

8th Meeting of the STRP, Gland, Switzerland, 22-24 September 1999

The 8th Meeting of the STRP, the first for the Panel members newly-elected by Ramsar COP7 and the first reflecting the new proportional regional representation adopted by Resolution VII.1 (1999), was held in Gland, Switzerland, 22-24 September 1999. Also for the first time, by virtue of Resolution VII.2 paragraph 8c, representatives of the Convention's International Organization Partners participate as full members of the STRP instead of as observers. In addition, Resolution VII.2 invited a number of additional bodies to send representatives in an observer capacity; those present were the Center for International Earth Science Networks (CIESIN), the Global Wetlands Economics Network (GWEN), the International Association of Limnology (SIL), the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG), the International Peat Society (IPS), and the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS).

The primary purpose of the new STRP's first meeting was to set a proposed Work Plan for the triennium, for consideration by the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee in late November 1999. The Work Plan itself will be posted here in English, French, and Spanish following the SC24 meeting.

Participants in STRP8:

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	OBSERVER ORGANIZATIONS
Dr Angel Alcala (Philippines), Asia	Dr Antoinette Wannebo, CIESIN
Dr Aboubacar Awaïss (Niger), Africa	Dr Toré Söderqvist, GWEN
Dr Harry Chabwela (Zambia), Africa	Prof Jean-Bernard Lachavanne, SIL
Mr Geoff Cowan (South Africa), Africa	Dr Rob Stoneman, IMCG
Dr Max Finlayson (Australia), Oceania	Dr Jack Rieley, IPS
Mr Arthur Hawkins (USA), North America	Dr William Streever, SWS
Dr Jorge Jiménez (Costa Rica), Neotropics, Chairperson	
Dr Peter Maitland (UK), Europe	SECRETARIAT
Dr Jan Pokorný (Czech Republic), Europe	Mr Delmar Blasco, Secretary General

Prof Toomas Saat (Estonia), Europe	Dr Bill Phillips, Deputy Secretary General
Dr Yara Schaeffer-Novelli (Brazil), Neotropics	Ms Margarita Astrálaga, R. C. for the Americas
Dr George Zalidis (Greece), Europe	Ms Rebecca D'Cruz, R. C. for Asia
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION PARTNERS	Dr Tobias Salathé, Regional Coordinator for Europe
BirdLife International: Mr David Pritchard	Mr Anada Tiéga, R. C. for Africa
IUCN: Dr Jean-Yves Pirot	Dr Dwight Peck, rapporteur
Wetlands International: Dr Nick Davidson	Logistics: Ms Mireille Katz, Ms Annette Keller
Wetlands International: Mr Scott Frazier	Intern Assistants to the Regional Coordinators:
WWF International: Dr Biksham Gujja	Alexander Belokurov, Parastu Mirabzadeh,
WWF International: Dr Chris Tydeman	Musonda Mumba, Flor Salvador, Anett Zellei
Additional invited experts from IUCN: Ms Andrea Bagri, Mr Ger Bergkamp, Dr Martha Chouchena-Rojas, Mr David Sheppard, Dr Wendy Strahm	
<u>Photographs of the STRP8 meeting and the reception as well</u>	

Notes of the 8th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

AGENDA ITEM 1: Welcoming remarks

The Secretary General (SG) welcomed the newly-elected members and noted that representatives of the International Organization Partners are now full members of the Panel. He also welcomed the observers from the invited organizations and expressed disappointment that representatives of the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of the other conventions were not present. He described the network of National STRP Focal Points (NFPs) requested by COP7 and invited STRP members to establish working contacts with these NFPs once they've been identified. He noted that the STRP's work for the triennium must be completed in time for the Standing Committee in October 2001. He asked the members to categorize the tasks requested by the COP as:

- a) those issues in which STRP has been asked to generate a product for COP8, which should have the highest priority;

b) those in which not enough has been done by other bodies; and

c) those which could be farmed out to other bodies, given the constraints on the STRP's time and resources.

He invited the STRP to ensure a female perspective on some issues, since there is little gender balance on the Panel. The new Ramsar video was viewed and will soon be ready for distribution.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Introductions of members and observers and their areas of expertise

AGENDA ITEM 3: Adoption of the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 4: Election of the STRP Chairperson for the triennium

Decision STRP 8.1: Dr Jorge Jiménez of Costa Rica was nominated by Tex Hawkins, seconded by STRP members from several regions and International Organization Partners, and elected Chairperson of the STRP for the triennium.

AGENDA ITEM 5: *Modus operandi* of the STRP

Item 5.1: National Focal Points. The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) expects most NFP nominations from the Parties by the end of the year. The Bureau will assist in communicating with NFPs but expects STRP members to seek input from the NFPs on a regular basis, obtaining their comments on STRP activities and tapping their expertise for STRP tasks. The success of communication within the network will be assessed at the next meeting. Dave Pritchard noted the value of people in-country who can help to translate Ramsar's international issues into national contexts and assist NFPs, and suggested that NFPs make contact with National Ramsar/Wetland Committees. The NFPs' areas of expertise should also be emphasized. The SG noted that the Bureau may need to begin translating key STRP documents and drafts into French and Spanish for the benefit of the NFPs. The Chair expressed concern that NFPs in developing countries may require further resources from the Convention. The Bureau agreed to provide draft Terms of Reference for the NFPs for STRP to consider, including the suggested role of monitoring Small Grants Fund projects. STRP members should contact NFPs in their regions, and NFPs can make contact with the STRP lead members of the Working Groups.

Item 5.2: Observer bodies. The Chair invited the observer organizations to identify contributions they could make as the meeting moves through the agenda.

Item 5.3: Other conventions. It is expected that observers from the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of the other conventions will be present at future STRP meetings. The Chair emphasized that the STRP NFPs should establish communications with the national focal points of other conventions, in order to facilitate cooperation at national level, and that the other conventions should be encouraged to participate in STRP meetings.

Item 5.5: Expected products of this meeting. This meeting is intended to produce a draft Work Plan, identifying Working Groups, their members, and timetables for actions, for adoption by the 24th Standing Committee meeting. The Panel will decide how many future meetings will be required. The SG noted that the core budget foresees assistance for STRP participation only once a year, but if an additional meeting should be required he would try to locate the resources. Budget implications of any additional Working Group meetings would have to be studied carefully.

Decision STRP 8.2: The Panel approved draft terms of reference for the STRP National Focal Points (attached in Annex II) for consideration by the Standing Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Regional categorization

An ongoing task of the STRP is to respond if any Contracting Party should indicate its intention during the triennium to notify the COP that it wishes to participate in another region.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Strategic Plan 2003-2008

Decision STRP 8.3: The Panel decided to request of the Standing Committee that the STRP be represented in the drafting process for the Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Invasive species

COP7 requested STRP to prepare wetland-specific guidelines on invasive species and relevant legislation. It was recognized that much work is being done by other bodies which could be tailored to the wetland context. **Wendy Strahm** (IUCN/SSG) briefed the STRP on ongoing work, including IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group's Guidelines for the Prevention of Biodiversity Loss due to Biological Invasion (nearing completion), the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) coalition (with a chapter on relevant law by the Environmental Law Centre), the draft Guiding Principles being prepared for the January meeting of CBD's SBSTTA, and the GBF workshop in alien species set for Sri Lanka in October 1999. Jean-Yves Pirot reported on the IUCN/Ramsar project to produce awareness materials on invasives in sub-Saharan Africa, now in its first phase.

Decision STRP 8.4: The Panel agreed to appoint a Working Group on Invasive Species to assess and comment upon the draft IUCN Guidelines and CBD Guiding Principles on this issue, determine whether they would satisfy the COP's expectations, and if not, suggest further action. The WG will include Finlayson (Lead), Alcalá, Awaiss, Chabwela, Cowan, Maitland, Saat, and WWF, with GWEN (Global Wetland Economics Network) members available for advice on economic aspects. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 9: Incentive measures

COP7 requested that STRP prepare an Internet resource kit and report to COP8. The DSG drew attention to OECD's and WWF's new handbooks on incentive measures. **Andrea Bagri** (IUCN) reported on the Economic Services Unit's Web resource kit prepared for COP7 and described CBD's progress on this issue in preparation for its COP in May 2000. She suggested the desirability of a series of resource kits for different audiences, which will build on the OECD and WWF guidelines, and a collection of 'case stories' of successful culturally-embedded incentive measures.

Decision STRP 8.5: The Panel decided to form a Working Group on Incentive Measures to work further with IUCN on a Web-based resource kit, and to defer contemplation of its report to COP8 until more has been learned of what the CBD will produce. The Working Group will include Hawkins (Lead), Pokorny, Bronwen Golder (to be invited), and IUCN, with GWEN available for advice. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 10: Impact assessment, economic valuation

The DSG felt that impact assessment is so urgent an issue that the Convention can no longer delay concrete advances in this area. Dave Pritchard (BirdLife), Ramsar's link with the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), suggested that it is not necessary to invent new wisdom, only to solidify connections between the impact assessment and wetland conservation communities. He briefed the Panel on recent advances in wetland awareness among IA professionals. The greatest need is to make people with a need for IA aware of the people who can assist; a roster of experts would be more helpful than guidelines. The present goal should be a Web-based resource kit on IUCN's Web site, with STRP suggesting new material, and a roster of experts, with STRP's NFPs helping to translate in the national context. **Andrea Bagri** briefed the Panel on the IAIA's Outline of Work. The STRP thanked IUCN for its work on the resource kit so far and instructed the Bureau to request CPs with existing guidelines to contribute them for the kit as well. It was urged that case studies on EIAs include those that have gone wrong. All urged greater

formal cooperation between Ramsar and the IAIA and that a representative of the IAIA be invited to the next STRP meeting.

Decision STRP 8.6: The Panel determined to invite the International Association for Impact Assessment to the next STRP meeting and instructed the Bureau to request Parties through diplomatic channels to send information on EIA case studies and guidelines. A Working Group on Impact Assessment was appointed to bring the matter forward, to include IUCN (Lead), Cowan, Schaeffer, Shatanawi (to be invited), BirdLife International (Pritchard), with GWEN and SIL (International Association for Theoretical and Applied Limnology) available for advice. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 11: Restoration

COP7 asked the STRP to identify sources of expertise and further to develop tools and guidelines. Bill Streever (SWS) noted the need for a roster of experts but pointed to some difficulties in whom to include. He observed that both positive and negative case studies should cover 25 or more types of approaches to restoration, with brief text, photographs, and links to technical literature. It was determined that the term "restoration" should include "creation" and "rehabilitation". Dave Pritchard (BirdLife) observed that COP7 asked for guidance on restoration as "an element of national planning" as well as site-based actions, including how to set targets, trigger regulations, secure funding. It was urged that Ramsar suggest that the USGS's citation index of 3700 searchable entries be merged with Wetland International's Wetland Restoration Specialist Group's 1300 non-searchable entries and perhaps others. Nick Davidson urged including training opportunities, case studies on different wetland types, and consideration of restoration as part of river basin management; Yara Schaeffer urged inclusion of a glossary of terms as well. Jack Rieley suggested that attention should also be paid to how to choose amongst restoration options and how to include social and economic factors. Grey literature should be canvassed for the citation index. MedWet is already gathering good and bad case studies on the Mediterranean Basin. Jean-Yves Pirot suggested developing a project proposal similar to the Recommendation 6.3 project on local communities in wetland management. Much material is already available on Eastern Europe.

Decision STRP 8.7: The Panel set up a Working Group on Wetland Restoration, to include Zalidis and Streever (Society of Wetland Scientists) as Co-Leads, Awaïss, Chabwela, Pokorny, Schaeffer, GWEN, IPS (International Peat Society), IUCN, SIL, Wetlands International, and WWF, to advance this issue further. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached.

AGENDA ITEM 12: The World Commission on Dams

Resolution VII.18 asked the STRP to contribute to the WCD process and report to COP8 on WCD's findings and their implications. Jamie Skinner of the WCD secretariat and the Bureau had offered suggestions for STRP action. **Ger Bergkamp** (IUCN) briefed the STRP on the WCD process, including a) full analysis of 8-10 focal dams, b) cross-check analysis of 120-150 more dams, and c) thematic reviews on related issues. He suggested that STRP contribute comments on the WCD secretariat's document for the Commission by 15 November, participate in review of the secretariat's papers, and perhaps pursue an analysis of Ramsar sites with dams. Ramsar and WCD should establish links with some sort of technical input. The WCD report is due in August 2000, and Ramsar could also contribute to the follow-up on guidelines afterward. Biksham Gujja described WWF's input to the process, including fact sheets on 50 to 200 dams, and noted the difficulty of linking specific sites to specific biodiversity and ecosystem losses. Harry Chabwela mentioned a recent study by Mike Acreman on the dam at the Kafue Flats Ramsar site in Zambia. Loss of migratory fish is a common and easily measured result of dam construction. The Danube system was cited as an instructive example, and links between dams and invasive species were pointed out. Wetlands International has counted 98 Ramsar sites for which impacts from dams have been cited in the data sheets. It was noted that dams can also be used positively as a tool for restoration, but these are usually smaller dams, whereas the WCD is concerned specifically with large dams. Dave Pritchard suggested that Ramsar include the transboundary effects of dams, perhaps in association with the Espoo and Helsinki Conventions. There is very little time in the WCD process to analyze anything meaningful in the Ramsar Database, and STRP might better focus on how Ramsar can use the WCD's guidelines afterward.

Decision STRP 8.8: The Panel established a Working Group on the World Commission on Dams process, charged with assessing the WCD guidelines when available, providing input to the WWF/IUCN assessment of large dams, assessing existing guidelines, and analyzing Ramsar Database information that might be relevant. The Group will include Finlayson (Lead), Chabwela, Maitland, Pokorny, Shatanawi (to be invited), IUCN, SIL, SWS, Wetlands International, and WWF, and members of GWEN available for advice. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 13: Allocation and management of water

COP7 requested a report on the current state of knowledge and guidance if possible. STRP members noted the urgent importance of the issue, as well as the difficulty of making a significant contribution without substantial resources. Studies are available on the Upper Mississippi Valley (USA) and Australia. The SG suggested that this should be the subject of a Technical Session at COP8 rather than just a report to the COP.

Decision STRP 8.9 The STRP established a Working Group on Water Allocation and Management, including Cowan (Lead), Hawkins, Pokorny, Shatanawi (to be invited), Zalidis, BirdLife, IPS, IUCN, SIL, and WWF, with GWEN members available for advice, and Mike Acreman of the Institute of Hydrology (UK) to be invited to assist. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 14: Inventory and data management

Nick Davidson (Wetlands International) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Global Review of Wetland Inventories (GRoWI) project and CD-ROM reports, the conclusion of which is that the global inventory situation is dismal and that no reliable quantitative estimates of resources or trends can presently be made. Anada Tiéga noted that in Africa inventory is a very high priority, with the potential to influence political leaders, and stressed the importance of an agreed inventory methodology and training. Bill Streever pointed to problems with the definitions of "comprehensive inventory" and "loss". Nick Davidson mentioned that the Ramsar Classification System had been used in just over half of the inventories assessed in the project.

The SG underlined the urgency of the inventory issue in all regions and dissuaded from waiting until COP9 (2005) for action. Money and technical assistance are required urgently, and a strategy is needed for getting the message to the development assistance community. The Standing Committee and the COP must be urged to see that special efforts are needed. The Chair noted that, because of the lack of a standard methodology, funds are frequently wasted on poor inventories. Resolution VII.29 urged that the MedWet methodology be considered as the basis of Ramsar tools for inventory, and Dave Pritchard hoped that STRP would be proactive in advocating a good methodology, given the damage caused by bad inventories.

Max Finlayson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed Inventory of Asian Wetlands project, intended to present an overview for COP8 and a fully-operational database by COP9. The STRP discussed technical aspects of the Asian project at some length. The DSG urged that the MedWet methodology be reviewed to see what changes might be required to make it globally applicable, and that these changes be made.

Decision STRP 8.10: The STRP established a Working Group on Wetland Inventory to review the MedWet inventory methodology with a view to wider applicability and to chart the way forward. The Group includes Wetlands International (Lead), Cowan, Finlayson, Jimenez, Milton (to be invited), Zalidis, and IPS, with CIESIN (Center for International Earth Science Information Network) to be invited and GWEN available for advice on economic matters.

AGENDA ITEM 15: Integrated coastal zone management

The Bureau has been tasked to propose guidelines on integrating wetlands into coastal zone planning for consideration by COP8, and it seeks STRP advice. Margarita Astrálaga listed a number of coastal zone guidelines already in existence (e.g., MedWet, Caribbean, FAO, World Bank, UNEP, etc). Angel Alcala pointed to the need to determine which of these are working well. Nick Davidson stressed that the goal is to bring the work of the coastal zone management community to the attention of the Ramsar community, and perhaps more importantly, to alert the coastal zone community to the importance of Ramsar issues. Rebecca D’Cruz urged that coastal zone issues be incorporated into Ramsar’s existing *Guidelines on river basin management*. The DSG lamented that CBD has recognized Ramsar’s role on inland water issues but not for coastal zones and welcomed STRP’s decisions that can be incorporated into the next draft Joint Work Plan with the CBD. Jack Rieley and others noted the interconnectedness of coastal zones with other wetland types and the artificial nature of these thematic distinctions; it was urged that CBD be encouraged to take a more holistic approach.

Decision STRP 8.11: The Panel established a Working Group on Coastal Zone Management, including Alcala (Lead), Finlayson, Saat, Schaeffer, SIL, and WWF, with GWEN available for advice. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached.

AGENDA ITEM 16: Assessment methodologies

The DSG noted that COP7’s River Basin Guidelines called on STRP to compile information on functional and biodiversity assessment methodologies, though not necessarily for endorsement by the COP. Ramsar’s Wetland Risk Assessment Framework deals with this issue as well. **Martha Chouchena-Rojas** (IUCN) briefed the STRP on CBD’s work on assessment, in relation to its thematic work programme and work on cross-sectoral issues, especially impact assessment and indicators. The STRP will consider assessment issues further in relation to ecological character (agenda item 20) and requested that the Bureau follow up with the CBD secretariat in order to maintain contact with its work on indicators.

AGENDA ITEM 17: Global Action Plan for Peatlands

STRP has been asked to advise on the draft Global Action Plan (Recommendation 7.1) and help with a review of the extent of global peatlands. Jack Rieley (IPS) presented videos on recent work on tropical peatlands, and Rob Stoneman (IMCG) briefed the Panel on the evolution of the Global Action Plan before and after its endorsement by Ramsar Recommendation 7.1. A workshop in Germany in November will aim to finalize the Draft GAPP for endorsement by the Ramsar Standing Committee and presentation during the Millennium Wetland Event (Québec, August 2000).

The Chair tasked the Inventory Working Group with the second half of the STRP's charge, relating to inventory of this wetland type, and the STRP discussed ways to "fast track" adoption of the GAPP. It was foreseen that the November workshop could finalize the draft and communicate it to the Standing Committee for possible adoption before the end of the SC24 meeting. Rebecca D'Cruz called for further action in response to the urgent peat forest destruction in Southeast Asia, something which could be done by this Standing Committee meeting without further delay.

Decision STRP 8.12: The STRP invited its members to comment on the draft Global Action Plan for Peatlands before the November 1999 workshop and urged the Standing Committee to endorse the final version. A Working Group on Peatlands, comprising Co-Leaders Wetlands International, IMCG (International Mire Conservation Group), and IPS, Milton (to be invited), with GWEN available for advice on economic questions, was established to advance the issue following Standing Committee's endorsement. The terms of reference for this Working Group are attached in Annex III.

AGENDA ITEM 18: Climate change

The STRP was asked to report to COP8 on the effects of climate change on wetlands. The DSG alluded to the tabled paper by IUCN, on Ramsar vis-à-vis UNFCCC, as the centerpiece of Ramsar's way forward. The Bureau considers this issue to be a very high priority and hopes to table the paper at the UNFCCC's COP in November 1999. The SG expressed special thanks to IUCN for this initiative. **Ger Bergkamp** (IUCN) summarized the paper's aims: 1) to summarize the state of knowledge on relationships between wetlands and climate change, 2) to analyze the documentation of both conventions, and 3) to suggest ways to establish links between the two conventions at the secretariat, subsidiary body, and national levels. He urged that STRP establish a Working Group or Focal Point for further work and invited comments on the tabled paper by 15 October; he also urged that STRP establish a formal link with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The DSG will visit the UNFCCC secretariat on 28 September 1999 for discussions on future cooperation.

Decision STRP 8.13: The Panel invited its members to comment on the IUCN's paper on Ramsar and the UNFCCC before 15 October and determined that no further work would be undertaken at this time. Max Finlayson was appointed as STRP's Focal Point for further discussions, and the issue of cooperation with UNFCCC will be revisited following the UNFCCC's next Conference of the Parties in November 1999.

AGENDA ITEM 19: Application of the Ramsar site Criteria

Item 19.1: Ramsar sites Database. Scott Frazier (Wetlands International) gave a PowerPoint presentation showing recent progress in the development of the Database, especially in filling gaps in the data. Antoinette Wannebo (CIESIN) reported on the progress of her discussions with Wetlands International and the Ramsar Bureau with a view to CIESIN putting the Ramsar site data on-line in such a way as to allow queries and GIS/mapping capabilities, in a context of additional data sets (e.g., climate change). The Chair congratulated Wetlands International for its progress with the Database and suggested that STRP National Focal Points might be able to assist in filling gaps. The DSG noted that COP7 identified those Parties with inadequate data and asked them to provide better data by the end of 1999.

Item 19.2: Short term targets for designation of wetland types. The DSG introduced the Work Plan's mandate for short-term targets for wetland types and expressed the need for more specific guidance for CPs on under-represented types. It was suggested that NFPs be asked to help identify existing inventories and shadow lists, and that other inventories, such as those of Important Bird Areas in Europe and Africa, could be helpful. WWF's Living Waters campaign is not site-based but has an area target of 25 mil. hectares of freshwater ecosystems being placed under protective management. The designation process varies from country to country, but in all cases the nomination must be made by the national government through the Administrative Authority. Some 398 new site designations were pledged at COP7 by 56 Parties and the Bureau is following up on these. The Chair observed that the STRP can advise on reaching targets but has no direct role in this process.

Item 19.3: Guidelines for under-represented wetland types. The Strategic Plan called for the STRP to prepare guidelines for the designation of peatland, wet grassland, mangrove, and coral reef; this could be modeled on the process of developing guidance on karst. The Chair asked the Coastal Zones and Peatland Working Groups to add the mangroves/coral reefs and peatland segments to their work plan. There was some doubt about what 'wet grasslands' refers to, since there is no specific type of that name in the Ramsar Classification and no glossary for any of the Classification's terminology. There was discussion of the suitability of the Ramsar Classification of Wetland Types, which has sometimes been described as inadequate; in the past the STRP has decided to leave it unchanged, as it seems adequate for its task. It was agreed that it would be better to make a table comparing Ramsar Types with those of alternative systems, and to add a glossary and a commentary on the existing system. Parties could be given the option of going further with their data whilst using the Ramsar System as a base.

Decision STRP 8.14: The STRP delegated its Working Groups on Coastal Zones and on Peatlands to work on guidance for identifying and designating mangroves/coral reefs and peatlands respectively. Wetlands International will assist with wet grasslands and the Administrative Authority of Belgium (which specifically requested this inclusion in

Resolution VII.27) will be invited to assist. Bureau staff will help to facilitate the process, as was the case with karsts: Tobias Salathé with grasslands, Rebecca D’Cruz with peatlands, and Margarita Astrálaga with coastal zones.

Item 19.4: Guidelines for regional application of the Criteria. It was observed that previous STRP meetings agreed that this task awaits the development of international guidelines before moving on to the regional level.

Decision STRP 8.15: The Panel recommended that the question of regional application of the Ramsar Criteria not be included in its Work Plan at this time.

AGENDA ITEM 20: Ecological character of wetlands

Item 20.1: Early warning systems. Max Finlayson noted that his institution, ERISS (Australia), is working on the question of how to apply the Wetland Risk Assessment Framework and plans to publish some case studies. With further contributions from others and publication on the Web, this task will have been met.

Decision STRP 8.16: The Panel encouraged Dr Finlayson to continue his work on early warning systems and looked forward to receiving a report at the end of it.

Item 20.2: Ecological quality of wetlands. A CBD liaison group is presently preparing a paper on biological indicators for SBSTTA5, and STRP could make input into that process. Inventory design should include basic parameters to monitor ecological quality, and this should be linked to the Wetland Risk Assessment Framework. It is difficult in some countries to determine change in ecological character and it would be helpful if biological indicators were developed by region. The USA is presently studying indicators methodology by type of wetland and region.

Decision STRP 8.17: The Panel determined to wait for the CBD’s document on biological indicators to be produced; the Bureau will distribute that to the STRP members, who will provide feedback to Dr Finlayson.

Item 20.3: Status of the Montreux Record. The STRP should be aware of its role in additions to and removals from the MR. A number of CPs made interventions at COP7 concerning their sites, and the Bureau will follow up the removal requests with the MR Questionnaire to ensure that removal is justified. Resolution VI.1 says explicitly that the STRP and/or the Bureau should seek further information if unsatisfied with the results of the Questionnaire. Parties can seek removal from the Record at any time so this is an ongoing task of the STRP. It was agreed that the STRP members to review removals should be chosen on a case-by-case basis, depending upon region, language, and

areas of expertise, and visits to candidate sites should be encouraged (resources permitting), perhaps by national offices of Partner Organizations or STRP observer bodies.

Decision STRP 8.18: The Panel determined that the STRP should be notified of each request for removal of Ramsar sites from the Montreux Record, at which time it would select a subgroup, including the appropriate subregional representative and other STRP members and National Focal Points as appropriate, to review each removal process.

AGENDA ITEM 21: Ramsar site management

Item 21.1: Management planning guidelines. The DSG described the past STRP's survey of the Parties on their use of the guidelines, which found that the guidelines were helpful but could be made more comprehensive in some areas. COP7 asked the STRP to provide additional guidance on management planning, especially with respect to impact assessment, cost-benefit analysis, zonation, multiple use, buffer zones, and the precautionary principle. **David Sheppard** (IUCN) presented an introduction to the work of IUCN's Protected Areas Programme and the World Commission on Protected Areas with its theme programmes, tasks forces, and networks. He welcomed Ramsar participation in the next decennial World Parks Congress, set for 2002 in Durban. The DSG reported on the recent Memo of Cooperation with the World Heritage Centre and increasing discussions with the Man and the Biosphere Programme on collaboration on site management, particularly for those sites listed under two or all three of these programmes/conventions. It was felt that a collection of best practice case studies would be the best way forward, possibly with assistance from WCPA members.

Decision STRP 8.19: The Panel created a Working Group on Site Management Planning Guidelines to expand the Ramsar management planning guidelines along the lines requested by COP7 and to establish links with the World Commission on Protected Areas and MAB experience. The Group will consist of Hawkins as Lead, Awaïss, Chabwela, and WWF, with Mike Alexander (Wales), Frank Alberts (Netherlands), IUCN's WCPA, and UNESCO's MAB Programme to be invited to assist. IPS offered to assist with advice.

Items 21.2: Management planning case studies, and 21.3: San José Record. It was noted that previous STRP meetings deferred the case studies issue, given other priorities, in favor of case studies being collected for other purposes; these and the Handbook series now being produced by the Bureau will partially meet this need. The Bureau and STRP have been asked to outline the feasibility of establishing a record of well-managed "demonstration" Ramsar sites, which could be combined with lessons-learned case studies. It was suggested that a concept could be presented to COP8 along with about 10 potential nominees for the SJR, with their management plans. There was discussion about whether the SJR should be limited to Ramsar sites, since the Management

Planning Guidelines are for "Ramsar sites and other wetlands", but since Resolution VII.12 mentioned the Wise Use Guidelines instead, it would be more appropriate to confine the SJR to model Ramsar sites.

Decision STRP 8.20: The Panel asked the Bureau to take the lead on the issues of management planning case studies and establishment of the San José Record and report to the next STRP meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 22: Interpretation of Articles 2.5 and 4.2 of the Convention

David Pritchard reported that the European Commission is developing guidance on "imperative reasons of over-riding public interest", which is equivalent to Ramsar's "urgent national interest"; BirdLife contributed legal advice to the EC process and has made that available to the Standing Committee (via the Bureau). He observed that Ramsar Parties need guidelines on how this issue should and shouldn't be interpreted and saw linkages to the habitat compensation issue. Much case law exists on this issue, and RSPB and the UK are presently reviewing the USA's 'no net loss' policy vis-à-vis the European situation. He stressed that it is not simply a matter of making rules that are as strict as possible, though loopholes should be closed. The DSG reported that a Diplomatic Note was sent to the Parties requesting input, but that only RSPB has responded.

Decision STRP 8.21: The STRP determined to defer the discussion of Articles 2.5 and 4.2 of the Convention until after the Standing Committee has received input and considered the issue further. BirdLife International volunteered to maintain a 'watching brief' on this matter on behalf of the STRP.

AGENDA ITEM 23: Any other business

Item 23.1: Terms of reference for STRP Working Groups. Each of the TORs established by the groups was discussed and amended for inclusion with the Work Plan. George Zalidis noted that additional resource people can be added to the Working Groups at any time. The DSG urged that timetables be established in the next few weeks for those TORs that have not yet got them.

Decision STRP 8.22: The STRP approved a set of terms of reference for its newly-created Working Groups (attached in Annex III) for inclusion in the STRP Work Plan for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Item 23.2: Subregional responsibilities for Regional Representatives on STRP. The CPs and non-CPs within each Ramsar region were apportioned amongst the STRP members from the respective regions, for contacts with National Focal Points and other purposes.

Item 23.3: Report of the Meeting. The draft report of the meeting's first two days was approved after corrections. The Chairman was authorized to approve the third day's report on behalf of the STRP.

Item 23.4: SWS Ramsar grant programme. Bill Streever announced a new small grants programme for Society of Wetland Scientists members in developing countries working on Ramsar-related projects.

AGENDA ITEM 24: Next meeting of the STRP

Despite budgetary constraints, it was felt that two STRP meetings would probably be necessary in the year 2000, given the volume of work required. The first was set for the second week of June 2000, at the Ramsar Bureau, and the second will be scheduled after learning the dates of the next Standing Committee meeting. The need for two meetings will be reassessed as the progress of the Working Groups becomes known.

AGENDA ITEM 25: Close of the meeting

The Chairman thanked the STRP members for their hard work and willingness to become involved, and offered special thanks to the DSG, Bill Phillips, for his many contributions to this and past STRP meetings. The DSG expressed thanks to the members on behalf of the Bureau, with special thanks to the observer organizations and to the Chairman. He also thanked the Regional Coordinators and the rapporteur for their assistance and especially expressed appreciation to Mireille Katz for her handling of the meeting's logistics. The DSG wished the STRP good luck in its work and expressed regret that, after leaving the Bureau in February, he would not be present to see these new initiatives come to fruition.