

# Component 3: Review of the scientific guidance and tools in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and lessons learnt for Ramsar

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**Ciénaga de Zapata (Cuba), Photo: © PJ Stephenson**

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## Acronyms list

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
IAC	Interamerican-Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPI	Science Policy Interface
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
STAC	Scientific and Technical Committee
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
TORs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change
WCR	Wider Caribbean region
WHC	World Heritage Convention

## 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 third.

This report specifically focuses on: "*Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.*" It was conducted via a literature search and 10 interviews with experts in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) identified by the Ramsar Secretariat. The aim of this piece of work was to better understand the different dimensions of scientific and technical guidance across a range of MEAs and other similar programmes so as to extract lessons and best practices for Ramsar.

## Findings

Scientific and technical guidance is relevant to all multilateral environmental conventions, although its extent and importance differs. In some cases it is a central element to the work of a convention, such as the assessment reports written by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which are key to informing negotiations as well as the programme of work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In other cases, scientific and technical guidance takes a somewhat less central role, but is a useful means of supporting Parties to better achieve the legal requirements under a convention, as in for example, case studies being used to demonstrate practical approaches to implement the UNECE Water Convention. In some cases guidance is made up of a concrete product (such as the IPCC's assessment reports or the CBD's Technical Series), in other cases, such as the World Heritage Convention's advisory missions, it takes the form of expert advice or input.

Membership to the scientific bodies of different MEAs varies. In some cases, each Party has a member (e.g.: UNFCCC's SBSTA), while in other cases, such as the Animals and Plants committees of CITES, a given number of seats are allocated and members are elected for their regional and technical representation. Important issues related to membership are the size of the bodies (with larger scientific bodies appearing to function less well than smaller ones), and the political/apolitical nature of these scientific bodies (with political agendas frequently perceived to interfere with the science).

The scientific and technical bodies reviewed fulfil many different roles. Some of the key roles are: providing scientific advice to Contracting Parties; encouraging and promoting collaboration with other scientific bodies; reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress towards application of requirements under the convention; developing and improving methodologies; supporting transfer of technology, including capacity building; and identifying innovations, new and emerging issues.

Most of the conventions reviewed do not make a particular distinction between the terms "scientific and technical" guidance with the term embracing a range of practical means of supporting the conventions and their ultimate goals.

In most conventions reviewed guidance needs are driven by the requirements of the convention. Parties are generally the ones defining specific needs via their COPs. Equally, in almost all cases, the primary audience for scientific and technical guidance is policy-makers (Parties to the Convention).

Guidance products include: technical documents (intended to provide up-to-date and accurate information on selected topics, e.g. the CBD Technical series); guidelines (intended to provide concrete guidance on ways and approaches to achieve specific objectives (e.g. CBD “Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development “ or the IAC’s “Guidelines for Preparing Sea Turtle Action Plans for IAC Party Countries”); global assessments (global and periodic overviews of the state of the environment e.g. the IPCC Assessments, or the CBD’s “Global Biodiversity Outlook”); case studies (providing real life examples written to make an issue more tangible); handbooks or manuals (reference guides serving as a resource, more generally at the level of the convention, e.g. the CBD Handbook or the CMS manuals); resolutions (motions or decisions that are formally adopted by Parties); scientific publications (in depth scientific documents written on a specific topic, e.g. on conservation measures or priorities for a given species); and fact sheets (intended to provide a brief overview of a given topic, e.g. the SPREP’s factsheet on “climate change and ecosystem based adaptation”).

Communicating scientific and technical guidance is an important step in the provision of guidance. In most cases, scientific meetings are conducted in at least the three major UN languages (English, French and Spanish). The technical content and style of documents are also important dimensions to communicating guidance. For example in the UNCCD the recently established Science-Policy Interface was specifically tasked with facilitating the “translation” from scientific documents into policy-oriented recommendations.

The role of the Secretariat of these MEAs varies from in depth involvement to more administrative and organizational involvement. In the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife protocol for example, the Secretariat manages the budgets and the programme of the scientific and technical advisory committee (STAC). In the World Heritage Convention, the Secretariat is one of the key pillars providing scientific expertise to Parties.

## **Implications of findings for Ramsar**

Based on what works well and what works less well in other MEAs, nine lessons have been proposed for Ramsar to consider.

**Lesson learnt 1: Maintaining scientific integrity** – Scientific integrity is important for the sake of credibility, and for the ability of the group to advance on scientific and technical issues without being detracted and delayed by political agendas. Members should have no conflict of interest and most products should be peer reviewed. Ramsar’s STRP has been praised for its apolitical nature and its scientific credentials, something which should be preserved.

**Lesson learnt 2: A lean scientific body** - A review by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) of different MEAs’ scientific bodies highlighted the diversity in group sizes and how large groups tend to be more inefficient. This was also highlighted by both the UNCCD for its CST and the UNFCCC for its SBSTA which are too large. Instead, in UNCCD’s recently established science-policy interface, membership is limited to 20 (plus three observers). A “reasonable size” would imply representation that is not Party-based but either based on themes or on regions, or both.

**Lesson learnt 3: One or more scientific bodies may be needed** - Many of the reviewed MEAs rely on more than one body for guidance. Arguments in favour of having more than one body, are that it helps to better focus the roles of each body.

**Lesson learnt 4: Membership should be carefully defined** - At least two of the conventions reviewed (IAC and CMS) have different forms of memberships: members that are designated by Parties and members that are selected by consensus by the COP for their specific expertise. Thus, a mix of regional representation and thematic representation can be achieved, as well as a more “neutral” membership.

**Lesson learnt 5: Capitalise on partnerships and external expertise** - Alternative ways of securing expertise can be achieved via partnerships with relevant regional or local bodies. Ramsar’s STRP is already engaging with international partners, but may need to consider regional and even national partners in some cases.

**Lesson learnt 6: The Secretariat has important functions related to scientific guidance** - The roles of the Secretariat in the provision of scientific guidance is important, notably in “translating” scientific work into practical guidance to the intended audience(s), facilitating the development of scientific and technical guidance, capacity building, listening and reaching out to its audiences (servicing role) which it can then filter back to the scientific body.

**Lesson learnt 7: Guidance should be practical and relevant to the audience** - It is important firstly to clearly identify in advance audiences for the guidance in question, and secondly to ensure that the guidance is indeed practical and relevant to the different audiences so that it will be used.

**Lesson learnt 8: Follow up on guidance is important** - Producing the guidance is one step; however, ensuring that it is used, learning lessons related to its use and uptake, and adapting it if necessary, are all important long term applications of the scientific guidance.

**Lesson learnt 9: Allocate realistic human and financial resources** - Shortfalls in resources are an issue in the provision of scientific and technical guidance across all MEAs. In some cases, such as the advisory function of IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM to the World Heritage Convention, a budget is attached which facilitates the provision of guidance. In most cases, the scientific staff work on a voluntary basis and much work remains un- or under-funded.

## 1. Introduction

Most environmental conventions have some means of obtaining scientific and technical guidance. In some cases this guidance is directed at complying with specific commitments under the Convention, in other cases, guidance is in direct response to needs of Parties or alternatively, to provide background data to support negotiations. Guidance may be provided by a subsidiary body or commissioned out to a partner organisation. In some cases more than one body provides guidance, while in others, there is one single dedicated scientific body.

This report presents the review of 10 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to understand how scientific and technical guidance is defined and provided, and to draw lessons which could be of use for Ramsar.

## Background

In July 2012, Ramsar Contracting Parties adopted Resolution XI.16 to “ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention” in which Contracting Parties 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) in June 2015. The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee Meeting (Decision SC46-14).

## Methodology

Two independent consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, were contracted during the period of May-July 2014 to undertake this review, with input from the Secretariat and the Review Committee.

The review was divided into five components, as listed below. These components are separate reports with each consultant taking the lead on a component.

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 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;
4. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant non-MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar; and
5. Final report drawing on the above analyses, that summarises 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 deals with component 3 of this process, namely: “*Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.*”

For this component of the review, the consultant conducted a literature search and invited approximately 24 experts from 13 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) identified by the Ramsar Secretariat

for interviews. A total of 11 interviews with knowledgeable staff from 10 MEAs were conducted (see Annex 1 for the list of interviewees).

The aim of this piece of work was to better understand the different dimensions of scientific and technical guidance across a range of MEAs and other similar programmes with the intention of extracting relevant lessons and guidance that could support changes in Ramsar's process of defining, producing and distributing scientific and technical guidance.

There are several elements to the provision of scientific and technical guidance: the guidance itself, the way it is defined and the bodies in place to help define and produce it, and the way it is written and distributed, among others. The next section (Section 2) reviews the key features of the scientific bodies that deliver the guidance, the types of guidance being delivered and elements that seem to work well and those that do not work so well.

Section 3 draws on lessons learnt which can assist the Ramsar Convention improve its own processes for scientific and technical guidance. Annex 1 provides a list of interviewees, while Annex 2 contains a short overview of key elements of scientific and technical guidance for the 10 MEAs reviewed.



## 2. Findings

### Introduction

Scientific and technical guidance is relevant to all multilateral environmental conventions. In some cases it is a central element to the work of a convention, such as the assessment reports written by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which are key to informing negotiations as well as the programme of work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC). In other cases, scientific and technical guidance takes a somewhat less central role, but is a useful means of supporting Parties to better achieve the legal requirements under a convention. An example is the development of case studies as a useful means of demonstrating practical approaches in different countries to implement the UNECE Water Convention. “Guidance” might be a concrete product (such as the IPCC’s assessment reports or the CBD’s Technical Series) but it might also take the form of expert advice or input.

### Scientific bodies

Practically all of the conventions explored in this report relied on at least one or more formal bodies for scientific and technical guidance (see Table 1). Exceptions were the UNECE Water Convention (which has two specific task forces but no formal scientific body) and the SPREP where the Secretariat works with partners to provide required scientific guidance to Parties.

**Table 1: Conventions and their main source of scientific and technical guidance**

<b>Convention/programme</b>	<b>Main source of scientific and technical guidance</b>
The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification ( <b>UNCCD</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee on Science and Technology (CST)</li> <li>• Science Policy Interface (SPI) Mechanism</li> <li>• Scientific Advisory Committee</li> </ul>
The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity ( <b>CBD</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)</li> <li>• Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)</li> </ul>
The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ( <b>UNFCCC</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)</li> <li>• Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)</li> </ul>
The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ( <b>CITES</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animals Committee</li> <li>• Plants Committee</li> </ul>
The UNESCO World Heritage Convention ( <b>WHC</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</li> <li>• International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)</li> <li>• International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)</li> </ul>
The Interamerican Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles ( <b>IAC</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific Committee</li> <li>• Consultative committee</li> </ul>

The Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) protocol to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific and Technical Committee (STAC)</li> </ul>
The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific council</li> </ul>
The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Transboundary Water Convention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Task forces and Secretariat</i></li> <li>• <i>Regional Advisory Body</i></li> </ul>
The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Various partners and Secretariat</i></li> </ul>

The above table demonstrates two broad categories of bodies: 1. independent organisations such as IUCN and ICOMOS that provide guidance or deliver assessments, 2. subsidiary bodies to a convention, such as the SBSTTA for CBD.

Some of these bodies have a very specific remit, such as for example the IPCC which is composed of scientists from around the world who review and assess global scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to the understanding of climate change. Others have a broader remit which ranges from assessing data, to responding to Parties' specific needs and keeping an eye on emerging issues.

**Box 1: Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ( IPBES)**

IPBES has recently been set up to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. Although its objectives are most closely aligned with those of the CBD, it is in fact linked to and expected to collaborate with all MEAs. Key functions of IPBES are:

- (a) responding to requests from governments, including those conveyed to it by MEAs related to biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- (b) identifying and prioritizing key scientific information needed for policymakers;
- (c) performing regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages;
- (d) supporting policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies;
- (e) prioritizing key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels.

While the Platform is open to all UN State members (other relevant organisations or non-UN State members can participate as observers), a Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) was created which is made up of equal representation of five participants nominated by each of the five United Nations regions (although members are elected for their personal expertise and are not intended to represent any particular region). Their term is limited to three years (renewable once, with half of members expected to remain in order to allow for continuity). IPBES funding is secured via a core trust fund with Party contributions and income from other sources.

The MEP is tasked with carrying out the scientific and technical functions agreed by the Plenary. In addition, working groups or other structures might be established by the Plenary as and when needed to implement the Platform's work programme.

IPBES is expected to collaborate closely with other MEAs, and the Chair of the STRP has been invited to participate as an observer in the IPBES (Resolution XI.6 of 2012).

Lessons learnt from the first year of operation of the IPBES' MEP have already highlighted the need for better

representation in terms of both gender and scientific discipline (with limited social scientists, economists, and marine specialists on the panel and only six women out of 25 scientists). Another lesson highlighted the value of having two co-chairs, one from a developed country and one from a developing country (IPBES, 2014).

### Membership

Membership to these different committees and bodies differs significantly.

In some cases, membership is entirely representative with each Party having at least one member (e.g.: UNFCCC’s SBSTA). In other cases, such as the Animals and Plants committees of CITES, a given number of seats are allocated and members are elected for their regional representation. In CMS a distinction is made between core members that are appointed by the COP and Party-appointed members. Furthermore, subsidiary bodies to the convention may be composed of individuals representing their governments, or on the contrary, of individual experts acting in their own right. The size of these bodies therefore, also varies immensely. Groups that are too large, such as the CMS’ scientific council (around 100 individuals), have faced a number of constraints (CMS, 2014). On the other hand, smaller groups such as CITES’ Animals and Plants committees which consist of about a dozen experts, appear to be much more efficient.

### Political or apolitical nature of bodies

The political involvement of scientific and technical bodies varies (see Table 3). In some cases members are directly nominated by governments (e.g. SBSTA members in UNFCCC) as government representatives and are not necessarily scientists. As a result, political agendas are high and may interfere with scientific and technical procedures. In other cases, members may be nominated by governments but act in their capacity as individual scientists.

**Table 3: Political nature of scientific bodies**

<b>Apolitical</b>	<i>e.g. the Animals and Plants Committees of CITES are not involved in the listing of species which is a highly political discussion. On the other hand, they provide advice related to specific dimensions of the conservation of species (e.g. on how to assess stocks).</i>
<b>Mixed</b>	<i>e.g. the <b>Inter-American Convention for the Conservation and protection of Sea Turtles</b> has two bodies: The Consultative committee of experts which includes a range of stakeholders, including public, private and civil society, and the Scientific committee which includes only scientists.</i>
<b>Political</b>	<i>e.g. UNCCD’s Committee on Science and Technology is a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties and is open to government delegates.</i>

Ultimately, even in cases where the relevant scientific and technical bodies might be apolitical, the guidance has political repercussions. Indeed, such guidance is used to guide or influence political decisions. For example, the CBD’s recent report on the “Description of Areas Meeting the Scientific Criteria for Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas” (SBSTTA, 2014) has implications for the creation of marine protected areas. In the context of conventions, it is inevitable for scientific and technical guidance to be in some way, directly or indirectly, linked to political processes which are at the core of the convention. Nevertheless, in some cases, the procedure for scientific and technical guidance may be more severely tainted by political influences, which not only affects the scientific rigour but also slows the process, as has been reproached by some of the CBD’s SBSTTA.

Furthermore, as per generally followed rules in scientific work, peer reviewing is an important procedure which is applied in the work produced by some of the committees, but not all.

Conflict of interest may discredit the scientific process, and for example, the IPCC has a detailed “conflict of interest policy” (IPCC, 2011) to ensure that its panel members adhere to the strictest rules; all potential coordinating lead authors, lead authors or review editors are requested to complete a conflict of interest form. Equally IPBES states in its operating guidelines that the panel should “be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes.” (IPBES, 2012).

### *Role of bodies*

The scientific and technical bodies reviewed fulfil many different roles. Some of the key roles are listed below:

***Providing scientific advice*** – all of the different scientific bodies reviewed are primarily entrusted with providing advice to the Contracting Parties. This may be advice on “complying with the requirements of the conventions based on best available scientific evidence” (e.g. the scientific committee of IAC); or advice “on all matters relevant to international trade in animal and plant species included in the Appendices, which may include proposals to amend the Appendices;” (CITES’ Animals and Plants committees); or “Advice on how best to measure progress on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy“ (UNCCD), or it may be very general, as in the World Heritage Convention which explicitly names the three bodies: ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM for their roles in an “advisory capacity”.

***Encouraging and promoting collaboration*** – In some cases, the scientific and technical bodies are expected to promote and encourage collaboration with other scientific bodies. For example the UNCCD’s CST has an explicit role as “Liaison with the scientific community and cooperation with international organizations” and the CBD’s SBSTTA is expected to “provide advice (..) on international cooperation in research and development..”

***Reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress*** – most of the bodies reviewed are tasked with assessing progress towards application of requirements under the convention. For example, UNCCD’s Committee on Science and Technology (CST) reviews “progress made in the organization of international interdisciplinary scientific advice in the Convention process;” the IAC’s Scientific Committee is meant to “periodically evaluate in collaboration with the Consultative Committee, the format of the Annual Report for the Parties”.

***Developing and improving methodologies*** – Scientific bodies are frequently tasked with developing or improving methodologies (what is sometimes referred to more as “technical guidance”). For example under the IAC convention, one task of the Scientific Committee is to “develop and improve methodologies related to the evaluation of environmental, socioeconomic and cultural impacts resulting from measures adopted”. Under the UNFCCC, the SBSTA is also tasked with “methodological work in areas such as impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.”

**Supporting technology transfer**– Capacity building and technology transfer is another area of work frequently within the remit of scientific bodies. For example, in the IAC convention one responsibility of the Scientific Committee is to “support actions directed towards development, use, training and transfer of socially and ecologically sustainable technologies”; the CBD’s SBSTTA also is meant to “advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies”.

**Identifying innovations, new and emerging issues** - One important role of most scientific bodies is to keep an eye out for innovations or new issues or threats that might impact on the convention. For example the UNFCCC’s SBSTA is intended to notably “Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies” (Article 9 of the UNFCCC). Also for example, CBD’s SBSTTA works to “Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how”.

Most of the conventions reviewed in this report do not make a particular distinction between the terms “scientific and technical” guidance. “Scientific and technical guidance” tends to be re-grouped as one item. The broad terminology “scientific and technical guidance” can be seen as embracing a range of practical means of supporting the conventions and their ultimate goals. In reality there may be a case to separate the two with “scientific guidance” being the background and basis for ensuring “technical” (e.g. policy-related, legal or managerial) guidance. In the UNFCCC for example, an implicit distinction is made by some between “methodological” guidance which supports the achievement of commitments under the convention, and “scientific information” which is useful background information which supports political decision-making (but is not essential in legal terms).

**Box 2: The World Heritage Convention**

The WHC has a unique setup when it comes to obtaining scientific and technical guidance. It relies on three pillars which it considers as key to sound scientific and technical input: 1. a decision-making body (the World Heritage Committee), 2. independent scientific bodies (IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS) and 3. relevant expertise within the Secretariat.

The World Heritage Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, decides on the use of funds in the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties. It is composed of 21 of the Member States who are elected by the General Assembly for a six-year term (although most States Parties choose voluntarily to only be Members of the Committee for four years).

The three independent scientific bodies each have their own mandates and workplans but have agreements with UNESCO to support the WHC and are mentioned in the Convention text. Each of these organisations has its own membership, which in the case of IUCN is mixed - both governmental and non-governmental - in the case of ICCROM is inter-governmental and in the case of ICOMOS is purely non-governmental.

Funding is provided to the advisory bodies from the World Heritage Trust Fund.

### *Defining guidance needs*

Guidance needs are driven by the requirements of the convention. In most conventions, guidance needs are defined by the Parties themselves via their COPs. In some cases, the TORs for the scientific body have very specific elements which are directly relevant to the convention. For example, the CITES' Animals and Plants committees both have in their TORs the need to “establish a list of those taxa included in Appendix II that are considered as being significantly affected by trade”. In other cases, the roles are much broader and can be widely interpreted. For example, under the CBD, the roles of “providing advice” and “reviewing” remain very general.

#### **Box 3: UNCCD**

The UNCCD has been trying to re-define its format for addressing scientific and technical issues. To strengthen the scientific basis of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided in 2007 that future sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) should be organized in a scientific conference format, focusing on a specific theme (to be determined by the COP) relevant to the implementation of the Strategy (decision 13/COP.8). As a result the first theme of the conference in 2009 was “*Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management*”. An assessment of the first scientific conference concluded, that while helpful to address scientific issues, this was not the best format for addressing the issues in the long term and ensuring continuity. Instead the evaluators suggested that what was needed was rather an independent mechanism such as the IPCC which would allow for broader participation of the scientific community and promote a “science culture” within the Convention in the long term (UNCCD, 2010).

### *Audience*

In almost all cases, the primary audience for scientific and technical guidance is policy-makers (Parties to the Convention); the overall objective being to assist governments in implementing the convention. A secondary audience, depending on the type of guidance, is practitioners. In some cases the audience might also be Secretariat staff and other partners.

## **Guidance products**

### *Type of guidance products*

While guidance can consist of advice of experts, a number of different written tools can also be found across the different conventions. A selection of these categories of tools is listed here:

- **Technical documents** – intended to provide up -to-date and accurate information on selected topics, e.g the CBD Technical series;
- **Guidelines** – intended to provide concrete guidance on ways and approaches to achieve specific objectives (e.g. CBD “Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development” or the IAC’s “Guidelines for Preparing Sea Turtle Action Plans for IAC Party Countries”);
- **Global assessments** – these are global and periodic overviews of the state of the environment or of a given natural resource (e.g. the IPCC Assessments, or the CBD’s “Global Biodiversity Outlook”);

- **Case studies** – real life examples written to make an issue more tangible;
- **Handbooks or manuals** – these are reference guides serving as a resource, more generally at the level of the convention (e.g. the CBD Handbook or the CMS manuals);
- **Resolutions** – resolutions are motions or decisions that are formally adopted by Parties. In some cases, scientific bodies engage in drafting some relevant resolutions, such as for example the Animals and Plants committees of CITES which have in their TORs the drafting of “resolutions on scientific matters related to animals or plants” for consideration by Parties;
- **Scientific publications** – these are in depth scientific documents written on a specific topic, for example on conservation measures or priorities for a given species; and
- **Fact sheets** – these provide a brief overview of a given topic. For example the SPREP’s factsheet on “climate change and ecosystem based adaptation”.

### *Communicating scientific and technical guidance*

One observer noted that “*Ramsar produces high quality science but is anybody listening?*” It is indeed one important step to produce scientifically and/or technically excellent information but if that information is not able to reach the intended audience for a variety of reasons (resources, language, length of documents) then its value is greatly reduced. In addition, different audiences will need to be reached via different communication tools. For example, in order to differentiate between its different audiences, UNCCD is considering the publication of policy-brief documents underpinned by scientific findings (for policy-makers) and a more technical-oriented series of publications (such as the Technical Series published by the CBD) for practitioners. This role of reaching out to the audience is not necessarily that of a scientific body, but rather that of communications staff or technical Secretariat staff.

In most cases, the languages of business for scientific meetings consisted of at least the three major UN languages (English, French and Spanish). For example, the SPAW’s STAC uses English, French and Spanish, as do the CITES Animals and Plants committees. The CBD SBSTTA notes that “The proceedings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice will be carried out in the working languages of the Conference of the Parties.”

In terms of the technical content and style of documents, some conventions expend resources specifically to support the “translation” of scientific language into more practical or policy-oriented language. For example in the UNCCD the recently established Science-Policy Interface was specifically tasked with facilitating the “translation” from scientific document into policy-oriented recommendations. Equally, the SPREP has been working on simplifying the CBD guidelines for the development of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to support its member countries in drawing up these strategies.

### **Role of Secretariats**

The role of Secretariats in terms of scientific guidance differs significantly. In some cases, the secretariat supports the scientific body, by organising meetings for example. In other cases, it is more deeply involved in the management of funds for the scientific body and in contractual arrangements. In SPAW for example, the Secretariat manages the budget and the programme of the scientific and technical advisory committee (STAC). Yet in other cases, it is involved in producing some of the relevant scientific advice and/or documentation. In the World Heritage Convention, the Secretariat is one of the key pillars providing scientific expertise to Parties. The Secretariat is also best placed to liaise with a range of

stakeholders and fundamentally, in capacity building, which in the case of scientific guidance, signifies roll out of the guidance.

### **What works well..**

***Independence*** – The apolitical or independent nature of the bodies providing the guidance gives it additional weight. For example, in CITES the Plants and Animals committees do not provide guidance on politically-sensitive issues, such as the listing of species. The UNFCCC relies on the independent guidance of the IPCC. Equally, the World Heritage Convention counts on the external expertise of three other organisations which themselves have a mixed constituency (see Box 2). This independence can be achieved either through regional nominations, whereby experts are nominated in the name of a region rather than independent countries or by nominating experts in their capacity as individuals (as is currently the case with the STRP). Alternatively, it may be achieved by relying on an external body or organisation. Nevertheless, to successfully work with an external body, a tight memorandum of understanding (MoU) or agreement is required which outlines the linkages and relationship between the two organisations. For example, in 1996 an MoU was signed between UNESCO and IUCN which reflects the main elements of the advisory services provided by IUCN, including the relevant budget. The agreed workplan between the two organisations is regularly updated and is subject to available funding.

***Legitimacy*** – the legitimacy of scientists that are part of the respective bodies is an important factor in ensuring that the guidance is given due consideration. Most MEAs require a *curriculum vitae* from the scientists in their advisory bodies and set minimum requirements. Nevertheless, some are more flexible than others.

***Communications-*** Much of the scientific work is done intersessionally and as such effective means of communicating between key stakeholders are needed. This also signifies appointing clear leads and responsible members to follow up on communications in between meetings. For example there is significant intersessional work under the IAC, led by the Secretariat and the Chairs of the two committees. Intersessional work also maintains momentum, secures commitment, as well as ensuring that key stakeholders have sufficient time to review relevant documentation.

***Format of guidance and follow up*** - The guidance should be short and easily communicable to diverse and nontechnical audiences. In contrast, the more complex the guidance (including its length), the less likely it will be used. For this reason, bodies such as the SPREP invest in turning the guidance into materials that can easily be communicated. In addition, follow up through workshops, dissemination of the guidance, networks for implementation etc. help ensure that the guidance will be used and applied. The UNECE identified the importance of following up through task forces and/or workshops once guidance has been developed to ensure that it is effectively used (including by providing training, if necessary). It sees this as a worthwhile use of resources to ensure the use of guidance and that it reaches the intended audiences.

***Bringing in countries*** - Drawing on the experience of countries themselves helps to bring them into the process and secure buy in. For example, in SPREP when developing case studies, the Secretariat tends to do so with a country counterpart so as to engage them fully and develop better partnerships. It also builds on the country's real experience. More generally, bringing in countries in the development of guidance is also important to secure the long term uptake and use of the guidance.

***Language*** –For effective dissemination in an international environment, documents should be translated at least into the three main UN languages. For this to be feasible, guidance documents should also be



relatively short (longer annexes may then be provided in only one language if required). For example, CITES has a page limit on its documents which forces them to be succinct.

***Role of Secretariats*** - The role of Secretariats differs in importance across MEAs. However, there appears to be an important role for the Secretariat as “orchestrator” of the process of defining and delivering scientific and technical guidance. This includes a range of functions such as coordinating scientific meetings, facilitating communications at all levels (between scientists, between scientists and Parties, between scientists and practitioners.. etc.) and simplifying the presentation of guidance or adjusting it to the intended audience, to cite a few. For example, in the IAC the Secretariat reviews the workplan of the scientific committee and if something does not get done, it assesses the reasons for this and takes remedial action (e.g. re-prioritising, providing logistical support etc...).

***Partnerships*** - Partnerships are an effective means by which scientific and technical guidance can be designed, disseminated and institutionalised. For example, the WHC relies on three strong partners to provide it with relevant advice. Equally, the SPREP secures much of the scientific guidance requested by its Parties via partnerships with appropriate institutions.

***Observers*** – the role of observers was generally considered as important in terms of bringing an additional dimension to the debates. This is particularly the case when members of the scientific body were entirely made up of Party representatives.

***Audience*** – the content of the scientific guidance needs to be targeted to the audience. This implies a clear understanding of who the guidance is intended for.

***Adapt to local context*** – guidance has in many cases to be adjusted to the local context. For example, SPREP’s members are all small countries with limited capacity, so part of SPREP’s role is to facilitate their tasks notably by promoting joint reporting across the different MEAs.

***Membership is key*** – the group is only as good as its members, and if members are not active, then the entire group suffers. It is important to have dedicated, active and knowledgeable participants. Working groups provide a means of ensuring that the right experts participate in the right groups. Equally, identifying a champion can serve to promote an issue (and even obtain additional funding for it..!).

## **.. and what works less well.**

***Political interference*** – political agendas frequently interfere with the scientific process. This is something that all conventions are grappling with, with some having found relatively good means of dealing with it (generally through smaller bodies that are not intended to directly represent Parties). In cases where political agendas have taken over, the value of scientific bodies has been greatly diminished.

***Size of bodies*** – Larger groups function less effectively than smaller ones. In cases where there is a need for a larger representative group, there are always smaller working groups which end up being tasked with more concrete work. The CMS in its recent review highlighted the size of its scientific council as an impediment to its effectiveness. As such, a lesson that appears to emerge from the different conventions reviewed is that bodies with over 20-25 experts do not function as effectively as smaller ones.

***Resources*** – the fact that most of the participants in these scientific bodies operate on a volunteer basis, and that funding is generally lacking, can limit their effectiveness. In such circumstances, the role of the Secretariat in facilitating and reducing work load and expenses can be extremely helpful as can partnerships.

### 3. Implications of findings for Ramsar

In this section the focus is on lessons learnt from the other reviewed conventions and how these can be applied to Ramsar.

#### **Scientific bodies**

##### **Lesson learnt 1: Maintain scientific integrity**

The apolitical nature of the scientific body is fundamental in terms of its credibility as well as the ability of the group to advance on scientific and technical issues without being detracted and delayed by political agendas. This also signifies ensuring that the group is cleared of any conflict of interest. Finally, it also signifies ensuring that for most products, a peer review process is necessary. Ramsar's STRP has been praised for its apolitical nature and its scientific credentials. This is something which should be preserved.

##### **Lesson learnt 2: Ensure a lean scientific body**

A review by CMS of different MEAs' scientific bodies highlighted the diversity in group sizes and how large groups tend to be more inefficient. This was also highlighted by both the UNCCD for its CST and the UNFCCC for its SBSTA which are too large. Instead in UNCCD's recently established science-policy interface, membership is limited to 20 (plus three observers). A "reasonable size" would imply representation that is not Party-based but either based on themes or on regions, or both. The current Animals committee for CITES for example is made up of 11 members (two from each of the following regions: Africa; Asia; Central, South America and the Caribbean; and Europe, one from Oceania, one from North America, and one expert in nomenclature issues), with 11 alternate members.

##### **Lesson learnt 3: More than one scientific body may be needed**

Many of the reviewed MEAs relied on more than one body for guidance. At times one was a subsidiary body while one was external (e.g. SBSTA and IPCC for the UNFCCC), at times both were subsidiary bodies (e.g. the scientific committee, and the consultative committee of experts to the IAC). In some cases one body provided more scientific guidance, while the other provided more technical guidance. There are arguments in favour of having more than one body, in particular as it helps to better focus the roles of these bodies.

##### **Lesson learnt 4: Membership should be carefully defined**

At least two of the conventions reviewed (IAC and CMS) have mixed memberships: members that are designated by Parties and members that are selected by consensus by the COP for their specific expertise. Thus, a mix of regional representation and thematic representation can be achieved, as well as a more "neutral" membership.

##### **Lesson learnt 5: Capitalise on partnerships and external expertise**

There are valid reasons to have a subsidiary body within a convention that caters specifically to the convention. However, increasingly, there are also opportunities to establish relevant partnerships and "outsource" some of the required scientific and technical guidance as is being done for example, by the WHC. This does however have clear financial repercussions. Alternative ways of engaging necessary expertise can also be achieved via partnerships with relevant regional or local bodies (as is the case in the

Pacific region for some of SPREP's work). Ramsar's STRP is already engaging with international partners, but may need to consider regional and even national partners in some cases.

### **Lesson learnt 6: The Secretariat has important functions related to scientific guidance**

The Secretariat is a significant cog in the whole wheel of provision of scientific guidance. While a scientific and technical body may be needed to develop (or commission and review) scientific work, the "translation" of that work into practical guidance to the intended audience(s) may best be undertaken and/or managed by the Secretariat. For example, the IAC, the SPREP and the WHC highlighted the fundamental role of the Secretariat in facilitating the development of scientific and technical guidance, and in the provision of the guidance to the intended audience, including through outreach work and capacity building. Equally, the Secretariat can play a key role listening and reaching out to its audiences (servicing role) which it can then filter back to the scientific body.

### **Guidance: Content and dissemination**

#### **Lesson learnt 7: Guidance should be practical and relevant to the audience**

It is important on the one hand to clearly identify in advance audiences for the guidance in question, and secondly to ensure that the guidance is indeed practical and relevant to the different audiences so that it will be used.

Guidance should be developed with the audience in mind. This implies considering both the level of language used and also the different languages used. In a global convention, guidance should be provided and delivered in at least three major UN languages. Furthermore, guidance should be kept sufficiently simple to be understood by a diversity of audiences worldwide. This may involve re-working the original material into something simpler that can be communicated widely.

#### **Lesson learnt 8: Follow up on guidance is important**

Producing the guidance is one step; however, ensuring that it is used, learning lessons related to its use and uptake and adapting it if necessary, are all important long term applications of the scientific guidance.

### **Resources**

#### **Lesson learnt 9: Allocate realistic human and financial resources**

Shortfalls in resources are an issue in the provision of scientific and technical guidance across all MEAs. In some cases, such as the advisory function of IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM, a budget is attached which facilitates the provision of guidance. In most cases, the scientific staff work on a voluntary basis and much work remains un- or under-funded.

These lessons have been used in Report 5 under this review to provide Ramsar with specific recommendations.

## Annex 1: Interviewee list

1. Marco Barbieri - Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
2. Nicholas Bonvoisin - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Transboundary Waters
3. Veronica Cáceres - Interamerican-Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles Convention (IAC)
4. Victor Castillo - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
5. David Coates – United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
6. Easter Galuvao – Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
7. Bert Lenten – Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
8. David Morgan – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
9. Mechtild Rossler - World Heritage Convention (WHC)
10. Alessandra Vanzella-Khouri - Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)
11. Florin Vladu - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

## Annex 2: Background Information on Surveyed Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

### 1. Cartagena Convention

#### *Overview*

The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) is a regional agreement to protect and develop the wider Caribbean's marine environment (including the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and parts of the Atlantic Ocean). It was adopted in 1983 and entered into force on 11 October 1986 and has been ratified by 25 countries.

It also has three protocols: the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region, the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region and the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities.

The Secretariat, based in Jamaica, has three main programmes:

1. Assessment and Management of Environment Pollution (AMEP)
2. Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW)
3. The Communication, Education, Training and Awareness (CETA) programme

Many activities are implemented through partnerships, in collaboration and/or coordination with a number of national, regional and sub-regional institutions and initiatives.

#### *Scientific and technical body*

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) was set up to provide guidance to Parties under the SPAW Protocol. It tries to meet every year. Parties nominate experts to the STAC and also invite regional organizations, NGOs and international organizations. They operate on a biannual workplan and budget which is approved by Parties at their COP.

The STAC has its own budget (70% from extraordinary contributions and the rest from a trust fund). The Secretariat manages the programme of the STAC and its budget. The group is very active and most of the work is achieved inter-sessionally.

In 2001 a review was undertaken of the STAC which highlighted the need for the following improvements:

- redefinition of the scope and structure of the STAC to make it a permanent body,
- completion of needed guidelines to support the implementation of the SPAW protocol,
- improving cooperation with other bodies/conventions (such as Ramsar, CBD, CITES...),
- improving participation,
- ensuring better uptake of SPAW products,
- development of sustainable financing arrangements.

Regional Activity Networks also provide scientific and technical input. These are networks of technical institutions and individuals (including e.g. governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental, academics and scientists) that provide input, peer review and expertise related to a specific scientific or technical issue with the aim to increase the level and depth of cooperation and sharing of expertise in the region.

### *Scientific and technical guidance*

Examples of guidance produced include developing guidelines and formats for presenting exemptions on use of threatened species, and reporting on their implementation, to the Contracting Parties; standardizing data collection on ship strikes and creating a regional repository; training on marine mammal entanglement response in the wider Caribbean region (WCR) and establishment of a region-wide network; developing standard guidelines and criteria for Index Site monitoring at sea turtle foraging grounds in the WCR; case studies on existing marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Bahamas, with the incorporation of terrestrial biodiversity, with recommendations for adaptive management.

Additional priorities in terms of scientific and technical guidance include increasing knowledge on marine mammal critical habitat areas, support for transboundary management and development of marine spatial planning scenarios for marine mammal corridors.

There is no distinction between scientific and technical guidance.

### *Main audience for the guidance*

The main audience is governments, but also the Secretariat and managers. Guidance is essentially to apply the requirements of the convention and its protocols.

## **2. Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)**

### *Overview*

The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), which entered into force in 2001, provides the legal framework for countries in the Americas to protect, conserve and allow for the recovery of the populations of sea turtles and their habitats, on the basis of the best available data and taking into consideration the environmental, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the Parties. It currently has 15 Contracting Parties, in addition to one country awaiting national ratification.

### *Scientific and technical bodies*

The Convention has two advisory bodies: 1. a scientific committee, and 2. a consultative committee of experts.

The scientific committee provides scientific advice to the Conference of the Parties to comply with the objectives of the Convention. It is made up of one scientist designated by each Party (who can be accompanied by up to three advisers), in addition to specialists nominated by consensus among the States to ensure that all relevant fields of knowledge are represented. The term for committee members is two years.

The “Consultative Committee of Experts” is made up of one representative from each Party, plus a total of nine members representing the NGOs (3), scientists (3), and the private sector (3). The purpose of this committee is to advise and guide the Conference of the Parties (COP) in their efforts to comply with the requirements of the Convention. It reviews the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, as well as drafting, if appropriate, resolutions for the Conference of Parties to consider at their meetings.

### ***Scientific and technical guidance***

Guidance expected from the scientific committee includes: evaluating the status of sea turtle populations and their habitats; recommending modifications to the format and content of the Annual Report of the Parties; supporting the Secretariat in creating and maintaining an up-to-date directory of scientists and/or experts in fields related to the Convention; analyzing the scientific research, projects and initiatives conducted by Parties or other relevant organizations or entities, and making recommendations on how to improve those actions to achieve the objective of the Convention; contributing to the development of bilateral, regional and multilateral management plans; developing and improving methodologies for the evaluation of environmental, socioeconomic and cultural impacts resulting from the measures adopted within the framework of the Convention.

Guidance is generally kept short and simple. In the annual report Parties need to show how they have complied on four technical resolutions. The consultative committee analyses these reports and as a result may make recommendations on the need for specific guidance to support Parties. This recommendation goes to the scientific committee which is then charged with developing the guidance. Countries may also go directly to the Secretariat asking for specific guidance. The Scientific Committee prioritises tasks.

They do not distinguish between scientific and technical guidance. Ultimately all guidance is applied to political decision-making.

### ***Main audience for the guidance***

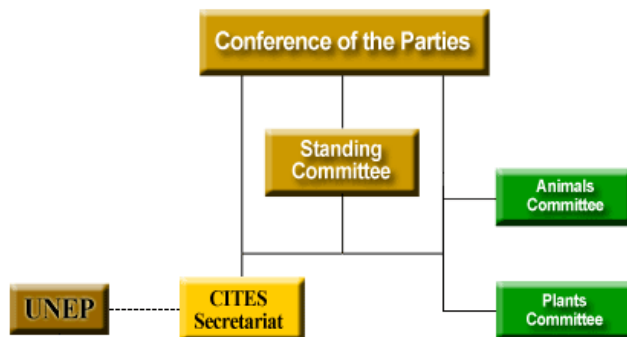
The main audience for the guidance is the Parties to the convention.

### 3. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

#### *Overview*

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) entered into force on 1 July 1975 and is aimed at ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Today, it has 180 Parties.

#### *Scientific and technical bodies*



**Source: CITES website**

CITES has two scientific committees of experts that were established at its 6<sup>th</sup> COP (Ottawa, 1987 – Res. 6.1) to “fill gaps in biological and other specialized knowledge regarding species of animals and plants that are (or might become) subject to CITES trade controls”. Members of the Animals and Plants Committees act in their individual capacity. They are elected at meetings of the COP and are drawn from the six major geographical regions (two members from each of Africa, Asia, Europe, Central and South America and the Caribbean, one from North America, and one from Oceania) as well as having one specialist on nomenclature on each of the two committees, taking the current membership to eleven. In addition, Parties may be represented as observers and the Chairman may invite any additional person or organization as an observer.

These committees provide technical support to decision-making about species.

The role of the CITES Secretariat is important in supporting the committees, preparing their meetings, acting as secretary at the meetings and preparing the summary records.

#### *Scientific and technical guidance*

The two committees are expected to provide scientific advice and guidance to other CITES bodies on all matters relevant to international trade in animal and plant species; deal with nomenclatural issues; assist the Secretariat and cooperate with it on the implementation of its programme of work; develop regional directories of experts; establish a list of those taxa included in Appendix II that are considered as being significantly affected by trade; assess information on those species for which there is evidence of a change in the volume of trade or for which specific information is available to indicate the necessity for review; undertake a periodic review of animal or plant species included in the CITES Appendices; advise



range States requesting assistance on management techniques and procedures; draft resolutions on scientific matters related to animals or plants, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

#### ***Main audience for the guidance***

The guidance is targeted at Parties to the Convention to support them in implementing the Convention.

## **4. The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**

### ***Overview***

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) was established in 1993 through an official agreement which currently has 19 Parties (14 Pacific island countries and 5 countries with direct interests in the region).

The purposes of SPREP are “to promote co-operation in the South Pacific Region and to provide assistance in order to protect and improve the environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations”.

Since 1995 SPREP has also been functioning as Secretariat of three regional conventions:

1. Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (1976) also called Apia Convention (suspended);
2. Convention on the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment in the South Pacific Region (1986) also known as Noumea Convention or SPREP Convention;
3. Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (1995) known as Waigani Convention.

While none of these Conventions have specific scientific bodies, the role of the SPREP Secretariat is key. In particular it:

- ensures the effective functioning of the COP and its subsidiary bodies;
- provides administrative, logistical, process management and procedural support to the COP;
- reports on administrative and budgetary matters;
- communicates relevant information received from one Party to other Parties;
- arranges support for party implementation of COP decisions.

### ***Scientific and technical guidance***

Article 7 of the Agreement outlines notably, the following roles for the SPREP Secretariat: to carry out research and studies as required to implement the SPREP Action Plan; to advise and assist Members on the implementation of activities carried out under the SPREP Action Plan; to gather and disseminate relevant information for Members and other interested Governments and organisations; to promote the development and training of personnel of Members and to promote public awareness and education, including publication of materials; to assist Member in the acquisition, interpretation and evaluation of scientific and technical data and information.

Member countries request specific assistance and the Secretariat responds. It may develop the guidance itself or work with partners. An example of guidance is the development of simple guidelines based on those of the CBD to support countries in revising their national biodiversity action plans (NBSAPs). Guidance takes the form of fact sheets, brochures, information exchange and guidance notes.

### *Main audience for the guidance*

The main audience for the guidance is both policy-makers and practitioners.

## **5. World Heritage Convention**

### *Overview*

In 1972 the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (WHC) came into force. Under the WHC Parties pledge to identifying potential valuable natural or cultural sites, protecting and preserving them as well as their national heritage. As of September 2012, the WHC had 191 State Parties. “States Parties are also expected to protect the World Heritage values of the properties inscribed and are encouraged to report periodically on their condition.”

### *Scientific and technical bodies*

Scientific guidance rests on three pillars: 1. the Secretariat, 2. the World Heritage Committee and 3. three advisory bodies.

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year, and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected by their General Assembly. This body is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, defines the use of the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties. While State Parties nominate properties for listing under the Convention, the Committee has the final say on whether a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The Committee also examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed properties and asks State Parties to take action when properties are not being properly managed. It relies on three organisations for its scientific advice:

**IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature) has a mixed constituency (both non-governmental members and governmental member). It provides the World Heritage Committee with technical evaluations of natural heritage properties and, through its worldwide network of specialists, it also reports on the state of conservation of listed properties.

**ICOMOS** (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental organisation which provides the World Heritage Committee with evaluations of cultural and mixed properties proposed for listing on the World Heritage List.

**ICCROM** (the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property ) is an intergovernmental body which provides expert advice on how to conserve listed properties, as well as training in restoration techniques.

### *Scientific and technical guidance*

The three advisory bodies receive funding from the World Heritage Trust Fund and are expected to:

“advise on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the field of their expertise; assist the Secretariat, in the preparation of the Committee's documentation, the agenda of its meetings and the implementation of the Committee's decisions; assist with the development and implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List, the Global Training Strategy, Periodic Reporting, and the strengthening of the effective use of the World Heritage Fund; monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and review requests for International Assistance; in the case of ICOMOS and IUCN evaluate properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List and present evaluation reports to the Committee; and attend meetings of the World Heritage Committee and the Bureau in an advisory capacity.”

Operational guidelines and resource manuals provide specific guidance. The former are useful before the nomination of world heritage sites, and the latter relate to how to prepare for nomination, how to prepare management plans etc.

“Reactive monitoring” is undertaken through missions that involve the Secretariat plus relevant representatives from one or two of the scientific bodies. An in depth report is produced and provided to the Party in question and then goes to the World Heritage Committee.

Periodic reporting functions on a 6-year cycle whereby State Parties complete a national report on how they are implementing the convention and reporting on each site.

There is no distinction between scientific and technical guidance. Guidance is scientifically-based but considered technical when it is applied.

Guidance is also developed further to general debates on specific topics at the World Heritage committee. At times as well, the Secretariat identifies issues and develops necessary guidance.

### *Main audience for the guidance*

The main audience for the guidance is State Parties. During missions, the main audience is the Party in question and relevant site managers. Frequently though, the interested audience may be much broader.

## **6. United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)**

### *Overview*

The Water Convention entered into force in 1996 and has 40 Parties in the UNECE region. It aims to strengthen transboundary water cooperation and promote the ecologically-sound management and protection of transboundary surface waters and groundwater. The Convention also promotes integrated water resources management, and in particular the basin approach.

Specifically, the Water Convention requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. In cases of joint water bodies, Parties are expected to cooperate by entering into specific agreements and establishing joint management bodies.

In 2003, the Water Convention was amended to become a global legal framework by allowing accession by countries outside the UNECE region. The amendment entered into force in 2013.

### ***Scientific and technical bodies***

The Water Convention does not have a scientific body.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment are the two main subsidiary bodies established by the Meeting of the Parties.

Two task forces exist: the Task Force on Water and Climate and the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus.

The Task Force on Water and Climate is responsible for activities and guidance related to adaptation to climate change, including flood and drought management. In 2007-2009, for example it produced guidance on water and adaptation to climate change to support governments.

The Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus is responsible for the preparation of the thematic assessment on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins. It focuses notably on improving cross- sectoral integration and coherence to better manage transboundary waters.

In 2003 Parties requested the establishment of a legal board to deal with legal questions related to the work under the Convention. This Board produced a “Guide to Implementing the Convention” together with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources.

A UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment provides policy advice to the Convention, notably helping Parties to comply with the provisions of the Convention.

### ***Scientific and technical guidance***

Guidance is essentially legal in nature and relates to implementing the modalities of the convention. Some technical guidance exists as well and this includes a “toolbox” which is very popular and reviews several case studies.

There is little scientific guidance, but rather guidance of a technical nature as the convention is more policy-focused. Guidance consists essentially of guidelines, case studies and good practices.

The compliance committee looks at national reports and assesses gaps in guidance that would help Parties improve in their compliance with the Convention.

### ***Main audience for the guidance***

The main audience for the guidance is authorities at national and/or municipal level.

## **7. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**

### ***Overview***

One of the three Rio Conventions, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established in 1994 as a legally-binding document to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification. It has 195 Parties.

### ***Scientific and technical bodies***

The COP has two subsidiary bodies: The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) which provides the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought was established at the start of UNCCD as a platform for scientific collaboration. It is assigned various advisory functions, data and information functions, research and review functions, functions related to technology, and evaluation functions (15/COP.1). It is meant to be multidisciplinary, open to the participation of all Parties, and composed of government representatives competent in the relevant fields of expertise. It also maintains a roster of experts. It makes recommendations to the COP on ways and means to facilitate and strengthen networking at the local, national and other levels.

Calls have been made for changes to the CST and since 2007 the format of meetings has evolved to one of a “scientific conference”. As a result of an evaluation of the first conference, it was agreed in 2007 to establish a “scientific advisory committee” to guide the substantive preparation of each subsequent conference. The committee is composed of a maximum of 12 experts with experience in economic assessment of land degradation, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. The composition of the membership is expected to ensure a balance of gender, regions and expertise.

Also, at the last COP, Parties agreed to set up a “science policy interface” (SCI) group which is a mechanism to collect science and use it for policy-making (decision 23/COP.11). It will be reviewed in 2017.

There is also the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) which was established at COP 5 in 2001 and is a standing subsidiary body to assist in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

### ***Scientific and technical guidance***

The CST focuses on scientific guidance, and in particular on monitoring the state of land degradation. It also concentrates on means of measuring and assessing progress, knowledge management and best practices. The CST synthesizes scientific evidence to allow COP to make more informed decisions. It may also identify emerging issues that could impact on the implementation of the convention.

In the more recent “scientific conference” formats, the Parties at COP determine the subject for the conference. Guidelines for reporting on progress are also important. Through the scientific conferences a “technical” series of documents was produced.

### ***Main audience for the guidance***

Politicians are the main audience for the guidance.

## 8. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

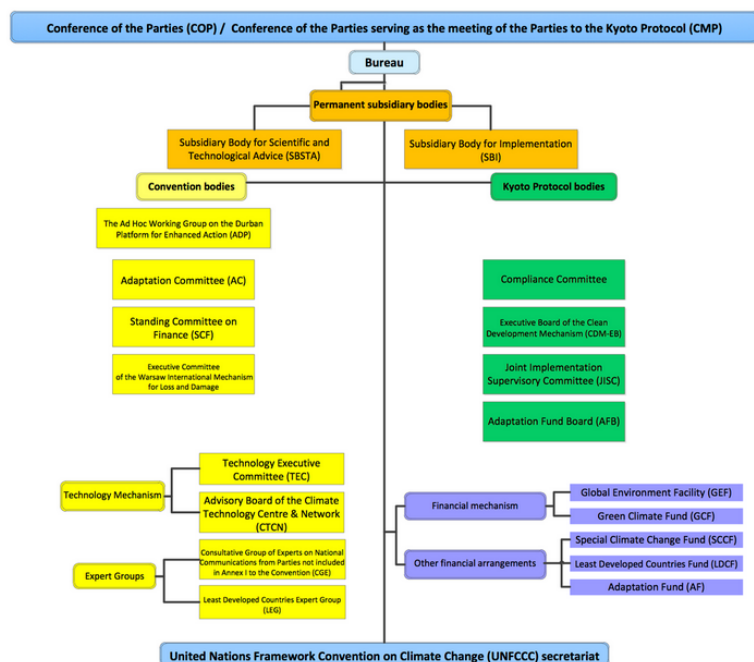
### Overview

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) emerged out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit as an international treaty to limit average global temperature increases and the resulting climate change, and to cope with whatever resulting impacts. By 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was adopted as a further measure to strengthen the global response to climate change. It is a legally binding Protocol tying developed countries to emission reduction targets.

There are now 195 Parties to the Convention and 192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

### Scientific and technical body

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) is one of two permanent subsidiary bodies to the Convention which supports the work of the COP by providing guidance on scientific and technological matters. The SBSTA meets twice a year.



Source: UNFCCC website

The IPCC is an independent panel but its work is fundamental to the UNFCCC and as such, the two collaborate closely.

### Scientific and technical guidance

Specific areas of work for the SBSTA include promoting the development and transfer of environmentally-friendly technologies, and conducting technical work to improve the guidelines for

preparing national communications and emissions inventories. The SBSTA also carries out methodological work in specific areas, such as impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change; emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; promoting the development and transfer of environmentally-sound technologies; and conducting technical work to improve the guidelines for preparing and reviewing greenhouse gas emission inventories from Annex I Parties.

The SBSTA also plays an important role acting as a conduit between the scientific information provided by the IPCC and other expert sources and the policy-oriented needs of the COP. It works in close collaboration with the IPCC.

### ***Main audience for the guidance***

The main audience for the guidance is ultimately policy-makers.

## **9. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

### ***Overview***

The third Rio Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), entered into force in 1993. It has three main objectives: 1. The conservation of biological diversity; 2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and 3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Today the CBD counts 194 Parties.

### ***Scientific and technical body***

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) is a subsidiary body of the CBD aimed at providing the Conference of the Parties (COP) with timely advice relating to the implementation of the Convention.

It is a multidisciplinary body open to participation by all Parties and is made up of government representatives with relevant expertise.

Its detailed work is set out in a *modus operandi* (annex III of [decision VIII/10](#)).

SBSTTA has met 16 times to date and produced a total of 176 recommendations to the Conference of the Parties.

Specific *ad hoc* technical expert groups on priority issues on the programme of work may also be set up, as required, for a limited duration, to provide scientific and technical advice and assessments.

### ***Scientific and technical guidance***

The specific functions of the SBSTTA are to:

- (a) Provide scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity;
- (b) Prepare scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention;

- (c) Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies;
- (d) Identify new and emerging issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
- (e) Provide advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
- (f) Respond to scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions from the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies.

Focal points are nominated to the SBSTTA by Parties which are intended to act as liaison with the Secretariat on behalf of their Parties with regard to scientific, technical and technological matters related to the Convention. This includes developing linkages, and facilitating information exchange, between the SBSTTA and relevant regional and national agencies and experts; responding to requests for input from the Conference of the Parties and the Secretariat related to scientific, technical and technological issues; communicating and collaborating with focal points for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice in other countries to improve the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body and to facilitate implementation of the Convention; collaborating with other national-level focal points for the Convention on Biological Diversity and focal points from other biodiversity-related conventions to facilitate implementation of the Convention at the national level.

### ***Main audience***

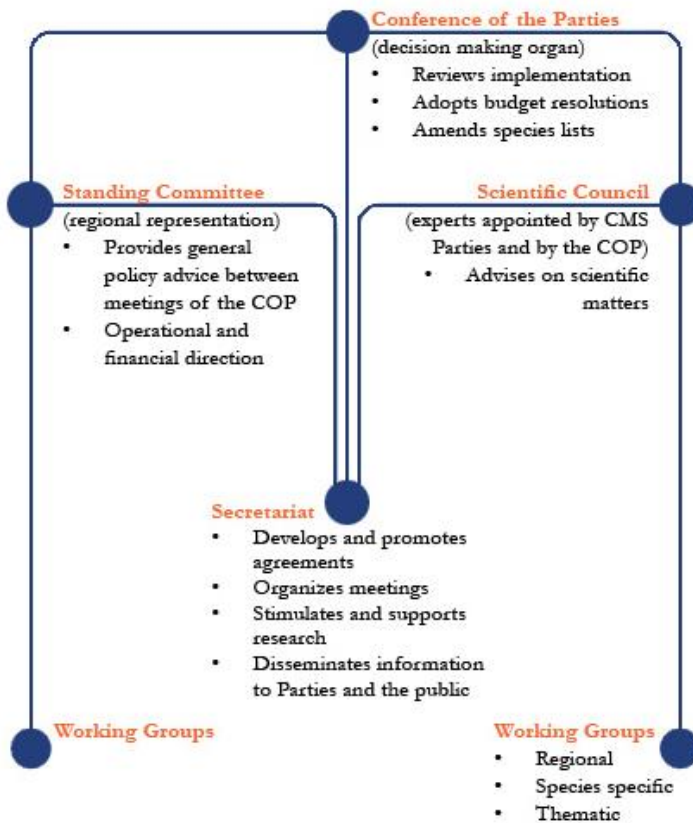
The main audience for SBSTTA guidance is the policy makers from contracting Parties.



## 10. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

### Overview

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. To date there are 120 Parties to the Convention.



Source: CMS website

### *Scientific and technical body*

The main scientific body of the CMS is the Scientific Council, one of two subsidiary bodies to the COP. It is intended to provide advice on scientific matters. “The Council makes recommendations to the Conference of the Parties on such issues as research on migratory species, specific conservation and management measures, the inclusion of migratory species in the Appendices and designation of species for Concerted or Cooperative Actions under the Convention.”

Each Party is entitled to appoint a qualified expert as a member of the Scientific Council and as a result there are currently close to 100 members. The COP may also appoint additional experts to cover relevant

fields of expertise. The Secretariat convenes meetings of the Council and while there is no set frequency for these meetings, they usually meet once before the Conference of the Parties and once intersessionally.

The Secretariat also plays a role notably in supporting and supervising research and conservation projects.

### ***Scientific and technical guidance***

Functions of the Scientific Council are set out in Article VIII to the Convention as:

- a) providing scientific advice to the Conference of the Parties, to the Secretariat, and, to any body set up under the Convention or to any Party;
- b) recommending research and the co-ordination of research on migratory species, evaluating the results of such research and reporting to the Conference of the Parties;
- c) making recommendations to the Conference of the Parties as to the migratory species to be included in Appendices I and II;
- d) making recommendations to the Conference of the Parties as to specific conservation and management measures to be included in agreements on migratory species; and
- e) recommending to the Conference of the Parties solutions to problems relating to the scientific aspects of the implementation of the Convention.

### ***Main audience***

The main audience for the guidance is the Parties to the Convention.

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