

Minutes of the 7th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The 7th Meeting of the STRP, Gland, Switzerland, 22-23 April 1998

Participants:

MEMBERS	INVITED EXPERTS
Africa: Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu, Ghana (chair)	Antonio Carlos Diegues, Brazil
Asia: Makoto Komoda, Japan	Bronwen Golder, WWF
Alternate: Chaman Lal Trisal, India	Rick van Dam, Australia
Eastern Europe: Mihály Végh, Hungary	(EWS workshop only)
Neotropics: Roberto Schlatter, Chile	Donald Baird, United Kingdom
Alternate: Peter Bacon, Trinidad +Tobago	Douglas Holdway, United Kingdom
North America: Mauricio Cervantes Abrego,	
Mexico	SECRETARIAT
Oceania: Keith Thompson, New Zealand	Bill Phillips, Deputy Secretary General
Alternate: Max Finlayson, Australia	Montserrat Carbonell, R.C. for Neotropics
W. Europe: François Letourneux, France	Rebecca D'Cruz, R.C. for Asia

	Tim Jones, Regional Coordinator for Europe
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	Anada Tiéga, R.C. for Africa
BirdLife International: John O'Sullivan	Dwight Peck, rapporteur
BirdLife International: David Pritchard	Annette Pavlic, Small Grants Fund
IUCN: Jean-Yves Pirot	Jamshed Kazi, Intern for Asia
Wetlands International - AEME: Scott Frazier	Maryse Mahy, Intern for Europe
Wetlands International: Nick Davidson	Raquel Siguenza, Intern for the Neotropics
WWF International: Elizabeth Salter, UK	Ahoua Traore, Intern for Africa
<u>Photographs of the STRP7 participants and the reception afterward</u>	

AGENDA ITEM #1: Adoption of the agenda

1. Following introductions and welcoming remarks by Bill Phillips, the Deputy Secretary General, and Mihály Végh, the Vice Chair, the draft agenda was adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM #2: Introduction to the work of the 7th STRP

2. Bill Phillips, the Deputy Secretary General, presented the Secretary General's apologies and stressed the importance of his presence at the 6th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in terms of the future evolution of the Ramsar Convention. At a related IUCN/WWF workshop on 21 April, Mr Blasco and Calestous Juma both spoke in support of the ecosystem approach for global freshwater policy. In carving out a Ramsar niche in efforts to address the global water crisis, the Bureau has been participating in as many fora as possible, pursuing mandates from the Standing Committee (SC) and Brisbane COP6. Ramsar needs to position itself strategically in

order to make the Ramsar message on the river basin approach well understood in water management debates, and to equip our Partner Organizations and Administrative Authorities with the tools to reinforce that. If Ramsar were to neglect the global water debates, the Convention would be marginalized and the debates would move in other directions.

3. Mr Phillips indicated that, because these issues will be at the core of COP7's technical programme, it will be the most important Ramsar COP yet. This STRP7 meeting must determine what Draft Decisions will be required for the SC meeting in October, and documents must be finalized by the end of August. COP7 will be important, not only for water issues, but because the other conventions are looking to Ramsar as the most mature, seeking a guide to how to operationalize decisions and policies. COP7 should give us a wide range of tools to work with.

AGENDA ITEM #3: Restoration and Rehabilitation of Wetlands

4. Mr Végh noted that it was expected that restoration and rehabilitation (R/R) will be treated in the Technical Session related to ecological character and introduced his agenda paper and Draft Decision. The wise use concept gives solid reasons for calling for restoration of wetlands; the paper describes four considerations (ecological, technical, ethical, and socioeconomic) and outlines five preparatory steps (preservation, conservation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and nature development). Mr Pritchard applauded the Draft Decision but suggested adding criteria for when R/R would be an appropriate action, as well as notes on what constitutes a desirable restoration.

5. Mr Bacon observed that restoration is a follow-on from detection of change in ecological character. He urged the use of the term "rehabilitation" only rather than both. "Reconstruction of the catchment" is often outside the jurisdiction of Ramsar sites. The economic rationale is especially important, particularly in developing countries.

6. Mr Finlayson tabled two more papers which include relevant ideas that may be borrowed. The terms have to be defined in the Draft Decision, and Wetlands International has already begun work on that. The "cost per hectare" must be borne in mind. In the cases cited in these papers, monitoring was very poor for the rehabilitation cases, and it is hard to know whether the action was worth the cost. It was difficult actually to get community involvement; it is not enough to call for participation, one needs to suggest the means as well. The linkage of monitoring to management remains difficult to establish.

7. Mr Phillips agreed on the need for definitions, especially on any distinction to be made between restoration and rehabilitation. He suggested bearing this discussion in mind as other interrelated topics come up (e.g., ecological character, management planning), so that a more integrated result can be reached. Mr Phillips noted that COP7 will expect, in addition to a Draft Decision, guidelines

and principles on R/R, case studies, and methodologies for CPs to make use of. He suggested that the STRP formalize relationships with work already being done and find a way to merge that work into the required COP documents.

8. Jean-Yves Pirot noted that the IUCN-coordinated project on involving local and indigenous people is presently reviewing case studies, many of which contain components related to restoration projects. Nick Davidson pointed out that Wetlands International has a number of specialist groups which he is charged with coordinating; amongst these is a Wetlands Restoration Group, a small network of invited experts co-chaired by Kevin Erwin and Palle Uhd Jepsen, who is also an STRP alternate member. He undertook to ensure that Ramsar's needs will be included in this group's workplan.

9. Tim Jones related that, as part of the IUCN Parks for Life programme, the Ramsar Bureau led a one-day workshop on restoration, the proceedings of which are now being edited. He summarized the workshop's conclusions: 1) that communication about restoration activities needs special attention, as it is hard for local people to learn what is being done elsewhere (suggestions included creating both a Web site, perhaps with Wetlands International, and a society, with a manual and directory, to help people know where to go); 2) that restoration is often considered an expensive luxury, not an integral part of management planning. The Pan-European Regional Meeting in Riga will have a session chaired by Ed Maltby, with Mr. Jepsen as a presenter.

10. Roberto Schlatter suggested that a Scheme be made showing the relations between R/R and other wise use concerns (e.g., ecological character, management planning, monitoring procedures, economic valuation, etc.), with a flow chart illustrating these interconnections. Mr Trisal explained that India has had experience with restoration, including some cases which have been disastrous, and recommended an exchange of examples among the regions and a common terminology.

11. Mr Phillips pointed out that, of the 10 requested case studies, some can come from the overlap with the community participation project, and the Specialist Group and Riga Meeting might contribute more. He urged that new case studies not be written just for this purpose. Mr Davidson emphasized the need for bad cases as well as good ones, with identifiable causes of failure. It was understood that the COP will receive the Draft Decision and annexed guidelines for action, with the case studies provided as an information document inexpensively printed, later to be published as a companion to the COP's Decision. Mr Phillips reminded the meeting that, in the next COP, there will not be much opportunity for case studies in the Technical Sessions, as these are intended to take the global view on key issues; case studies can be offered in poster presentations, info documents, and informal talks outside regular hours.

12. Continued discussion of the proposed case studies publication called for a Ramsar "flavor" to the cases and noted that a proliferation of case studies on many topics are being planned. Mr Davidson suggested presenting only an analysis of best practice cases available elsewhere, with a list of references to these other sources. Ms D'Cruz noted that in Asia alone there are three databases with this information, and it might be better to use the present time to identify existing sources of such data, though Mr Bacon noted again the desirability of presenting material tailored for Ramsar's own needs.

13. Mr Komoda broached the idea of a single publication containing case studies illustrative of management planning, rehabilitation, ecological character, and other wise use issues.

14. A subcommittee composed of Messrs Végh, Phillips, Davidson, Frazier, and Jones met separately and reported back to the meeting with an outline of the way forward.

Decision STRP 7.1: The Panel requested that Mr Végh and the Bureau take the lead in preparing a more detailed Draft Decision on restoration and rehabilitation which takes into account the meeting's remarks and incorporates cross-references to illustrate the position of R/R within the system of other Ramsar tools – to be completed in first draft by 31 May for discussion at the Riga Pan-European Meeting (3-6 June), with later drafts to be discussed at other Regional Meetings if possible. The Annex to the Decision should use Mr Végh's agenda paper as an introduction, incorporate further input from the Restoration Specialist Group on methods and approaches, and include lists of information sources, databases, and addresses, perhaps with creation of a Web page of links – to be completed by the end of August. For the case studies, a standard format and selection criteria should be developed by the Bureau, with help from the STRP and the Wetlands International Specialist Group, which will also be asked to clarify definitions – to be completed by November 1998. The Scheme or Flowchart of relationships among Ramsar tools should be developed by the Bureau.

Ms Ntiama-Baidu, STRP Chair, took over the chairing of the meeting at that point, after apologizing for her late flight and expressing her thanks to Mr Végh for standing in to get the meeting started.

AGENDA ITEM #4: Ecological Character of Wetlands

15. Mr Finlayson and Mr van Dam reported on the experts' workshop on Early Warning Systems for Change in the Ecological Character of Wetlands, which was held on the two days prior to STRP7. The workshop's conclusions chiefly concerned revisions called for in the agenda paper by Finlayson, van Dam, and Humphrey and continued debate on the definitions of "ecological character" and "change in ecological character", with some indecision remaining to the end. It was urged that the paper

should explain types of change rather than causes of change, should focus on techniques that address water pollution as an example, should elaborate upon techniques for use as early warning indicators (such as endocrine disrupters, birds, physico-chemical indicators) and should develop further the concept of rapid assessment (by use of bird monitoring and remote sensing techniques). It was accepted that a Wetland Risk Assessment (WRA) framework be used as a vehicle for identifying problems and predicting change in ecological character. Mr van Dam explained further the standard paradigm for Ecological Risk Assessment and a modified paradigm for WRA. The concept of acceptable and unacceptable risk could not be dealt with in the workshop because it is site-specific and must be considered in light of long-term management objectives for each site.

16. The workshop agreed that the revised paper should stress three major themes: 1) change in ecological character, 2) the use of a Risk Assessment framework, and 3) prediction of change ("early warning") and the development of techniques. Socio-economic factors are built into the risk assessment process, and the choice of technical options for monitoring may be governed by non-technical reasons. To the question of what threshold should be used to trigger actions, Mr Finlayson stressed that the level of acceptability is related to each site and to negotiations over management objectives. He showed a chart illustrating the relationship of monitoring to the other various instruments of the Convention, a possible prototype for the Scheme or Flowchart of wise use tools.

17. Elizabeth Salter addressed the issue from the perspective of endocrine disrupters and stressed that all present risk assessment methods are flawed because the levels of toxics required to create harmful effects are too low to be detected. Therefore, present thresholds are also inadequate, because one molecule may be enough to cause damage. Birds are good indicator species, but it is better to move down the food chain (e.g., invertebrates) to pick up smaller doses. Risk assessment is no longer seen to be relevant in this field; rather "hazard assessment" is increasingly preferred (though those terms are not everywhere used in the same way).

18. Mr Finlayson noted that bird indicators are being used in this paper as only one example, chosen especially because birds have always been an important part of the Ramsar Convention and many Ramsar supporters are "bird people". In any case, birds are good indicators for some threats; further down the food chain, there is less data. He noted that monitoring and choice of indicators must be hypothesis-based and specific to each site.

19. Mr Tiéga expressed concern about the financial implications of the various techniques in underfunded countries, and Mr Finlayson conceded that the choice of techniques depends upon the types of threat encountered and other factors and some techniques are not inexpensive. Mr Pritchard pointed out that detecting change in the ecological character of a site is easier than detecting ecological change, because one chooses for each site what is valuable for management planning. John O'Sullivan noted the lack of mention of "disturbance" as a cause of change, and Mr

Finlayson recalled that disturbance is probably included in one or more types of change, which are to be emphasized rather than causes of change, but agreed to look at whether it needs adding.

20. Mr Finlayson turned to the presentation of a study called for by STRP 6.2 on the adequacy of the existing Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for providing baseline data for monitoring change in ecological character. Based on a study of 29 RIS provided by the Ramsar Database officer, Mr Frazier, and rated as "good", he and his colleagues concluded that 1) the RIS is basically suitable for the purposes of the Database, but 2) it is wholly inadequate for providing monitoring baseline data. Information relevant to baselines and monitoring was poorly addressed and mainly qualitative, and it did not specifically relate to threats that were identified in the RIS or to the criteria cited for designation for the List, nor to the identified values and benefits of the site.

21. The study of the RIS indicated the RIS is inadequate for recording change in ecological character, Mr Finlayson concluded; what is required is a mechanism to record sufficient information on 1) a reference or baseline condition, 2) values and benefits in relation to threats, 3) natural variability in temporal change, 4) the monitoring framework or programme, and 5) management mechanisms. He noted that the questions of the adequacy of National Reports as an updating mechanism and the relationship of criteria for listing to values and benefits and monitoring have not yet been addressed.

22. Mr Frazier explained that the RIS has evolved over the years and that a combination of old and new forms were used in this test. He raised the question whether any newly created data instrument will be filled in any more fully than is the RIS now. Mr Jones, the former Ramsar Database officer, explained that from 1971 to 1989 all that was required for site designation was the name of the site and a map. By COP4 there were too many Ramsar sites and the Database was instituted to answer the questions then most asked, namely why were these sites listed? A data input form was needed, and it was modeled on Derek Scott's data sheets for the regional directories of wetlands then being published. He noted that there were simpler objectives in those days, but seconded the doubt whether, if new and more elaborate data requirements are developed, the CPs will respond to them any more fully.

23. Mr Finlayson recommended designing a new instrument rather than revising the RIS to be more inclusive and cautioned against being deterred from the path of recommending an optimal approach and assisting the CPs in reaching it. Mihály Végh suggested that many of these issues can be included in the descriptive/evaluation phase of the Management Planning Guidelines (MPG) and explained in the descriptive notes for management planning. Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu cautioned against making any more revisions in the RIS before carefully defining what is wanted from the Ramsar Database.

24. Mr Frazier described steps presently being taken to improve the Database information, including soliciting updated data for RIS six years old or older and the work of Wetlands International staff in providing draft RIS for approval in cases where none exist.

25. Mr Pritchard urged that baseline information should always be present and never be optional, and that it should be stipulated that a statement of conservation objectives should always be provided; this could be in the management plans, however, and not in the RIS. Mr Jones drew attention to the United Kingdom's position paper on problems with the RIS and recommendations for modification, Agenda Item #16. He had no objection to changing the RIS if required but stressed that, if the CPs should adopt a new RIS at the next COP, they should show more commitment to filling them out as well.

26. Ms Carbonell observed that the RIS now has two uses, 1) its original descriptive purpose and 2) assisting in the Convention's movement towards management planning and monitoring change in ecological character, etc.; these latter she felt ought rather to be part of National Reporting as an updating process. Mr Finlayson expressed the view that the RIS can achieve its present purpose, is doing so to some extent and is improving. Concerning change in ecological character, Resolution VI.1, which locks CPs into this reporting mechanism, was probably a mistake. Rather than holding the CPs to obligations for reporting, it would be better to express it in terms of assisting them to manage their wetlands. Mr Frazier also noted that data on Ramsar sites frequently do exist but did not come through official channels.

27. Mr Komoda wondered whether the new National Reports format is better for this updating of data, but it was felt that, since the new NR format is based on the Strategic Plan, it would probably not be appropriate.

Decision STRP 7.2: It was agreed that the idea of using the RIS to gather baseline monitoring data should be abandoned. The notion of ecological character has evolved and should be seen as part of the management planning process rather than as Database-related.

Decision STRP 7.3: After extensive discussions, the STRP determined to recommend the following definitions to the Standing Committee:

"Ecological Character: The sum of the biological, physical, and chemical components of the wetland ecosystem, and their interactions which maintain the wetland and its products, functions, and attributes."

"Change in Ecological Character: The impairment or imbalance in any biological, physical, or chemical components of the ecosystem, or in their interactions which maintain the wetland and its products, functions, and attributes."

28. Mr Finlayson described how the Early Warning Systems discussion paper will be amended to account for the workshop's comments, with a much shorter summary for public use. A Draft Decision will also be prepared with assistance from the Bureau.

29. Mr Finlayson reiterated that the RIS is suitable for its purpose but is not adequate for recording change in ecological character and should not be diverted to that purpose. He urged that CPs only be asked to report on change in ecological character and not be required to provide data, noting that we have moved inadvertently to asking for that data. National Reports may be useful for this purpose but that question has not been studied. (Mr Phillips noted that NR forms have already gone out for COP7 and that if any changes are to be made in the NRs they should be proposed in Costa Rica.) Mr Finlayson expressed the need for examples of the use of monitoring data in making management decisions to be included in a technical text appended to the Draft Decision, or better, as an info document for COP7 which would not require SC approval in October.

Decision STRP 7.4: The STRP requested Max Finlayson and his institution to take the lead in developing a technical document on the use of monitoring data in making management decisions, for presentation to COP7 as an info document. A Draft Decision will also be prepared with assistance from the Bureau.

30. Mr Pritchard supported using NRs to get monitoring data but wished not to rely on triennial NRs alone, since Article 3.2 requires Contracting Parties to report changes in ecological character to the Bureau without delay. Ms Carbonell suggested that the Bureau analyze the current round of NRs to see if they presently provide data on change, but Mr Phillips pointed out that NRs will be submitted after the last date for proposing changes to the SC. He saw a need to undo the Resolution VI.1 focus on using the RIS for monitoring purposes and to lay this task upon the Management Planning Guidelines. Reporting can be triennial in the NRs but it is more important to build guidance into the MPG. Mr Finlayson observed that Resolution VI.1 was explicitly provisional and provides the mechanism for abandoning the use of the RIS for this purpose.

31. Mr Phillips noted that there is a project under consideration for using remote sensing and satellite imagery in management planning in Europe, which if funded will be complementary. A Technical Session at COP7 will include discussion of remote sensing.

32. The Chair, Ms Ntiamo-Baidu, summarized that the STRP has agreed upon definitions of ecological character and change in ecological character; that Mr Finlayson and the Bureau will

develop a Draft Decision; that the STRP invites Mr Finlayson and his colleagues to prepare a technical paper on monitoring for COP7; and that the STRP thanks Mr Finlayson and his colleagues for all their work over the past five or six years on this issue.

AGENDA ITEM #5: Management Planning Guidelines

33. Mr Komoda reviewed the first survey on the "Kushiro" or Ramsar Management Planning Guidelines last year, to which replies came from 43 CPs. These respondents generally found the MPG to be relevant and some 70% said they had applied them. NGO assistance has been important. Training is very important in management planning. Most did not feel the MPG to be too complicated. The conclusions were that most CPs feel the MPG are suitable for use without amendment, and that fundamental change was not necessary, though further improvement based on the CPs' experience would be helpful.

34. Mr Schlatter reported on the second "follow-up" MPG questionnaire conducted over the past three months, which was addressed to experts rather than to governments. Of the 26 responses, 21 did not consider EIAs, 22 did not complete cost-benefit or economic valuations, 7 reported financial or human limitations; 11 have introduced the precautionary principle, half lack buffer zones, and only half involved local people. 12 of the 26 had difficulty evaluating the success of management objectives but many are reviewing and updating their management plans. The main limitations are finances, training, ownership, and legislative issues. There was an expressed need for specific examples of best practices. He urged having regional workshops to train managers in the use of the Ramsar MPG.

35. Mr Diegues noted that the small number of responses raised the question of distribution in the responding countries; Mr Schlatter felt that the main distinction is between developed and developing countries. Mr Tiéga doubted that the planners were not technical people but were rather too specialized, and require better coordination. Mr Diegues lamented that so few plans are in place – less than 25% of all national protected areas and less for wetlands. There is a need first to solve the lack of MPs for all protected areas, then for Ramsar sites.

36. Mr Phillips agreed that the two questionnaires reveal a disappointing response and congratulated Drs Komoda and Schlatter for distilling as much from them as they did. He noted the conclusion that the MPG should not be discarded but recognized a possible need to elaborate them with additional guidance in light of concerns raised in the follow-up questionnaire. He noted the meeting's evolving view that case studies on various issues should be merged into one compendium on, e.g., "implementation of the Convention", and he seconded the suggestion of developing a Scheme showing interlinks amongst restoration/rehabilitation, ecological character and monitoring, management planning, involving local and indigenous people, frameworks for national policy, and

legislative frameworks, the last three of which are the subject of ongoing projects. Such a Scheme would be capable of showing COP7 how all the Convention's fundamental building blocks work together. Mr Phillips expressed the view that researching many case studies is not the best use of resources; there should be something that links these things into a framework, so that case studies illustrating all aspects will reinforce an integrated rather than a sectoral approach.

37. There was some discussion of the increasing role of NGOs in preparing management plans, with the caution that, since in the end it is the administrative authorities who have the responsibility, the Convention must continue to work toward strengthening government capacity and avoid relying too heavily upon NGO assistance; a balance is necessary.

38. A subcommittee composed of Messrs Komoda and Schlatter and the Bureau met separately and reported back to the meeting with an outline of the way forward.

Decision STRP 7.5: The STRP agreed to prepare a brief report for the Standing Committee on the findings of the two questionnaires on the Ramsar Management Planning Guidelines and delegated drafting this to Drs Komoda and Schlatter by the end of August. By the same deadline, the Bureau and Drs Komoda and Schlatter will prepare a Draft Decision for COP7 which will create links with other Ramsar issues and recommend retaining the current MPG, with the adoption of an annex to the Draft Decision which will provide additional guidance based on issues identified in the follow-up questionnaire; a first draft will be circulated to the STRP for comment. The annex will take the form of a "lessons learned" paper and provide guidelines for implementing key aspects of the MPG, and experts (such as Mike Alexander) will be invited to assist. The draft annex should be circulated for comment to selected respondents to the follow-up questionnaire and finalized by the end of August. Concerning the requested case studies, the Bureau should review all the calls for case studies emerging from COP6 and the Strategic Plan and identify existing case studies that illustrate a number of wise use concepts. This combined set of case studies will be prepared by the end of 1998 and presented to COP7 as an information document.

AGENDA ITEM #6: Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance

39. Mr Phillips reviewed previous mandates concerning the Criteria and STRP6's decision that there is no basis for developing new criteria, only for a reorganization of existing criteria with improved explanatory notes. The SC approved but asked the STRP to review the criteria again, especially with regard to cultural values and benefits. The Bureau's agenda paper for STRP7 was designed to be aggressive and thought-provoking on ways to involve values to humans. He urged that the meeting 1) focus on the proposed new criteria based on benefits and values of wetlands to human populations, 2) consider criteria for other taxonomic groups, 3) examine suggested changes in the

language of the current Type I (representative) and Type II (biodiversity) criteria, and 4) consider what to report back to SC21 and COP7.

40. Mr Phillips stressed that all criteria should be derivable from Article 2.2 of the Convention coupled with the wise use provisions. The proposed wording of suggested Criteria 3.1 on functional benefits is rooted in Article 2.2's natural functions, but that of suggested Criteria 3.2, taken from World Heritage, may be moving farther from the Convention's original intent. He argued that the Ramsar Convention is at a crossroads in its evolution and the suggested new criteria will be a good step in directing the Convention away from a narrow focus on natural properties and towards increased relevance to human welfare. As the Convention matures, it must emphasize wetlands as more than places where biodiversity can be protected; to remain at that stage would mean that Ramsar would be identified as merely protecting biodiversity in Listed sites, which are only 12% of the world's wetlands.

41. Mr Diegues drew attention to significant changes in the composition of Ramsar membership over the past decade, especially in the types of countries participating. He noted that human concerns are more frequently part of the language for national parks and protected areas, with increasing joint efforts between social and physical sciences. Some cultures are overly extractive, others not, but in general traditional societies are less destructive. A focus on human uses should focus on traditional uses; even the adjective "sustainable" is often not enough. He noted that the notion of "benefits" is culturally defined. It is more difficult to manage sites with people inside them, because one must negotiate as a key part of management, and most physical scientists are not trained for that. It is true that human uses are difficult to monitor but perhaps no more so than ecological features. Mr Diegues expressed the view that times have changed and the Ramsar Convention should keep up. At the Mamirauá Ramsar site in Brazil there is a new experiment in co-managing with traditional peoples, rather than expelling them from the protected area. He suggested that presently most Ramsar sites are designated for political reasons rather than by the Criteria.

42. Bronwen Golder explained WWF's move towards increasing engagement of local populations and community involvement. She stressed a distinction between designation and management. Criteria for designation must have scientific rigor, but there is a growing view that principles used in management are just as important. It might be better not to amend the Criteria but rather to strengthen the wise use principles and raise their importance within the Convention, thus making the Convention more legitimate at the community level. The EU Directives of habitats and species and on birds chose to stick with scientific rigor in the criteria for designation but highlighted social concerns in implementation.

43. Ms Carbonell observed that where management planning works, in Ramsar and other sites, is where local people are involved. She noted however that some traditional uses are sustainable and others are not. Mr Diegues said that what is traditional has no global definition but must be defined in local contexts. He felt that the distinction between designation and management need not be exclusive, for there can be an overlap between the naturalness of the ecosystem and the presence of traditional people. Mr Tiéga voiced a preference for a more holistic approach to this distinction, in which the designation of a site recognizes its natural properties and encourages good management practices. Mr Komoda agreed that the local population should be part of site management but wondered, if these concerns were to become part of the Criteria, where would the line be drawn on other management issues being included? He also noted that the proposed criteria do not distinguish between international and national levels of importance.

44. The Chair, Ms Ntiamo-Baidu, expressed disappointment at the way in which STRP6's decisions were presented to the Standing Committee, giving the impression that because the STRP members are not social scientists they felt incapable of judging the issue of criteria based on value to humans. She recounted the history of this issue vis-à-vis the STRP and noted that STRP6 did consider the issue fully, urging the Bureau to reorganize the Criteria into two categories (representativeness and biodiversity), with additional species included as subsets of category II. STRP6 decided that for a site to provide benefits to humans presupposes good ecological values, and that these concerns should be part of the Wise Use Guidelines. She would have preferred to have seen the reorganization that STRP6 called for.

45. Mr Finlayson felt that discussion of wise use would be a better use of time than a debate on the Criteria, but expressed the view that the sense of Article 2.2 of the Convention cannot be constrained to the lengths proposed by the new criteria. He noted that human uses are not included in the definitions of ecological character, because reporting on change requires monitoring, which would be very difficult to do in the case of the proposed new cluster 3. He felt that the Criteria and the List are mechanisms of the Convention but not the Convention itself and that it would be better to focus the discussion on wise use issues. STRP6 called for a rearrangement of the Criteria according to biophysical values, and he urged that this be re-affirmed and transmitted to the SC, in order to get on with more important issues.

46. Mr Pritchard found it odd to select sites based upon human use of ecological values rather than upon the ecological values themselves. He acknowledged the need to position the Convention but suggested that this be done through the application of the wise use principles rather than through the Criteria. After discussion of the extent to which the "working definition of ecological character" in Resolution VI.1 constrains the discussion of the Criteria, Mr Finlayson suggested rethinking the definition first and then discussing the Criteria.

47. Mr Diegues cautioned against rejecting human-based criteria because they are felt to be subjective and non-scientific, and suggested that the issue is not being taken seriously because of backgrounds in different sciences, the human and the biological. Ms Golder argued that those roles are complementary and cannot be merged. She urged that, having made an ecological decision on designation, managers then extend the parameters to other, broader issues and include socio-economic values further along the continuum. She again suggested a focus on wise use principles rather than dwelling upon the Criteria. Mr Jones agreed by noting that the Criteria issue has evolved into a false indicator on whether the Convention is taking human uses seriously, which risks dominating the SC and COP agendas and could have the opposite effect of moving the focus away from wise use and back onto the narrower concept of Listed Sites. He expressed doubt whether 106 CPs could agree on human-use values in any case and hoped that energies will not be dissipated on a side issue. Mr Végh suggested that human-based issues would be better included in the Management Planning Guidelines.

The Chair, Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu, summed up the consensus view thus:

Decision STRP 7.6: The STRP expressed the desire not to spend any more time in discussion of new criteria based on human uses of wetlands, preferring to focus on a serious look at wise use concepts. The STRP requested Bronwen Golder to present a written summary of her valuable presentation before the end of the week ([appendix I](#)).

48. Discussion continued about criteria for other taxonomic groups and about the wording of the suggested revision of the existing criteria. A subcommittee composed of Messrs Jones, Frazier, and Bacon, and Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu met separately and reported back to the meeting with conclusions about the existing Criteria. Mr Jones reported the group's emendations to the Bureau's proposed wording of two categories, 1) representativeness or uniqueness, and 2) biodiversity, with subsets on species, waterbirds, and fish. It was felt that there will be no time to consider the inclusion of other taxonomic groups before COP7, but proposals will be welcomed from other groups (e.g., IUCN SSC). The group also called for Guidelines to be drafted by a working group.

Decision STRP 7.7: The STRP decided to recommend to the SC the wording of the reorganized Criteria as provided by the drafting subcommittee ([appendix II](#)) and determined that a Working Group will draft new Guidelines which will include good definitions and a glossary, a note on endemism, and full cross-references to other tools and issues within the Convention. The Working Group on Criteria Guidelines will consist of Peter Bacon, Bill Phillips, Scott Frazier, and Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, and will ask Mike Acreman to participate especially on hydrological issues; the Group will work by correspondence and will circulate a first draft to the STRP for comment, with a final version ready for the SC by 31 August.

AGENDA ITEM #7: Strengthening Links with other Conventions

49. Mr Phillips provided background on the Bureau's cooperation with the CBD's SBSTTA on inland freshwater ecosystems and noted that SBSTTA proposed to recommend that CBD's COP4 consider having a Joint Work Plan with Ramsar. Rather than wait until COP5 for adoption, the Bureau has prepared a draft JWP outlining relevant activities (under way or planned soon), which has been issued as CBD COP4 Info Document #8, so that the CBD focal points can see how Ramsar initiatives relate to the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Since the CBD has more than 170 CPs, one can hope that some of them, having seen how many CBD points are being delivered by Ramsar, will wish to join our Convention as well.

50. The most significant part of the proposed JWP is section II.12 on financial mechanisms. Ramsar has had little success in gaining access to GEF funds, and only the Rio treaties (CBD, FCCC, CCD) have the role of advising GEF built into them. Section II.12 calls for instructing CBD to give a certain priority to Ramsar projects.

51. Mr Phillips urged STRP members to explain this issue to anyone able to influence COP4. It is expected that the draft JWP will be approved by COP4 but there may be opposition to the precedent-setting clause on GEF access. The premise is that Ramsar's carrying out so many tasks in behalf of the CBD objectives would be facilitated by access to GEF funds. The Partner Organizations are lobbying hard for this and the draft JWP has been sent to both the Ramsar AAs and CBD focal points. This may have the added benefit of increasing the level of dialogue amongst Ramsar, CBD, FCCC, and CCD focal points within the countries, which is to be encouraged. The CBD secretariat has encouraged Ramsar to approach the financial mechanism with better projects, but the question of support from the CBD's Contracting Parties remains. The CBD secretariat feels that targeting Ramsar sites in developing countries and countries with economies in transition will be well received by the GEF.

52. Mr Finlayson suggested several amendments for new versions of the Joint Work Plan, and Mr Pritchard noted that the International Association for Impact Assessment has asked BirdLife International to provide a formal link between itself and Ramsar, the CBD, and IUCN.

AGENDA ITEM #8: Global Review of Wetland Resources

53. Mr Finlayson reported on the progress of the Global Review project so far. Its objectives are to discover how much wetland there is and what state it is in, which entails what information there is, where it is, and how good it is. With funding from the UK, Wetlands International under contract from the Ramsar Convention has set Mr Finlayson and Nick Davidson and the three Wetland International offices to making regional reviews of the information available. Progress reports on

relevant databases will be due soon. Standardized database fields have been agreed. The Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist will collate the regional offices' results for a Global Overview and pass hardcopy results to the Bureau. No decision has yet been made on the final product, perhaps something for the Web. A draft report will be prepared for the IUCN Conference in Dakar, November 1998, then to the Bureau, then to COP7.

AGENDA ITEM #9: Toxic Chemicals

54. Ms Salter offered apologies from WWF for not having prepared a Draft Decision because of the tragic death of Barbara Rutherford, but assured the STRP that the promise will be fulfilled. WWF is increasing its work in freshwater issues and foresees increasing cooperation with Ramsar. She provided background on lethal and sublethal/chronic toxic threats to species, growing international concern, and new legal instruments. She also noted an increase in the use of synthetic chemicals, especially as pesticides, and predicted still more. It is difficult to pin down the extent of effects of toxics on species decline, but it is generally obvious. Ramsar should note that it is not enough to protect species and habitats. Toxics do threaten ecological character and thus threaten the wise use of wetlands; they can travel long distances, so the emphasis on buffer zones and point vs. diffuse source distinctions needs to be overcome. Ramsar's catchment approach is good but a global approach is what is required. In environmental appraisals, CPs should identify producers of toxics and their effects on wetlands.

55. She described two international instruments in prospect against persistent organic pollutants (POPs), about which there is a consensus for reduction or elimination, but many other substances will not be included because, though extremely harmful, they are not seen as persistent. Instruments against other endocrine disrupters will probably come later.

56. She pointed out that WWF advises that, since of the 60 chemicals with endocrine-disrupter capabilities fully half are pesticides, it is best to approach reduction through agricultural uses, via alternative agricultural techniques. WWF has a number of pesticide reduction programmes going on. Concerning industrial toxics, PRTRs enable communities to know what goes into factories and what comes out (both as waste and as products).

57. Mr Phillips observed that the Bureau seeks ways to bring this issue to the notice of the CPs and would like to ensure that the toxics issue is highlighted in our progress on ecological character guidelines, etc. There is a need for case studies on toxics, too, to give guidance to the CPs. Ms Salter noted that most information on endocrine disrupters comes from freshwater aquatic systems, but case studies on remediation are only slowly coming in. WWF could provide some of this material. WWF will be present in strength at COP7, of course, but since toxics are not on the formal agenda, Ms Salter suggested that Ramsar formally request a presentation of some sort on toxics. Mr Phillips

noted the possibility of a special intervention from WWF; there will be a high-profile special intervention, for example, on wetlands and human health. The lack of a scheduled Technical Session should not preclude a high profile for the toxics issue.

58. Mr Finlayson inquired about a listing of toxic chemicals, to which Ms Salter replied that WWF has such a list, but industry people would dispute many of the substances on it. Toxics include all toxins but WWF's emphasis is mainly upon endocrine disrupters.

59. Mr Finlayson added that he considered that Ramsar needed to consider further the issue of hydrocarbons and oil spills in coastal wetlands and that this could be done within the proposed Wetland Risk Assessment framework being proposed.

Decision STRP 7.8: The STRP formally acknowledged the work of the late Barbara Rutherford, who contributed valuable input to the STRP in the past, and expressed its sympathy to her family and friends. The STRP requested WWF to provide its background report and Draft Decision to the Bureau by the end of June, for circulation to the STRP for comments before finalization by the end of August. Ms Salter signified her willingness to meet that deadline.

AGENDA ITEM #10: Economic Valuation of Wetlands

60. Mr Phillips noted that there will be a COP7 Technical Session on tools for assessing and recognizing wetland values, and the Bureau has established ongoing contact with GWEN and with Mike Acreman for ideas for TS discussions. Preliminary talks have been held with IUCN on how to shape the Technical Session. Mr Végh provided some further promising contacts in his institute.

61. Keith Thompson urged, in addition to economic valuation, more subjective studies and recommended a draft plan by Stevens on "cost-utility evaluation of natural heritage" which introduces a number of other factors and is not as monetary as cost-benefit analyses. It is more suitable for decisions at national level on whether individual sites are worth conserving. Cost-benefit analysis misses something out, as some things can't be ranked monetarily and need subjective factors. Mr Pritchard agreed that the wording of Recommendation 6.10 and the Strategic Plan may be too limiting and restrictive to monetary valuations. Since cost-utility and cost-effectiveness are better than cost-benefit, he hoped that "economic valuation" would embrace a larger range of tools than just monetary ones. Mr Komoda described a case study in the use of CVM (contingency valuation method) conducted by the government of Japan on the Yakushima Island World Heritage Site and observed that the goal of valuation is to reach common agreement on management approaches.

62. The STRP was asked to communicate any further inputs on this issue to Bill Phillips.

AGENDA ITEM #11: Environmental Impact Assessment

63. Mr Pritchard described the recent work of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), with 2500 members and affiliates in 100 countries. IAIA seeks cooperation with the Ramsar Convention. IUCN is proposing a similar investigation of what guidelines, case studies, rosters of experts, etc., are in existence. As at Ramsar's COP6, there is an awareness that there is much wisdom out there, which shouldn't be duplicated just for Ramsar. Recommendation 6.2 called for input on existing guidelines from the CPs but there was very little response. It would be a good idea to seek guidelines, case studies with lessons learned, a review of the state of play, and a stock-taking. He noted a common interest with CBD, IAIA, etc. on this issue, with discussions taking place in many other fora.

64. Concerning the desired Scheme of Ramsar tools, Mr Pritchard saw the need for a description of how EIA relates to other Ramsar tools and how it fits with each. This may be more helpful if it were not considered desirable to write our own guide.

65. Mr Phillips welcomed a "closing of the loop" with Mr Pritchard's role as a link with IAIA. Cooperation with IAIA might also be included as part of the proposed Joint Work Plan with the CBD. What is most important is to represent visually, with textual support, the importance of EIA in Ramsar planning. He noted that EIA figures prominently in the project on legislative frameworks for National Wetland Policies for the Technical Session at COP7, and mentioned that Mr Pritchard will be in the workshop on that. There is also another project on National Wetland Policy guidelines, in which Mr Pritchard is also involved.

66. Mr Phillips foresaw that the Ramsar "Scheme" will be a big task (a "web" rather than a flowchart) and sought Mr Pritchard's help on that. He suggested that the MPG follow-up questionnaire might also yield good case studies. He judged that it's all coming together and, though extremely complex, still a valuable input for COP7.

67. To Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu's question on how to find the expertise to evaluate the EIAs done by other parties on Ramsar sites, Mr Pritchard stressed the need to know whom to go to for the expertise, which is the virtue of IAIA, which has networks of experts. Codified principles in a document may sometimes help, but bringing in experts may be better. Mr Thompson urged that, whenever a significant event occurs in the catchment of a Ramsar site, governments should be obliged to seek expert advice; the discretion of officials should be tightened on this issue.

AGENDA ITEM #12: Ramsar Small Grants Fund

68. Mr Schlatter reported that, after some years of successful operation of the SGF, the time has come to design steps to ensure that deadlines are respected, in order to show to the donors a greater accountability and rigor in reporting. With assistance from Annette Pavlic, the Bureau's programme assistant for the SGF, he offered draft forms for progress reports and final reporting of SGF projects. He also suggested instituting a post-project evaluation form, with results to be communicated to the countries and taken into account in future allocations.

69. Mr Phillips thanked Mr Schlatter and the STRP for taking this initiative and noted that Operational Objective 6.2 calls upon the Bureau and the SC to bring a critical evaluation of the SGF programme to COP7. Improved accountability and reporting will assist in that. He expressed a need to evaluate completed projects more thoroughly and to publicize case studies, and when requesting funds for the SGF the Bureau needs to demonstrate good management of those funds.

70. Mr Tiéga urged that SGF reports require countersignature of the Administrative Authorities to show that the AAs are monitoring their progress. Ms Pavlic noted that more than half of all projects are implemented by someone other than the AAs, though the AAs must submit the proposals; she welcomed the idea of involving the AAs more closely in the success of the projects, perhaps with a place for the AAs comments on the project's results as well.

71. There was discussion of the best methods for improving the operation of the SGF, including a suggestion that the STRP and Partner Organizations be involved in project evaluation along with the Regional Coordinators. Mr Komoda suggested that only half of each grant might be provided in the beginning, with the remainder to follow after receipt of the progress report; the idea of withholding substantial portions of the grants did not meet with approval as it was felt that many project implementers in developing countries would be unable to begin the projects without a significant amount to begin with. Upfront costs tend to be highest for field-based projects, which could be crippled by that stipulation. It was suggested that responsibility for final reporting be transferred to the AAs if the project implementers should fail to report on time, at the risk of having no more projects approved from that country. Problems with the timing of the call for SGF applications, presently sent through diplomatic channels, sent directly to the AAs and Partner Organizations, posted on the Ramsar Web site, and spread by word-of-mouth, were discussed but no improvements could be recommended.

72. Ms Pavlic observed that, with present funding for the SGF so low, it would be unwise to advertise any more broadly since it would only mean more proposals being left unfunded. This year the Bureau requested CPs to recommend only one project or at least to prioritize their submissions. There are presently about 60 completed proposals for a total of some SFR 2.4 million, but only SFR 130,000 have been received so far to fund them. Mr Phillips reported that this year, after the SC has

selected the projects for the SGF funding available, the Bureau intends to work hard to find bilateral donors for some 20 or 30 of the other worthy proposals.

73. The Chair, Ms Ntiamo-Baidu, expressed the STRP's gratitude to Ms Pavlic and Mr Schlatter for their work on this issue.

AGENDA ITEM #13: Review of the Ramsar Database

74. Mr Frazier reported that Wetlands International's move to the Netherlands has permitted increased staff and technical capacity, including a Web site and better computers. In 1997, quite a few data gaps were filled, especially for the Russian sites, and Mr Frazier and his staff contributed about 35 draft RIS for CPs with less capacity. For the six-year update, ten have been received and more are expected.

75. For 1998, Directory texts will be written for all Ramsar sites, for electronic publication in advance of COP7. Staff are developing an application to manage the Ramsar Database, and more outputs are slated for the Web. There were some 130 information requests during 1997 (23% NGOs, 26% Bureau, 15% government organizations, 12% students etc., 12% private individuals, 6% consultants, 3% media). Mr Frazier led the STRP through a number of exhibits, including a global map of Contracting Parties and several colorful charts showing analysis of Ramsar sites, Parties, and regions.

76. Mr Phillips observed that, in the Bureau's workplan, getting adequate data on sites has been a high priority and the RCs and Mr Frazier have been pestering the CPs all year. The Bureau no longer adds new sites to the Ramsar List until the Administrative Authority has satisfied basic expectations on data and maps, which has caused some annoyance among the CPs. Some 12-15 countries are moving towards accession. He expressed hope for a breakthrough among the Small Island Developing States and noted the Bureau's paper on Ramsar benefits for SIDS published on the Web and forthcoming as an attractive brochure. By COP7 in May 1999 there may be as many as 120 Contracting Parties.

77. Mr Jones introduced the United Kingdom/JNCC paper on the RIS, which pointed to the difficulty of giving guidance to so many different people working on data for site designations. They would like to know more about how the data is to be used, more about the relation between the RIS and management planning, and wished for a clearer distinction between the two, with less duplication. The UK paper distinguishes between data needed for global analyses and data needed for site management. He noted that other CPs do not have the resources or dense reporting network that the UK enjoys. It is a radical suggestion to urge CPs to make management plans for all sites as the main source of data on those sites.

78. Mr Pritchard judged that the UK raises some interesting questions but does not address the issue of how to motivate CPs to gather and provide data. He saw problems in the global applicability of some of the UK's suggestions.

79. The Chair, Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu, expressed unwillingness to open discussion on the UK's suggestions, since the STRP had earlier agreed that the RIS is adequate for its objectives, and also in view of the limited time available for the STRP's deliberations. There is a need to redefine what is wanted from the Ramsar Database in order to help the CPs with management, and that will be a big job. For the present, the STRP will acknowledge the UK's recommendations and continue to consider their strong points in other contexts.

80. Resolution VI.13 requested Wetlands International to develop further its analysis of threats to Ramsar sites, and Mr Frazier pointed to an updated Overview of Ramsar Sites as a way to analyze these threats, but said that no funding has as yet been found for that exercise. He was unsure whether the expectations voiced in Resolution VI.13 could be met without financial assistance.

81. Mr Phillips noted Mr Frazier's hope that the Overview could be updated and published electronically for COP7, though no funding has yet been secured for that, but observed that the Convention still expects Wetlands International to present some form of report on this issue to COP7; the form that might take can be discussed later, and Mr Frazier has demonstrated some of the possibilities. The Ramsar List will always be an important part of the Convention. The Chair offered the view that graphical analyses such as those Mr Frazier produced for this meeting would look very good blown up on a big screen.

82. Mr Cervantes wondered whether country-by-country analyses were possible, to which Mr Frazier replied that they can easily be done but regional breakdowns are usually considered more politic. He hoped for WCMC's help in incorporating IUCN protected area status data for Ramsar sites. Mr Jones noted the UK's suggestion of easy-to-complete tick boxes but felt that text commentary is always more reliable than ticked boxes.

Decision STRP 7.9: The STRP determined that the Ramsar Information Sheet is satisfactory for its principal purpose at present (see Decision STRP 7.2). Noting the views of the UK, however, it was felt that the next STRP may wish to revisit the issue once the views of other CPs are known.

83. Mr Thompson, responding to STRP Decision 6.15 requesting him to review the suitability of the Ramsar Classification of Wetland Types, reported that he tried designing a more suitable classification scheme and concluded that, based on New Zealand's experience, it would be too complicated for global application. What is required is a simple system based upon structure and not necessarily hierarchical. There should be a global system as well as national systems, which need not

be the same but should be translatable into each other. He urged a more proactive approach, covering most important wetland categories whether or not any real sites of those types presently exist on the List.

84. The Chair, Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu, expressed disappointment that the STRP had not made much progress on this issue in view of the fact that it was the STRP which requested to look at the issue, i.e., that this is the one task that the STRP was not mandated to do. She thanked Mr Thompson and agreed with his view that something needs to be done, but could not tell what that should be and felt uncomfortable bringing such a recommendation to the SC. Mr Finlayson noted that the Ramsar Classification was intended for only one purpose, providing categories for Ramsar Database analysis, but that other people's uses of it are not as satisfactory. He suggesting making other recognized classification systems available, possibly on the Web, for people seeking guidance on that, and adding some text to the Ramsar classification system which spells out its limited objectives.

85. It was noted that the Semeniuks' paper on Ramsar classification of inland wetlands points out some of the problems, which could be solved by adopting the Semeniuk breakdowns. Mr Finlayson pointed to the Semeniuks' Table 7 showing comparisons between their scheme and Ramsar's. The Semeniuks are now undertaking the same exercise for marine and coastal wetlands, and he suggested that they be asked to submit their results to the STRP. Mr Phillips quoted the Semeniuks' purpose being "not to displace the Ramsar classification" but agreed that seeking the Semeniuks' involvement might be helpful to the Contracting Parties. Mr Thompson expressed the view that the Ramsar classification is not so helpful for management and he urged the Bureau to stay in contact with the Semeniuks.

86. Mr Frazier noted that the Ramsar System contains no definitions of its terminology and ought to have a glossary attached to it.

Decision STRP 7.10: The STRP determined that the Ramsar Classification System serves the purposes for which it was created, but noted that there are other classifications in existence. The Panel urged the Bureau to draw attention to the work of the Semeniuks and keep in contact with them. If necessary, a second look at the Ramsar System will be taken at a later date to see whether modification is required. The STRP asked Messrs Thompson and Frazier to work together to see if a glossary can be provided.

AGENDA ITEM #14: Education and Public Awareness

87. Mr Phillips pointed out that a Ramsar communications strategy must be developed for COP7, but the Bureau has developed an interim communications plan for the interim. No consultant has yet been located to work on a strategy, and he asked the STRP for leads. Someone with fresh ideas

would be preferred, not someone from within the "Ramsar family"; he or she would need to develop realistic goals, because the Bureau's communications team is very small.

88. The STRP members were invited to contact Bill Phillips with suggestions of people who might be contracted to develop a Ramsar communications strategy in time for presentation to the SC in October.

AGENDA ITEM #15: The Montreux Record and Management Guidance Procedure

89. Following up on the list of proposed MGP missions approved by Decision STRP 6.5, Rebecca D'Cruz reported that the Iran mission did take place, the India mission is slated for the first two weeks of November, and the Jordan mission has evolved, with the Administrative Authority's concurrence, into a proposed workshop in August-September 1998 to analyze the work of the GEF project which has just completed its 3-year first phase there.

90. Ms Carbonell reported that the Guatemala mission was completed in June 1997; the report has been finalized and submitted to the AA, with no response on its acceptance over the past three months, perhaps political issues involving oil production are involved as well as technical ones. The Costa Rica mission took place in March 1998 and the experts' contributions have just been received; the MGP report should be ready by June, but Costa Rican authorities have already begun implementing some of the recommendations given orally. Trinidad and Tobago has requested a follow-up to the MGP mission of 1995. Though there do remain other Montreux Record sites in the region, no other MGP missions are planned at this time.

91. Mr Tiéga reported that the proposed missions to Algeria and Uganda have been deferred because of security problems. For Egypt, the problems are political and not technical, so a high-level mission is being planned the better to reach the decisionmakers. In order to learn whether the political will is there, the Secretary General has offered to accompany the MGP mission, suggesting May of this year, and an answer is awaited from Egypt.

92. Mr Jones observed that since more than half of all Montreux Record sites are in Europe, they can't all be addressed by traditional MGP missions, and he is seeking more innovative means of dealing with them. Greece (10) and Italy (5) account for half of Europe's MR sites. Greece feels that, because of recent positive actions, removal of some of its sites from the Montreux Record is warranted, and on a recent visit there the Secretary General recommended that an independent panel be established to recommend to the government and the Convention on whether to remove them. Mr Jones also visited Italy, where it was agreed that three sites in Sardinia should remain on the Record; there will be a mission to northern Italy later this year to check on the other two MR sites. Spain has been a lower priority for an MGP mission to Doñana because much is going on there,

but the Bureau expects to be consulted on aquifer issues there. A reduced MGP mission is planned for Croatia later this year, concerning its two Record sites; since all the technical information is available, the questions to be resolved are all political.

93. Mr Phillips noted that the Montreux Record has a bad image. The Bureau is undertaking to prepare a publication for COP7, a compendium of information on all Montreux Record sites and former sites, with all the steps taken and with happy endings, in order to allay fears of the MR and the MGP. A full history of the MR and the MGP will show them to be positive tools of the Convention, not sticks with which to punish Contracting Parties that are unable to meet the Convention's expectations.

94. To Mr Finlayson's request for a scorecard on recent Montreux Record actions and use of the Resolution VI.1 questionnaire, the Regional Coordinators reported that in Asia, no sites have been added or removed and the questionnaire, though not yet used, will be used in India; in the Neotropics, no sites have been added or removed but hopefully all those on the Record will be removed soon, using the questionnaire; in Africa, South Africa has reported on two MR sites; and in Europe, one Czech site has been added to the Record, using the questionnaire, and 5 to 10 sites might be removed next year. Italy found the questionnaire logical and helpful, but there is a communications gap where the Administrative Authorities don't know about the tools that exist to assist them.

95. Ms Carbonell informed the meeting about Mr Pritchard's analysis of implementation of the Convention in Trinidad and Tobago, which found many actions to have been triggered by the MGP mission and noted the use of all the Ramsar tools by the Administrative Authority.

AGENDA ITEM #16: Any Other Business

96. Mr Phillips introduced the CBD's COP4 Information Paper #9 on the results of the Malawi Workshop on the Ecosystem Approach, to be discussed at the Global Biodiversity Forum on 1 May. STRP comments on that paper will be welcomed by Gudrun Henne of the CBD secretariat. The Bureau has been cooperating closely with the Partner Organizations to promote the ecosystem approach at all the prominent water fora.

97. The recent diplomatic note calling for nominations for the next Scientific and Technical Review Panel was discussed, with attention to the revised areas of expertise being sought. STRP members were asked to suggest further names for the future Panel.

98. Concerning the project on Involving Local and Indigenous People, it was reported that the Secretary General and Messrs Phillips and Finlayson have been involved in this project, mandated by

COP6 (which identified IUCN, WWF, the Caddo Lake Institute, and the Kushiro International Wetlands Center to undertake it) and coordinated by the IUCN Social Policy Group, in the person of Alex de Sherbinin. A list of case studies is under development and well advanced, and some of them also illustrate a range of other issues as well. The challenge remains to translate the lessons learned into a tangible something that the CPs can take home from COP7.

99. With this, Mr Phillips said, as with all Draft Decisions for COP7, we need very tangible, specific actions to be taken and to require reporting on them. When they make their reports to COP8 in 2002, the Contracting Parties should specify what actions have been taken. The Draft Decisions should not just say "here is an annex of guidelines, please follow them"; there should be much more accountability built into them.

AGENDA ITEM #17: Next Meeting

Decision STRP 7.11: It was agreed that the present meeting's minutes will be circulated to participants in draft form next week, with comments required within a week after that. It was also agreed that no more meetings will be needed before the next Standing Committee, since outstanding issues and required documents can be dealt with by correspondence.

AGENDA ITEM #18: Closing Remarks

100. Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu sincerely thanked the STRP members for their support over the years and congratulated them on having got through their full agenda. She expressed gratitude to Bureau staff for their support and preparation of documentation. She wished the members a safe journey home.

101. Mr Phillips on behalf of the Bureau thanked the members for their expert guidance. He particularly thanked Ms Ntiamoa-Baidu for guiding the STRP process so ably. He noted that COP7 will change the STRP for the next triennium, but the Bureau hopes to remain in close contact with all of the present STRP members. He invited the Panel members to be ambassadors for the STRP and act as an historical resource. He expressed once again the Secretary General's regrets for not being present, but conveyed Mr Blasco's report that the Convention's presence at CSD6 has proved to be worth that inconvenience.