12th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

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CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
12th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel,
Gland, Switzerland, 1-4 February 2005

Report of the Plenary Sessions

Participants

Tuesday, 1 February 2005

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. **Max Finlayson**, Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), welcomed the members and observers to STRP12, and outlined its purposes: to progress the finalization of COP9 documents and decide upon what messages should be sent to the Standing Committee (SC) about the STRP and its future work. **Gordana Beltram**, Chair of the Standing Committee, welcomed the participants and noted that the SC has been following the progress of the STRP's work with great interest. **Nick Davidson**, Deputy Secretary General (DSG), welcomed everyone and drew attention to the number and complexity of the tasks that had been mandated to the STRP and to the need to provide COP9 with strategic advice on emerging issues in the next triennium. He said that there has been much progress since STRP11. He noted that, given the Convention's focus on the interrelationships between water and wetlands, the present work of filling gaps in the technical guidance and providing a conceptual framework for it is timely.

2. The participants introduced themselves, and **the DSG** listed apologies from expected participants who were unable to attend. **The Chair** noted that the absence of five regular members of the STRP is too many.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

3. With a few changes noted, the agenda was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: STRP's advice to COP9 - briefing on the technical Resolutions process

4. **The DSG** described the intent of Resolution VIII.45 to streamline the Resolutions process, in light of the volume and complexity of COP Resolutions. About 1/3 of the COP8 Resolutions were technical/STRP documents, another 1/3 came from the SC, and another 1/3 came directly from the Parties, some of them technical as well but without benefit of the STRP's review. He outlined the present draft advice for the SC Subgroup, that (in addition to administrative Resolutions emanating from the SC) there should be two technical Resolutions - one of them will urge the Parties to adopt all of the technical guidance documents presented as annexes, and these will be offered for adoption early in the COP; any contentious guidance can be removed for break-out discussions, but in the past most contention has been devoted to the enabling Resolutions rather than to the guidance documents themselves. The second technical Resolution will be a package of STRP recommendations on future priorities. This modus will also help the COP to see just how much work is being mandated for the STRP, Parties, and Secretariat before the decisions are adopted.

5. **The DSG** noted further that because of the increasing volume of paper presented to the COP, a new way has been devised to present detailed methodological backgrounds and similar technical papers, not directly as COP Info papers but rather published in a **Ramsar Technical Reports (TR) series**, Web-published in PDF format at low cost and easily located on the Ramsar Web site. These would be published in English only and only in PDF unless additional funding were found for some of them. Older materials now buried in the Ramsar Web site might be added to the series as well, e.g., the invasive species and climate change papers from COP8. These materials could be made available as they become ready, after peer review by the STRP, and the timeframe will be detached from the normal COP deadlines. The TRs would be cited to the COP as available but would not require COP approval, as they would only be additional resources for the Parties to make use of as they wish.

6. **The DSG** observed that under the current Rules of Procedure Parties may submit their own draft Resolutions 60 days before the COP, bypassing the process of STRP and SC review, and it is also proposed that the SC strongly urge the Parties to submit their proposals to the SC and STRP so that they can be considered and, if possible, incorporated into ongoing work for the COP.

7. **The Chair** noted that when final drafts are presented to the SC in early March, the SC may wish to circulate some back for further work, and the STRP must decide how to deal with that. **David Stroud** suggested that the more contentious guidance might be separated out in advance to facilitate rapid consensus on other materials, and it was recalled that the SC has not been able to accomplish that in the past. **David Pritchard** noted that it is not always easy to make a clear distinction between technical Resolutions and others, and suggested that during the lead-up to COP9 they be referred to as "Resolutions with technical content".

Decision STRP12-1: The STRP supported the suggested approach for presenting documents for COP9, i.e., by separating technical and administrative documents, with two technical Resolutions including the guidance documents as annexes, and with background technical info papers to be published separately in a Technical Reports series.

8. **The Chair** congratulated IUCN's wetlands representative, Jean-Yves Pirot, on his new job in IUCN's Global Programme, and thanked him and IUCN for his service to Ramsar. **Dr Pirot** said that he will miss working with the STRP but will probably still be involved in Ramsar COP9.

Agenda item 7: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Ramsar Synthesis Report

9. **Rebecca D'Cruz** made a PowerPoint presentation on the background of the MA and the development of the Ramsar Synthesis Report, and she outlined the MA conceptual framework and terminology. **Maria José Viñals** questioned whether MA terminology would be appropriate for dealing with cultural values, which cannot always be seen in terms of services. Only non-material cultural services are considered there, whereas some cultural values are intrinsic. She, **Randy Milton**, and **David Stroud** urged that if Ramsar terminology is to be translated into the MA's framework, additional explanations will be needed. **The DSG** noted that historically Ramsar has become a mix of terminologies over 30 years and should stay current in order to communicate with the other conventions. He observed that the introduction of cultural issues has been contentious for the Ramsar Convention, and moving towards the MA concepts, which bring together social sciences and economics in addition to ecological sciences, can help to resolve the rôle of Ramsar in wetland cultural issues. He said that we would not be discarding Ramsar terms, merely coordinating our terminology with the MA's.

Agenda item 4: Wise use of wetlands (Working Group 2)

10. **Randy Milton** introduced the document "Review and updating of the Ramsar Convention's wise use and ecological character concepts" and outlined the WG's advice on bringing Ramsar terminology into the MA conceptual framework.

11. **The DSG** made a PowerPoint presentation on the evolution over 30 years of the Ramsar terms "wise use", from the treaty's far-sighted emphasis upon the interdependence between humans and wetlands, through the 1987 and 1996 definitions adopted by the COP. The WG recommends redefining "wise use" in more recent terms and "ecological character" in terms of the MA's services. It was urged that gaps in the Wise Use Guidelines (1990) and Additional Guidance (1993) be identified and filled and that those documents should be retired or withdrawn.

12. **The Chair** and **the DSG** led a drafting discussion of each of the relevant terms and established new wording in light of the MA's services and CBD's ecosystem approach terminology. It was noted that the COP need not adopt the MA conceptual framework, but it can nonetheless be used to help identify how Ramsar guidance fits together and identify gaps in its coverage. Working Group 2 agreed to review the text in the MA's conceptual framework boxes and amend it to Ramsar uses.

> **Decision STRP12-2: The STRP agreed that several key Ramsar terms should be redefined, with wording to be agreed later in the meeting, and presented to the SC with a background document explaining the rationale for each change. The STRP also agreed that a version of the Millennium Assessment's Ecosystem Maintenance Framework should be adapted to show how Ramsar concepts and guidelines fit together into it and identify gaps in the Ramsar guidance (though not all MA issues will require Ramsar guidance).**

> **Decision STRP12-3: The STRP agreed that the Panel should take steps to identify gaps in Ramsar guidance and find a means of repackaging some of the older guidance into current documents and retiring or withdrawing appropriate older ones, for consideration by COP10. It was agreed that a recommended STRP task for the next triennium should be to revisit the case studies of *The Wise Use of Wetlands* (1993) and others, review their subsequent progress, and provide updated case studies.**

Agenda item 5: Management planning (Working Group 5)

13. **Frank Alberts** made a PowerPoint presentation on the WG's progress in creating a ca.50 page Field Guide on wetland management planning, to be published in electronic and hardcopy in English and translated into other languages if resources permit. The Field Guide will be presented to COP9 but will not require endorsement. It will contain eight chapters based on the steps outlined in the management planning guidelines, and each will include text, case studies, and links. The final draft will be circulated to the STRP and others for comment during April 2005, finalized in May, and produced beginning in June. **Archna Chatterjee** has taken the lead in the work, and thanks were conveyed to WWF for covering her time on the project.

> **Decision STRP12-4: The STRP expressed its enthusiasm for reviewing the draft Field Guide on management planning and urged the Secretariat and others to seek funding for publication of the final version in hardcopy format. The Panel encouraged the Bureau's regional assistants to help in finding appropriate links, as time permits.**

Agenda item 6: Inventory and assessment (Working Group 1)

14. **Heather MacKay**, Vice Chair of the STRP, introduced the WG's work on this issue, and**the Chair** made a PowerPoint presentation outlining the WG's progress on or deferral of its various tasks. The updating of the GRoWI report on global inventory should be deferred to the next triennium.

Agenda item 6.1: Guidance on low-cost GIS

15. **The Chair** noted that a report is ready on the use of low-cost GIS, and **Christoph Zöckler** offered to add the report of a recent workshop for inclusion. It was agreed that the WG will identify which parts of the John Lowry document "The application of low-cost GIS software" can be extracted as an extended summary to form a stand-alone guidance document for the COP, with the whole document to be published as a Technical Report.

> **Decision STRP12-5: The STRP determined to submit selected non-technical parts of the John Lowry document on GIS to the SC and COP as part of its 'Integrated Framework' guidance document for adoption, to publish the whole document in the Technical Reports series, and expressed its gratitude to the author.**

Agenda item 6.2: Wetland classification systems

16. **The Chair** reported that Vic and Christine Semeniuk had prepared a review as requested but did not include all of the habitat types covered in the Ramsar classification of wetlands. The WG recommended that their study be published as a TR, with a note explaining its limited scope. The Semeniuks have offered to demonstrate the application of the hydro-geomorphic system that they had developed, and the WG recommended that this offer should be accepted for consideration over the next triennium, when there will be time to see how it fits into Ramsar-relevant concerns. **The Vice Chair** suggested that the STRP or a consultant should move forward in parallel at the same time in extending the Ramsar classification, and **Tatiana Minaeva** urged that the Semeniuks' system be adopted and added to. **The DSG** noted that the Ramsar typology was adopted for a single purpose but it is now widely used by the Parties and others, and that complementarity should be the goal rather than substitution.

> **Decision STRP12-6: The STRP agreed that the Semeniuks' offer to demonstrate the application of a hydro-geomorphological system should be accepted, and that in the next triennium the STRP should take up the task of determining how that system matches the current Ramsar system and other types of groupings (e.g., groundwater), in order to prepare a report for COP10. Publication of the Semeniuk review in the Technical Reports series, after peer review, will be considered.**

Agenda item 6.3: Biogeographic regionalization in the RIS

17. **The Chair** took note of the confusion amongst the Parties in filling out the new Ramsar Information Sheet item on biogeographic region and urged that new data items should not be added to the RIS in future without sufficient guidance on how to fill them out. There was discussion of the problem of Parties citing national or subnational or idiosyncratic schemes, or in the case of the Neotropics a mere citation of the region. **Tatiana Minaeva** suggested that a global scheme defined by the Convention could be imposed upon the Ramsar Sites Database and calculated automatically from the sites' geographical coordinates and wetland types. **Edith Wenger** reported that WWF is presently completing an overall scheme of biogeographical regions of the world. **David Stroud** suggested that one or a few biogeographical schemes be adopted by COP10 for the use of each region with evaluation of options in the meantime.

> **Decision STRP12-7: The STRP agreed to add a bit of text to the RIS's Explanatory Note and Guidelines urging Parties to apply a continental, regional, or supra-national biogeographical scheme rather than a national or subnational one, and to recommend that a further study be made of appropriate available schemes for possible adoption by COP10.**

Agenda item 6.4: Guidelines on describing the components of ecological character

18. **The Chair** reported on progress on this effort to provide a standardized basis for managers of wetlands, especially Ramsar sites, for describing ecological character. He noted that advice on mapping has been deferred awaiting results of the ESA's GlobWetland protocol, which will be reported to COP9.

19. **The Chair** solicited input for a list of attributes to be sought in defining ecological character. **David Pritchard** and **Tatiana Minaeva** suggested that a basic matrix of categories might be more useful. **Mike Acreman** noted that some parts of the definition looked inward at the site itself whilst others require knowledge of the setting; **the DSG** observed that the MA's focus on ecosystem services implies the setting as well. **Heather MacKay** noted the need for information on the river basin/regional aquifer context. **David Pritchard** drew attention to the fact that all of the attributes are objective, whereas the Ramsar Criteria require some subjective judgements.

20. **Margarita Astrálaga** described the difficulties of Parties in developing countries in meeting requirements for exhaustive data, with few resources for gathering data and monitoring. **The Chair** noted that the data categories are intended to help the Parties focus on the kinds of data needed for assessing key issues, not to insist that all data be gathered whether or not they are appropriate in the context. It is recognized that data cost is a real issue, and the Parties should be

encouraged to focus on the kinds of data most needed and most readily available. **Mike Acreman** observed that much data is needed only for international comparisons but not necessarily for site management. **David Stroud** urged that the suggested data categories be field-tested, particularly against a site that was earlier described and is known to have undergone change, so as to assess how effective it is in describing change over time.

21. **Heather MacKay** summarized the proposals thus far for the kinds of data required to describe ecological character, and **David Pritchard** suggested that it will all be most intelligible if it is described in terms of data needed to detect change, omitting mention of Criteria, designation, evaluation, etc.

> **Decision STRP12-8: The STRP expressed its support for the idea of defining two levels of data to be sought for describing ecological character: 1) at the Convention level, semi-qualitative data useful for detecting change, and 2) at the site management level, quantitative and more detailed data, as determined by the particular needs of the site. The latter category should be field-tested.**

> **It was agreed that Working Group 1 will develop a scheme of data categorization, in an information paper for COP9, with a recommendation on what the COP should ask to be done next. This will be taken forward in the next triennium as part of a broader review of the Convention's information needs.**

Agenda item 6.5: Evaluating ecosystem services delivered by wetlands

22. **The Chair** reported, in reference to the paper by De Groot and Stuip, that more case studies would be useful, tourism should be considered, and there should be more emphasis on techniques than on the wider framework. The WG has more case studies that could be added, so further search would not be necessary.

> **Decision STRP12-9: The STRP agreed that the De Groot/Stuip paper on Wetland Valuation should be revised and peer-reviewed by the STRP and published in the Technical Reports series, with a statement of its availability to be made for the COP. A portion of it will be extracted and presented to the COP as part of the 'Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring' guidance annexed to the Resolution, and the Working Group will prepare that within the next few weeks.**

Agenda item 6.6: Guidelines for rapid assessment

23. **The DSG** cited this as an example of pro-active collaboration between the CBD and Ramsar. **The Chair** summarized the Working Group's reactions to the draft Guidelines.**Teresita Borges** stressed the practical alternatives offered to the Parties, and **Mike Acreman** emphasized the need for interlinking this guidance with other Ramsar guidance, e.g., groundwater. **Rebecca Tharme** drew attention to a lot of new disaster assessments and tools now coming out concerning the recent tsunami, and **the DSG** suggested that the "Ramsar Tsunami Reference Group" could produce new information for another annex or case studies, or include it in a TR publication.

> **Decision STRP12-10: The STRP requested the Deputy Secretary General to develop the "Guidelines for rapid assessment" further and circulate the document to the STRP for comment, to be presented to the SC for COP consideration as a guidance document with both of its appendices.**

Agenda item 6.7: Relationships among SEA, EIA, risk assessment and vulnerability assessment

24. **The Chair** made a PowerPoint presentation on vulnerability assessment based on a paper produced by Habiba Gitay. While vulnerability assessment has no single definition, it encompasses sensitivity and adaptive capacity. There was discussion about the admittedly unclear distinctions amongst the four kinds of assessment, and the uses of the words hazards and risks.

> **Decision STRP12-11: The STRP endorsed the publication of Habiba Gitay's paper in the Technical Reports series, following revision and peer review, with a note to the COP on its availability and with a summary text included in the 'Integrated Framework'.**

25. **The DSG** urged that the integrated framework document should include summary guidance statements drawn from the new and older potential Technical Reports, but acknowledged that the fact that so far it's planned that they will only be in the English language presents a problem. **The SC Chair** suggested that those TRs that seem most valuable might gain SC support for a search for additional resources. **Heather MacKay**suggested that the STRP should prioritize those TR documents that would be most valuable for translation - she asked each Working Group to draw up, by the end of the week, a list of extended summaries or TR reports that would be most worth translating in order to create a consolidated list for the SC.

26. **Dave Pritchard** outlined the document that describes the relationships amongst the types of assessment, and noted that the draft needed a bit more work. **The Chair** agreed that, with a bit more work, it should be included in the integrated framework document.

Decision STRP12-12: The STRP agreed that the document on the relationships amongst assessments should be taken forward, and welcomed David Pritchard's offer to produce the desired diagram to accompany it.

Agenda item 6.9: Integrated framework for wetland inventory, assessment, and monitoring

27. **The Chair** made a presentation that introduced the integrated framework, noting that this covers the technical side of management planning and must still be integrated into the planning side. **The DSG** recalled the question of how summaries could be included in the framework, how much detail, and how much should be left for publication as TRs. **Mike Acreman** urged that "you are here" orientations should be included in the diagrammatics. The issue is to be taken up again on the morrow.

Agenda item 6.10: Other issues

28. **The DSG** drew attention to a report issued by IUCN/WWF/WorldFish Centre in response to a Ramsar COP8 Resolution, developed by consultant Robin Wellcome, 64 pages, and to a draft COP8 Resolution that never found a home. He asked whether the Wellcome report, suitably edited and revised, would make a valuable Technical Report, and whether the Draft Resolution contains elements appropriate for further STRP work in the next triennium. He invited participants to consider to what extent fisheries should be an important issue for the STRP in future.

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29. **Peter Bridgewater**, the Secretary General (SG), briefed the meeting on the FAO "Water for food and ecosystems" meeting ongoing in The Hague and described the debate on natural disasters to be held later in the day.

Agenda item 6.10: Resolution on fisheries

30. **The DSG** referred to the document on Ramsar sites and fisheries and suggested that the draft Resolution intended for COP8 could be used to form a few operative paragraphs in a COP9 Resolution about future work, and that IUCN, WWF, and the WorldFish Centre should be encouraged to develop the draft report further with a view toward publication in the Technical Reports series. **David Stroud** noted that there are already fish Criteria (i.e., 7 and 8) which are not being well used, and **the DSG** suggested that those may need review as well, since they seem to be causing problems for the Parties. **Heather MacKay**suggested that the Convention may be looking into other sectoral guidance in future, and**the SG** urged that, since fisheries could be the first of several such issues, it should go into a separate Resolution. **The SC Chair** noted that it will be

important to present such a draft Resolution to the SC carefully, mindful of the controversy occasioned by the agriculture Resolution at COP8. **David Pritchard** noted that the mention in para. 11 of "sustainable fisheries" implies socio-economic issues and will also need careful handling. **Margarita Astrálaga** urged that the wording must be consistent with guidance that has already been adopted. **The Chair** noted that the issue can be divided into site designation and wise use issues and the proposal could be separated in order not to lose both in case of trouble with one.

> **Decision STRP12-13: The STRP agreed to urge IUCN, WWF, and the WorldFish Centre to work further on the report, the draft of which will be circulated to the Panel. The draft Resolution text should be brought to the SC as a separate text focusing on its wise use aspects but could be incorporated as an element of the omnibus technical implementation Resolution. Issues in the draft Resolution concerning Ramsar Site designations and criteria should be linked with implementation resolution text from Working Group 4. The report, after peer review by the STRP, would be published as a Technical Report in time for the COP, if possible, or the three organizations could be encouraged to publish it themselves.**

Agenda item 6.9: Integrated framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring

31. Following on from the earlier discussion [para 27], **Christoph Zöckler** suggested that the Ramsar framework on assessments might be tied, not only to the MA, but to others as well, e.g., the World Water Development report and the Comprehensive Assessment of Agriculture and Water. **The DSG** drew a distinction between methodological assessments, like the five under discussion (EIA, SEA, risk assessment, vulnerability assessment, and economic valuation), and processes like the MA.

32. **David Pritchard** inquired about whether the role of reporting is integrated into each methodology or should be a separate element.

33. **The Chair** described diagrammatic models of the interrelationships of the five types of assessments and noted that the intent was to provide technical tools that the Parties could use as they needed. **Teresita Borges** stressed that it is important to tell the Parties that these are guidance tools to be used if wanted, and to reassure them that they are not obliged to do everything. **Heather MacKay** and **Rebecca Tharme** pointed to the need for cross-referencing to other types of assessment, e.g. environmental flow assessment - **the Chair** replied that in the proposed conceptual model there is no limit to what can be added.

34. **The DSG** added that the short summaries of each guidance to be included in the framework document could also include pointers to how all of the elements fit together.**Heather MacKay** urged that a key element of each summary should be advice on when the method should be used and its purpose(s). **The DSG** proposed that there should be a common structure to the summaries, including purpose, method, etc., but noted that a lot of work would be involved, raising the question of whether it could be got ready in time for COP9. He noted that the framework is the most important paper for COP9 from WG1, and the draft must be ready by early April in order to go to the SC. **The Chair** recalled that the MA conceptual framework is also being used to show the relationships among the Ramsar guidance. He indicated that he will provide 1-2 page summaries for each methodology on 1 April 2005.

> **Decision STRP12-14: The STRP agreed that the Integrated Framework should be finalized, at the latest by 1 April 2005, and prepared as an Annex to the proposed COP9 draft Resolution on additional guidance for the implementation of wise use.**

Agenda item 6.10: Other issues for Working Group 1

35. It was noted that task 1.12 on consolidated guidance on detecting change in ecological character has been subsumed in the products concerning data on ecological change and Article 3.2 concerns in the Integrated Framework. Revision of the Montreux Record questionnaire has not been done - it is linked to the request for an Article 3.2 reporting form and this will come up later in the agenda item on the Ramsar Sites Database.

36. It was also noted that task 1.13 on status and trends of Ramsar sites has not been attempted, because of lack of resources, but aspects of this will be coming out of work on the Ramsar Sites Database and a review of its data categories, and from WG6's indicators work.

Agenda item 7: Millennium Assessment, Ramsar Synthesis Report

37. **Rebecca D'Cruz** resumed her description of the development of the Synthesis Report so far [para. 9 above] and sought input on the five-page Summary for Decision-Makers. She noted that there are five main sections, reflecting the underlying chapters of the MA. She noted that the team has been asked by the MA to remove the Constanza valuation figures and invited the Panel's opinion on that.

38. **The DSG** pointed out that the MA Synthesis will not go to the SC for approval, since it is a report from the MA to the Convention and its text will have been finalized before the SC next meets. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate if the STRP were to endorse it as a valuable source of

information for the Convention and express its views on the present Synthesis draft, and that would be reported to both the MA and the SC.

39. **The SG** noted that the COP agenda has a place for a presentation of the MA and its products, but he strongly urged that an additional one-page document be added, to be called "Key Messages for Decision-Makers" and drawn from the Synthesis Summary. The last point in the Summary, concerning a needed conceptual shift, should be the first and main point in the Key Messages. Many important users, especially the private sector, will need a quick punchy message, and it will be something Ramsar delegates can take from the COP to show their governments. The "conceptual shift to a cross-sectoral focus" is the main message and should be emphasized.

40. **Rebecca D'Cruz** agreed with the idea of an additional one-page summary but said that grabbing the bold paragraphs of the Summary would not be sufficient; the points should be recrafted in order to be fully understandable without supporting text. **Christoph Zöckler** drew attention to other examples of good documents with very brief summaries of key points.

41. **Rebecca D'Cruz** led the meeting through the text of the Summary and the participants offered numerous suggestions for improvement, in each case promising to provide text. The word "deliver" should be used instead of "provide". To damage by floods, mention of the ability of floodplains to regulate floods should be added, and the positive side of flooding should be inserted. A distinction should be made between physical water scarcity and economic water scarcity, absolute and relative scarcity, since a focus on the problem of access rather than just scarcity leaves room for more creative solutions. It was agreed that a high estimate of the extent of wetlands is preferable to citing a range, and that some spatial context should be supplied to the estimate of global wetland extent of 1,280 million hectares in order to give the reader a sense of what that means. **Christoph Zöckler** promised to send the relevant figures used in the World Water Assessment Report.

42. There was discussion of how the figure of 50% of wetlands lost should be phrased in terms of the MA's language for expressing levels of confidence. It was agreed that, in describing loss of wetland-dependent species, "inland" should be used instead of "freshwater" in order to include saline and brackish habitats. **Archna Chatterjee** promised to provide data permitting the inclusion of losses of dolphins. It was agreed to remove specific mention of the Living Planet Index from the Summary, and that the mention of dragonflies and the IUCN Red List should be reworded. On the positive and negative aspects of flooding, **Mike Acreman** promised to provide wording. It was agreed that the Summary does not bring out the issue of perverse incentives as well as the Synthesis text does. It was agreed that tourism in wetlands, and the boom in ecotourism in developing countries, should be better reflected, and that mention of high-altitude wetlands in the context of climate change should be introduced. It was also agreed that the Synthesis text on

human health, especially important for decision-makers, needs to be added to the Summary. **The SG** called for care in talking about economic frameworks, since economists still use their own models of how much water should be allocated to wetlands, and **Mike Acreman** suggested that greater stress be placed on the adverse implications of taking water away from wetlands instead. It was agreed that the Summary should note that its conclusions apply to both developed and developing countries.

43. The Synthesis co-leads agreed to try to draft the one-page Key Messages document by Friday.

> **Decision STRP12-15: The STRP, having reviewed the MA Ramsar Synthesis and the Summary for Decision-Makers, endorsed the contents of the Summary, subject to inclusion of the changes requested, and the addition of a one-page Key Messages text to be included at the start of the Summary for Decision-Makers and also distributed separately by the MA. This set of key messages should also be prepared as a separate leaflet to act as an outreach tool. The STRP wishes to retain the Summary's information on economic valuation but requested that the values quoted in the Summary for Decision-Makers be checked and verified, and it believes that the box suggested about controversy over the Constanza valuation would be inappropriate in the Summary for Decision-Makers. The Panel would like to review the text again if the MA should make any changes in what the STRP has recommended as improvements. The STRP placed special emphasis on its view that easy readability for non-technical readers should be a priority.**

44. **The Chair** requested that anyone with textual suggestions concerning the rest of the Synthesis Report should submit them to the team authors. **David Stroud** noted that the weakest part of the Report concerns the Scenarios section, and it was agreed that that will be strengthened if possible.

45. **The Chair** noted that the MA process has brought great added value to Ramsar issues, gathering a lot of disparate information into one place and providing wider coverage of people and issues. **The DSG** noted that the team's working in collaboration with so many new people from other processes has widened the "Ramsar family" considerably. He wondered if there were a way to import parts of the MA Synthesis material into the Ramsar COP process - **the SG** felt that the best way to do that would be through the presentation to the COP, drawing attention to the Synthesis for Parties that wish to use it. The Parties could then charge the STRP to review the Ramsar Synthesis and full MA reports and see how aspects of these could be incorporated within the Ramsar guidance. He felt that the process should not be hurried. **The DSG** suggested that a request for future STRP work on how to utilize the MA information, especially regarding responses, could be incorporated into the STRP's future tasks to be approved by the COP.

The European Space Agency's GlobWetland project

46. **Diego Fernandez** made a PowerPoint presentation on the ESA's GlobWetland project, in collaboration with Wetlands International, and its relevance for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring. A midterm review is coming up soon. The purpose is to develop a user-oriented information system based on Earth Observation technology in order to support national and local authorities in managing Ramsar sites. The pilot project includes 50 Ramsar sites in 21 countries.

47. **Doug Taylor** made a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating the GlobWetland product using Web-based GIS software created for the Creston Valley Ramsar site in Canada, available from the GlobWetland Web site. He also illustrated a synthesis of the Ramsar and European Corine wetland classification schemes - a "Cramsar" scheme - created in order to achieve consistency globally and lending itself better to multi-scalar interpretation. He suggested that this scheme will be useful for further STRP thinking about remote sensing.

48. **The Chair** said that he was very pleased to see this linkage between space and ground data, long seen as a possibility and now a reality, and he thanked the ESA for its efforts. There was discussion of the technical capabilities of the methods employed, concerning relative hydration of soils, sub-surface thermal mapping, and capacity for rapid response in cases of disasters. **Diego Fernandez** reported that ESA can reprogramme satellites and provide images useful in rapid impact assessment within 3-4 days, though as **Randy Milton** noted there may be difficulties in finding archived "before" images to compare with the "after" images.

Agenda item 8.5: Water resources management (Working Group 3)

49. **Heather MacKay**, the Vice Chair, made a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the WG's work, noting that the Integrated Framework was not in the original mandate but came to be seen as necessary.

50. **The Vice Chair** explained that the Integrated Framework includes background on links between wetland ecosystems and water resources management, through the hydrological cycle. It more clearly defines Ramsar's role in integrated water resources management and explains the links amongst the elements of the Convention's water-related guidance, to wit: the scientific tools, the policy and institutional aspects, and the tools for basin planning and management frameworks. She described for each of these categories the existing Ramsar documents, the new ones to be brought to COP9, and those to be proposed for future work.

51. **The Vice Chair** noted that the framework document needs still to have new Wise Use terminology incorporated, to be checked against products from the other Working Groups, and additional comments to be taken on board before final editing very soon.

52. **Frank Alberts** urged more attention to coastal waters and it was agreed to strengthen that - **the DSG** suggested that text can be borrowed from the COP8's ICZM guidelines. **The SG** pointed out that the land-sea interface is important and that this document will help to define Ramsar's role in global water governance. He reported that the River Basin Initiative will be considered by the GEF soon and may provide a promising framework by the time of COP9. **Gordana Beltram** suggested using Europe as a regional example, where it is a struggle to keep wetlands at the centre of water legislation.

53. **Sandra Hails** urged that since participatory management is identified as an important tool in water resources management this should be reflected in the list of core water-related guidance in the Integrated Framework. She also called attention to the relevance of the Convention's CEPA programme as a source of tools for carrying our participatory management and suggested that perhaps in the future these two sets of guidelines could be better linked to reflect this. **Heather MacKay** observed that CEPA has been brought into river basin management and that can be used to kick-start such a unification, and she said that that will be strengthened in the document.

54. **Tatiana Minaeva** urged that the SC formulate the presentation of the document in such a way that a few Parties against water regulation will not object to it. **Heather MacKay** agreed that it is not Ramsar's intention to drive water sector policy, but rather to provide tools for wetlands people to interact and engage with the water sector. **Tobias Salathé** noted that the situation is sometimes more complicated, as when the UN Water Convention, using the ecosystem approach and integrated water resources management, finds wetland issues to be too sectoral. He said that the essence is in the catchment approach.

55. **Teresita Borges** suggested that the WG look at the CBD documents prepared for the next SBSTTA meeting on targets for inland waters and coastal waters, derived from the CBD's millennium development targets. **The DSG** promised to provide copies of those documents. **The SG** said that it will be important to see what the Commission on Sustainable Development decides and see how that can be reflected in the framework document.

> **Decision STRP12-16: The STRP decided that the integrated water framework document should be finalized and included either in the technical guidance resolution for the COP or, on the advice of the SC, as a stand-alone draft Resolution on water-related issues.**

Agenda item 8.3: Guidelines for groundwater and wetlands.

56. **Mike Acreman** made a PowerPoint presentation outlining what groundwater is, its terminology, and the approach of the draft guidance document. He solicited examples and photos of wetland types and more examples of strategies that could be employed by managers. **Najjam Khurshid** suggested that in arid lands using a wetland's water wisely could be included and that was welcomed as a good example.

57. **Tatiana Minaeva** reported a number of comments on the text: it would be useful to analyze by reference to Ramsar wetland types; there is a two-way relationship between groundwater and wetlands and the emphasis should be on the need to protect the wetland in order to protect the groundwater; discussion of the uses of groundwater should be strengthened; the target readership is unclear and the language is too difficult for non-engineers; more examples are needed from elsewhere in the world than Europe.

58. **Mike Acreman** noted that, whilst not trying to invent a new wetland classification, it is impossible to explain hydrology without using an hydrological classification. He and **the DSG** noted that the appropriate level of technical language for the target readership is a perennial problem for Ramsar - the main target must be our government representatives, helping them to engage with other sectors as well. Almost all of our language is seen as too technical by some and insufficiently technical by others. He agreed that a glossary will be added to the document, that text will be added to state explicitly that the document is shooting for a middle ground, and that additional references will be supplied for those wishing more technical detail.

59. **Frank Alberts** noted that the graph of tolerable levels is good because it shows that wetlands depend upon dynamic water regimes and not just more and more water, but it was agreed that such a graph allows water planners to go for the allowable minimum.

60. There was discussion of the need to expand discussion of the interaction between groundwater and surface habitats to address underground habitats as well, and **Gordana Beltram** noted that the European Water Framework Directive and forthcoming Underground Water directive deal only with chemical components and not the biological components. It was agreed that a paragraph should be added to the document calling for future study of aquifer/underground ecosystems and habitats. At the suggestion of **Manikchand Puttoo**, it was also agreed that an example should be added of groundwater in relation to coastal lagoons.

> **Decision STRP12-17: The STRP decided that the groundwater guidelines should be finalized, with the addition of the Panel's suggestions, and presented to the SC and COP as one of the annexed guidelines to the technical guidance resolution.**

Agenda item 8: Additional guidance on river basin management

61. **Heather MacKay** presented the proposed document, noting that there is plenty of guidance on river basin management in the Ramsar suite but it is not very successful because 1) there is not enough detail to allow Ramsar people to engage with the water sector, and because 2) the sequencing of proposed activities is not right. The WG recommends taking the Critical Path approach and "Ramsarizing" it, with more operational detail supplied. The WG was tasked to analyze case studies but resources were not found for that, and it recommended that analysis using the Critical Path approach should be mandated for the next triennium.

62. **Heather MacKay** illustrated the Critical Path approach, showing bottlenecks occurring at the implementation at wetland level. She outlined the remaining steps to be taken in finalizing the document.

63. **Lijuan Cui** noted that WWF has done a lot of work with case studies in this regard, but**Heather MacKay** expressed a preference for going back to the authors of case studies to get a fuller picture, not just another desk study, and that would be a job for the future. She solicited site names for future investigation, using the Critical Path template. **Sandra Hails** suggested that in order to find out what can go wrong, one ought to go to the successes, and ask the authors how they overcame the problems that they inevitably confronted.

64. **The DSG** inquired about how the guidelines would fit into the Ramsar toolkit in relation to the existing River Basin guidelines. **Heather MacKay** suggested that eventually the two guidances should be merged, with a new front end.

> **Decision STRP12-18: The STRP decided that the river basin management guidance should be finalized for inclusion in the COP's guidance documents to be considered by the SC, and that the STRP should be requested to consider a consolidation of the river basin guidelines for COP10.**

Agenda item 8.2: Guidelines on environmental flows

65. **Rebecca Tharme** made a PowerPoint presentation describing the tasks of the Working Group as modified. The "Review of environmental flow methodologies for rivers" needs a common introductory session for this and future documents on other types, for the Technical Reports series; the 1st draft is available now, the 2nd draft should be ready by September. The "Review of environmental flow methodologies for estuaries and nearshore coastal environments" needs more information on systems other than estuaries; the 1st draft is available, and the 2nd should be ready by April. The "Review of environmental flow methodologies for non-riverine wetlands" document is continuing to add information and should be deferred to the next triennium.

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Agenda item 8.2 Guidelines on Environmental Flows (continued)

66. In addition to the Technical Reports mentioned above, **Rebecca Tharme** reported that a priority task for COP9, "Supplemental guidelines for the determination and implementation of environmental water requirements for wetlands as component under Ramsar water framework," is nearing completion, but some questions remain about current terminology. It was noted that "environmental water requirement" (EWR) is not synonymous with "environmental allocation". She suggested that "an environmental water requirement may be defined as the water quantity and quality regime [pattern], in space and time, required by a wetland ecosystem to maintain it in a specified condition in terms of its ecological character [including the ecosystem services it provides to people]" and noted the Panel's suggestions for improvement, promising to circulate a new version taking account of the comments.

67. **Rebecca Tharme** led the meeting through an outline of the draft guidelines and received suggestions on several areas identified as needing input.

> **Decision STRP12-19: The STRP welcomed the draft of the supplemental guidelines on environment water requirements and urged that it be finalized for inclusion in the COP's guidance documents to be considered by the SC.**

68. It was requested that people who could be helpful in identifying case studies for the Technical Reports and Millennium Assessment should come forward before the end of this meeting.

69. **Heather MacKay** reviewed the status of the tasks undertaken by WG3 on Water Resource Management, including those which are nearing completion and those that have had to be deferred because of lack of financial resources.

- Task 3.1 on river basin management, the review of case studies has had to be deferred but the additional guidance has been produced.
- Task 3.2 on guidelines for impacts of dams was considered unnecessary, and future case studies on environmental flows will address dam examples.
- Task 3.3 on a report on environmental flow methodologies will be met by the guidance document for COP9 and two Technical Reports.
- Task 3.4 on good practice examples of water allocation and management has not been done, but future case studies on environmental flows and river basin management will include examples.
- Task 3.5 on a review of Resolutions VIII.1 and VIII.2 has been done; see the river basin management document for recommendations.

- Task 3.6 on groundwater envisaged technical papers on groundwater-wetland interactions and guidance on the use and management of groundwater to maintain ecosystem functions, both of which have been deferred because of a lack of resources, and a guidance document which is nearing completion.
- A framework for Ramsar's water-related guidance; this document, needed to show where everything else fits together and embody the STRP's advice on how best to take the issues forward, has been produced as well.

70. A number of participants commented that they were extremely impressed by the quantity and quality of the work produced by WG3 and wished to have their thanks to the group recorded in the meeting report. **The DSG** suggested that, as this work provides a solid basis for a key issue of the next COP, the water-related guidance should go into a separate Resolution, and he asked the WG's help in crafting the Resolution text.

Agenda item 10: Ramsar site designation (Working Group 4)

71. **The DSG** drew attention to the extract from the CBD's Decision VII/4 on the inland waters programme of work, which invited the STRP to elaborate the existing Ramsar Criteria in several aspects.

72. **David Stroud** reported that WG4 decided not to proceed with development of a stand-alone Criterion for cultural and socio-economic importance and instead to make use of Criterion 1's potential to permit selection of sites on those bases. The WG recommended changing the wording in Criterion 1 from "natural or near-natural" to "natural or most-natural" to facilitate application of this Criterion in highly-modified landscapes. The Group's task to analyze the implications of cultural and socio-economic Criteria has been fulfilled through the proposed INFO paper for COP9 entitled "Rationale for STRP's proposed changes to the Strategic Framework . . .".

73. **David Stroud** reported that the Group is recommending a number of additions and changes to the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List and seeks the Panel's guidance on a number of issues. The terminology still must be harmonized with other terms being recommended by the other WGs, and the conceptual linkage of the proposed Criterion 1 usage must be made to the broader definition of ecosystem services.

74. The Group proposes to defer Task 4.1 concerning underrepresented wetland types as a priority for the next triennium, because no funding was found to undertake it. In Task 4.2 concerning further development of the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS), some aspects were not advanced, but a number of additions are proposed for COP9 on the RIS form in sections 12, 13, 17, 21, and 22. On the rolling review of the Criteria (Task 4.3), the WG proposed Strategic Framework text for Criteria

5 and 6 on waterbirds and recommended that the COP adopt an additional Criterion 9 on "aquatic megafauna", for which a Technical Report will be produced in summer 2005 providing background for the use of the 1% threshold. The Group also proposed additional text for the Strategic Framework concerning guidance for the application of Criterion 1 with respect to selection of Ramsar sites on the basis of their cultural and socio-economic importance and urged that the COP mandate the Secretariat to make additional editorial updatings to the Framework following COP9.

75. Concerning Task 4.5 on mapping standards, **David Stroud** reported that Wetlands International is preparing standards based on materials developed for the GlobWetlands intitiative, and this could be included in the RIS guidance update. The review of data and information needs in Task 4.6 was not pursued because no funding was found, and that should be a priority of work for the next triennium.

76. **Maria-José Viñals** recalled that some Parties have strong concerns about free trade and she suggested less emphasis on the products of wetlands, lest the Parties fear competition; she urged that the wording be especially carefully chosen in the French and Spanish. **The Chair** doubted that that was as big a problem at COP8 as it seemed, as it was the trade side of the issue that those Parties wished to avoid, not the products. **David Stroud** said that it will be explained that "services" includes non-material services. **The SG** agreed with the importance of harmonizing the language versions, and he promised that the Secretariat will work closely with the translators to make sure that the true sense is communicated. **The SG** said that he believes that the cultural issue can be moved forward, but slowly, and he offered that the Secretariat will take over the wordsmithing. **The DSG**noted that the MA's work helps in this regard by having identified cultural services as one of the four ecosystem services.

77. **David Pritchard** urged care in linking the Criteria to ecological character, since what needs to be maintained at a site, i.e., the ecological character, may not be the same as the reason for which it was listed as internationally important.

78. There was considerable discussion of the use of 1% threshold in relation to aquatic megafuna in the proposed Criterion 9. Questions were raised about where the population estimates needed for determining 1% would come from, and **David Stroud** cited the cooperation of Mariano Gimenez-Dixon and IUCN-SSC's non-avian specialist groups.**Tobias Salathé** wondered whether a great deal of new work might fall to the Secretariat, and **the SG** expressed similar doubts that there would not be enough solid data for many species, leading to extra work and contentious arguments. **David Stroud** explained that the proposed Criterion would be linked to an annex of species about which there is sufficiently reliable data and would thus taxonomically limit the application of the Criterion, and the annex would be updated in harmony with IUCN-SSC's specialist groups and others.

79. **The SG** inquired about where the line would be drawn in determining "mega"-fauna, and **the DSG** preferred the term "non-avian wetland-dependent species". **David Stroud**thought the Criterion could include non-mega fauna, but only if there were good biogeographic and site population estimates. **The DSG** noted that the 1% threshold would not be appropriate for some taxonomic groups because of their life histories. **David Stroud**noted that this was also the case for waterbirds with respect to Criterion 6.

80. It was suggested that the annex should include a list of appropriate species, in order to get it moving, and more could be added as increased data becomes available. **David Stroud** noted that the waterbird population estimates are not complete, either, but that does not impede the utility of Criterion 6.

81. **Iván Darío Valencia** drew attention to the fact that the Strategic Framework currently permits use of any of the CITES and CMS appendices in Criterion 2, which is broad. **The DSG** agreed that the Framework text should be limited to "CITES Appendix 1 and CMS appendices" which would be named. **Tatiana Minaeva** noted that the CITES Appendices are intended for trade purposes and wondered why they are used in Ramsar's natural criteria. **The SG** noted that there are political reasons for maintaining those references, as they show that Ramsar is aware of what our sister biodiversity conventions consider to be important.

82. **Iván Darío Valencia** expressed doubts about how loosely the Parties might use a Criterion involving cultural value, noting that it is already difficult to determine if any sites proposed for designation do not fill some Criteria because the Criteria are too broad. **The DSG** reminded the meeting that it is up to the Parties to designate the sites, and the rôle of the Secretariat is to evaluate and advise them on their use of the Criteria and provision of data. **The SG** wondered whether it might be mistaken to encourage the Parties to nominate additional new sites if they lack the resources to management them properly, and he said that he dislikes the notion of setting targets for total Ramsar sites; he noted that if it is made too easy to designate a new Ramsar site it would encourage the addition of new sites without real improvements in their management. **Tatiana Minaeva** agreed that as the quantity of Ramsar sites increases, the quality seems to have been declining. She noted that the World Heritage Convention has inspectors who check sites and urged more attention to such feedback on sites in Ramsar; she observed that Ramsar respects the sovereignty of the Parties but perhaps too much. **The STRP Chair** suggested that that issue could be brought before the SC in the context of the STRP modus operandi recommendation.

83. **Tobias Salathé** reiterated his doubt that the proposed annex will only list the species but not provide the data, and he wondered who will pay for doing that? **David Stroud**promised to discuss that issue with IUCN and report back later in the meeting [see para. 104].

84. **Edith Wenger** suggested providing text in the Strategic Framework on invasive species and the fish Criteria and on habitat connectivity, especially important for fish -**David Stroud** replied that those are important concerns but are site management rather than site selection issues and should be covered in the fisheries Resolution and the Resolution on invasive species if there is one.

85. **Edith Wenger** suggested that RIS sections 25-26 on conservation measures taken and proposed should mention the IUCN protected area categories. **The SG** agreed and said that will be done, while recognizing that some Ramsar sites will not fit those categories and others will fit more than one.

86. **Maria-José Viñals** urged that clear guidance on the use of cultural and socio-economic values be added to the Strategic Framework under Criterion 1.

87. There was discussion about whether the suggested changes to the Strategic Framework text should be brought to the COP in an entire new edition of the SF, some parts of it only, or just a listing of the proposed additions and changes.

> **Decision STRP12-20: The STRP determined to bring the rationale for the STRP's proposed changes to the Strategic Framework to the COP as an INFO paper, to propose the adoption of a new Criterion 9 on aquatic fauna, and to recommend additions and changes to the Strategic Framework, all subject to the amendments suggested by this meeting. Only the proposed changes should be communicated to the COP, and the COP should be asked to mandate the Secretariat to perform the editorial tasks of incorporating the changes it adopts.**

Agenda item 11: Indicators of the effectiveness of the Convention's implementation (Working Group 6).

88. **David Pritchard** introduced Val Kapos of UNEP-WCMC, who has agreed to serve as a consultant in advancing the work on indicators. He drew attention to the WG's request for advice and approval on four points: 1) the choice of seven priority indicators for immediate development, 2) the template for the indicator fact sheets, 3) the process for operating the indicators, and 4) the next steps. The seven priority indicators have been chosen on the basis of their importance to the Convention, their feasibility, their place in a range of key issues, and their potential rôle as "umbrella" indicators.

89. He noted that operating the indicators for determining Convention outcomes goes on in parallel with the National Reports (NR) activity, which focuses upon processes and intentions. The periodicity and timing will vary by indicator but all are aimed at the COP, though there should also

be periodic status and trends assessments. The results can be fed into the 2010 process and the CBD's PoW targets monitoring. The STRP's recommendation on future work should include who will coordinate the indicator measurement process and how.

90. **David Pritchard** foresaw that if the priorities and template were to be approved at this meeting, the consultant would immediately begin work on the seven fact sheets. There will be an opportunity to take account of the SBSTTA-10 meeting in mid-February. The SC Subgroup on COP9 meeting in early March will determine how the process will operate after COP9. Draft fact sheets will be circulated to the STRP by the end of March, finalized by 25 April, and tabled at SC31 in June. He asked for STRP or National Focal Point volunteers to try out a few of them before the COP.

91. He noted that the indicators of effectiveness have had to be developed in the absence of targets for levels of effectiveness in what the Convention should be achieving. He described the indicators as a coherent integrated package that is pragmatic. Some will be based upon a less quantitative and more knowledge-based, low-cost questionnaire approach similar to that recently used by MedWet.

92. **The SG** noted that it is essential to have indicators to show the Convention's effectiveness in outcomes, rather than just in processes, and it is important to have a good nexus with National Reports, but there may be some resistance from the Parties to the idea of taking on additional work. **David Pritchard** noted that not all of the indicators required work from the Parties; some will but others are supranational, and that will be made clearer in the text. **The DSG** noted that the template will identify certain process indicators in the NRs for each of the indicators, and that can be used to develop future structures of the NRs.

93. **The SG** wondered whether stakeholder participation should have a higher priority amongst the indicators. **David Pritchard** agreed but said that it had been downgraded at this stage because of the feasibility of measuring it in a comparative systematic way. Its importance can be brought out elsewhere.

94. **Margarita Astrálaga** called attention to several non-ecological indicators that are key for developing countries to demonstrate their progress in the Convention's implementation, such as financial commitments, enforcement, wetland committees that involve stakeholders, and others. **David Pritchard** observed that those tell us about what the Parties are doing but not about their effectiveness; the intent is to get beyond processes and means to ends and measure the results themselves. **Christoph Zöckler** suggested more highlighting of synergies with both CBD and CMS, and drew attention to the continuing problem of ascertaining what results are really *Ramsar*'s effectiveness, and not, for example in the case of waterbirds, AEWA's. **Najjam Khurshid** suggested that CEPA issues should be included as indicators, which **David Pritchard** said

would be covered under stakeholder attitudes. **Rebecca Tharme** made several suggestions on the water-related indicators, which will be taken on board. **Archna Chatterjee** indicated that stakeholder issues can be covered under management planning questions if they are constructed properly.

95. **Lijuan Cui** raised several questions for Parties that should be measured: do they have legislation and national planning to implement the Convention; how many internationally important wetlands have they designated and is there a plan for designating them; will they be managed properly; how will they measure indicators and monitor trends. **David Pritchard** acknowledged that these were important concerns and are most appropriate for the National Reports, though Indicator E on wetland management can include site specific issues.

96. **Teresita Borges** noted that despite the work involved the Parties will be glad to have this information on indicators, which will help them to identify problems over the long term. **Rebecca D'Cruz** and **Heather MacKay** suggested seeking to find out how effectively the Convention's tools are being used. **David Pritchard** noted that the SC Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45 is studying that issue.

97. **The SC Chair** saw a need for outcome-oriented targets, which could be related to the targets of the CBD and others. **David Pritchard** noted that the SBSTTA's results can be mapped to the Ramsar indicators. He recalled that the SBSTTA targets are not for effectiveness but rather for progress towards the 2010 goals.

> **Decision STRP12-21: The STRP approved of the Working Group's choice of seven indicators to which the highest priority should be given at this stage and approved the proposed template for the fact sheet. It was agreed that the consultant should begin work at once and the Working Groups were asked to identify a lead contact for her on each indicator in order to facilitate her work.**

Additional agenda item: J-Dog

98. **Margarita Astrálaga** introduced the stuffed toy J-Dog, which has been sent out from a school in a Canadian village to wander the world for a year and report back frequently. Given to her by the Canadian delegation at the regional meeting in Mexico, the animal has traveled with members of the Ramsar family to Bangkok, Armenia, Algeria, etc., and will next accompany Max Finlayson to India and then Rebecca Tharme to Sri Lanka.

Agenda item 9: Agriculture, water and wetlands

99. **Rebecca Tharme** outlined the "Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture" (CA) project and noted that IWMI has invited Ramsar to act as a co-sponsor. This will entail a CA product specifically targeted to Ramsar needs and provide an opportunity to feed into the new Intergovernmental Panel on Scientific and Technical Development process. A short meeting was held earlier this week to develop questions that Ramsar would wish to see addressed by the CA and further input was requested. **Rebecca Tharme** noted that "agriculture" in this context is not constrained to crop-based issues but includes aquaculture, agroforestry, and livestock production.

100. She led the meeting through a consideration of each of the categories of Ramsar questions to be addressed by the CA if possible and received a good deal of input, notably on artificial waterbodies, thirsty crops and less water-demanding agriculture, genetically modified organisms, trade issues, eutrophication and sedimentation, effects of grazing and abandonment of pastoral regimes, underground habitats, agriculture's effects on climate change as well as vice versa, increases in water temperature, drought and dry lands, inappropriate crop choices, governance, water costs for agriculturalists, restored wetlands on agricultural land, etc. It was urged that the preamble should ask for regional breakdowns as well for many of these issues.

101. **Rebecca Tharme** expressed appreciation for the additional ideas and asked advice on priorities among them as well. It was agreed that Rebecca would send her revised text of the questions to the Secretariat for formal transmittal to IWMI and posting on the STRP Support Service. The CA process will continue into 2006, with no product foreseen for COP9. **The DSG** suggested that progress on Ramsar Resolution VIII.34 on agriculture should be suspended pending the CA report, and that the fisheries Resolution should link in to the CA as well. **Rebecca Tharme** solicited further names to approach for help in writing and reviewing the CA materials.

> **Decision STRP12-22: The STRP welcomed the proposal by the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture to prepare a targeted report for the Ramsar Convention and confirmed the draft list of questions to be addressed on Ramsar's behalf - it requested the agricultural working group to transmit the text of the questions to the Secretariat to be sent to IWMI.**

Agenda item on agriculture, additional:

102. **The SG** introduced the document headed "Water for food and ecosystem - partnership for implementation: Guidelines for agriculture in or near ecological networks", just received from the government of The Netherlands. It embodies a proposal for a project to involve Ramsar, the CBD, the FAO, IWMI and some countries with funds to be provided by generous countries, which envisages hiring a consultant to draft revised and updated Guidelines, and is meant to help to

implement Ramsar Resolution VIII.34. The terms of reference are to be ready by COP9 and the guidelines to be finalized in 2006, with an evaluation and further recommendations to be presented to COP10.

> **Decision STRP12-23: The STRP welcomed the "Water for food and ecosystem" initiative and urged that it be closely linked to the Comprehensive Assessment's work and timetable. The Panel thanked the government of The Netherlands for its initiative and asked that the STRP, and particularly its working group on agriculture, with Rebecca Tharme as the contact person, be kept apprised of its progress.**

Agenda item 4, report back by Working Group 2 on the Ramsar conceptual framework and definitions

103. **Randy Milton** led a discussion of the latest versions of the proposed text on wetland ecosystem terminology and revisions to the definitions of wise use, ecological character, and change in ecological character. It was agreed that explanatory text would be needed to complement the definitions and that the utmost attention should be paid to their accurate translation into other languages.

> **Decision STRP12-24: The STRP endorsed the agreed text on the conceptual framework, terminology and definitions and asked the Secretariat, Randy Milton, and David Pritchard to draft explanatory paragraphs to accompany the definitions. It was agreed that this text should be ready for the SC Subgroup on COP9 meeting in as final a form as possible.**

Agenda item 10, report back by Working Group 4 on use of the 1% threshold

104. **David Stroud** reported back [para. 83 above] on his discussion with IUCN's Mariano Gimenez-Dixon, in which they devised a procedure for establishing a list of population estimates of wetland-dependent fauna and mega-fauna soon and updating it in future via the IUCN's Web-based Species Information Service (SIS). It was urged that a first list should be published as a Ramsar Technical Report at low cost.

> **Decision STRP12-25: The STRP endorsed the proposed process for providing updated population estimates for wetland-dependent species via the IUCN's Species Information Service.**

Agenda item 12: Review of the STRP's *modus operandi* and proposals for change

105. **The STRP Chair** asked how the STRP's *modus operandi* could be improved and noted that the absence of five of its 14 regular members indicated that something is wrong with the present situation. Some observer organizations have never attended. At SC30, he noted the need to involve the members more. The STRP Support Service has worked well but some members have never accessed it. The problems of the STRP are many and complex. There has been great progress on many items and a lot of fine work can be reported to the SC, but there is also a long list of items not done. Not enough funding support was provided for the tasks assigned, and the Panel had to rely upon people donating their own time. More realistic estimates are needed of how much can be done and how much money will be needed. It's not good to have some authors being paid and others not.

106. There was considerable discussion of the best pattern of meetings, which this triennium consisted of a first full meeting, then mid-term drafting workshops, and then a final plenary. There was much support for the value of the mid-term workshops, somewhat less for the first full meeting, despite its value for inducting new members into the process. Particular problems noted were

- the onus placed upon a few key people to ensure coherence across the suite of tasks,
- the delay in building a work dynamic following the last COP,
- the loss of momentum after the first enthusiastic and ambitious work-plan session,
- the limited range of expertise of each of the members and the still political nature of the Parties' nominations for the Panel,
- the difficult rôle of observer organization representatives who must act as liaison with less motivated experts within their organizations,
- the excessive number of tasks assigned by the COP and SC.

107. **Heather MacKay** suggested that the Chair and Vice Chair of the STRP and the Secretariat should present the SC with terms of reference for the next triennium showing how much time and money would actually be involved in each of the tasks proposed.

108. **The DSG** recalled that the STRP's title is "review panel", but this triennium has been no different from past ones, with too much expectation of new work by members and organizations that are volunteers. He lamented that nominations were still essentially political and not tied, as planned, to expertise in the work foreseen, and he noted that this time we were extraordinarily lucky to have such enthusiastic help, especially in the water-related guidance from Heather MacKay and Rebecca Tharme. He urged that there should be an expert at the coordinating centre of each task, paid or otherwise, and that the STRP cycle should be divorced from the COP cycle, which currently leaves only 18 months for STRP's work and the other 18 months to lie fallow, with unfinished tasks forgotten. **Dave Pritchard** agreed that the COP bottleneck leaves a significant dead period with no mandate to start anything else, and said that a rolling programme would be

preferable. He urged that the SC should be required to set priorities before the COP meeting rather than after it, so that it must then set realistic priorities. **The DSG** suggested that the COP should ask the STRP to "provide advice to the Contracting Parties" rather than "report to the COP", so that the advice could be provided in the form deemed most appropriate by the Panel, whenever it was ready and not just at fixed dates.

109. **Tatiana Minaeva** called for greater involvement of the STRP National Focal Points (NFP) and for more STRP involvement in site designations, monitoring implementation of the Resolutions, interaction with the work of other conventions (e.g., the Joint Work Plan with the CBD), etc.

110. **The SC Chair** pointed to the need to involve the STRP Chair and Vice Chair in the SC's task of establishing priorities and ensuring carry-over of the continuing work as well as determining priorities for new work. It's important to inform each COP meeting of what has been left undone because of the lack of resources. She suggested that each STRP continue in post until the newly appointed STRP has been installed and has held its first working meeting.

111. **The Chair** urged that the next Chair should be paid an honorarium. He noted that it has been a struggle to get interest from the other conventions and the IOPs, and he raised the question of whether we are doing work that interests them. He noted that the current method is for Parties to come to the COP with tasks for the STRP, rather than the STRP coming to the COP with expert opinions about emerging issues that should be addressed.**The Chair** reiterated that there should be a first full meeting in some form, there should be more liaison with the SC on priorities, that a lead expert (paid or unpaid) should be identified in advance for each task, and that the new Technical Reports series should take some pressure off the COP timetable constraints.

112. **Sandra Hails** noted that the WI's CEPA Specialist Group is not part of the STRP and has no funding, but has been given responsibilities. In effect that means that she has had to represent the CEPA group but has Secretariat duties at the same time. There were several WGs that would have benefited from CEPA input but she was unable to attend them all. The STRP should reconsider the Specialist Group's rôle. **Heather MacKay** suggested rolling over the CEPA group into a permanent adjunct body. **The SG** said that he sees the CEPA working group as having a key advisory role across all issues.

113. **Heather MacKay** stressed the importance of having a budget for the STRP's work and knowing the budget in advance, in preference to having to begin the work and learning only later what parts of it could be completed after funding has been found. **The Chair** urged that all of the tasks should be planned out in advance and that it be made clear just what will be done and not done given the budget allocated. **The DSG** recalled that there is a budget for travel to the meetings but not for any work at all - additional support this term came about only by persuading a donor to divert some

funds to pay for a few consultants. **The SG** agreed that budget is a real problem and invited the SC Chair to convey that message to the SC. He noted that the STRP would have a better chance of getting more money if it did a worse job - its success for each COP undercuts its claim to necessity. He said that the STRP is probably the most effective scientific body among the conventions, but he cautioned against expecting a significant amount of new funding for STRP. We must be more rigorous in ensuring that everyone is aware of how much of the work has been voluntary and that the Parties understand what has not got done because they have not provided the money.

114. **Tobias Salathé** said that the STRP has been somewhat isolated from the Parties because no use has been made of the National Focal Points, and he urged that they be used more strategically. **The Chair** expressed frustration that the budget covering involvement of the NFPs had had to be cut mid-term.

115. **Rebecca Tharme** argued that a scoping of tasks with financial costs should be made early on, to be sure at an early stage about what can be paid for before things have got too far along, and that it is good to have a small contingency fund for later stages. The honoria are important, too, even if not large, so that people feel appreciated. She noted that presently the STRP is writing and reviewing its own material, which is not normal in science.

116. **David Stroud** observed that the work plan outlined which tasks required funding, and it would be easy to go back and list those that it had not been possible to advance because of lack of funds. He suggested that a six-year rolling work plan be adopted, as for the Strategic Plan, with a continuous review of tasks.

117. **David Pritchard** urged that the STRP should also act as a rapid reponse mechanism for the COP on emerging issues.

118. There were numerous expressions of great appreciation for the very valuable work of Wetland International's STRP Support Service, which was seen as very important to the STRP's work. Nonetheless, there were some STRP members who never logged on to it. It has been agreed that the Support Service would better be brought back into the Secretariat, though considerable IT issues will be raised by that, thought to be soluble. **Edith Wenger** suggested that progress reports from the Working Groups should be posted from time to time, and that the mid-term workshops should have been reported. **David Stroud** urged that a briefing on the use of the Web-based Support Service should be offered to new STRP members. **David Pritchard** foresaw that as the Support Service proves so valuable with future use, there will be more and more need for hands-on maintenance. **Teresita Borges** asked whether the STRP could have a small space on the Ramsar Web site to inform all of what the groups are doing, apart from keeping up on the Support Service.

119. **The SG** summarized that everyone welcomed the effective way in which the STRP Support Service has been run by WI, but recognized the need to make it more available to the NFPs despite budgetary limitations. He said that a good mechanism is needed to involve the NFPs as a way to getting back to the Parties.

120. **The Chair** reiterated Tatiana Minaeva's concerns that the STRP has got too isolated from what's going on on the ground and suggested asking the SC to reconsider what the STRP is meant to do, in light of Tatiana's suggestions of advising on site designation and management issues, reviewing use of the tools, identifying gaps in the Convention, and looking at trouble spots. **Tobias Salathé** noted that some of these are already included in the STRP's TOR, when need arises. **Tatiana Minaeva** said that members often have information on Ramsar sites in the field but have no mechanism for reporting it.

121. **Heather MacKay** observed that the STRP is developing policy in isolation and wondered if its meetings should not be held in variable locations with one day left for a field trip to a Ramsar site. **The DSG** noted that it would only be a matter of cost, since a potential host Party would have to cover the costs of moving nearly the whole Secretariat for the occasion - he suggested tying the meetings to Montreux Record sites so that the STRP might act also as a large Ramsar advisory mission. **The SG** noted that there would not be much enthusiasm among the Parties for funding that sort of meeting.

122. **David Pritchard** echoed the suggestion of a broader rôle for the STRP, a balance between forward, proactive and strategic advice and responsive problem-solving on emerging one-off issues. **Randy Milton** cautioned that increasing the scope of activities of the STRP members would not be feasible for the volunteers, without turning them into ex officio Ramsar staff members.

123. **The DSG**, expressing his regret that NFPs have not been much involved before now, outlined plans to circulate the report of this meeting and the documents soon reaching completion through the NFP network. [See also Decision STRP12-34 below.]

Friday, 4 February 2005

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Ramsar Synthesis Report, "Key Messages"

124. **Rebecca D'Cruz** introduced a redrafted "Key Messages" statement to accompany the Synthesis Report's Summary for Decision-Makers [paras. 37-43 above] and led a drafting session in revising the language to embody the Summary's most important points compellingly. It was pointed out that the document need not be confined to using Ramsar terminology at the expense of general familiarity, since it will be coming from the MA and not from the Convention. It was

recalled that crafting the document is not a task of the STRP or Secretariat, requiring consensus, but rather of the MA Ramsar Synthesis team, which is seeking advice. It was also recalled that the Synthesis Report, the Summary, and the Key Messages must be drawn from data and conclusions that are actually in the MA report itself.

> **Decision STRP12-26: The STRP endorsed the structure and content of the one-page "Key Messages" document based on the MA Ramsar Synthesis Report's Summary for Decision-Makers, subject to additional drafting by the Synthesis Report team, and urged that MA secretariat be advised of the STRP's opinion that it should be included at the start of the Summary and also distributed separately by the MA.**

Agenda item 13: Recommendations for future technical priorities: Global Action on Peatlands

125. **Tatiana Minaeva** made a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the tasks mandated by Resolution VIII.17 and reported that the Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands (CC-GAP) has now been established, comprising a broad range of representatives from industry, conservation groups, governments, academics, etc. She noted that Tobias Salathé is the chair and conveyed her thanks for his and the Secretariat's assistance. She introduced the Committee's draft "Implementation Plan for Global Action on Peatlands" and noted that proposed annexes will be updated based upon information to be gleaned from the National Reports when they are submitted. She suggested that priorities for the future to be recommended to COP9 include peatlands and climate change, peatlands and water, peatlands and biodiversity, and peatlands and human well-being/poverty reduction.

126. **Tatiana Minaeva** continued that the CC-GAP process has provided a good model for emulation for other wetlands types, because it included intersectoral partnerships, involvement of the private sector, information transfer, leveraged fundraising (e.g., the Global Peatland Initiative), and the involvement of development agencies in project funding. She suggested that a draft Resolution for COP9 should include a recognition of the value of this partnership approach, information for the Parties about priorities identified by the CC-GAP, a request for the Parties to review how well their policy frameworks implement those priorities, and thanks to the Secretariat with a request for continued involvement in the CC-GAP. She said that tasks for the Secretariat in the next triennium might include providing a constant follow-up of information, monitoring GAP implementation by the Parties, identifying gaps, and assisting with fundraising.

127. **The DSG** suggested that the review of implementation and the importance of the consortium approach could be more effectively highlighted in the Secretary General's Report to the COP and the regional overview reports than in a Resolution, supplemented by additional information to be made available via the Web site. He noted that the Committee's recommendations regarding

priorities for the future will go into the STRP's advice to the COP on future priorities. He noted that the Secretariat has committed a lot of Dr Salathé's time as chairperson in order to assist the Committee in getting going, and that priority will have to be reviewed for the next triennium.

> **Decision STRP12-27: The STRP expressed its appreciation to the Coordinating Committee's hard work and substantial progress; the Panel urged that reports of the CC-GAP's achievements should be embodied in various reporting mechanisms to the COP and that its recommendations for future priorities should be included in the STRP's recommendations to the COP.**

Agenda item 13: Recommendations for future technical priorities: Review of the 2002-2005 STRP work plan's "Key additional stategic issues" (pp. 48ff.)

128. Concerning the item on **water quality**, it was felt that tasks related to how water quality is included in environmental flows, ambient water quality determination, and guidance on water quality for site management should remain on the list of priority issues, and that managing the impacts of mining wastes on Ramsar sites should be added. Working Group 3 will produce a short note outlining these issues.

129. Concerning the matter of **mainstreaming Ramsar issues within the water sector**, it was felt that this is largely a CEPA matter, with potential scope for contributions from WI's CEPA Specialist Group. It was agreed that Heather MacKay and Sandra Hails would draft a short text for the future implementation recommendations, drawing upon text in the River Basin Management guidelines.

130. Concerning **fisheries and wetlands**, it was recalled that if IUCN, WWF, and the WorldFish Centre are amenable, their paper could be taken forward as a Ramsar Technical Report, and it was agreed that the issue of wetlands and sustainable fisheries management is important enough to warrant a stand-alone Resolution, which they should develop further in collaboration with the Secretariat for consideration by SC31. It was suggested that Carmen Revenga should be invited to assist, and **Tunde Oje** promised to keep WI's new Freshwater Fish Specialist Group informed.

131. **Margarita Astrálaga** pointed out that some Parties in the Neotropical region are discussing sponsoring a draft Resolution forbidding shrimp aquaculture in Ramsar sites in the conviction that there is no such thing as sustainable aquaculture. **The DSG** cited that as a good example of the need for proposed Resolutions to be submitted to the SC for consolidation. It was agreed that the STRP should urge that further work on aquaculture be undertaken, and **Rebecca Tharme** offered to draft text on actions wanted, in consultation with CGIAR, FAO, and others.

Decision STRP12-28: The STRP recommended that key strategic issues concerning water quality, mainstreaming Ramsar issues within the water sector, and fisheries and wetlands should be carried forward amongst priority tasks for the Panel in its future work. It also urged that work on aquaculture issues be added to the list of priority tasks.

132. Concerning **guidance on the full range of wetland types and features**, **the DSG** recalled that the idea was to provide some short, consistent guidance on site designation for all wetland types in order to avoid people pushing their own favorite types forward in an uncoordinated manner. **David Stroud** suggested that that be kept as a task to begin in the next triennium but that it be seen as a longer-term effort linked to rethinking the classification system. **David Pritchard** noted that the work plan's task is not very targeted and that it would be helpful to know what the proposed guidance was meant to be used for. He added that it would be important to know how the existing guidance on wetland types is being put to use. It was suggested that, for example, by looking at the RISs it might be possible to learn whether there have been more site designations or better data provided following the adoption of guidance for a particular wetland type, and whether such additional guidance has helped the Parties. **David Stroud** wondered whether any Parties are making systematic reviews of the conditions of their Ramsar sites and what kind of guidance could be offered to help them with that. He agreed to lead on that question and scope out the task.

Decision STRP12-29: The STRP decided to recommend as a priority task for the next triennium that the Panel should review existing guidance on site designation for wetland types, examine its usefulness to the Parties, and assess the need for a strategic tool that would help the Parties to make a systematic review of the conditions of their Ramsar sites. It was also agreed that the Panel should assess the need for new technical guidance for additional wetland types.

133. **Margarita Astrálaga** suggested that it would be good to find out what advantage there is to Ramsar designation, how effective designation has been. **David Pritchard** observed that that question is among the indicators to be studied.

134. Concerning **wetlands and forest ecosystems** and input to the CBD's programme of work on forest ecosystems, **the SG** suggested that the task should remain on the STRP's list of future work, so that Ramsar will remain part of the work of the CBD and UN Forum on Forests. **Randy Milton** reported on new initiatives on boreal forests in Canada and Russia and agreed to formulate the task for inclusion in the Panel's future work.

Decision STRP12-30: The STRP agreed that, as a lower priority but to remain on the list of its tasks, the Panel should identify what initiatives are presently under way on forest

ecosystems and ensure that wetland issues are represented, with Randy Milton taking the lead on this issue.

135. Concerning **addressing the WSSD 2010 biodiversity target**, **David Pritchard**noted that WG6's work on indicators will lead to a synthesis of status and trends in wetlands for input to the 2010 progress report and will include a digest of what the Convention is able to say on the subject. It will permit the Panel to link with the respective programmes of work and to engage in whatever processes take place closer to 2010. **Teresita Borges**noted that the Global Biodiversity Outlook, due in 2008, will be important and will include Ramsar.

> **Decision STRP12-31: The STRP agreed to recommend continuation of its task on addressing the WSSD 2010 biodiversity target and requested David Pritchard to formulate that task more precisely.**

136. **The DSG** suggested that, for remaining issues from the work plan, the Secretariat should work with the leads of the Working Groups and circulate a completed draft for the STRP's comment, with a proposals for the levels of priority of the recommended tasks.**Heather MacKay** reminded each Working Group to provide some text on the work it proposes for the next triennium, i.e., what the WG would like to see included in its brief for the future.

Future areas of work in addition to those arising from the existing programme

137. **David Pritchard** suggested that future work might be mapped out on wetlands and health issues, with an exploration of possible links to the WHO. **Edith Wenger** suggested that work should be done on further elaborating the links between Criterion 1 and cultural issues to see whether they are significant, and **the DSG** recommended that a suitable time be left following COP9 to see how that works out. **Maria José Viñals** urged that cultural issues be further advanced as soon as possible, so as not to lose momentum; **the SG**responded that cultural issues are presently being brought forward faster than had been called for by COP8 and there is an ongoing mechanism for judging progress, and it was agreed that it would be better not to pursue them further for COP9 but rather to revisit them in the future.

138. **Tatiana Minaeva** said that the issue of climate change and natural disasters in respect to wetlands needs more study and urged that a comprehensive report on this be added to the STRP's priorities. **David Pritchard** distinguished between two aspects of the subject: research into how natural disasters happen and what mitigation effects there are, and the STRP's ongoing review function to provide a technical view of disaster events when they happen. **David Stroud** noted that the UNFCCC's IPCC will be working on wetlands and water issues. **The Chair** expressed the view that the issues are important but that it is not clear what the STRP could do that other, better

resourced bodies could not; he suggested that the STRP wait and see what will be produced by the IPCC and the Comprehensive Assessment.

> **Decision STRP12-32: The STRP agreed to impress upon the SC the importance of the issues of climate change and natural disasters vis-à-vis wetlands, but not to recommend any specific programme of work.**

139. A number of other issues were mentioned and will be considered for inclusion in the list of future priority work. **Estelle Gironnet** urged work on tourism and ecotourism in relation to wetlands and development of the RIS to account for potential transboundary sites and management plans. **Heather MacKay** suggested that, in future, sectoral guidance (fisheries, agriculture, etc.) could be provided on tourism and wetlands. **Randy Milton** suggested developing guidance on mitigation issues. **Heather MacKay** suggested that developing a framework for sectoral guidance might be a high priority, and **David Stroud** agreed to develop a list of sectors for which guidance would be helpful and assign priorities to them.

Agenda item 15: Any other business: Report on the Ramsar Sites Database Service

140. **Doug Taylor** made a presentation on "The Future of the Ramsar Sites Database Service" and drew attention to an unfulfilled need to test whether the tools and contents of the RSDB are meeting the Parties' needs. He suggested using the STRP Support Service to gather feedback on that issue, by mid-April, in order to report to the SC in June. He noted the need for a simple form to assist Parties in making Article 3.2 reports to the Secretariat about changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites, and he drew attention to the proposed draft form on pp.16-19 of the document. He noted that the RSDB requires consistency in how to store information about threats to Ramsar sites, based upon a "knowledge-based" qualitative approach rather than upon a quantitative one. He suggested that the proposed free-standing Article 3.2 form should be integrated into the existing six-year RIS update cycle, while acknowledging that that reporting cycle does not yet enjoy widespread compliance.

> **Decision STRP12-33: The STRP agreed to post comments on the efficacy of the RSDB Service to the Support Service Web site. The Panel requested the Secretariat and Wetlands International to develop further the proposed Article 3.2 form and post that on the Support Service for STRP comment.**

Agenda item 12: Review of the STRP *modus operandi* (continued)

141. **The Chair** referred the members to the draft report of the previous day's meeting on this issue [paras. 105-123 above] and proposed that he, the Vice Chair, and the DSG should prepare a report

to the Subgroup on COP9 on a revised modus operandi based upon those points. **The DSG** said that based upon the Subgroup's responses, the Chair and the Secretariat will prepare a revised STRP modus operandi for the SC in June as a draft Resolution to the COP, one which will take account of funding issues as far as practicable.

> **Decision STRP-34: The STRP agreed that the present meeting's recommendations should be prepared by Max Finlayson, Heather MacKay, and the Secretariat as a report to the Subgroup on COP9 meeting in March and then incorporated into a draft COP Resolution for the SC meeting in June 2005.**

Agenda item 15: Any other business: Coastal Wetland Restoration and Assessment

142. **Doug Taylor** provided background on the creation and work of the Ramsar Tsunami Reference Group, coordinated by Wetlands International and comprising the four International Organization Partners and IWMI. In the apparent absence of a rapid assessment methodology for use in such emergency situations as the recent South Asian tsunami, WI has developed a protocol or form for rapid wetland and coastal assessment and he requested STRP input. There are WI teams already in the field using the form so improvements must be incorporated quickly. The teams have minimal equipment and are not technically trained, so the form relies upon solid common sense. It uses a coastal transect approach, progressing from coral to intertidal to beach to inland up to 20 or 25 meters asl, and some of its fields have been designed in consultation with humanitarian groups working in the field.

143. STRP participants made numerous suggestions for improvement to the form or protocol, including the following: why was the area selected for assessment; what are the main features of the zone; visual assessment of habitat and biodiversity change; sampling frequency; sampling across a number of impact zones including hardest and less hard hit; freshwater supplies, pollution and well contamination; rebuilding already in progress and extent of coordination; plan of rebuilding, refugee camps, and clear ground for rebuilding; what part of community is left, unaffected, and why; use of photographs to establish fixed points; the national authority's plans; was tourism an activity and is it recommencing; changes in topography and effects on livelihood; effects on infrastructure, hotels, coastal beach erosion; existing coastal defense structures, their effectiveness and present state.

144. **Doug Taylor** indicated that the protocol is being made available to all of the IOPs and others are encouraged to use it as well. It will be described at the Asian Wetland Symposium next week. **Rebecca Tharme** offered to fill in the form retrospectively for certain areas and to assist WI in arranging translation into additional local languages.**David Pritchard** suggested that the protocol

should be integrated or incorporated into Ramsar's rapid assessment guidelines. **Doug Taylor** indicated that the transect survey approach takes about half a day to fill out.

145. **Doug Taylor** noted that the form will be revised now with this input and posted on WI's tsunami Web site for the partners to use as they wish. He will work with the Secretariat to decide how this initiative should be reported to the COP. **The SG** noted that the discussion illustrates the need for a Convention position on reacting to natural disasters, a pre-adopted response strategy. **Doug Taylor** reminded that the aim of the Tsunami Reference Group is to provide objective scientific information and advice to the Ramsar Secretariat and the Parties, and said that the Administrative Authorities will be included when reporting back. Each of the IOPs will have its own slant on the uses of the Group's advice. **David Stroud** looked forward to a subsequent report on how the form worked out in practice. **The DSG** envisaged an interim report for the SC in June and a full report for COP9.

146. **Margarita Astrálaga** observed that at the ICRI meeting in April each of the participating groups will be asked about its response to the tsunami; that meeting will decide the project priorities for the next year. **Rebecca Tharme** queried how the Tsunami Group would fit into larger processes such as the CGIAR project on effects on livelihoods.**The SG** noted that the responses to the tsunami on the environmental side have been less coordinated than on the humanitarian side, and COP9 will be an opportunity for the Parties to take a decision on how to deal with similar events over the long term, in order to be better prepared.

> **Decision STRP12-35: The STRP endorsed Wetlands International's protocol for Coastal Wetland Restoration and Assessment, with the benefit of its suggestions, and strongly urged other groups to use it as well. The protocol should be included as an example in the Convention's rapid assessment guidelines. The Panel requested Rebecca Tharme to provide a list of other guidelines (e.g., regarding coral reefs) to be attached to the protocol and rapid assessment guidelines.**

Any other business: Coastal Wetland Restoration Framework Document

147. **Doug Taylor** explained that the document is part of the tsunami recovery effort and that the list of key issues has been drafted by Kevin Erwin. He solicited feedback on that to be contributed to WI's tsunami Web site.

Any other business: WorldFish Centre report

148. **The DSG** drew attention to the 24-page report just received from the WorldFish Centre entitled "Undervalued and overlooked: Sustaining rural livelihoods through better governance of wetlands" and focused upon the Mekong region, and he distributed copies to the participants.

Any other business: WWF work on bioregionalization

149. **Edith Wenger** reported on WWF's work on global bioregionalization based upon freshwater fish and fish species needing access to fresh water, which will be the only scheme that covers inland aquatic ecosystems. It will be circulated to the STRP for review in February and the members are invited to comment. If appropriate, it could be useful for the Ramsar Information Sheet. **The DSG** drew attention to similar work by WWF, UNEP-WCMC, and The Nature Conservancy on coastal and nearshore ecosystems, and said that the Secretariat will keep the Panel apprised of the progress there.

Agenda item 16: Adoption of the report of the meeting

150. **The DSG** drew attention to the draft reports of the first three days' meetings, which had been circulated previously, and proposed that comments be confined to substantive matters - he asked that editorial corrections and improvements be passed directly to the rapporteur. He proposed that the STRP should authorize the STRP Chair to approve the fourth day's report on its behalf, and he noted that the Secretariat reserves the responsibility to make purely editorial revisions later when finalizing the document.

> **Decision STRP12-36: The STRP approved the first three days' reports of the meeting, subject to suggested amendments, and authorized the STRP Chair to approve the fourth day's report on its behalf. Thanks were offered to the rapporteur.**

Agenda item 17: Closing statements

151. **The DSG, Nick Davidson**, thanked the participants for their hard work and applauded the significant volume of work that has been progressed. He noted the coherence that has been gained through the framework approach, which will be helpful for the Parties. He said that all of the WGs are the best he has ever seen - he expressed his pleasure at having worked with the Chair and Vice Chair and echoed his appreciation for the work of the rapporteur. He thanked all of the Secretariat staff, who have done so much to assist the STRP throughout the week, and he especially singled out Catherine Loetscher, who led on the logistics for this her first meeting since joining the Secretariat. He particularly praised the rôle of the four Assistant Advisors/Interns, who not only helped in the operation of the meeting but also contributed to the discussions. He thanked the concierges and cafeteria staff for their significant help in making the meeting run smoothly.

152. **The SG, Peter Bridgewater**, emphasized again the hard work of the Secretariat staff in organizing and facilitating the meeting and added his personal thanks. He said that the STRP is a model for how to garner scientific advice and funnel it into policy, and that this STRP is the best one and groundbreaking in its results. He noted that unless the COP gets good advice, its Resolutions are not useful, and that Ramsar products for its Parties are widely seen as standard bearers. He urged the STRP members to take pride in being part of a groundbreaking historical process. He thanked the Chair and Vice Chair for their calm guidance and expressed his appreciation for the DSG's hard work in guiding everyone through the process, drawing attention to David Pritchard's help as well. He looked forward to working with STRP members even after the end of this triennium, because, he said, "you can take the person out of the STRP but you can't take the STRP out of the person".

153. **The SC Chair, Gordana Beltram**, echoed what had been expressed already and said that the SG has a great staff. She noted that at Ramsar everything is always so well organized that one takes it for granted. She said that the STRP has done very good work this triennium, both in the tasks accomplished and the message about the way forward. She urged that that message to the SC should be open and frank so that the decision-makers are made aware of how important the STRP is to the Convention. She expressed her personal thanks to the Secretariat staff and to the Chair and Vice Chair.

154. **The STRP Vice Chair, Heather MacKay,** also expressed her thanks to the Ramsar and IUCN staff who made the meetings run like clockwork. She extolled the Chair's contribution, with minimal blah-blah in an informal atmosphere. She thanked the members and the representatives of the IOPs and observer organizations for their work.

155. **The DSG** noted that though this has been the last formal STRP meeting, the STRP remains 'in office' through the COP, with quite a few tasks still ongoing. The *modus operandi* asked members to participate in the COP if possible, and he urged the members to talk to their Ramsar national focal points at home and remind them of that - as members of the delegations, they will be able to help the Secretariat at the COP and mentor the Parties through the materials presented to them.

156. **The Chair, Max Finlayson,** noted that he has participated in 11 of the 12 STRP meetings. He too thanked the Secretariat staff and noted that the STRP still has much work to do in preparing final documents, reviewing the Technical Reports, and providing information for him to report to the SC and COP. He agreed that it would be very helpful if STRP members could participate in the COP. He noted that the COP will ask the Chair and Vice Chair to advise on the composition of the next triennium's Panel.

157. **The Chair** continued that the commitment and work of the participants has been outstanding and that an enormous amount and high quality of work has been accomplished. He added that he was sad to be ending his formal role with the STRP and looked forward to completing the current workload and would not dance on the tables. He concluded by saying that it has been a pleasure working with such very nice people, and that the highlight of this meeting in his memory will always be the agenda item concerning the stuffed dog.