites because they do not see what uses are being made of the site data. If only asked to respond to Bureau requests for data, they may see no real need for it.

114. **The SG** felt that future changes to the RIS should be directed to the management and monitoring of ecological character, and the whole RIS might have to be rethought with that in mind. **The DSG** agreed that the RIS had been designed for a different purpose and does not provide information needed for assessing trends in a site's ecological character.

115. **Tobias Salathé** observed that capacity in accurate mapping is increasing at local level, but often those responsible for Ramsar in the ministries, especially in federal states, are different people and removed from the local situations. There is an urgent need to strengthen the linkages between local sites and national authorities in most of the Contracting Parties.

116. **Rebecca Tharme** asked whether Ramsar Administrative Authorities have a mandate to seek out relevant information from other ministries, or any guidance on how to do so, in order to provide quality control on data submitted in the RIS. **The Chair** replied that, aside from calls for cross-sectoral consultation in past Resolutions, there has not been much success in overcoming the problem of walls within even the best bureaucracies.

117. **Tobias Salathé** suggested that the Convention needs more analysis at the national level, rather than at global or regional levels as heretofore, and thus Parties might be moved to improve their data. **David Stroud** noted that analyses made from inadequate data would serve to highlight the existing gaps. **David Pritchard** urged that more analysis, however crude, of management status and other qualitative questions might break the circle and provide incentives for better

data. **Andreas Grünig** called for the use of remote sensing at high levels in close combination with local data.

118. **Doug Taylor** recalled that early data provided by the Parties was largely "ceremonial" or "celebratory" and not conceived of as a tool for analysis. **The DSG** suggested that instead of reporting to each COP only at global and regional levels, the Bureau could provide country by country reports for COP9 which would illustrate the insufficiency in some of the RIS data supplied by Parties.

119. **David Barker** thanked WI for its work and noted that LakeNet has been an avid consumer of Ramsar data. He approved of the RSD's movement towards a Web-based design which would allow consumers to define their own products from the database. He wondered whether the CIESIN Gateway was not duplicative, and pointed to the need for a common architecture among partners to allow bringing data in from different sources.

120. **Christoph Zöckler** expressed the wish to re-energize UNEP-WCMC's base of about 600 digitized Ramsar site boundaries, perhaps by getting the Administrative Authorities to control the data, via access through the Web, and to improve it.

Decision STRP11-24: The STRP expressed its approval of the very good job that Wetlands International has done over the years in managing the Ramsar sites data and improving the existing data resource. It urged WI: 1) to continue making the database itself directly available to users; 2) to try to establish a base map in order to allow other users to collaborate; and 3) to examine the most effective way to achieve accurate digital boundary information for all Ramsar sites, making that available in order to facilitate that collaboration.

121. Concerning advising on removals from the Montreux Record, it was noted that the practice is to request the views of any interested STRP members and STRP NFPs over the list servers.

122. Concerning collaboration with other conventions, it was noted that it is not always feasible for the Chair to represent the STRP in the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of other conventions, and that it would be preferable to nominate permanent representatives from the Panel.

Decision STRP11-25: The Panel requested Dave Pritchard (BirdLife International) to represent the STRP in SBSTTA meetings of the CBD; Francisco Rilla to liaise with the Chair about the Scientific Council of the CMS; and Max Finlayson to represent the Panel with the MAB Programme on matters of Biosphere Reserve Integrated Management (BRIM). Though Ramsar has an MOC with the CCD but not yet a joint work plan, the Panel

accepted the offer from Teresita Borges to represent the Ramsar Convention in the preparations for the CCD's next COP in Havana, Cuba (August 2003).

123. **The DSG** noted that concerning the joint work plans' calls for links between the working groups of the subsidiary bodies, this has so far been done largely by Bureau staff, but he suggested that each STRP Working Group should decide how to crosslink with related groups from other conventions.

The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award

124. Concerning CEPA issues, **the SG** announced that thought was being given to selecting the Ramsar Award and Evian Prize for COP9 in 2005 on the basis of achievements in wetlands CEPA efforts.

Agenda item 13: Finalization of the draft STRP work plan

125. **The Chair** led the Panel through the accumulated work plan of the six Expert Working Groups and cross-cutting issues, and a number of additions and changes were recorded for the final draft version. He noted that the Bureau will harmonize the document into a standard format, seek out any few missing bits from Working Group leads as needed, and send the draft for review by the participants by means of the Support Service. **The SG** recommended that the draft should be finalized and ready for transmission to the Standing Committee by 25 April so that it can be made available to the public by 15 May.

126. **Jorge Jiménez** asked that, in future, when the COP does not adopt a document prepared by the STRP or requests additional work, a mechanism should be established for the COP to explain its decisions. **The SG** noted that in most cases the reasons for the COP's decisions, whether they be political or technical, are known to the participants but not recorded in the summary conference report. He offered that the Bureau could prepare a "file note" explaining such matters for the STRP and Bureau's archives, but not for the public.

Decision STRP11-26: The STRP adopted its proposed work plan for the Triennium 2003-2005 for submission to the Standing Committee by 25 April 2002, after finalization of the text by the Bureau.

Agenda item 14: Mid-term Working Group Meetings

127. It was observed that there was no further information to be added to the indications contained in the draft work plan.

Agenda item 15: Date and venue of STRP12

Decision STRP11-27: The Panel established the date of its next full meeting as sometime in late November or early December 2004, with dates to be finalized with the STRP Chair. Unless a generous offer should be made to host the meeting elsewhere, covering all additional Bureau costs, it will take place in Gland, Switzerland.

Agenda item 16: Any other business

128. **Dave Pritchard** noted, concerning the representativeness of socio-cultural types in the Convention, that this would be the last STRP meeting to have the participation of a Secretary General with the middle name of Alberto. He observed that everyone is aware of the Secretary General's achievements on behalf of wetlands and the Convention, and the human face he has put to the Convention's work. He requested the Chair of the Standing Committee to present the Secretary General with some parting gifts, not to include a COP8 T-shirt.

129. **The Chair of the Standing Committee** drew attention to the many achievements of the Secretary General and presented him with a signed photograph of all the STRP11 participants, some cooking utensils, and a typical Swiss cow bell.

Adoption of the STRP11 report of the meeting

Decision STRP11-28: The Panel adopted the report of the first three days of the meeting, with editorial changes passed to the rapporteur, and delegated the Chair of the STRP to adopt the final day, following which the report will be made public immediately.

Signing of Memorandum of Cooperation with LakeNet

130. **Delmar Blasco**, Secretary General, and **David Read Barker**, President of LakeNet, signed a memorandum of cooperation between the two secretariats. The text is available at http://ramsar.org/key_lakenet_moc.htm.

Agenda item 17: Closing remarks

131. **The Chair of the Standing Committee** expressed the SC's thanks to the Bureau and the STRP members and observers for their extraordinary work in dealing with the difficult issues and arriving at a complex work plan in so short a time. She wished them all the best in their further work.

132. **The DSG** said that he had been hugely impressed by the qualities and achievement of the new STRP and observed that it continues a strong Ramsar and STRP tradition of people coming from a range of different interests and working together successfully. He thanked all of the members of the Bureau staff for their work before and during the meeting: all of the interns, Montserrat Riera and Valerie Higgins for their prompt distribution of documents, Dwight Peck the rapporteur and webmaster, Sandra Hails the quizmaster, especially Mireille Katz for all of the meeting logistics, the cafeteria staff, the Secretary General for his steady guidance in this and other STRP meetings, and especially to all of the participants, who made the meetings not only productive but also stimulating and enjoyable.

133. **The Chair** drew attention to the quiz and dinner as high points and reported on the comments of the representatives of the CBD Secretariat, who thanked the Bureau and in particular the DSG for their preparations and commented particularly on the usefulness of the 50-page Annotated Agenda, a model which could be adopted by other fora. He thanked the Secretary General and wished him well in the future, and expressed his gratitude to all of the participants for their excellent work.