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Abbreviations

CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CEPA NFP	CEPA National Focal Point
COP	Conference of the Contracting Parties
CP	Contracting Party
DR	Draft Resolution
IOP	International Organization Partner
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SC	Standing Committee
Secretariat	Ramsar Secretariat
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
STRP NFP	STRP National Focal Point
TOR	Terms of Reference
WSM	Wetland Site Manager

The term 'interviewee' and 'respondent' are used interchangeably to denote a person interviewed for this report.

The term 'body' or 'bodies' refers to a range of participants involved in a process or activity, including inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

Executive Summary

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the second.

This report specifically focuses on reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders.

The report includes three sections: 1. Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies and processes; 2. A summary of findings from the interviews conducted with representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes; and 3. Key messages and lessons learnt.

A summary of key findings and key messages is provided below.

Key Findings

Views on uptake of Ramsar Guidance

- More technical guidance is needed
- Wetland site managers and other target audiences need to be accessed
- Guidance should be delivered in several languages
- Guidance should be clear and concise
- Much guidance is already available, and needs to be disseminated
- Some key issues and themes were identified as needing further guidance development

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

- Several suggestions were made on strengthening the roles of various bodies, including the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, to ensure the needs of Parties are captured in the guidance developed
- Resources and capacity needs were highlighted several times by interviewees, with concerns that the STRP and Secretariat operate on very limited budgets, affecting guidance development, translation and dissemination
- Prioritization of tasks for the modus operandi is needed
- Several opportunities were identified to improve provisioning of guidance, including forming more partnerships, and establishing national wetlands committees

Key Messages and Lessons Learnt

Guidance Provisioning

Accessibility and language

- Guidance should be as clear and concise as possible – scientific jargon and unnecessary length should be avoided in order to make key messages clear.
- Guidance should be provided in the minimum of English, French and Spanish. Partnerships with other organizations experienced with outreach to the target audience should be explored for guidance development, dissemination and translation.

Outreach to target groups and tailoring guidance to suit them

- A database for target audience contacts should be developed and updated – for example, NFPs, CEPA NFPs can partner with organizations that have access to wetland site managers in a particular region. This contact information should be retained in the database.
- A variety of different guidance types should be utilized for efficiency and effectiveness – for example, wetland demonstration projects are invaluable for practical, hands-on training.

Make use of existing guidance

- Guidance developed by other organizations is already available on multiple issues and themes relevant to Ramsar, and for various sites and regions around the world. Before undertaking development of guidance on a particular issue, stocktaking should be done to assess whether guidance already exists, and if it does, in what ways it is possible to adapt it and deliver it to stakeholders.
- A database with existing guidance could also be developed, working with CEPA NFPs and relevant organizations, to supplement the information available, for example at the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) 'Tools for Parties – Relevant Publications' site (which currently has a Google search tool):

<http://ramsar.wetlands.org/ToolsforParties/RelevantPublications/tabid/749/Default.aspx>

Structure, Bodies and Processes

Prioritize Tasks and Streamline Implementation of Modus Operandi

- A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. A professional facilitator could assist in fairly and objectively guiding the STRP through a prioritization process.
- The process of implementing the modus operandi should be streamlined so that there is sufficient time for delivering outputs. This can be achieved, for example, by setting clear timelines for implementing the workplan (a professional facilitator could also assist with this).

Ensure Relevancy of Guidance Through Strengthening Working Relationships

- STRP Members, senior regional advisers and CEPA NFPs should form a closer relationship to ensure the needs of the Parties are responded to and met
- The Secretariat should work more closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical guidance is developed

Partnerships, synergies and collaboration:

- The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there.
- Partnerships will also enable Ramsar to provide relevant guidance in a variety of ways, such as demonstration projects and workshops, to target audiences.

1. Introduction

The Ramsar Convention, signed in 1971 in Ramsar City, Iran, is an intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands in all geographic regions of the planet. The pillars of implementation are the wise use of all wetlands, designation and management of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), and international cooperation. There are 168 contracting parties, and 2,188 Ramsar Sites.

The Ramsar Convention has four bodies: the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP), the Standing Committee (SC), the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Secretariat, which are involved in a range of processes and activities in implementing Ramsar's mission - the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.

Background

In [Resolution XI.16](#), 'Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention,' the Contracting Parties at Ramsar's 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11, Bucharest, 2012) approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention", the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12). The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46th Standing Committee Meeting (Decision SC46-14).

The review requested by the Contracting Parties at COP11 has been divided into five components, as listed below. These components are separate reports drafted by a team of two consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, each taking a lead on a specific component. The present report is Component II of this process: Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders.

1. Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools, etc.;
2. **Review of the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders;**
3. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;
4. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;

5. Final report drawing on the above analyses, that summarizes major findings, lessons and recommendations for: 1.) Improving the way scientific guidance is developed, applied and converted into tools; and 2.) Improving scientific support and delivery by Ramsar bodies and processes.

This report has three major sections: 1. Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies and processes; 2. A summary of findings from the interviews conducted with representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes; and 3. Key messages and lessons learned.

Methodology

This analysis was performed by conducting a literature review of Ramsar guidance documents and other materials (see Annex I for a list of materials consulted). Through this review, we identified the types of guidance and descriptions of roles and responsibilities for the bodies and processes of the Convention, including the STRP, STRP NFPs, Standing Committee, STRP Oversight Committee, NFPs, CEPA Oversight Panel, Secretariat, Ramsar Advisory Missions, regional initiatives and international organizations. The focus of this review is on the roles and responsibilities of the Ramsar Convention's bodies as they pertain to the provisioning of science and technical guidance, and not their overall roles and responsibilities.

The analysis was supplemented with interviews with representatives of the above bodies, including the former STRP vice-chair and an invited expert. In total, 15 people were interviewed, (see Annex II for list of interviewees).

The full set of Interview questions are available in Annex III. A compilation of all responses was provided to the Secretariat.

This report is organized into three main parts: An overview of the roles of bodies and processes of the Ramsar Convention as they pertain to the provisioning of scientific and technical advice (Section 3), key findings from interviews (Section 4), and overall recommendations (Section 5).

2. Roles of Bodies and Processes of the Ramsar Convention

The following section is an overview of the roles of bodies and processes of the Ramsar Convention, as pertaining to the provisioning of scientific and technical guidance. The literature consulted includes the STRP modus operandi 2013-2015 (Res. XI.18), which outlines the primary roles and responsibilities of the STRP and its members. Further TORs for STRP members, invited experts, and observer organization representatives are referenced in Annex I. It is emphasized that the full set of roles and responsibilities for each body is not listed here; rather for the purposes of this report, the roles related to guidance provisioning have been extracted.

Ramsar Bodies

Conference of Contracting Parties (COP)

The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) is the governance and policy-making body of the Convention. Government representatives from each of the Contracting Parties meet every three years to receive national reports on the preceding triennium, decide on the budget, implementation and priorities for the next triennium, and consider guidance for Parties for ongoing and emerging issues.

The programme of each meeting of the COP includes technical sessions which analyze ongoing and emerging issues of importance in the field of wetland conservation and wise use, including further interpretation and development of the key Convention concepts and guidance for the Parties on key areas of implementation.

The STRP's Work Plan for each triennium is built around the priority tasks determined by the Standing Committee, which are based upon requests from the Conference of the Parties by means of its Strategic Plan and COP Resolutions and Recommendations, and for 2013-2015 specifically in COP11 Resolution XI.17.

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention was established (by Resolution 3.3, Regina, 1987) to oversee Convention affairs and to act as the intersessional executive body representing the COP between its triennial meetings. Members of the SC are contracting parties that are elected by each meeting of the COP, to serve for the triennium. 16 regional and two ex-officio members are chosen on a proportional basis according to the six Ramsar regions - Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, the Neotropics, and Oceania.

In addition to the Regional Representatives, the host countries of the most recent and the upcoming meetings of the COP are full members, and the host countries of the Ramsar Secretariat and Wetlands International, as well as the five International Partner Organizations themselves, serve as permanent observers.

The Standing Committee has overall responsibility for the work of the STRP. Since 1999 a set of guidelines (*modus operandi*) for the functioning of the STRP have been established and revised regularly. The *modus operandi* is described in more detail below.

The SC meets annually. Prior to each meeting of the COP, the SC is transformed into a Conference Committee for the duration of the COP.

Subsidiary bodies of the Standing Committee include various subgroups (on finance, COP11, and the Strategic Plan), a Management Working Group (MWG), and a Transition Committee of the MWG. Others are formed on ad-hoc basis as needed. Two other subsidiary bodies, the CEPA Oversight Panel and the STRP Oversight Committee, are described in more detail below.

CEPA Oversight Panel

The CEPA Oversight Panel is a subsidiary body of the Standing Committee. The main function of the CEPA Oversight Panel is to monitor and inform on CEPA issues within the Convention and the progress of implementation of the CEPA Programme as established by Resolution VIII.31, and to advise the Standing Committee and the Secretariat on the CEPA work priorities at the national and international level, including the CEPA priorities of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). The Oversight Panel also clarifies the broad roles of the two government and non-governmental CEPA Focal Points nominated by each Party.

STRP Oversight Committee

The responsibilities of the STRP Oversight Committee are to:

- I. Appoint the members, Chair and Vice Chair of the STRP;
- II. Provide intersessional advice, guidance and support to the operations and work of the Panel;
- III. Keep under review, and advise the Standing Committee on, the operations of the Panel under this revised *modus operandi*; and
- IV. Provide advice to the Secretariat on expenditures under the STRP budget line

The oversight committee reports to the SC, and is chaired by the Chair of the SC. The oversight committee is composed of the Chair and Vice-chair of the SC, Chair and Vice-chair of the STRP, and the SG and Deputy SG *ex officio*.

STRP and STRP Members

The Scientific Technical and Review Panel (STRP) is a subsidiary body of the Ramsar Convention established in 1993 (Resolution 5.5, Kushiro, 1993) with the aim to provide scientific and technical guidance to the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Ramsar Secretariat. It was established in recognition of the importance of taking a practical scientific, evidence-based approach to improve understanding, promote and implement the wise use of wetlands.

The composition of the STRP (appointed by the STRP Oversight Committee and endorsed by the Standing Committee) for the 2013-2015 triennium consists of a Chair and 13 members (including the

Vice-Chair), six invited experts and representatives from the five International Organization Partners (IOPs) (BirdLife International, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IUCN, Wetlands International, and WWF International). In addition, representatives of the subsidiary bodies of other Multilateral Environment Agreements, international organizations and non-governmental organizations and associations are invited to participate as observers during each triennium. STRP members are appointed for their expertise in their own right and not as representatives of any government or institution. One appointed member has CEPA expertise and another has socio-economic expertise. At least one member of the panel is appointed from each of the six Ramsar regions.

General Responsibilities

- Establish the scope, deliverables and approach to delivery for each task assigned to it by the Conference of the Parties, including through thematic scoping workshops, and in so doing ensure input from the network of STRP NFPs, Ramsar Regional Initiatives, and other relevant organizations;
- Commission, through the Secretariat and resources permitting, an expert or experts to lead preparation of the work identified;
- Ensure appropriate peer review of draft materials, including consideration of how best to present the material in order to ensure its effective communication and uptake;
- With the Secretariat, seek to identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP NFPs, wetland managers and other wetland experts, including through the support of Ramsar Regional Centres;
- Review (including with STRP NFPs) and approve all scientific and technical materials prior to any transmittal of them to Parties, including to the Conference of the Parties, in line with the terms of Resolution VIII.45;
- Leverage their own networks of wetland experts nationally and internationally to contribute to the work of the Panel;
- The appointed CEPA member has the role of providing input to all stages of the Panel's work on each task, from scoping the needs of the identified users to the finalization of outputs, drawing inter alia on the Convention's CEPA networks and those of the Convention's IOPs.

Outputs

- Draft Resolutions (DRs) to COP on scientific and technical issues
- Guidelines on aspects of Convention implementation, annexed to COP DRs
- COP Information Papers supporting scientific and technical DRs
- Ramsar Technical Reports (detailed reviews and methodologies)
- Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes
- STRP Review Request note
- Other Outputs (web portal, STRP newsletter, databases, fact sheets, capacity-building tools)

The following table outlines the major responsibilities of STRP members or bodies, as related to provisioning of guidance. Further details for particular STRP members or bodies are outlined below the table.

Table 2: Responsibilities of STRP Members or Bodies as they pertain to scientific and technical guidance¹

STRP Member or Body	Responsibilities
STRP Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the STRP’s thematic work on strategic, emerging and ongoing issues and future priorities, and coordinate the Panel’s advice to the next COP concerning high and emerging priorities for the Panel’s work in the next triennium; • When needed, create a task group to deliver a specific top priority task in the STRP’s Work Plan; • Represent the Convention’s scientific and technical work externally by maintaining relationships with partner organizations and, resources permitting, by participating in scientific fora and other conferences;
STRP Vice-Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with the STRP Chair on the division of responsibilities regarding oversight of the work of any thematic Working Groups (WGs) or specific task groups established by the Panel; • Represent the Convention’s scientific and technical work externally, through maintaining relationships with partner organizations and, resources permitting, by participating at scientific fora and other conferences;
<i>STRP IOP Representatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult within their organizations, including with any relevant specialist groups and other networks, on the Work Plan of the STRP, ensuring that their views and expertise are available to the STRP; • Maintain and access their organization’s regional and global wetland conservation and wise use expert networks; • identify and engage input to STRP WGs and task groups from relevant experts from their organization’s staff and expert networks
<i>STRP Invited Experts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the STRP on current thinking, latest scientific understanding, and outstanding issues in their areas of expertise relevant to wetlands; • When invited by the Panel, and resources permitting, be commissioned to lead the drafting and finalization of STRP products; • Contribute to intersessional work largely through electronic means, including the STRP web portal and work space

¹ Not all responsibilities are listed here, only those deemed relevant to the provisioning of guidance. A full range of responsibilities for various members, bodies and processes can be found within the literature listed in Annex I of this report.

STRP Observer
Organizations

- identify to the Panel and its WGs any work relevant to top priority and other tasks already in existence or underway through their processes and initiatives;
- Advise the STRP on current thinking, latest scientific understanding and outstanding issues in their areas of expertise relevant to wetlands;
- when invited by the Panel, and resources permitting, be commissioned to lead the drafting of STRP products;
- Participate in any scoping workshops or other intersessional workshops called by a WG or task group to which they are contributing;
- Contribute to intersessional work largely through electronic means, including the STRP web portal and work space.

STRP NFPs

The main function of the STRP NFP in each country is to provide input and support to the implementation of the Work Plan of the STRP, as approved by the first full meeting of the Standing Committee that follows each COP.

- STRP NFPs should maintain regular contact and communication with the other Ramsar NFPs (Administrative Authority and the CEPA Focal Points) in their country and, as much as possible, with other STRP NFPs in their region.
- Consult with and seek input from other experts, expert bodies and wetland centres in his/her country. In this regard, the NFP should mobilize local capacity at the country level, e.g., through the establishment of a Ramsar/wetland scientific and technical committee.
- Use the opportunities of suitable national meetings, newsletters, e-mail, etc., to canvas the views of the expert community and, when feasible, to organize expert consultations on key issues in the STRP Work Plan.
- Provide information to the STRP on local or national initiatives that are relevant to the STRP's work.
- Have full access to the Web-based STRP workspace so that they may have input to all stages of the Panel's work, including the development of the scope of delivery of each priority task, the review of draft materials as they are prepared by the Working Groups and task forces, and contribution to the peer review of reports and other documents being considered for publication in the Ramsar Technical Report and Briefing Note series.

Administrative Authority NFPs

NFPs are appointed to coordinate national implementation and act as the daily contact point for the Convention for people within the country and the Ramsar Secretariat. NFPs coordinate the national implementation of the Convention, maintain communication with the STRP and CEPA National Focal Points and update them on national or international progress in the implementation of the Convention. NFPs also work with the national focal points for other water-related and biodiversity MEAs, to ensure effective and coherent implementation of all the conventions.

Secretariat

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is the executive group responsible for the day-to-day coordination of the Convention's activities. It assists in convening and organizing the Conference of the Parties, the meetings of the Standing Committee and the STRP, and Ramsar regional meetings. Its role concerning scientific and technical guidance includes:

- Making known the decisions, Resolutions, and Recommendations of the COP and the Standing Committee;
- Providing secretariat functions for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and maintain the functionality of the Web-based STRP Support Service;
- Keeping the Contracting Parties, the Ramsar community, and the public informed of developments related to the Convention;
- Developing avenues of cooperation with other conventions, intergovernmental institutions, and national and international NGOs.

The Secretariat is composed of 22 staff, and one out-posted officer in Oceania.

Processes

Modus Operandi

The purpose of the modus operandi is to enable the STRP to deliver the best available scientific and technical advice to the Convention, in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

The workplan for the STRP is developed on a triennium basis and is defined by the Standing Committee, based upon requests from the Parties (via the Conference of the Parties).

The process involves:

1. The development of a draft work plan by the STRP in the form of a DR which is then submitted to the SC for review and adoption (components of the DR may be shared with Parties during pre-COP meetings)
2. The DR is reviewed and approved at the COP, at which point Parties may include requests for additional work.
3. At its first meeting after the COP, the STRP reviews the COP resolutions (the resolution on the STRP workplan and other scientific and technical resolutions), and on the basis of this, prepares its workplan for the current triennium (including budget allocation, depending on the funds available).
4. The STRP Chair reports to each subsequent SC meeting on progress with regards implementation of the workplan, and at that point, the SC can request changes e.g. in terms of prioritization of tasks.

Ramsar Advisory Missions

The Ramsar Advisory Missions are a technical assistance mechanism, with the main objective of providing assistance to developed and developing countries in solving the problems or threats to Ramsar Sites that make inclusion in the Montreux Record necessary.

BOX 1– Montreux Record

The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.

Ramsar Advisory Missions were formally adopted by Recommendation 4.7 of the 1990 Conference of the Parties (formerly known as the Monitoring Procedure and the Management Guidance Procedure).

Contracting Parties issue a request for an advisory mission, TOR are established by the Secretariat, and two or more experts visit a Ramsar site and report on their findings and recommendations.

Regional Initiatives

Regional Initiatives under the Ramsar Convention are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern. Groups of Contracting Parties with a common geographical focus can apply for endorsement as “Regional Initiatives operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention”.

With regard to provisioning of guidance, regional initiatives can include specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders. The operational guidelines for the current triennium (2013-2015) establish that²:

- The operation of a Regional Initiative should make optimal use of the Ramsar tools (frameworks, guidelines, guidance, methodologies, etc.) published in the Ramsar Handbooks, Technical Reports, and Briefing Notes series, and it should be based upon strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions which should be recognized as partners in the Initiative. The use of specific Ramsar guidance should be reported to the Secretariat.
- Regional Initiatives need to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar objectives. Specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders should be included in their work plans. The outcomes of such activities should be communicated to the Secretariat for use by the Ramsar CEPA Oversight Panel.

² Paragraphs 23, 25, and 26 of the Regional Initiatives Operational Guidelines 2013- 2015

- Regional Initiatives need to support the further development of the STRP through cooperation with STRP national focal points in the region, STRP members and experts, and through synergies to be established at all possible levels of the activities undertaken by Regional Initiatives.

3. Key Findings From Interviews

Clear patterns emerged from the interviews conducted in terms of views of the uptake of guidance, and views on the roles of Ramsar bodies and processes in providing guidance. These key findings are presented below.

Views on Uptake of Ramsar Guidance

More technical guidance is needed:

There is no clear definition or delineation of scientific vs. technical guidance. While respondents agreed that technical guidance should be rooted in good science, the majority believe that more technical guidance targeted at the site level is needed. While there are six geographic regions of focus for the Ramsar Convention, it was noted that within each region there is great variability, thus different needs.

Wetland site managers and other target audiences need to be accessed:

As the Secretariat has no contacts for wetland managers (physical linkages such as phone or email contacts), they are not well-represented in the decision-making process. Names and contact details for the WSMs around the world are needed in order to conduct outreach.

Ramsar focal points may not always disseminate relevant technical materials to WSMs or NGOs as their time is limited and they do not necessarily have the expertise or appropriate role for this. There needs to be a smoother communication loop, where the site managers can communicate their needs to STRP NFPs, who in turn can communicate administrative NFPs and with the Secretariat. Additionally, while web-based guidance such as webinars, virtual courses and social media should be explored, WSMs may not have internet access and would still benefit from physical manuals and other paper publications.

Guidance should be delivered in several languages:

The majority of respondents mentioned the need to make guidance available in different languages, with the minimum being English, French and Spanish. This need was communicated several times throughout the interview in relation to other question (discussed in the next section of this report). In addition to translated handbooks, interpretation should be provided at meetings. Some interviewees placed the onus of interpretation and translation needs onto the Parties that need the service (i.e. Parties should fund translation and interpretation).

Guidance should be understandable:

The majority of respondents agreed that while having guidance translated into different languages is absolutely essential, it is also necessary to ensure that the guidance provided is easy to understand. Too often Parties ignore the guidance as the language is too complex – it contains a lot of technical terms, which is difficult as English is not a first or second language for the majority of Parties. Additionally, there is a tendency for guidance to contain too many details, where it should be focused on “some basic truths, and some numbers and facts”. According to one respondent, “the details should be left to the academics”, whereas Ramsar should develop and deliver the essential messages in a simple and efficient way.

Available guidance needs to be disseminated:

As previous reviews have demonstrated³, there is low awareness that guidance is available. There should be a better mechanism to make WSMs and other stakeholders aware of the guidance that is already available. Much guidance has also been produced by NGOs and IGOs, and partnerships should be explored to disseminate this existing guidance to those working on the ground in wetland management. For example, there is much guidance on wetlands in the UK which could benefit WSMs in other regions.

Key issues and themes for guidance development:

Interviewees were asked to identify themes or issues for which more guidance is needed. The following were mentioned:

- Transboundary wetland management
- Aquaculture
- Ramsar Site Designation and Management
 - Understanding impediments to designation of Ramsar sites
 - Clear guidance on management of Ramsar sites
- Climate Change
 - Wetlands in a climate change scenario - policy brief or position paper on climate change. This has been a difficult theme as some Parties have been conservative in their views.
- Value of wetlands and ecosystem services, and making the case to governments for effective laws and policy to combat the loss of wetlands
- Restoration
 - Guidance is needed in developing countries for restoration of wetlands, and building capacity for developing expertise
- Water management - ‘Sustainable water for all’
 - Water is becoming a scarce resource. There should be a focus on the hydrological roles of wetlands in the water cycle.

³ See *Component 1: Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools* (Mansourian 2014), and *An Evaluation of the Use & Utility of Ramsar Guidance* (van Boven 2008)

- Other emerging issues including macro changes to ecosystems, such as population impacts, collapse of pollination systems, connectivity and coherence of protected areas

Some interviewees felt that the full range of issues is already being captured in available guidance, but the main challenge is reaching out to those who need the guidance.

Several respondents noted that there is a mismatch between topics that are seen as priorities by Parties and by the STRP. As can be seen from the survey results in Component 1 to this overall analysis, there are indeed some differences in topics for guidance identified above by the Ramsar body representatives interviewed for this report, and those identified by Parties and WSMs that were surveyed in the report for Component 1 of this review. The topics identified in common include restoration, valuation and management of Ramsar Sites.

Additionally, there are conflicting views on who is driving the priorities – some feel the agenda is driven by the latest demands from Parties, others feel the STRP is pursuing its own academic interests and not necessarily what is needed by Parties and WSMs. The prioritization of themes is further discussed in the next section of this report.

Interviewees highlighted some specific recommendations, as follows:

- A targeted email of links to Ramsar guidance would be beneficial for IOPs, NGOs and others to disseminate among their networks;
- Retaining the services of a professional facilitator to guide meetings, ensuring discussion is inclusive, meeting goals are met, next steps are outlined, and decisions are made objectively
- Demonstration projects should be explored. It is good to have tools and methodologies in place, but at the end of the day, WSMs learn from visiting a place where restoration is going on and producing results, and then bringing home the expertise

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

Defining and coordinating roles for the provisioning of guidance:

The majority of interviewees believe that the roles and responsibilities of Ramsar bodies and processes, as related to delivering guidance, are clearly defined and differentiated. Interviewees pointed to the TORs that have been elaborated for each body, however mentioned that while clear, roles and responsibilities must be implemented.

More comments on defining roles for the provisioning of guidance were directed towards the STRP. It was suggested that more political input is needed in the approval of processes, to ensure that the work is aligned with priorities identified by parties, with the caveat that a balance must be struck for the extent of political input. Additionally, it was mentioned that the work of STRP has been too academic in nature. Instead, the STRP should be translating scientific guidance to technical guidance,

and approach existing science bodies to undertake academic research. The STRP also needs to work closely with countries to ensure that the guidance provided is relevant.

In terms of the Standing Committee, it was emphasized that their role includes oversight of the STRP, and that this role could be strengthened to ensure that the needs of Parties are captured in the guidance.

Regarding the role of the different NFPs in terms of delivery of guidance to target audiences, they should advise on the most effective methods of guidance and identify the key recipients. There is a perception of a disconnect between the role of STRP and the role of parties. STRP has viewed its role to provide advice to COP and SC, and up to individual parties to uptake and implement or adopt the advice as appropriate within their circumstances. NFPs could be involved in the process of producing STRP products, drawing on their expertise where appropriate.

Regarding the role of the Secretariat, it should ensure that the needs of the Parties are being met. Methods suggested by respondents included having stronger management at the Secretariat, working closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical, on-the-ground guidance is developed. Additionally, better coordination is needed between senior regional advisors, who have closer contacts to the NFPs, with the STRP.

Resource and capacity needs:

- It was mentioned several times that the STRP works voluntarily on a very limited budget, and that with a greater budget the STRP could be more effective in fulfilling its role.
- Respondents mentioned there could be better coordination with other institutions that are conducting related research, case studies, and demonstration projects, and dealing directly with wetland ecosystems, such as the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme.
- Regarding views on the STRP online support: While the principle of the online support system was to allow stakeholders to engage in the work with STRP, the STRP did not have the capacity and was not in a position to respond to all the requests.
- The Secretariat has also been seen as being stretched for resources, given the increasing number of parties and Ramsar sites. One interviewee suggested strengthening the regional teams, currently including one senior officer and assistant
- Respondents mentioned several times that more resources were required to deliver guidance in different languages

Modus operandi: Timing & Prioritization of tasks

Respondents were asked for views on the effectiveness of the modus operandi. Comments received were related to better prioritization of tasks, and setting timelines for activities so there would be sufficient time for producing deliverables.

On prioritization, respondents mentioned that there is a tendency to carry over unfinished priorities from the previous triennium, and the workplan has been viewed as a `wish list` that is continually added to, and difficult to fulfill and implement. Given the limited resources of the STRP, it was viewed that funding availability is a key determinant of which activities and projects are prioritized and completed.

It was viewed that timelines in implementing the modus operandi need to be more efficient. After the COP, there is a “cumbersome process” of inviting experts, observers, checking on availabilities, brainstorming, etc. Usually there are only a few months left after these processes to deliver results.

More than one respondent emphasized that having a realistic work load with reasonable resources to carry out tasks is key to successful development and delivery of guidance.

Operate in different languages to open doors for all experts:

The issue of language is not only about translating documents into different languages for site managers. In order to access the best experts in the world, the work of the STRP needs to be translated in French and Spanish as well. Operating in different languages opens doors for participation and representation for workshops and other activities. One interviewee mentioned that when there was a call for nominations for STRP members, no nominees came from a Spanish-speaking country. Thus, Ramsar has a limited presence in the Neotropics Region, as the expertise in that region is not being tapped, and as there is no communication with experts in the region once guidance is issued. Interviewees recognized, however, that part of the language issue is the lack of funding to cover translation and interpretation costs.

What are the opportunities?

- *Making audiences aware:* respondents again emphasized that efforts should be made to ensure that key audiences nationally are aware of relevant products already produced by Ramsar and know where to look for up-coming products.
- *Prioritization of tasks:* Refine the process of filtering through the needs identified for each region, and narrowing down to the absolute priority tasks.
- *Monitoring progress:* If a country or a group of countries requests STRP to work on a particular task, those countries can partner with STRP to monitor how STRP is progressing with that task
- *Partnerships, synergies and collaboration:* The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. water-related conventions such as UN Water, or the Rio Conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there. If scientific body comes to a common list of needs, they can invite research institutions to do work in those fields.
- *Establishing effective, national wetlands committees:* Encouraging countries to establish well-represented national wetlands committees will enable Ramsar to work with bodies that are not necessarily within Ramsar administrative authority

Other comments:

- Several respondents wanted to emphasize that the STRP has been working on a voluntary basis, and have gone beyond what they need to do. While generally it is perceived that the work of the STRP has been too academic in nature, and that the guidance produced needs to provide more technical support, the science that has been produced has been quite strong. In contrast to the science advisory bodies of other MEAs, STRP members are selected based on their expertise.
- A more regular communication exchange between the Secretariat, the SC, COP and STRP was recommended. The STRP workspace was seen by one interviewee as being difficult to access because of the requirement of a password.

4. Key Messages and Lessons Learned

Guidance Provisioning

Accessibility and language

- Guidance should be as clear and concise as possible – scientific jargon and unnecessary length should be avoided in order to make key messages clear.
- Guidance should be provided in the minimum of English, French and Spanish. Partnerships with other organizations experienced with outreach to the target audience should be explored for guidance development, dissemination and translation.

Outreach to target groups and tailoring guidance to suit them

- A database for target audience contacts should be developed and updated – for example, NFPs, CEPA NFPs can partner with organizations that have access to wetland site managers in a particular region. This contact information should be retained in the database.
- A variety of different guidance types should be utilized for efficiency and effectiveness – for example, wetland demonstration projects are invaluable for practical, hands-on training.

Make use of existing guidance

- Guidance developed by other organizations is already available on multiple issues and themes relevant to Ramsar, and for various sites and regions around the world. Before undertaking development of guidance on a particular issue, stocktaking should be done to assess whether guidance already exists, and if it does in what ways it is possible to adapt it and deliver it to stakeholders.
- A database with existing guidance could also be developed, working with CEPA NFPs and relevant organizations, to supplement the information available, for example at the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) ‘Tools for Parties – Relevant Publications’ site (which currently has a Google search tool):

<http://ramsar.wetlands.org/ToolsforParties/RelevantPublications/tabid/749/Default.aspx>

Structure, Bodies and Processes

Prioritize Tasks and Streamline Implementation of Modus Operandi

- A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. A professional facilitator could assist in fairly and objectively guiding the STRP through a prioritization process.

- The process of implementing the modus operandi should be streamlined so that there is sufficient time for delivering outputs. This can be achieved, for example, by setting clear timelines for implementing the workplan (a professional facilitator could also assist with this).

Ensure Relevancy of Guidance Through Strengthening Working Relationships

- STRP Members, senior regional advisors and CEPA NFPs should form a closer relationship to ensure the needs of the Parties are responded to and met – mechanism?
- The Secretariat should work more closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical guidance is developed

Partnerships, synergies and collaboration:

- The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there. If scientific body comes to a common list of needs, they can invite research institutions to do work in those fields.
- Partnerships will also enable Ramsar to provide relevant guidance in a variety of ways, such as demonstration projects and workshops, to target audiences.

ANNEX I: List of Resources Consulted

An Evaluation of the Use and Utility of Ramsar Guidance (van Bowen 2008):

http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/Use_utility_Ramsar_guidance_report.pdf

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Ramsar (Iran), 2 February 1971. UN Treaty Series No. 14583. As amended by the Paris Protocol, 3 December 1982, and Regina Amendments, 28 May 1987.

Delivering the Ramsar Convention in Your Country: National Focal Points and their Roles (2014)

http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/about/about_NFP_2014_en.pdf

Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands (2013) <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/regional-initiatives/Operational-guidelines-2013-2015.pdf>

Report of the STRP Chair to SC46 and draft Work Plan (2013-2015):

<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/46/sc46-doc16-strp.pdf>

Report of the STRP Oversight Committee to SC46: <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/46/sc46-doc15-oversight.pdf>

Report of the STRP Chair to SC47: <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/47/SC47-17-STRPChair.pdf>

Report of the STRP Oversight Committee to SC47: <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/47/SC47-16-STRPOversight.pdf>.

Res. X.9, Appendix I: Terms of Reference for STRP NFPs

(http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_x_09_e.pdf)

Res. XI.5: Regional initiatives 2013-2015 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention:

<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res05-e.pdf>

Res. XI. 17, Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015:

(<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res17-e.pdf>)

Res. XI. 16: Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific & technical advice and support to the Convention

(<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res16-e.pdf>)

Res IX.18: Establishment of an Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention

(http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_ix_18_e.pdf)

Res XI.19: Adjustments to the terms of Resolution VII.1 on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention

(<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res19-e.pdf>)

STRP Work plan (2013-2015): http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/strp_2013-15/STRPWorkPlan2013-15.pdf

STRP *modus operandi* for 2013-2015 (Res. XI. 18) (<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res18-e.pdf>)

STRP *modus operandi* (2013-2015) (adjusted by Res. XI.18): guides the work of the STRP, setting out its composition, roles and responsibilities (<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/STRPmod-op-2013-2015.pdf>)

Terms of reference for STRP members, experts and observers: drafted during STRP17 at the request of the STRP Chair (<http://strp.ramsar.org/strp-publications/other-strp-documents/terms-of-reference-for-strp-members-invited-experts-and-observer-organisation-representatives>)

Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools (Mansourian 2014)

ANNEX II: List of Interviewees

Interviewee Title	Organization
Chris Briggs Secretary General	Ramsar Secretariat
María Rivera Senior Regional Advisor for the Americas	Ramsar Secretariat
Lew Young Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania	Ramsar Secretariat
Paul Ouédraogo Senior Regional Advisor for Africa	Ramsar Secretariat
Tobias Salathé Senior Advisor for Europe	Ramsar Secretariat
Royal C. Gardner STRP Chairperson	Ramsar STRP
Sandra Hails CEPA Officer	Ramsar Secretariat
Rebecca D’Cruz Former STRP Vice-Chairperson	Ramsar Secretariat
Dave Pritchard STRP invited expert and Joint Coordinator of the RCN	Ramsar Culture Network (RCN)
Julia Marton-LeFevre, Director General Mark Smith, Director, Global Water Programme	IUCN
Delmar Blasco Coordinator	MEDWET
Vicky Jones Senior Flyways Officer	BirdLife International
Peter McCormick Deputy Director General (Research)	International Water Management Institute
Denis Landenbergue Wetlands Manager	WWF

ANNEX III: Interview Questions

Views on uptake of scientific guidance

1. Do you think that scientific (for policymakers and scientists) and technical advice (for workers, managers, WSM, etc.) is delivered to Ramsar clients in an effective way? Why?
2. How do you feel about the balance in providing science guidance (for policymakers and scientists) vs. technical guidance (for practitioners, managers, WSM, etc)
3. In your opinion, what are the most effective methods of disseminating scientific guidance? What about technical guidance? Why?
4. Do you see any Ramsar clients as needing more targeted material (NFPs, STRP NFPs, CEPA NFPs, IOPs, NGOs, WSM?)
5. Do you see any thematic work area or issue as needing particular attention (e.g. wetlands and health, wetlands and climate change, etc.)
6. How would you compare the different tools for disseminating Ramsar guidance – for example, handbooks, websites, resolutions?
7. Do you have any general comments on improving delivery of guidance?

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

1. In your view, are the roles and responsibilities of Ramsar bodies and processes in delivering guidance clearly defined and differentiated? Please explain.
2. Do you feel that Ramsar bodies have the resources and capacity needed to effectively deliver scientific guidance and technical guidance? Please explain.
3. Do you feel there is adequate coordination among Ramsar bodies in providing guidance? Please explain.
4. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the STRP modus operandi 2013-2015 in terms of providing guidance?
5. What areas in providing scientific or technical guidance do you feel need improvement (either for the body the interviewee represents or other Ramsar bodies)
6. What opportunities are there for more efficiently and effectively providing science and technical guidance?
7. Do you have any general comments on the roles of Ramsar bodies and processes for providing guidance?