

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Proceedings of the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Vol. 7/12 (Brisbane, Australia, 19-27 March 1996)

Acknowledgements

The following institutions and individuals contributed support for the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties:

Organizing Committee

Australian Nature Conservation Agency
Australian Marine Conservation Society (on
behalf of the member organizations of the Australian Wetland Alliance)
Brisbane City Council
Queensland Department of Environment

Others

180 volunteers
4KQ
ABC TV
Anne's Sport Fishing Charters
Anne Beasley
Ansett Australia
AusAID – Papua New Guinea Branch
AusAID – South East Asia Regional Program
AusAID – South Pacific Multicountry Program
Australian Seafood Industry Council
Avis
Barry Ingham
Bill Foster
Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre
Brisbane Visitors and Convention Bureau
Channel 7
Commonwealth Bank of Australia
Data #3
Dave Lennon
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – South Pacific 2000 Program
Digital
Events
Frank Warrick OAM

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Premiums Plus
Queensland Art Gallery
Queensland University of Technology
Richard Morecroft
Showstoppers
Sirocco Music
The British Council
The Courier-Mail

Pre- and Post-Conference Tour organizers:

Australian Marine Conservation Society
Bob Wood South Pacific Tours
Djabulukgu Association Inc.
Murray Shire Council
Newcastle Visitor and Convention Bureau
North-west Australian Wader Expedition – Clive Minton

The Performers for the 25th Anniversary:

Child performers
Indonesian Region Cultural Group
Nunukul Kunjeil (Aboriginal Dance Troupe)
Spanish Folkloric Dance Group
Visions of a Nomad
Whizzbang

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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Notes of the First Plenary Session

19 March, 14:00-17:30

Agenda Item I: Opening Remarks

1. Louise Lakos of Hungary, the chair of the Standing Committee, welcomed the participants.
2. Peter Bridgewater, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, welcomed the participants on behalf of the host country.

Agenda Item II: General Statements

3. Welcoming and policy statements were made by:
 - Mr Neville T. Bonner, elder of the Jagera aboriginal country, including Brisbane and its watershed
 - Mr Eddie Hegerl, Australian Wetland Alliance, on behalf of Australian non-governmental organizations
 - Councillor John Campbell, Acting Mayor, on behalf of the Lord Mayor and people of Brisbane
 - Honorable Brian Littleproud, Minister of Environment for Queensland
 - Senator Robert Hill, Federal Minister of Environment, Sport and Territories
 - Dr Calestous Juma, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
 - Mr David McDowell, Director General of IUCN - The World Conservation Union
 - Mr Chris Kalden, President of Wetlands International
 - Dr Claude Martin, Director General of WWF International
 - Mr David Pritchard, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, for BirdLife International
 - Mr Delmar Blasco, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

[The texts of these statements are presented in full in Volume 8/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Agenda Item III: Adoption of the Agenda

4. The agenda, circulated as DOC.6.1, was adopted by consensus.

Agenda Item IV: Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

5. The Rules of Procedure, circulated as DOC.6.3, were adopted by consensus.
6. The Netherlands expressed the wish to suggest amendments to the Rules for future Meetings and was invited to convey suggested amendments to the secretariat.

Agenda Item V: Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons

7. The Government of Australia proposed Dr Peter Bridgewater for consideration as Chairperson of the Conference, and the Conference Committee recommended acceptance of this proposal. Dr Bridgewater was elected Chair by acclamation.
8. The Conference Committee proposed Ms Emma Diaz de Gordillo of Guatemala and Mr Ban-Ymary Daboulaye of Chad for election as Vice-Chairpersons, and they were elected by acclamation.
9. Dr Bridgewater succeeded to the Chair and made several announcements concerning the conduct of the Meeting. Interventions from the floor should be as brief as possible. Written notes should be transmitted to the rapporteurs, especially when exact wording is considered important. To ensure smooth flowing of the Meeting, particularly sensitive issues should be discussed in advance with the Conference Chair, the Vice-Chairs, or the Secretary General.

Agenda Item VI: Appointment of the Credentials Committee

10. According to Rule 3.3, the Credentials Committee shall consist of five members. The Conference Committee proposed Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, the People's Republic of China, and Uganda.
11. It further proposed Norway and the USA as additional ad hoc members, so that all regions will be represented. These Contracting Parties were elected by consensus.
12. The Conference Committee recommended the election of Bulgaria as Chair of the Credentials Committee. This was approved by acclamation.

Agenda Item VII: Admission of Observers

13. There were no objections to the list of observers circulated in DOC.6.4, and this became the official list of observers.

Notes of the Second Plenary Session

20 March, 09:00-17:30

Agenda Item VIII a): Report of the Convention Standing Committee

Hungary (Chair of the Standing Committee)

14. reported on the history and composition of the Standing Committee, and summarized its activities in the 1993-1996 triennium, as outlined in DOC.6.5.
15. The Committee was mandated to compile the draft Strategic Plan 1997-2002, which proved to be a most challenging task. The draft submitted was of course widely discussed at regional meetings and by NGOs as well. The Committee's intention was to make a firm recommendation on the budget for the next triennium, but the Subgroup on Finance has been unable to reach a conclusion because of insufficient feedback from the Parties. This issue will be discussed at regional meetings during this Conference, and hopefully the Committee will be able to make a recommendation later.
16. The Standing Committee recommends adoption of RES.VI.6 on changes in the name and procedures of the Wetland Conservation Fund and RES.VI.7 on new STRP members.

17. In the search for a new Secretary General, the Standing Committee had no procedures to go by. Thanks are due to Dan Navid, the former Secretary General, to Jim McCuaig for filling in as Interim Secretary General during the search, to Delmar Blasco, the new Secretary General who has already proved his abilities, to David McDowell and IUCN for assistance, and to the Canadian Wildlife Service for releasing Mr. McCuaig.
18. Thanks are also due to the countries that hosted Standing Committee, STRP, and regional meetings, Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, India, Kenya, Panama, and Switzerland, to the four partner organizations, to Anderson Koyo (Kenya), the Vice-Chairperson, to Graham Donald (UK), Chairperson of the Subgroup on Finance, and to the Bureau for its assistance.

Trinidad & Tobago

19. moved a vote of thanks to Louise Lakos for her excellent work as Chairperson throughout the triennium. Adopted by acclamation.

Agenda Item VIII b): Report of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

Mihály Vég (Hungary)

20. reported on the work of the STRP throughout the triennium, as outlined in DOC.6.5.
21. He thanked the other STRP members for their work: Tom Dahl, Max Finlayson, François Letourneux, Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, Roberto Schlatter, Mohammad Shatanawi.
22. The STRP is making several recommendations to the Conference, which are found in DOC.6.5.

Agenda Item VIII c): Introduction of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002

Anderson Koyo (Kenya), Vice Chair of the Standing Committee

23. introduced DOC.6.14, Draft Strategic Plan 1997-2002, and described its eight General Objectives. He thanked all Parties and individuals who made valuable contributions to the Plan.

The Chair

24. paid tribute to Anderson Koyo for his work in chairing the Strategic Plan Drafting Subgroup. Any further input to the Draft Plan should be communicated to the secretariat or to Mr Koyo.

Agenda Item IX: Report of the Convention Bureau

The Secretary General

25. referred to DOC.6.6, the Report of the Convention Bureau and made the following corrective and supplementary points:
 - The practice of assigning regional responsibilities to the Technical Officers, rather than thematic ones, is working well and should be continued. The Technical Officers are increasingly overworked, with more and more Contracting Parties requiring assistance.
 - He re-emphasized the excellent working relationships with the Convention's four partner organizations; there has been a very recent meeting to plan for the COP and will be a follow-up meeting in July. He would welcome still further partnerships.
 - The Convention's communications work requires more attention and the Secretary General will be reviewing this important area closely after the Conference.
 - Denmark should appear together with Sweden and India as having contributed support for the forthcoming book on wetland biodiversity.

- The budget surplus of SFR 41,000 for 1995 should be amended to SFR 28,891, still better than the deficit projected in September 1995.
 - He urged Parties to pay their contributions for 1996 on time.
 - The cost of living adjustment should be corrected to 1% (not 2% as shown).
 - Although the staff structure is working and effective, some refinements may be made following the Conference.
26. Referring to DOC.6.6, Annex 1 (Wetland Conservation Fund), the total funding of approximately SFR 1.7 million since the WCF's inception is not sufficient; to make the fund really useful, the Conference must examine how to reach the Kushiro target of US\$ one million per year.
27. He sought the Parties' help in improving the data in the Ramsar Database, so important an instrument of the Convention.

Scott Frazier, the Ramsar Database/Wetlands Officer, Wetlands International

28. summarized the recent thematic and regional analysis of information in the Database, to be found in *Overview of the World's Ramsar Sites*, and called for improved reporting of data from the Parties, including adequate maps.

Themes for the Future: Special Intervention 1

Dr Geoff Howard, IUCN

presented "Reconciling water resources management and wetland conservation: a key challenge for Ramsar in the 21st century".

29. Dr Howard observed that, as the 21st century approaches, domestic, industrial and agricultural demand for water will rise and put increased pressure on resources. Assessment of the degree to which wetlands perform hydrological functions relies upon accurate data, which are, however, expensive to collect. The Convention needs to work in collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization and others to improve the reliability of data worldwide, and should strengthen its hydrological expertise so that it can help ensure that beneficial hydrological functions are considered by decision-makers. Ramsar should encourage the study of traditional systems of water management and should continue its current work on guidelines for the economic valuation of wetlands for policy makers. The Convention should ensure that wetland users participate directly in decision-making and should strengthen its support for multi-disciplinary training. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Agenda Item X: Review of Implementation of the Convention in each region

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Asian Region

Swarn Singh Boparai (India), Regional Representative for Asia

30. presented an overview of the implementation during the triennium, including a summary of the national reports. With the latest site, Mai Po, there are 57 Ramsar sites in the region and more are expected. Several nations are expected to accede soon: Cambodia, South Korea, Thailand, Bhutan, North Korea, Israel, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Uzbekistan. Increase within the region in including sites in the List has been slow: of 13 Parties, 7 have only one site. Pakistan has notified the removal of 3 sites and add 3, and India wishes to remove 3 sites from the Montreux Record. Most Ramsar sites in Asia have some sort of legal protection.

31. The Asian region expresses concern about any possible reduction of Bureau activities resulting from budget discussions during the Conference. If contributions cannot be increased, the same budget would stretch further if the secretariat were lodged in a developing country; Asia would be prepared to match the facilities now available in Switzerland.
32. He offered his thanks to Mr Al-Zu'bi (Jordan) for his assistance as Alternate Member, and expressed his best wishes for Dr Satoshi Kobayashi of the Bureau in the future. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 57 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]

Mr Zhibao Wang, Vice Minister of Forestry (China)

33. spoke of his country's commitment to the importance of conservation and wise use and reported on recent activities in support of implementation of the Convention since its accession in 1992.

Malaysia

34. noted that the important International Conference on Wetlands and Development, in October 1995, requested that he convey to this Meeting the Kuala Lumpur Statement, which is available. Having joined in 1994, Malaysia has only one site, but thanks to US\$ 1.5 million in assistance from the Danish Government improvements are being made to its management.

Japan

35. announced the designation of one new site and is considering the creation of a National Wetland Committee.

Jordan

36. thanked the Australian Government for its hospitality and the Bureau for its arrangements. A new branch of the Department of Environment has been tasked to carry out monitoring of wetlands and implement education and public awareness of Ramsar values in the schools.

Indonesia

37. noted that it has signed an MoU with the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA) especially regarding wetlands. It is cooperating with Australia and Papua New Guinea and has established a National Wetland Committee, with a national strategy and a national action plan. It has added sites and now designates another site.

The Islamic Republic of Iran

38. observed that the beautiful city of Ramsar in Iran would very much like to host another such meeting as the one in 1971. It has established a national committee for sustainable development and now has a national strategy, for biological diversity in general and wetlands in particular. Iran urged greater cooperation between Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and recommended that the core budget be increased to allow for more assistance from the Bureau. The developed countries should take the lead in greater transfer of technology.

Nepal

39. observed that, with assistance from the Netherlands, it has identified 51 sites, 36 of which have special value for diversity, and 10 of which need conservation measures. Nepal is designating 3 new sites. Fourteen percent of Nepal is protected land, and most of its wetlands lie within that area.

Bangladesh

40. observed that its national report was completed and sent through channels but not received by the Bureau. Bangladesh is carrying out studies on its lone Ramsar site, the Sundarbans, with

the help of UNDP, and seeks donor assistance to implement the recommendations. It plans to add 2-4 new sites, but did not receive WCF funding for assistance with that process; if approved next year, the number of sites will be increased.

Sri Lanka

41. has a National Strategy for Wetland Conservation, and a National Wetland Steering Committee including all relevant agencies. It has site reports on 26 wetlands, of which 10 have management plans, including that of its Ramsar site at Burdala. It has been improving this site based on the management plan, upgraded to a national park with a visitor centre to be opened soon, and is in the process of designating a second site.

Cambodia

42. stated that the Ministry of Environment has proposed accession to the Convention to the Government and hopes for a favorable answer by the end of 1996. It appealed to the international community for assistance in reconstruction following its 25 years of war.

Bhutan

43. expressed its gratitude for help in attending the COP and said that it is presently in the final stages of joining the Convention.

WWF

44. supported the goal of as many new sites as possible but observed that the quality of listed sites is more important and was not mentioned in the report. Many sites are experiencing change and have no management plans. WWF asked all Parties to prepare management plans, including stakeholders and communities, with a catchment approach, and to report on these to the 7th Conference of the Parties.

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Oceania Region

Janet Owen (New Zealand), Regional Representative for Oceania

45. referring to INFO.6.12, cited progress in listing sites and in management, and congratulated Papua New Guinea on the listing of Tonda Wildlife Management Area. As part of her overview of progress in the region, she mentioned the launch of the *Directory of Wetlands of New Zealand* and of the 2nd edition of the *Australian Directory of Important Wetlands* at this Meeting. She urged aid agencies to pay particular attention to education and training programmes, especially those which used traditional practices by indigenous peoples. She made special mention of the Brisbane Initiative's East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Network and the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 77 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]

Australia

46. explained the importance of the Brisbane Initiative, establishing a network of listed and non-listed sites as urged in REC.C.4.4. Following earlier flyway initiatives, the Brisbane Initiative will cover the remaining one-third of the globe. Australia urged the Conference to reaffirm the importance of the flyway approach and called upon the Parties to nominate more sites that lie along the flyway.
47. It noted that the Brisbane Initiative will be launched on Tuesday, 26 March, and invited all delegations wishing to make inputs to join the drafting group on 21 March at 19:00.

Japan

48. thanked Australia for its efforts on the Brisbane Initiative, in which it has been deeply involved. It supports the Initiative but wishes for a few amendments, which it will convey later.

Papua New Guinea

49. thanked the Australian Government for assisting PNG's participation. It thanked Ms Owen for her report. It expressed its gratitude to the Wetland Conservation Fund, WWF, and AusAID for funding the important workshop that produced the Port Moresby Statement; the proceedings are now available.

Fiji

50. thanked the Australian Government for assisting Fiji's participation. Fiji is presently considering joining the Convention.

Western Samoa

51. thanked the Australian Government for enabling Western Samoa's participation. Western Samoa is considering joining the Convention and will be looking to the Ramsar Bureau for a lot of support.

Themes for the Future: Special Intervention 2

Ms Barbara Rutherford, WWF International

presented "Taking Toxins out of Wetlands"

52. Ms Rutherford remarked that toxins in wetlands is an emerging issue for Contracting Parties to consider in their future work to conserve wetlands and water resources. Many Contracting Parties are already experiencing degradation of their water resources, and of their Ramsar and other wetland sites due to agricultural run-off and industrial discharges. An understanding of how toxic pollution damages nature, including humans, is an imperative to prevent pollution in the first place, as many of the impacts we are now beginning to understand are long term and irreversible in nature. New evidence that even low doses of toxic chemicals can permanently effect the fundamental endocrine systems of humans and wildlife, which control development and reproduction, requires renewed vigilance about keeping toxics out of wetlands. Ultimately this means keeping toxics out of the environment. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the African Region

Mr Anderson Koyo (Kenya), Regional Representative for Africa

53. reported that the number of Contracting Parties and listed sites have increased. Application of the wise use concept is making steady progress across the region, but wetlands in the region are among the most threatened in the world. Management plans are in operation at a few sites and others are being developed. The first Ramsar African Regional Meeting was held in Nakuru, Kenya, in August-September 1994.
54. Most countries have developed national plans or strategies which incorporate wetland conservation. National Ramsar Committees are either in place or are in process of forming in a number of countries. Many Contracting Parties are participating in international cooperation on shared wetlands and species, and there are numerous bilateral agreements between African countries and international governmental and non-governmental bodies.

55. There is need for the creation of more wetland reserves in Africa. Almost all Contracting Parties are engaged in training and public awareness activities. Factors hindering implementation of the Convention include lack of adequate legislation, financial resources, qualified personnel and technical capacity, and effective land use policy. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 51 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]

The Secretary General

56. announced that UNESCO has advised that Côte d'Ivoire has become the 93rd Contracting Party.

Hon. Besueri Mulondo, Minister of State, Ministry of Natural Resources (Uganda)

57. noted that Uganda launched its National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetlands in 1995 (copies of which are available at the Conference) and is ready to assist other Contracting Parties to formulate national wetland policies. A National Environment Statute was also enacted in 1995 and provides for the protection of wetlands and the formulation of guidelines on wetland management. Pilot activities demonstrating the wise use of wetlands are being undertaken at local community level. Invasion by water hyacinth has caused considerable damage to water transport, fisheries, water supplies and power generation, and is transforming the ecological character of shoreline wetlands. Uganda is collaborating with Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania in research, management and control of water weeds, in particular water hyacinth, on Lake Victoria.

Ghana

58. observed that five of Ghana's six Listed Sites are being managed under the Ghana Coastal Wetlands Management Project with funding of US\$7.1 million from the GEF. However, this does not include funding for a transboundary Ramsar site as noted in the report on the Africa Region. Negotiations are in progress with Côte d'Ivoire over the joint management of the Abby Lagoon, which also lies partly in Ghana. Ghana's wise use strategy seeks to empower local communities to manage their wetland resources, but this is not without problems created by poverty and the need of local people to exploit wetlands to satisfy social and economic needs. To overcome these problems it is important to adopt a multidisciplinary programme approach, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 1997-2002. There is a need for international donor institutions to coordinate their policies, projects and activities where wetland rehabilitation, development and management are concerned. Ghana has halted an encroaching housing development in the Densu Delta Ramsar site.

Senegal

59. noted that thanks to financial support from the Government of the Netherlands and assistance from IUCN, a five-year management plan is now operating at the Djoudj Ramsar Site. Cooperation is important for transboundary sites and a Memorandum of Understanding will soon be signed with Mauritania on the National Park of Djoudj and the National Park of Diawling. With international assistance in carrying out waterbird counts, a national network of wetlands, including Ramsar sites, has been established thanks to IUCN. Technical matters and training were the subjects for a subregional workshop held at Djoudj.

South Africa

60. announced that after seven years of debate and environmental impact study, no mining will be allowed in the St Lucia Ramsar site, and requested that the site be removed from the Montreux Record. An integrated development and land use planning strategy will be undertaken for the entire Northern Kwa-Zulu/Natal region, as recommended by the 1992 Monitoring Procedure mission. South Africa acknowledged the valuable support given by the Ramsar community through the Montreux Record mechanism and the Monitoring Procedure.

A further three wetlands are to be designated in the Ramsar List, two of which could be expanded into Mozambique and Lesotho once these countries have acceded to the Convention. South Africa also expressed appreciation for the Ramsar Bureau's help in debates over the Langebaan site.

Zaire

61. noted that it had joined the Convention shortly before the Conference. Forty-seven per cent of Zaire is covered by dense tropical forests. There are seven National Parks, including the Virunga Ramsar Site. In collaboration with UNDP a national environmental management plan is being developed. Zaire seeks to benefit from its Ramsar status in drawing up a national inventory of wetlands to help prepare a National Policy.

Kenya

62. thanked the Government of the Netherlands for providing support for the Wetland Conservation and Training Programme, which will lead to the development of a National Wetland Policy. Thanks also go to the Government of Japan for the expansion and rehabilitation of the Nakuru town sewerage plant. A further project in partnership with WWF focuses on the Lake Nakuru catchment, and a community based management plan is being developed at Lake Naivasha. A tripartite agreement with Uganda and Tanzania concerning the conservation of Lake Victoria is benefiting millions of people.

Guinea-Bissau

63. observed that help will be needed from the Wetland Conservation Fund if sites are to be designated. IUCN has been providing assistance, especially with coastal management, since 1988. With additional help some existing National Parks could become Ramsar sites.

Gabon

64. noted that its implementation of the Convention has been timid until now. Legislation ratified in 1987 is still being considered. WWF has helped to establish wardens at three Ramsar sites. Management plans are being implemented at two sites thanks to technical support from WWF, GTZ (Germany) and the Government of France.

Togo

65. has recently joined the Convention and seeks to benefit from the expertise within the Ramsar family. Resources are lacking for training and education programmes, as well as for monitoring to evaluate potential wetlands for the Ramsar List. Togo thanks the Bureau for funding inventory and mapping work at its two existing sites.

Côte d'Ivoire

66. thanked the Bureau for its efforts since Regina in 1987 to help Côte d'Ivoire become a Contracting Party. Eight National Parks and three Nature Reserves cover 6-8% of the country's territory. The new Ramsar site merits international attention and international assistance will be required to list further sites.

Mauritania

67. referred to the Banc d'Arguin as the jewel of the world's wetlands, an important and highly productive fishery and waterbird site, and Mauritania thanked Mr Luc Hoffman, NGOs and governments for the conservation help it has received. Three new sites will be designated for the Ramsar List.

Tanzania

68. described two wetland sites and further announced that arrangements are nearly complete for accession to the Convention.

Ethiopia

69. noted that it was attending the Conference in order to understand Ramsar better and to evaluate the obligations and convey the many benefits of joining. The Government is ready to consider its joining positively, and potential sites have been identified.

Cameroon

70. observed that IUCN, WWF, and GEF are helping to fight threats to its wetlands, and it supported the Strategic Plan as the best way to tackle these daunting tasks. It expressed its intention to join the Convention soon.

Dr Manuel David Mendes, Secretary of Environment (Angola)

71. noted that, after 30 years of war, an era of peace is emerging. It is not possible to manage wetlands because of land mines. War has destroyed all infrastructure, and most roads to wetlands were very dangerous, as lawlessness impeded efforts to solve the land mine problem. Angola asked the Conference to provide help to undertake an inventory of the present state of wetlands and their biodiversity.

Zimbabwe

72. supported the aims of the Ramsar Convention and has already decided to accede; the paperwork is in progress and Zimbabwe is certain to be a Contracting Party before the 7th COP.

Mali

73. noted that Mali places importance on wetland conservation. Lacking the human and financial resources to study and designate new sites, Mali took this opportunity to ask colleagues at this Meeting for assistance.

Zambia

74. mentioned the importance of its many wetlands, particularly as the source of two major African rivers, the Zambesi and the Congo or Zaire. Zambia has established a Wetlands Task Force under the Environmental Council charged with formulating a National Wetlands Policy, which should be ready by the end of 1996. Zambia expressed its gratitude for Wetland Conservation Fund support for establishing the status of the natural resources of the Lukanga Swamp earmarked as a Ramsar site, and recorded its appreciation for other wetlands-related assistance from the European Union, the Netherlands, WWF and IUCN. Zambia emphasized its intention to strive to achieve all or most of the Recommendations and Resolutions of this COP before the 7th Conference of the Parties.

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Neotropical Region

Roberto Cal (Uruguay), Regional Representative for the Neotropics

75. explained the strong commitment of the Region as shown by the number of new sites listed since Kushiro, whilst at the same time he explained the great conservation challenges due chiefly to poverty, as well as erosion, industrial activity and tourism. The region as defined by Ramsar is varied in many ways and may someday have to be split into two. The wise use concept has helped in many ways. Jeannette Kawas in Honduras lost her life in defense of the conservation and wise use of wetlands. He highlighted the importance of the Wetland Conservation Fund throughout the region, though its resources are insufficient to satisfy all

needs and it should be strengthened. He drew attention to Wetlands for the Future, financed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Department of State, within the 25th anniversary efforts. He noted the Uruguay round of GATT and its mention of sustainable development. The committee within the WTO on the relation between trade and environment may help to break down trade and non-trade barriers to trade in sustainable wetland products. He thanked the member states in the region. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 68 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]

Argentina

76. acknowledged the need to strengthen Ramsar in its country; its National Committee will set up a national programme for wetlands which will result in a Strategic Plan. Argentina approved of the Secretary General's emphasis upon sustainable use and especially on the scarcity of water. It is committed to meeting the challenges arising from this Conference.

Bolivia

77. noted that Laguna Colorada is no longer on the Montreux Record, because the geothermal project has been stopped. There is a national system of 15 protected areas, with eight more soon, several with management plans. There is an agreement with indigenous people for management of one area. With Bureau support, another three potential sites are being worked on, one of them with Peru: Lake Titicaca should soon become a Ramsar site.

Brazil

78. reiterated that free trade is vital for the good of wetlands, as it removes barriers to trade in wetland products. Brazil urged the Conference to send a message to this effect to the Committee on Trade and Environment of the World Trade Organization.

Sr Marco Antonio Gonzalez, Vice Minister of Environment and Energy (Costa Rica)

79. noted that twenty-five percent of Costa Rica's area is conservation area, in 116 protected areas; it has five Ramsar sites and is now presenting one more, its 6th Ramsar site. They are transboundary sites with Nicaragua and Panama. Costa Rica has a vision of a national network of wetland areas in partnership with their communities. With the help of IUCN and financial support from the Netherlands, a national strategy for the conservation of wetlands has been developed.

Peru

80. has three sites and has submitted data sheets for four more, thanks to assistance from the Wetland Conservation Fund. A strategic plan and an action plan have been adopted. Thanks are due to the US Department of State for financial assistance in developing a plan for Paracas.

Trinidad and Tobago

81. explained the recent Monitoring Procedure at Nariva Swamp and recommended use of this instrument to other Parties, following their positive experience of its application.

Chile

82. is now drafting a national wetland policy, with a National Wetland Committee. It plans to designate five highland sites, thanks to funding from the Wetland Conservation Fund, and another two forested sites and one on Easter Island.

Dr Carlos Medina, Minister for the Environment (Honduras)

83. announced that Honduras is designating its third Ramsar site. He proposed that the Convention revise the definition of wetlands to make humans as prominent as flora and fauna.

It is hard to convince people to conserve wetlands because of animals when they are living on the border of misery. Poverty is the root cause of wetland loss. No Ramsar site should be without a management plan; the wealthier countries should form partnerships with developing countries, and the Convention should have guidelines on such help.

Panama

84. has made great progress in drafting policies to include wetlands in land use planning, in partnership with local communities. The regional meeting in Panama was very important, and Panama would welcome initiatives for cooperation from Contracting Parties and organizations.

Suriname

85. noted that it has one listed site and two others in the final stages of designation. It thanked the French Government for development assistance for a management plan for its Ramsar site, and the Canadian Wildlife Service for other assistance.

Guatemala

86. observed that at its second site, the role of women in local management has been significant. Women have a major role everywhere. Guatemala is designating its third site, in consultation with local communities and with similarly significant participation of women. It urged more joint cooperation in the region.

Venezuela

87. announced four new sites, making five in all. The National Ramsar Committee has studied 36 protected areas and chosen these four because they are the best managed, already having plans.

Ecuador

88. agreed that poverty, trade barriers, and insufficient technical and financial assistance are real problems.

Colombia

89. noted that only recently has it had a Department of Environment with strength. It applauded the fact that in this Convention, unlike many others, governments and NGOs seem like members of the same family.

Nicaragua

90. expressed its full intention of signing the Convention soon, as its wetlands are key, bridging diversity between South and North America, the Atlantic and the Pacific. It promised to be a Contracting Party before the 7th COP.

WWF

91. noted that Río Cruces in Chile may be threatened by change in ecological character because of a planned cellulose plant upstream, involving reforestation with exotic species. WWF called for greater reflection and the cessation of this industrial development.

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the North American Region

Humberto Berlanga (Mexico)

92. summarized information from the national reports and INFO.6.11, noting that the region's nine sites added since Kushiro brought the total to 52. Ría Lagartos, thanks to improvements due to a GEF-supported management plan, should be removed from the Montreux Record. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 72 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]
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Notes of the Third Plenary Session

21 March, 09:00-17:30

Agenda Item X: Review of the Implementation of the Convention in each region (continued)

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in Eastern Europe

Louise Lakos (Hungary), Regional Representative for Eastern Europe

93. noted that six States have acceded to the Convention since Kushiro (Albania, Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), bringing the total to 16 Contracting Parties with 97 sites. Many sites are threatened by human activity. Management plans exist for many sites; those prepared with international assistance seem often to work best.
94. There are three keys to success: a) an explicit commitment from the entire government, so environmental authorities need to involve the ministries for finance, privatization, etc. as well; b) appropriate financial incentives for the private sector; c) cooperation and partnerships in communications, including with NGOs. Technical and financial assistance is necessary.
95. Public awareness activities are best carried out in the national languages, and Ramsar materials need to be intelligible to local people. Ramsar is seen in the region to be an effective instrument, an international standard to which reference can be made.
96. The Ramsar division into Eastern and Western European Regions is neither geographical nor political, though economic differences exist. Further thought is needed, which might lead to a review of Ramsar's whole regional system. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 64 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]

Romania

97. noted that a National Strategy and Action Plan on biodiversity and sustainable use is being finalized, supported by the World Bank and the GEF, and it will include all necessary actions for conservation and wise use of wetlands. There has been progress on legal mechanisms. Romania has 30 significant wetlands besides the Danube Delta, and most would qualify for Ramsar status. Romania plans one designation soon, and others are likely.

Armenia

98. reported that economic circumstances constitute the main problem, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The use of water to generate electric power has led to a drop of 1.2m in the level of Lake Sevan. The Ministry of Environment is attentive to bilateral cooperation opportunities and beginnings have been made, especially with neighboring countries.

Croatia

99. reported on recent steps to solve problems in several Ramsar sites. Crna Mlaka has been privatized, but contacts with the new owner are progressing. Kopacki Rit is still inaccessible to Croatian authorities because of the political situation, but there are hopes for resolution soon.

Hungary

100. highlighted the special problems of countries with economies in transition, particularly privatization. Some of the best Ramsar sites are fish farms; it is necessary to fight to keep privatization agencies from selling to entrepreneurs, or to educate farmers, and for these purposes Ramsar is a good tool. A National Ramsar Committee was formed last year. A number of new sites were proposed in January and are now being debated by the Government; if accepted, Hungary's sites would grow by 40% in area and number.

Poland

101. noted that Siedem Wysp, which has been on the Montreux Record since 1990, has seen very positive progress. Last year three new site designations and one site extension were achieved.

Bulgaria

102. has been a Party for 20 years and has four sites. Bulgaria expressed its appreciation for the help of its partners on several projects, Switzerland, Monaco, France, the World Bank, and the Ramsar Bureau, and highlighted the development of its 1993 National Action Plan with support from France and the Bureau. In its dealing with private owners, Ramsar status is a facilitator. One new site designation was announced, Lake Shabla.

Latvia (speaking also on behalf of Lithuania)

103. expressed its readiness to work cooperatively for wetland conservation and wise use.

Albania

104. described the inherited environmental problems in the move from centralized planning to a market system, and the present need for an integrated management plan for the coastal zone. It highlighted several projects funded by UNEP and the World Bank, and described management planning efforts at Albania's first Ramsar site. GEF funding has enabled continuing cooperation between Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on shared sites, an approach that is being extended to wetlands shared with Greece and Yugoslavia.

Ukraine

105. announced that the Cabinet had identified 22 wetlands as potentially important, of which four sites have been chosen for the Ramsar List. Ukraine has the strong intention of signing the Convention as a new independent state.

The Czech Republic

106. invoked the memory of Jiri Janda, who died in May 1994. The five new Czech sites since Kushiro are due chiefly to his work. The nine Czech sites show a good balance: 3 peatlands, 3 floodplains, and 3 fish farms. The Czech Republic shares the problem raised by Hungary, that of privatization. English translations of Czech law dealing with nature and landscape protection may be helpful to other Contracting Parties.

Azerbaijan

107. described two important sites and their threats, emphasizing the need for multilateral assistance. Since 1978 the Caspian Sea has risen, and there is a strong need for basic

equipment. All nations are invited to help; Azerbaijan would like to participate in Ramsar but without financial assistance it will be impossible.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society

108. made the point that the thematic structure of national reports makes it very difficult to assess the status of individual sites. The Society recommended restructuring so as to keep all the present information but also allowing evaluation at the site level. It suggested that a working group could be established to address this problem and offered to assist.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

109. noted that from 1976 to 1991 it was part of Yugoslavia and there was no implementing authority. Since then it has created a National Ramsar Committee (1994), with the help of the Bird Study and Protection Society of Macedonia at the initiative of BirdLife International.

Australia

110. supported the Australian Marine Conservation Society's proposal and urged the Standing Committee to review the structure of national reports, especially so as to include the views of NGOs, and report to the 7th COP in 1999.

Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in Western Europe

Dr Fritz Dieterich (Germany), Regional Representative for Western Europe

111. described the situation in Western Europe since the Koshiro COP and emphasized the cooperative spirit existing within Europe, especially in cases of cross border management. Examples included the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, agreements between Germany and Poland on sites along their common border, and management arrangements for sites along the Rhine, Danube, and Elbe Rivers. [The full text of this presentation begins on page 80 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.]

Iceland

112. summarized developments since submission of its national report. A new Ramsar site has been decided upon and is now being processed by the Foreign Ministry. In a new conservation policy, the decision has been made to restore several wetlands, through collaboration of the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Nature Conservation Council of Iceland, and the Icelandic Society for the Protection of Birds.

Switzerland

113. announced its publication on Swiss Ramsar sites, coordinated with the 25th Anniversary, and reminded the delegates of the photography exhibition on Swiss mires.

France

114. described its involvement with the MedWet programme: Phase I (funded by the EU ACNAT and LIFE programmes), defining methodological tools and involving Southern European Governments, NGOs and the Ramsar Bureau, is passing into the next phase, funded by the LIFE project, which will bring in other Mediterranean nations. France has been particularly involved in the public information and training parts, with the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat heading this work, and has produced a set of brochures for the public at all Ramsar sites. Nine new Ramsar sites will be named in the very near future, and wetlands will soon have a priority in French law.

Italy

115. noted that it too is participating strongly in the MedWet initiative and will be hosting a major conference in Venice in June, where a Draft Strategic Plan for Mediterranean Wetlands based on Ramsar's Strategic Plan will be discussed.

Malta

116. announced a new site earlier this year, and presently has two.

Belgium

117. noted that it has not yet ratified the Paris Protocol and Regina Amendments but hopes to do so soon. New sites are in preparation, and there has been positive action along the Scheldt, a Montreux Record site. Belgium is particularly concerned about threats to wet grasslands and recommends that the Convention pay further attention to it. It announced a supplementary and voluntary contribution of SFR 8,000.

Portugal

118. pointed to its two present sites and announced that on 15 March it had sent through diplomatic channels the data sheets for seven new sites.

Austria

119. has begun preparations for a National Wetland Policy. Step I will be publication of an inventory of national wetlands. WWF Austria will be commissioned to develop the strategy. LIFE aid will help to study all potential Ramsar sites. One new site will be listed before the end of 1996 and a further two sites in 1997. Austria invited nearby states and the Bureau to attend the Standing Committee meeting of its National Wetland Committee.
120. Austria supported the restructuring of national reports outlined in a previous intervention, especially concerning the inclusion of the views of NGOs.

Israel

121. announced that ratification is in the final stages and should be finalized by June, with two sites, including the recently restored parts of Lake Hula drained in the 1950s.

Turkey

122. announced completion of a national wetland inventory, which found 81 potential wetlands of international importance. Establishment of a National Committee is being considered, as a mechanism for coordinating agencies and allowing participation by the universities. Turkey seeks opportunities for international cooperation and will host a MedWet meeting in 1996.

The UK

123. observed that since its national report in August 1995, its number of sites has increased from 91 to 102, including Mai Po in Hong Kong. The Government's response to the Monitoring Procedure report on the Dee Estuary shows well the great extent to which it is aware of its obligations under the Convention.

Greece

124. apologized for the delay in its national report. Recommendations have been made concerning Greek sites at earlier Conferences: maps have now been submitted for seven sites and the rest will follow by the end of 1996. There is now management of three sites through a Joint Ministerial Decree and three more are in the signing process. A management agreement has been signed for surveillance and visitors' centers at eight sites, including an advisory role for local populations.
125. Every effort has been made to ensure that the Acheloos project will not diminish the conservation values of the Messolonghi wetlands; it has been decided to divert only half as

much water to Thessalia plain as first planned. Greece has been involved in the MedWet project. It is including public awareness as part of national policies, financing NGO efforts from proceeds of a petrol tax. A National Ramsar Committee is being established which will include NGOs and universities. Greece and Bulgaria have signed an MoU concerning the Nestos. Greece hoped that the Conference would recognize that Greece has made significant progress and will multiply its efforts over the next three years. Greece announced that in honor of the 25th Anniversary it will make a contribution of SFR 8,000.

Norway

126. announced that nine new sites had been submitted to the Bureau from the embassy in Berne three days ago, a 300% increase in area. Two of the new sites are peatlands, one of them transboundary with Russia. At Åkersvika, adjacent to the site of the Winter Olympics, decisive steps were taken to ensure the safety of the Ramsar site.

Germany

127. described its interesting project in conjunction with France to establish a Ramsar site along 190km of the upper Rhine, a densely populated and used area but still very important for migratory species and biological richness.

WWF

128. argued that Austria's naming of the Neusiedlersee, Seewinkel & Hanság site would seem to suggest a much wider area than is actually covered by the site.
129. WWF acknowledged that Greece has taken positive steps at all eleven sites but that all are still under serious threat and are degrading. It welcomed the provision of site maps but would wish to see management plans. It expressed the belief that the recent EIA on the Acheloos project, which favors the dam, lacks all reliability and objectivity. The WWF report on Greek wetlands will be distributed later in the Conference.

BirdLife International

130. argued that it is impossible to measure progress if Parties' national reports are not submitted by their deadlines. Greece, Ireland, and Spain all failed to send their reports in time for inclusion in the regional overview. Greece thus robbed the Conference of the chance to judge whether the Kushiro recommendation had been addressed. The Greek ministerial declarations have expired, leaving a legal vacuum. National reporting is vital and the system is not working. BirdLife International urged the Standing Committee and the Bureau to address this problem.

The Secretary General

131. sympathized with the frustration of receiving some reports late, but noted that for the first time, all Contracting Parties have submitted reports, even if some were late. There is a long way to go, but encouraging progress has been made.

Republic of Korea

132. mentioned that it was seeking to involve local communities and will accede to the Convention after procedures have been carried out.

Canada

133. also expressed concern about the effects of the present structure of national reports and about the difficulty of using them, especially on individual sites. Canada urged revision of the structure so as to highlight the evolution of each site.

Morocco

134. thanked the Contracting Parties which have given support for its conservation work, with the European Union, BirdLife International and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) as well and asks for their continuing support.

OECD Guidelines for Aid Agencies

Dr Horst Breier, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

135. described the recently published OECD Guidelines for Aid Agencies, one concerning wetlands and another on marine and coastal zones. It represents the views of donors but includes input from experts and NGOs; the wetlands guidelines were authored principally by IUCN with input from Ramsar staff. He commented that aid agencies must not work against conservation values. The guidelines are aimed at a wide, non-specialist audience. Copies are available, and a fuller briefing will be held during the Conference.

Themes for the Future: Special Intervention 3

Ms Diane Tarte, Australian Marine Conservation Society and

Mr Richard Lindsay, International Mire Conservation Group

presented “Wetlands in the Coastal Zone and Peatlands - A Key Role for Ramsar”.

136. Ms Tarte spoke of the degrading impacts on the world’s coral reefs: up to 10% of all reefs have been degraded beyond recovery and scientists predict that 20-30% may be lost by 2020; sixty per cent of the world’s 5.6 billion people live in coastal areas. The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) has four main themes which are the basis for regional strategies: integrated coastal zone management; capacity building; research and monitoring; and review and evaluation of management action. However, ICRI cannot provide the framework of a governmental convention under which a range of policy and programme initiatives and funding options can occur. Ramsar, which explicitly includes coral reefs, can provide this and Draft Recommendations 7 and 8 before the Conference, if adopted, will see coral reefs and tidal wetlands take their rightful place in the family of Ramsar wetlands. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of these *Proceedings*.]
137. Mr Lindsay reported on the findings of a pre-conference workshop on peatlands. Although peatlands cover 400 million hectares in total and represent 50% of the world’s terrestrial and freshwater wetlands, only 75 of the 778 Ramsar sites listed by December 1995 have peatland as their dominant habitat; totalling 3 million hectares compared with 52 million for all listed Ramsar sites. The workshop identified an area to which Ramsar can usefully devote particular attention. One Draft Recommendation highlights that peatlands have been under-represented in both site lists and actions of Ramsar, but that there is explicit recognition, under Action 6.2.3 of the Draft Strategic Plan, of the need for greater effort in this area. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Agenda Item XI: Strategic Plan, Programme, and Budget

[Note: The Strategic Plan had been introduced earlier; see paragraphs 23 and 24 above.]

The Bureau’s Draft Programme for 1997-2002

The Secretary General

138. introduced the Triennial Programme 1997-1999, DOC.6.15. The Programme was based on the optimistic view that there would be an increase of 49% in the core budget. This would allow the recruitment of the additional staff post of Development Assistance Officer. The document indicates the resources required for each of the actions assigned to the Bureau in the Programme. The Programme will change in line with changes made to the Budget and the Draft Strategic Plan.
139. He explained the rationale behind the costing of the Bureau's actions in carrying out each part of the Draft Strategic Plan. The figure of SFR 100 per hour was calculated from the total budget divided by the total weeks in the year and does not merely represent salary: travel, facilities, photocopies, all other overheads were included. This is not a scientific document but a method for costing priorities roughly and allocating staff time.

Malaysia

140. noted that there seem to be a lot of overlaps in the organization of the tasks and suggested the formation of a new small group to prioritize and rationalize some of these costs in the hope of bringing them down somewhat.

Austria

141. queried the real cost of a working hour and was reminded by the Secretary General that these "hours" included all overhead costs as well as salaries. The relative cost of the tasks is more important than any rough estimate of the real costs.

Discussion of the Draft Strategic Plan

Romania

142. requested technical information on data reporting requirements under the Draft Strategic Plan, as it is currently setting up data collection parameters. It asked the Bureau for EPA information and materials to serve as models for Romanian visitors' centers.

Netherlands

143. found all of the Plan valuable but cited four General Objectives as higher priorities than the others: Objective 2 on wise use, 4 on capacity building, 5 ensuring conservation, and 7 on cooperation and assistance.

Belgium

144. missed the word "research" from the Plan's objectives and wondered whether it was included under training.

Norway

145. wished to have seen more attention paid to national cooperation within various sectors, spelling out how wetland policies can be integrated into biological diversity policies. Also, more advice on how to cope with the forces of destruction at national level. It urged that a group be established at this COP to make these changes.

Brazil

146. was pleased to see efforts to integrate the Rio conclusions and welcomed the Plan's emphasis on transfer of technology and resources to developing countries, and it wished to prioritize Objectives 2, 4 and 7. It sought more emphasis on cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially concerning equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of natural resources.

Ecuador

147. felt that the text does not fully fit the purposes of the Ramsar Convention and is more like a convention with new purposes. If the aim is an ideal Ramsar Convention, amendments would be needed. There is not enough clarity or precision to the budget and no proposal on how to capitalize the sums involved. Ecuador suggested that each Party establish a counterpart fund so as to match assistance financing, thus showing commitment.

Islamic Republic of Iran

148. observed that Objective 4 needs more emphasis. Moreover, the Plan should give priority to transfer of financial resources and appropriate technology the developing countries require for implementation of the Strategic Plan at the national level. More coordination between Ramsar and the CBD is needed.

Tunisia

149. noted that Objective 5 calls for conservation of all sites on the List, which would be hard to guarantee, and recommended a change in the wording.

Venezuela

150. echoed what Brazil had said earlier and stressed that the future of Ramsar exists only insofar as this Plan comes up with financial backing; otherwise it is all just wishful thinking. Thus Objective 7 is the most important one.

East African Wildlife Society

151. thanked the Netherlands for enabling it to be present and urged the need for empowerment of local environmental NGOs in particular, which are better able to concentrate on environmental problems than the local people can.

Indonesia

152. offered other amendments to the wording of the Plan.

The Chair

153. concluded that more fine tuning was required on the draft text and proposed that the Conference Committee nominate a group including one country from each region to further refine the text, based on written and oral comments received, in time for the Bureau to produce a final draft on 24 March. It would be unwise to open it up too much, as so much consensus has already been painstakingly built. The Plan should not exactly match the budget; it should be somewhat larger, but not smaller.

Brazil

154. urged that in order to be democratic, an open-ended small group discussion might be better than a closed subgroup, and accepted the Chair's suggestion that the working group's meeting time would be announced so that others might attend if they wished.

Peru

155. noted that Objective 1 seeks universal membership but felt that conservation and wise use should rather be number one. The Plan should provide for when an action is finished and how much it cost, with monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation.

Budget Matters

Mr Graham Donald (UK), Chair of the Subgroup on Finance

156. explained the approach adopted by the Standing Committee, which will be proposing the application of the terms of reference agreed at the 1993 COP for the financial administration of the Convention in 1997-1999. He reported progress on the core budget negotiations and the level of subscriptions required to finance such a budget.
157. The establishment of a Reserve Fund had been recommended by the Convention's auditors, Price Waterhouse. Three sources of income for the Reserve Fund were proposed: any surplus achieved by efficiencies; any subscriptions received from Contracting Parties previously written off as bad debt; any interest on funds received with the donor's approval.
158. The auditors had also recommended accounting on an accruals basis, which enables both income and expenditure to be allocated against the financial year to which they relate.
159. The establishment of a Finance Subgroup as a permanent feature can relieve the Standing Committee, carefully scrutinize the Convention's accounts, and provide guidance on the operation of the Reserve Fund.
160. If Contracting Parties are able to pay contributions in Swiss francs, savings on administration can be made and exchange losses avoided, though the laws of some Contracting Parties may not permit this.
161. The Standing Committee and Finance Subgroup were working hard to achieve the maximum level of consensus on the budget. There was still no consensus on the minimum contribution. Mr Donald outlined some of the considerations which, he believed, should be taken into account in deciding the budget.
162. Following a study of the best means of allocating contributions, the Standing Committee will be recommending that the United Nations scale should continue to be the basis of calculation.

Friends of the Earth International

163. expressed strong concern about the difficulty of reaching consensus on meeting basic needs of the Convention. The sums involved are very, very modest compared to other conventions or even many NGOs. It requested that all Parties try much harder, as the result would benefit everybody, in both developed and developing countries. It urged the Parties to make the greatest effort possible to accept the 49% increase in the core budget or as near as possible. FOE felt that the Ramsar Convention has been proved a reliable and effective convention and deserves better support.

Islamic Republic of Iran

164. noted that the UN scale of assessments is recalculated on a different timetable than Ramsar's invoicing, to which the Secretary General explained that 1997 invoicing would be exact while exact amounts for the next two years would not be known until UN recalculations were announced. But the total amount budgeted would be decided at this COP, though each Party's share for 1998 and 1999 might be altered slightly.

Trinidad and Tobago

165. suggested that the possible relocation of the Bureau should be considered by the Standing Committee.

Shortland Wetlands Centre

166. noted that the NGOs are concerned that support would be insufficient for the Strategic Plan and the WCF. Ramsar gets less than any other such body, and the Centre extended its sympathy to the Bureau for having to do so much with so little. It commended the Australian Government's pledging initiative.

Brazil, with support from Venezuela

167. objected that the application of the UN scale to Ramsar's contributions put a heavy burden on some developing countries and requested the Standing Committee to continue to search for alternatives to be brought to the next COP.

Uruguay

168. pointed out that this had been studied at great length and no viable alternative to the UN scale had been found. The search for good alternatives will continue, however.

Themes for the Future: Special Intervention 4

Mr Lew Young, WWF-Hong Kong

presented "Education and Public Awareness - New Meanings in a New Era"

169. Mr Young noted that at previous conferences on wetland conservation there have been calls for a shift of emphasis within the wetlands conservation world toward activities concerned with raising awareness, knowledge and understanding, and community based action. As information technology develops, it is clear that a structure and organization is needed to take advantage of such opportunities for the benefit of wetland conservation. The Draft Strategic Plan for the Ramsar Convention clearly proposes that a concerted programme of education and public awareness for wetlands is developed. The actions proposed in Objective 3 are the results of workshops and discussions held since Kushiro, designed to raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of the *Proceedings*.]

Announcement of pledges to the 25th Anniversary Funds

170. In August 1995 the Australian Government invited the Governments of all Contracting Parties to join with Australia in pledging funds at this Conference for the achievement of the objectives of the Strategic Plan. It has been decided to set aside part of this Plenary Session for the announcement of these pledges.

The Netherlands

171. expressed its appreciation for the establishment of the 25th Anniversary Fund to pursue the objectives in the Draft Strategic Plan, and later this year will host Wetlands International's regional headquarters and global coordination unit. The Netherlands pledged one million Dutch guilders per annum for three years, to fund projects in developing countries and those with economies in transition. In addition, the Netherlands will double its contribution to the Wetland Conservation Fund from 30 thousand guilders to 60 thousand per annum over three years.

The USA

172. pledged an additional \$ one million over its core budget voluntary contribution over the next six years, to be invested in the Wetland Conservation Fund. Over the past two years a programme to commemorate the Ramsar 25th Anniversary, Wetlands for the Future, has begun training Latin American wetland managers. This fund will total \$750,000 when fully funded.
173. Caddo Lake Institute has pledged more than \$100,000 to its Ramsar-based initiatives. The Institute will create the first US regional academy of wetlands science education and the first US regional Ramsar centre, to be located adjacent to the Caddo Lake Ramsar site.
174. The US Agency for International Development will invest more than \$5 million in 1996 to support the principles of the Ramsar Convention, largely towards coastal zone and coral reef management and the link between freshwater and coastal ecosystems.

175. A number of in-country initiatives, based on Ramsar principles, will also benefit from additional funding, including the Cheyenne Bottoms State Area and the Florida Everglades that will receive US\$ 1.5 billion for its restoration.

Switzerland

176. pledged SFR 500,000 over probably two years, specifically to help implement the Strategic Plan and to fund projects recommended by the Bureau. Switzerland is honoured to host the Ramsar Bureau and, in addition, since 1988 has made contributions five times its compulsory amount.

WWF

177. will make available immediately SFR 25,000 to the Wetland Conservation Fund. WWF has contributed SFR 50,000 to the WCF over the years, as well as spending SFR 50 million a year on wetland and freshwater issues in 60 countries.

Denmark

178. pledged one million Danish crowns (SFR 220,000) towards implementation of the Draft Strategic Plan, although Denmark takes the view that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) should remain the only financial mechanism for funding global environment conventions. The one-off contribution must be channelled through the 25th Anniversary Fund, probably in support of objectives 2.6 and 2.7 of the Draft Strategic Plan.

Iceland

179. has paid ten times its annual contribution to the Wetland Conservation Fund since Kushiuro. In support of the 25th Anniversary, Iceland pledged three times that amount to the WCF.

The UK

180. pledged £30,000 to support implementation of the Draft Strategic Plan, specifically to help assess the world's wetland resources. The UK also announced a additional grant of at least £ one million for work at Indonesia's Danau Sentarum Ramsar site, to be managed by Wetlands International Asia Pacific.

Hungary

181. despite the burdens of economic transition, pledged SFR 25,000 to support the communications and awareness raising objectives in the Draft Strategic Plan.

France

182. pledged FF10 million (SFR 2.5 million) towards multilateral and bilateral projects, and will carefully examine GEF wetland projects to ensure that they respect the goals of the Draft Strategic Plan. France already provides communications support and support to the WCF in addition to its compulsory contribution.

Sri Lanka

183. has committed 500,000 rupees per annum to strengthen Ramsar objectives in its territory, and pledged to allocate an aggregate sum of funds from grants and the national budget to the value of US\$ 0.5million for implementation of programmes identified for its Ramsar site and for the conservation and wise use of its other wetland sites.

Hon. Brian Schumacher, High Commissioner for Canada to Australia

184. pledged CA \$ one million to support activities in pursuit of the Convention's Draft Strategic Plan during the 1996-2002 period, to be delivered in association with government and non-government partners involved in wetland conservation in Canada. The contribution will focus

on the application of innovative wetland technology to habitat programmes and restoration, to wastewater treatment, and to national wetland policy, particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe.

Pakistan

185. committed itself to raise its spending on wetland conservation activities from \$500,000 to \$1 million over three years, to be spent in-country on wise use and educational and public awareness activities.

Bulgaria

186. despite the pressures of economic transition, pledged SFR 20,000 annually over the next six years to achieve Draft Strategic Plan goals in Bulgaria, especially transboundary and coordination activities within the region.

India

187. pledged SFR 25,000 for wetlands-related work in other developing countries.

Japan

188. announced a contribution to help implement wise use programmes under the Strategic Plan. International programmes would receive at least approximately 60 million yen and national programmes 40 million yen in FY 1996.

BirdLife International and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

189. announced the pledge of UK£ 4000 to assist in financing the Monitoring Procedure.

Dr Kwabena Adjei, Minister of Lands and Forestry (Ghana)

190. expressed the desire to demonstrate the extent to which Africans wish to take care of wetlands by traditional means as they always have, and to work together in implementing the Strategic Plan; as part of the 25th Anniversary, he pledged \$5000 to help implement the Strategic Plan.

Australia

191. indicated that its initiative had been amply rewarded by the aforementioned pledges and that the Minister of Environment, Sport and Territories would announce Australia's 25th Anniversary pledge at the evening's gala celebration. Australia thanked those countries that had responded to its initiative.

At the 25th Anniversary Gala Celebration Dinner

Senator Robert Hill, Minister of Environment, Sport and Territories (Australia)

192. pledged AUS 2 million in support of the objectives of the Draft Strategic Plan, particularly for projects involving the Asia and Oceania regions.

[Pledges made by Australian non-governmental organizations and Ducks Unlimited at the opening of the Sixth Plenary Session, see paragraphs 266 and 267 below.]

[Discussion of Agenda Item XI: Strategic Plan, Programme, and Budget was continued in the Fourth Plenary Session, beginning at paragraph 196.]

Notes of the Fourth Plenary Session

25 March, 09:00-17:30, and 26 March, 09:30-10:30

Themes for the Future: Special Intervention 5

Mr Alessandro Russi (Italy)

193. introduced “MedWet - A Mediterranean Blueprint for Regional Wetland Cooperation”. He gave the background to the MedWet programme, Phase I of which ends in June 1996 with a major conference in Venice, which will provide the catalyst for further action. MedWet has been the stimulus to Italy’s National Wetland Policy and the developing network of wetland sites. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Mr Thymio Papayannis (MedWet Coordination Group)

194. indicated that Phase II of MedWet, with funding from the European Union, would concentrate on implementation of many aspects of the Ramsar Strategic Plan. Lessons from Phase I were that wise and sustainable use of wetlands could not occur until the grass roots causes of the loss and degradation of wetlands had been addressed; that success could only be achieved by long-term action over 10-30 years; that collaboration of all concerned was essential; and that to be effective it was necessary to be flexible, direct and efficient. The MedWet initiative would only work if local people can be convinced that such actions will be to their own benefit. [The full text of this presentation appears in Volume 9/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Agenda Item XIII: Reports of Technical Sessions

Reports were given by

195. Ms Nadra Nathai-Gyan (Trinidad & Tobago) – Session A on Wise Use of Wetlands;
Dr Yaa Ntiama-Baidu (Ghana) – Session B on Ecological Character and Change in Ecological Character;
Mme Monique Barbut (France) – Session C on Cooperation with the Biodiversity Convention, World Bank and GEF;
Mr Antonio Fenandez de Tejada (Spain) – Session D on Management Planning;
Mr Abdoulaye Ndiaye (Senegal) – Session E on Ramsar Criteria; and
Mr Anderson Koyo (Kenya) – Session F on Community-based Wetland Management.

[Volume 10/12 of these *Proceedings* contains the full texts of these reports as well as abstracts and texts of many of the presentations made during the Technical Sessions.]

Agenda Item XI: Strategic Plan, Programme, and Budget

Session, [continued from the Third Plenary
paragraphs 138-192]

Mr Veit Koester (Denmark), Chair of the Strategic Plan Drafting Group established by the Conference Committee

196. introduced the final draft of the Strategic Plan [DOC. 6.14 (Rev. 1)]. While retaining the main thrust of the Plan, the Group considered many suggestions for amendment and addition, except those introducing new issues at this late stage and those that were deemed not to be in the spirit of the Plan. Many valuable contributions had been made by NGOs, and they were thanked for their understanding and willingness to accept that not all proposals could be included. The Plan in its revised form was a package not to be unwrapped, full of compromises and fragile consensus.

197. Action 6.1.5 on identifying transfrontier wetlands was wrongly included, as having introduced new issues at a late stage, and will be deleted. No amendments were made from the floor to the final draft of the Strategic Plan.

Mr Graham Donald (UK), Chair of the Conference Committee Subgroup on Finance

198. introduced draft Resolution VI.17 (Rev. 1). A budget increase of 25% had been agreed and those not supporting it have indicated they would not block consensus. There had been no consensus on a minimum annual contribution of SFR 1,000, but the Standing Committee and the Conference may come back to it at a future occasion. The 1997-1999 core budget did not include an amount for the Monitoring Procedure and project funds would be needed for this; some funds were already available. An amount of SFR 70,000 was included in the core budget for the Wetland Conservation Fund (WCF). The UN Scale of Contributions for funding the Convention in 1997, 1998 and 1999 would be applied, and further efforts would be sought to find an alternative, more acceptable method.

Caddo Lake Institute

199. was concerned about external perceptions of the Convention over the lack of funding for the Monitoring Procedure and low level of funding for the WCF. It was urged that a note be made that the Contracting Parties are not abandoning those ideas.

Uruguay

200. preferred the term “unrecoverable debt” to “bad debt” and suggested a fixed period of time be introduced to establish such a debt. The Secretary General and the Subgroup on Finance were urged to reassign and channel funds to the Monitoring Procedure, a key component of the Strategic Plan.

Austria

201. was not delighted by the 25% increase, following cuts in the Austrian Ministry of Environment’s budget, from which Ramsar contributions are paid, but will accept it if that is the consensus.

Ecuador

202. suggested a line to explain how the Reserve Fund would be spent.

Greece

203. expressed its readiness also to accept the 25% budget increase.

Mexico

204. expressed its preference for no increase in the Convention budget, because of budgetary limitations at home; in order not to impede a consensus, however, Mexico accepted the resolution with reservation.

The USA

205. had to oppose any budget increase, as it does not have its own budget yet and may have to reduce its traditional level of support for the Convention. This by no means implies a judgment on the Convention’s work or any loss of confidence in the Bureau. The fact that the USA has always paid more than its share would have been if it had been obligatory shows its strong support. The USA hoped that it would still be able to contribute more than it would if calculated by the UN scale. The USA will not in any way seek to block any consensus. The Subgroup on Finance was unable to fund some items the USA would have liked, and the WCF is less than optimum; the USA will do everything possible to obtain more funds for the WCF and the Monitoring Procedure, and encourages other Parties to do the same.

Germany

206. indicated it would have welcomed a lower budget increase in line with cuts being made by national governments and international organizations, but would do its best to fulfill its obligations.

France

207. reiterated its firm and continuing support for the Convention but noted that this further large increase, following on the 100% increase at Kushiro, and in light of general budgetary limitations, might lead to unpaid contributions.

Belgium, Canada and Italy

208. would do their best to meet the 25% increase in the budget despite similar cuts in national budgets.

Denmark

209. would not block consensus despite its preference for the 49% increase option.

Venezuela

210. expressed its wish not to oppose the consensus but wished to record that because of budgetary restrictions it had not been able to pay its contributions until now and would be even less able with the proposed increase. Venezuela supported the suggestion that the Standing Committee be instructed to reassess the scale of assessments.

Agenda Item XIV: Considerations of Conference decisions

DOC.6.4 addendum I: Admission of Observers

211. There were no objections.

DOC.6.15 rev. 1: The Bureau Work Programme

212. As a result of recent budget discussions, the proposed Development Assistance Officer has been removed from the core budget, and the work programme has been adapted to the 25% increase option. The Netherlands sounded a note of concern that the recommendations and resolutions assign many new tasks as well; the Programme will need to be revised again and reported to Standing Committee. The USA saw ways to accomplish some of these tasks with less manpower; changed priorities can reduce some of these costs. The USA hoped for flexibility over the triennium; the Secretary General must have full discretion to allocate staff time to accomplish mandated tasks, but the USA sees the work programme as a preliminary indication that will constantly be adjusted. In particular, Objective 7 does not seem worth this priority.

Resolution VI.1 rev.1 on change in ecological character

213. Australia, Brazil, Ghana and WWF suggested amendments.

Resolution VI.2 rev.1 on criteria for identifying sites based on fish and fisheries

214. The Working Group on fish criteria has submitted a revised text in which references to fisheries have been removed, in order to maintain the resolution's focus on conservation and defer aspects related to human economic activity to be picked up under studies related to RES VI.3. Thus Criteria 4(a) and 4(b) have been retained, but 4(c) and associated guidelines have been deleted.
215. Kenya strongly urged that 4(c), though removed from this resolution, should be referred to the STRP for possible future adoption, and this was noted as a mandate for the STRP. Norway

cautioned that future discussions involving an expansion of Ramsar criteria beyond conservation would need to be considered from the legal standpoint as well. New Zealand clarified its reasons for urging deletion of 4(c), in that it favors integrating thought on human activities more generally elsewhere. Iceland made an intervention. There were no further amendments.

Resolution VI.3 rev.1 on review of Ramsar criteria for identification

216. Australia and BirdLife International made amendments.

Resolution VI.4 rev.1 on population estimates for operation of waterfowl criteria

217. New Zealand offered a suggestion for improvement.

Resolution VI.5 on subterranean karst wetlands

218. There were no amendments.

Resolution VI.6 on the Wetland Conservation Fund

219. This is intended to change the name of the Fund to something less misleading and to streamline the approval procedure. Uruguay, representing a consensus of the 14 States in the Neotropics Region, recorded strong opposition to giving the Secretary General discretion over allocation of grants; while in no way casting aspersions upon the Secretary General, it felt that this gives him a great deal of discretion that should belong to the Standing Committee. The STRP, not the partner organizations, should carry out scientific and technical reviews. Canada expressed the view that the Standing Committee's workload is too great for such small grants; it supported the resolution, noting that the Secretary General will report to the Standing Committee. This view was endorsed by the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation, and Switzerland. Uruguay argued that the Fund is one of the Standing Committee's basic tasks and should not be given over. The question was left for the Conference Committee.
220. Following redrafting, the Secretary General introduced the Conference Committee's proposed changes. References to a new procedure for approval of projects were removed, but the Standing Committee will be asked to review the functioning of the Fund, including its mechanism for deciding on grant allocations, and to implement any changes it feels may be indicated. There were no further amendments.

Resolution VI.7 on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

221. Uruguay, Hungary, Australia, Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Italy, and WWF made interventions, chiefly concerning the proposed network of experts. Dr Max Finlayson was nominated as the alternate member for Oceania. Croatia opposed the presence of a representative of Yugoslavia on the proposed network to support this body. Following deliberations overnight, new language was introduced concerning the network of experts. Switzerland recommended that the network of experts should receive timely news of STRP activities. Bolivia suggested that the English phrase "work through correspondence", which embraces e-mail and other forms of communication but excludes meetings, is restricted to postal mail in Spanish and needs a new term. The list of proposed experts will be removed from the resolution. Brazil added a note on views and priorities established by the previous COP. There were no further amendments.

Resolution VI.8 on Secretary General matters

222. There were no amendments.

Resolution VI.9 rev. 1 on cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity

223. Denmark expressed concern about the COP of the CBD being asked to discuss wetlands when there is already a specialized convention to do that. Switzerland suggested wording that would solve that problem.

Resolution VI.10 rev. 1 on cooperation with the GEF and its implementing agencies

224. There were no amendments.

Resolution VI.11 on consolidation of Recommendations and Resolutions

225. There were no amendments.

Resolution VI.12 on National Wetland Inventories and candidate sites

226. The UK, Denmark, Malta, USA, and BirdLife International made interventions. Denmark and Malta produced an agreed final draft.

Resolution VI.13 on information on designated sites

227. There were textual emendations from Malta. Belgium queried why recommendations should be necessary for what the Parties have already agreed to do by virtue of signing the Convention. The Chair remarked that this was not only true of the Ramsar Convention.

Resolution VI.14 on the 25th Anniversary and the Strategic Plan

228. There were no amendments.

Resolution VI.15 on rules of procedure

229. The UK and Hungary made suggestions which had no objections.

Resolution VI.16 rev. 1 on accession procedures

230. Wetlands International and Ecuador suggested textual amendments. Peru asked for inclusion of a phrase requiring boundaries to be set in accordance with rules set by the United Nations.

Resolution VI.17 rev. 1 on financial and budgetary matters

has been reported above.

Resolution VI.18 on the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award

232. There were no amendments.

Resolution VI.19 rev. 1 on education and public awareness

233. The UK explained the motivation behind this resolution and its importance, and suggested textual amendments. Ireland, Italy, and WWF suggested amendments, to which the UK agreed. The Nature Conservation Council encouraged greater use of national and local NGOs, the critical link between national policy and grass roots implementation, and wished to see clearer structures for ensuring NGO participation.

Resolution VI.20 on thanks to the host

234. Ecuador urged giving thanks to “the people and governments of Australia”.

Resolution VI.21 on reporting on the status of wetlands

235. The Netherlands, Denmark, Ecuador, Iran, Uruguay, and Wetlands International suggested improvements in the wording.

Resolution VI.22 on cost reduction and relocation of the secretariat

236. Switzerland thanked Trinidad and Tobago for its willingness to find compromise language, and the USA wished to see an emphasis on IUCN support; wording was added to the effect that studies of relocation should be done in close conjunction with IUCN.

Recommendation 6.1 rev. 1 on peatlands

237. Australia urged an addition concerning alternatives to peat-based horticultural products, with responses from Canada and New Zealand. Switzerland and Hungary put forward amendments, and the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales found this a weak resolution.

Recommendation 6.2 rev.1 on environment impact assessment

238. Australia should be listed as co-sponsor. Brazil and Hungary suggested improvements.

Recommendation 6.3 rev. 1 on local people in wetland management

239. The Netherlands, Uruguay, the USA, and the Islamic Republic of Iran suggested new wording. Ecuador wished to replace “local people” for “local communities” and “indigenous peoples” in order to avoid encouraging social divisiveness. Friends of the Earth expressed disappointment that the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples were not better addressed in the text. Italy and Bolivia made further textual suggestions. Sweden observed that there are places where representation by indigenous peoples is appropriate, e.g. on delegations to meetings, and others where it is not; it suggested the formulation of a nomination process. WWF expressed a willingness to assist the Bureau. Australia was instructed to meet with interested Parties and redraft the text.
240. The text was redrafted overnight and agreement was reached by all involved Parties. The UN has formally adopted the term “indigenous people” instead of “indigenous peoples” and that change should be made. There were no further amendments.

Recommendation 6.4 rev. 1 on sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

241. There were no amendments.

Recommendation 6.5 on management training programmes

242. There were no amendments.

Recommendation 6.6 on regionally based Technical Officers

243. There were no amendments.

Recommendation 6.7 rev. 1 on coral reefs

244. The Netherlands made a suggestion for improvement, and there were no more amendments.

Recommendation 6.8 rev. 1 on strategic planning in coastal zones

245. Denmark noted that this recommendation adds nothing to what has already been decided at the COP2 of the CBD.

Recommendation 6.9 rev. 1 on National Wetland Policies

246. Brazil and the Philippines made suggestions for improvement.

Recommendation 6.10 rev. 1 on economic valuation of wetlands

247. The amendments growing out of Technical Session A are not reflected in this draft, due to technical errors; Canada read the alterations aloud and, with one suggestion from the USA, there were no further amendments.

Recommendation 6.11 on collaboration for Mediterranean wetlands

248. Egypt is also a co-sponsor, and Tunisia, Croatia, and Israel voiced support for the recommendation. Friends of the Earth International felt that it should also address a request to Mediterranean Contracting Parties to list more sites that meet the Ramsar criteria, especially along flypaths.

Recommendation 6.12 rev. 1 on private and public funded activities

249. Australia offered one amendment.

Recommendation 6.13 on the Kushiro guidelines on management planning

250. Pakistan, the Netherlands, and Germany suggested alterations, and Canada observed the frequent appearance of new tasks for the STRP.

Recommendation 6.14 on toxic chemicals

251. Italy joined the co-sponsors, and Australia and Canada wondered again about the danger of overloading the STRP with new tasks. Iceland, Denmark, New Zealand, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Greece, Peru, Ireland, Denmark, Kenya, Ecuador, and the United States suggested improvements to the text. It was sent for redrafting and tightening.

Recommendation 6.15 on restoration of wetlands

252. New Zealand is also a co-sponsor. The Netherlands, Greece and Belgium suggested changes.

Recommendation 6.16 on bilateral and multilateral development cooperation

253. The Netherlands introduced amendments agreed by the redrafting group, and Italy and Norway strongly supported the proposed recommendation. Brazil, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Venezuela thought it premature, however, to invite Contracting Parties to use or recommend the use of OECD Guidelines with which they cannot yet be familiar. There was a feeling that, rather than simply withdraw the recommendation, the Parties should at least acknowledge that the OECD Guidelines had been introduced to the COP. A working group was charged to bring a new version of the recommendation to the Plenary.

Recommendation 6.17 on individual sites

254. A great body of material has been received for inclusion, and the draft text will be distributed before consideration in the next Plenary.

Recommendation 6.18 on water

255. Hungary asked to be removed from the list of co-sponsors. Canada observed that this was a resolution rather than a recommendation; it was renamed Resolution VI.23.

Notes of the Fifth Plenary Session

26 March, 09:00-17:30

Oceania Day

**“Paradise under Pressure: Conservation and Wise Use of Coastal Wetlands
in the South Pacific”**

Janet Owen (New Zealand), Chair

256. announced that the special focus of Oceania Day would be on coastal zone wetlands. These contain some of the most important wetlands for some countries in the region, in particular coral reefs, mangroves, and estuaries. In all countries of the region, coastal zone wetlands are vital for provision of food resources and make substantial contributions to their economies, particularly for fisheries. They are subject to intense development pressures. The presentations would focus on the biological values of these places, as well as the management of their use and development.

The Secretary General

257. observed that the countries of the vast Oceania region are places of particular beauty and significance; they might not be immensely powerful nations in the geopolitics of the world, but they are unique. He very much hoped that most of them will become Contracting Parties to the Convention before the next COP. He considered that this will be beneficial to each country in particular but also to the Convention, since the Oceania region countries will bring with them their perspectives and experience to enrich the work of the treaty.

Presentations

- “Living on the Edge,” presented by Sue Miller, South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme
“The Biodiversity of Coastal Zone Wetlands in Oceania,” presented by Joanna C. Ellison, Australian Institute of Marine Science
“Wetlands, Fish, and Fishing Communities: Protecting and Restoring Habitats for the Future,” presented by Duncan Leadbitter, Australian Seafood Industry Council
“Moreton Bay, Australia: Multiple-use Planning and Management for a Ramsar-listed Coastal Wetland,” presented by David Perkins, Department of the Environment
“You Call It Wilderness – We Call It Home: Protection and Preservation of Quandamooka (Moreton Bay),” presented by Penny Tripcony and Bob Anderson
“Managing Tourism to Protect Coastal Wetlands in Oceania,” presented by Birandra Singh, National Trust, Fiji
“The Management of Coral Reefs and Mangroves in a Pacific Island Community: The East Hiri Integrated Conservation and Development Programme - a Community Developed Project,” presented by William Asigau, UNDP Small Grants Coordinator, Papua New Guinea

[The full texts of these presentations appear in Volume 11/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

The Federated States of Micronesia

258. described its composition of over 600 islands, with their barrier reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds. The population depends upon wetlands for agro-forest cultivation and fishing, and complex land and marine tenure issues require effective partnerships among local communities. Institutional and monetary resources are limited, and accession to the Convention must be weighed carefully. Micronesia supports the Convention’s efforts to encourage technical assistance and hopes the Oceania Region will remain a priority in the Convention’s work.

Fiji

259. expressed appreciation for the assistance of Ramsar’s partner organizations and other agencies in wetland conservation work in Fiji and is drafting new legislation on sustainable development with the help of the Asian Development Bank. The “wise use” concept has

always been part of traditional Fijian communities and will be embodied in the new legislation. The newly established Department of Environment is developing integrated coastal management plans which should assist in meeting Ramsar obligations after accession to the Convention. Fiji welcomed the Australian training initiative for the region.

The Solomon Islands

260. provided background on the establishment of the Arnavon Marine Conservation Area, in which three ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse communities were brought successfully together in common aims through a long process of consultation and awareness raising carried out by the Government, SPREP, and an NGO (The Nature Conservancy).

Western Samoa

261. described its wetland resources and its recent efforts towards their conservation and wise use, especially with regard to community participation.

New Zealand

262. described its mechanisms, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, for bilateral and multilateral assistance for wetland and sustainable development activities in the South Pacific region. Bilateral aid is increasingly directed towards capacity building in local NGOs. The Resource Management Act of 1991, which was designed to fit into a new system of local government and embodies negotiated principles for the relationship between the Maori people and the Government, identifies consideration of wetlands as a matter of national importance. These measures are having very beneficial impacts on the management of natural resources in New Zealand.

Tonga

263. described its wetland situation and commented on the recurring conflict between conservation and the demand for development, especially residential development in light of its traditional system of land tenure. The minister responsible for the environment is also charged with the allocation of land to every male citizen. Tonga observed that the concept of wise use, in such a tightly constricted range of options, could often result in the complete destruction of the wetlands' ecological characteristics.

Vanuatu

264. described the physical and demographic make-up of its republic and the great diversity of its wetland types. Most land, including fringing reefs, is in customary ownership and difficult to set aside as protected areas. Wise use is by no means new to the people of Vanuatu, but population increase and economic development have brought significant threats. The national conservation strategy gives high recognition to coastal wetlands, and there are important local community initiatives. Financial and technical resources are in short supply, however, and Vanuatu welcomes partnerships with multilateral agencies and international NGOs.

Papua New Guinea

265. introduced draft Recommendation 6.18, adoption of which was warmly endorsed by Australia, New Zealand, and Chile.

Notes of the Sixth Plenary Session

27 March, 09:00-12:00

Mr Eddie Hegerl, Australian Marine Conservation Society & Australian Wetland Alliance

266. observed that the organization of the present COP was the result of a partnership of local, state, and national government agencies and non-governmental organizations. On behalf of 42 NGOs present, he pledged to work together in partnership with the Bureau and Parties in several areas of implementation and report on achievements to the 7th COP. The NGOs have agreed upon the text of this statement and have pledged AUS\$ 1750 for the operation of the Monitoring Procedure. Moreover, sales from the Art Exhibition and the Ramsar Shop have yielded a further AUS\$ 3000 for the Wetland Conservation Fund. Other NGOs around the world are invited to sign the NGOs' Brisbane Pledge of Support for the Ramsar Convention. [The full text of the NGOs' Pledge has been published as Volume 2/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

Ducks Unlimited

267. noting its previous financial commitments to Ramsar sites in several countries, pledged on behalf of Ducks Unlimited organizations in Australia, Canada, Europe, Mexico, New Zealand and the USA, to commit at least SFR 3.1 million in fiscal year 1996-97 for habitat protection, restoration and management, wetland education and training programs at 21 Ramsar sites worldwide and in support of National Ramsar Committees and proposed listings of new sites, in addition to its US\$ 68 million earmarked in 1996/97 for other wetland initiatives outside of Ramsar sites but in support of Ramsar objectives.

The UK (chair of the Subgroup on Finance of the Conference Committee)

268. explained further amendments that have been made to RES.VI.17 on financial and budgetary matters. The UK also announced the designation of its 103rd Ramsar site.

Agenda Item XII: Report of the Credentials Committee

Bulgaria (Chair of the Credentials Committee)

269. reported that the Committee was composed of Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Uganda, as well as Norway and the USA on an ad hoc basis to make up the seven regions. In pursuing the Kushiro recommendation that all credentials must be unambiguous and in proper form, the Committee has confirmed the credentials of 86 Contracting Parties for this COP. The Committee recommended that in future all delegates must present a statement signed by the Head of State or Minister of Foreign Affairs or an acting authority clearly so designated, or signed by an ambassador or permanent representative explicitly authorized to do so by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, sealed or on letterhead clearly issued with the personal name of the delegate clearly and unambiguously named. If the statement should not be in English, French or Spanish, it should be accompanied by an official translation.

Australia

270. expressed its view that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is not the automatic successor to the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and is thus not entitled to represent the Contracting Party Yugoslavia at this Conference. The USA supported Australia's position, citing United Nations precedents. The Federal Republic of **Yugoslavia** later presented a written rebuttal to the Bureau.
271. **The report of the Credentials Committee was accepted by acclamation.** (The report of the Credentials Committee and the Australian and Yugoslav statements are appended to this report.)

Agenda Item XVI: Adoption of Conference Report and Decisions

272. **Draft Resolutions VI.1 through VI.23 as revised, with the exception of Resolution VI.20, were adopted by acclamation.**

Brazil

273. moved the adoption of **Resolution VI.20**: Thanks to the People and Governments of Australia, which was adopted by acclamation.

The Senior Policy Adviser (Ramsar Bureau)

274. described the development of Recommendation 6.17 on individual sites and accepted several amendments to 6.17, as well as several corrections to the Spanish translation put forward by Peru and Argentina.

WWF

275. congratulated the Government of Australia on significant wetland conservation initiatives but regretted that specific Ramsar sites at risk of ecological changes had not been named in Recommendation 6.17.4 so that progress can be monitored. WWF requested that Australia place high value on environmental concerns when assessing proposed uranium mining within Kakadu National Park, and that it consider alternatives to: coral mining in Moreton Bay, the proposed location of a chemical facility on the western shore of Port Phillip Bay, an expansion of petroleum shipments through Western Port Bay, discharge of saline effluent into the Coorong from a drainage scheme, and proposed irrigation schemes that would divert water from Pittwater-Orielton Lagoon and the Coongie Lakes. WWF requested that Australia expand the Ramsar boundaries of Macquarie Marshes, Gunbower Forest, Barmah Forest, Moreton Bay and the Peel-Yalgorup System. WWF expressed the belief that 30 of the 49 Australian Ramsar sites are at risk of ecological change but are not listed in the Montreux Record, and called on Australia to include sites like Towra Point and Lake Toolibin in the Montreux Record.

The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales

276. supported WWF's statement and urged the Government of Australia to place Towra Point in the Montreux Record and designate Wingecarribee Swamp for the Ramsar List as a matter of urgency.

277. **Draft Recommendations 6.1 through 6.18 as revised were adopted by acclamation.**

INFO 6.24, proposed agenda for the work of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

278. was introduced and received minor amendments from the floor. The Chair noted that there was no opposition from the floor to adoption of this document with these amendments.

Canada

279. confirmed that the Governments of Hungary and Canada had jointly invited the new STRP to a first meeting to be held in June 1996 in Hungary with financial support from Canada.

Document INFO 6.25, the Conference Report

280. was introduced as a compilation of notes on Plenary Sessions 1 through 4 which had been overseen by the Conference Committee through Daily Reports prepared throughout the COP. The Bureau will undertake to clean up any typographical errors which may remain and to append a record of the 5th and 6th Plenary Sessions to the final Conference Report. The

Contracting Parties recorded, both by oral intervention and in writing to the rapporteurs, the additions and changes they wished to see made in the text.

281. **Document INFO 6.25, the Conference Report, with the amendments, was adopted by acclamation.**

Agenda Item XVII: Election of Members of the Standing Committee

282. The following Parties were moved, seconded, and approved by acclamation for membership in the Standing Committee until the close of business of the next ordinary session of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

	<u>Regional Representative</u>	<u>Alternate Member</u>
Africa	Senegal	Uganda
Asia	Malaysia	Islamic Republic of Iran
Eastern Europe	Hungary	Russian Federation
Neotropics	Uruguay	Panama
North America	USA	Canada
Oceania	Papua New Guinea	New Zealand
Western Europe	Germany	France

Note: Australia, as host of the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties, and the host of the next Conference will also be voting members of the Standing Committee during the same period.

Agenda Item XVIII: Next Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

The Chair

283. explained that two invitations had been received, from India and Costa Rica, and that discussions had been ongoing in the Conference Committee throughout the week.

India

284. expressed its continuing commitment to hosting a Ramsar Conference of the Parties, but wished to defer to Costa Rica for the 7th COP in 1999 in acknowledgment of the fact that heretofore there has never been a Ramsar COP held in the Neotropical Region. India reiterated its firm offer to host the following COP.

Costa Rica

285. acknowledged the good will of the Government of India for arriving at this harmonious solution and expressed its commitment, on behalf of the people of Costa Rica, to work hard to continue the great tradition of organization and hospitality that has been exemplified by the Government of Australia.

286. **The offer of Costa Rica to host the 7th Conference of the Contracting Parties in 1999 was accepted by acclamation.** The Standing Committee and Costa Rican authorities will determine the exact place and dates after further discussions.

The Chair

287. on behalf of all the delegates, expressed his appreciation for India's offer to host the 8th COP and noted that this offer should receive priority consideration by the 7th COP.

Agenda Item XX: Close of the Meeting

India, on behalf of the Asian Region; the Contracting Parties from Scandinavia; Zambia; and Canada

288. expressed appreciation to the Chair and the Australian authorities for a well organized meeting.

Shortland Wetlands Centre, on behalf of Australian NGOs and volunteers

289. expressed appreciation to the Government of Australia for the opportunity to contribute to the National Report and to the organizing of the COP, and commented on the strong cooperative relationship between NGOs and governments throughout the Ramsar Convention's COP.

Councillor John Campbell, Acting Lord Mayor of Brisbane

290. thanked the delegates for their participation in the Conference and for their impact on the city of Brisbane.

Mr Des Boyland, on behalf of Mr. Littleproud, Queensland Minister of Environment and Heritage

291. congratulated the delegates on a successful Conference and pledged continued cooperation.

Mr Delmar Blasco, Secretary General of the Convention

292. paid tribute to the Australian authorities, organizers, and volunteers, to the staff of the secretariat, and particularly to Dr Peter Bridgewater, the Chair, for a successful and well-run Conference. [The full text of this statement appears in Volume 8/12 of these *Proceedings*.]

The Chair

293. expressed his appreciation to the delegates and to the volunteers and staff and adjourned the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

[rapporteurs, Dwight Peck, Tim Davis]

Report of the Credentials Committee

(adopted by the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties, 27 March 1996)

1. The Conference elected the following members to the Credentials Committee: Australia (Ms Lynette Tomlin), Bulgaria (Dr Jeko Spiridonov), Chile (Ms Nancy Cespedes), China (Mr Yuan Liu), Uganda (Ms Jane Kavuma), naming Bulgaria as Chair
2. While Rule 3.3 of the Rules of Procedure provides for a five-member Credentials Committee, the Conference elected two additional *ad hoc* members to ensure that all seven Ramsar regions were represented, namely: Norway (Mr Olav Nord-Varhaug), the USA (Dr Bruce Beehler).
3. In the course of its work, the Committee referred to Rule 3.1 of the Rules of Procedure, which provides that “The Delegate or any Alternate Delegates of a Contracting Party shall, before exercising the voting rights of the Contracting Party, have been granted credentials in proper form, enabling him/her to represent the Contracting Party at the Conference and to vote on its behalf”.
4. In accordance with these requirements, the Committee confirms the credentials submitted by delegates of 86 Contracting Parties:

Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.
5. Because of the difficulties encountered at the 5th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, held at Kushiro, Japan, in 1993, the Committee strove to apply the Kushiro Committee’s recommendation that credentials be unambiguous and in proper form.
6. Draft Resolution VI.15 on Amendment of the Rules of Procedure as of the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties “requests the Standing Committee to conduct a thorough review of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties in the forthcoming triennium, with a view to proposing to the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties a revised set of Rules of Procedure in harmony with those of other international environmental conventions”.

7. The Brisbane Credentials Committee therefore proposes that the Rules of Procedure be amplified to specify the following:
- The Statement of Credentials must be signed by the Head of State or Government, or the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the absence of that Authority, the Statement may be signed by the Acting Authority clearly so designated.
 - Alternatively, the Statement of Credentials may be signed by an Ambassador or Permanent Representative explicitly authorized to accredit the Delegation by the Head of State or Government, or Minister of Foreign Affairs.
 - The Statement must bear a full signature of the appropriate Authority or else be sealed and initialled by that Authority. In combination the seal and/or letterheading should clearly indicate that the Statement of Credentials has been issued by the appropriate Authority.
 - A delegate may not exercise the right to vote unless his/her name is clearly and unambiguously listed in the Statement of Credentials.
 - The original of the Statement must be presented to the Credentials Committee at the Conference of the Parties.
 - If the Statement of Credentials is submitted in a language other than one of the three working languages of the Convention (English, French, and Spanish), it is necessary to provide a suitable translation to permit efficient validation of the Credentials by the Committee.
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Annex I

Responses to the Report of the Credentials Committee

Australia (delivered from the floor and in writing to the secretariat, 27 March 1996)

1. The Australian delegation wishes to record its views on the credentials of the Delegation from Belgrade. The Australian Delegation fully understands the complexities of the issue of the former Yugoslavia.
2. The Australian Delegation, and a number of other delegations here, cannot at this time accept that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) is the continuing state of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
3. The legal opinion of 29 September 1992 from the former United Nations Legal Counsel remains the definitive opinion on the issue indicating that the FRY is not the automatic continuation of the SFRY. The position of the FRY in the United Nations (UN) remains the same, namely, that as the FRY cannot automatically continue the membership of the SFRY in the UN, the FRY should apply for UN membership. As the FRY has been excluded from participation in the General Assembly, representatives of FRY cannot participate in the work of the General Assembly, its subsidiary organs or conferences and meetings convened by the United Nations. In respect of treaty bodies not covered by General Assembly Resolution

47/1, the meetings of States Parties to treaties have adopted a similar approach to that adopted by the General Assembly in all meetings of treaty parties since 1992.

4. Mr Chairman, the Australian Delegation requests that its view be recorded in the report of this meeting.

Yugoslavia (delivered in writing to the secretariat, 27 March 1996)

1. Referring to the intervention of the Australian delegation about the legal status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the delegation of the FRY at the 6th Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention in Brisbane has to bring the attention of the Standing Committee, the Bureau, and the Conference Committee to the following:
2. Yugoslavia is among the first signatories and Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention;
3. At preparatory Regional Meetings for the 6th Conference in Budapest (Hungary) and Varna (Bulgaria), the Contracting Party position of the FR of Yugoslavia as well as the credentials of its delegation were confirmed;
4. In the meantime, UN sanctions against the FR of Yugoslavia were suspended. Recently, legal experts of the UN Secretary General (Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs) issued their legal opinion that Resolution 47/1 of 22 September 1992 is without effect on the capacity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to participate in treaties, including those deposited with the Secretary-General, and furthermore that this Resolution was adopted within the framework of the UN and the context of the Charter of the UN, and not as an indication that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was not to be considered a predecessor State;
5. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as Contracting Party was invited to the 6th Conference, registered the participation of its delegation on time, sent its National Report on time, and its delegation orderly and in proper form submitted its credentials of Contracting Party. The Ramsar Bureau even paid all expenses for two members of the Yugoslav delegation;
6. Australia (the Federal Minister for the Environment), as the host of the 6th Conference and a Contracting Party, sent two letters to Yugoslavia (Federal Minister for the Environment) as Contracting Party, asking support for the Australian initiative;
7. The Yugoslav delegation bona fide came to the Conference, orderly registered its attendance, took its seats in the Conference hall and with all other delegations of Contracting Parties and participants of the Conference enjoyed full Australian hospitality;
8. In numerous contacts with the Chair of the Standing Committee and representatives of the Bureau of the Ramsar Convention and during the first part of the Conference, there was not any warning that the position of the FRY as Contracting Party would be disputed; and
9. The credentials of the delegation of the FRY were confirmed by the Credentials Committee.
10. The delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is concerned that this unfortunate, needless and legally groundless intervention of the Australian delegation was against the spirit, principles and honourable mission of the Ramsar Convention. This Conference, fortunately, was only unsuccessfully misused for unclear political goals. The delegation of the Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia requests that this statement be included in documents of the 6th Conference of the Ramsar Convention.

Contracting Parties, Observer States, and Observer Organizations Represented at the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Contracting Parties

Albania	Greece	Panama
Algeria	Guatemala	Papua New Guinea
Argentina	Guinea	Paraguay
Armenia	Guinea Bissau	Peru
Australia	Honduras	Philippines
Austria	Hungary	Poland
Bangladesh	Iceland	Portugal
Belgium	India	Romania
Bolivia	Indonesia	Russian Federation
Brazil	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Senegal
Bulgaria	Ireland	Slovak Republic
Burkina Faso	Italy	South Africa
Canada	Japan	Spain
Chad	Jordan	Sri Lanka
Chile	Kenya	Suriname
China	Latvia	Sweden
Comoros	Lithuania	Switzerland
Costa Rica	Malaysia	The FYR of Macedonia
Côte d'Ivoire	Mali	Togo
Croatia	Malta	Trinidad and Tobago
Czech Republic	Mauritania	Tunisia
Denmark	Mexico	Turkey
Ecuador	Morocco	Uganda
Egypt	Namibia	United Kingdom
Estonia	Nepal	United States of America
Finland	Netherlands	Uruguay
France	New Zealand	Venezuela
Gabon	Niger	Viet Nam
Germany	Norway	Yugoslavia
Ghana	Pakistan	Zaire
		Zambia

Observer States

Angola	Federated States of	Myanmar
Azerbaijan	Micronesia	Nicaragua
Bahamas	Fiji	Palau
Belarus	Georgia	Solomon Islands
Benin	Israel	Tanzania
Bhutan	Jamaica	Thailand
Cambodia	Kazakhstan	Tonga
Cameroon	Kiribati	Ukraine
Central African Republic	Korea, Republic of	Uzbekistan
Colombia	Laos PDR	Vanuatu
Ethiopia	Malawi	Western Samoa
	Moldova	Zimbabwe
	Mongolia	

Intergovernmental Organizations

CITES/UNEP
Common Wadden Sea Secretariat
Commonwealth Secretariat
Convention of Migratory Species
(UNEP/CMS)
Council of the European Union
International Bank for Reconstruction and
Development (World Bank)

Mekong River Commission
Organization for Economic Cooperation and
Development (OECD)
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological
Diversity
South Pacific Regional Environment
Programme (SPREP)

International Non-governmental Organizations

African Centre for Technology Studies
BirdLife International
East African Wildlife Society
Friends of the Earth/Amigos de la Tierra
International Council for Game Conservation (CIC)
International Association of Limnology
International Peat Society
International Wildlife Management Consortium
IUCN/UNEP - The World Conservation Union

MedWet
Wetlands International
World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and its National
Organizations from Australia, Austria,
Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Japan,
the Netherlands, Pakistan, the UK, and the
USA

National Non-governmental Organizations

Australia/Australie:

Australasian Wader Studies Group
Australian Centre for Environmental Law
Australian Conservation Foundation - NSW
Australian Cotton Foundation
Australian Marine Conservation Society
Australian Society for Limnology
Australian Wetland Alliance
Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
BHP Health, Safety and Environmental Affairs
Coast and Wetlands Society Inc.
Conservation Council of South Australia
Conservation Council of Western Australia Inc.
Conservation Council of the South-East Region &
Canberra
Ducks Unlimited Australia
FAIRA Aboriginal Corporation
Friends of the Earth-Australia
Hunter Wetlands Trust
Inlands River Network
Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project
Lower Mary River Landcare Group Inc.
National Farmers Federation
National Parks Association of New South Wales
Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales
Northern Land Council
Ocean Watch Ltd.

Peel Preservation Group Inc.
Quandamooka Lands Council

Queensland Conservation Council
Queensland Ornithological Society Inc.
Queensland Wader Study Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union
Shortland Wetlands Centre
Victorian Wetlands Trust
Wetlands Conservation Society
Whales Alive
Wildlife Preservation Society
Yorta Yorta Murray Goulburn Rivers Clan Group Inc.

Austria/Autriche:

Austrian Society for Nature Conservation (ÖNB)
Institute of Nature Conservation (INL)

Canada/Canadá:

Ducks Unlimited Canada

France/Francia:

Fondation Internationale du Banc d'Arguin
Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux
Station biologique de la Tour du Valat

Germany/Allemagne/Alemania:

German Hunting Association (DJV)
German Society for Nature Conservation (NABU)

Japan/Japón:

Field Assistant Network
Fukuoka City Hall
Hakata Bay Citizens Alliance
Hokkaido Government

Japan Wetlands Action Network
Japanese Association for Wild Geese Protection
Kushiro City
Kushiro International Wetlands Center
Narashino City Hall
Oyo Corporation
Ramsar Center Japan
Save Sone Wetland
Save the Fujimae Association
Wild Bird Society of Japan
Yachiyo International University

**Korea, Republic of/Corée, la République
de/Corea, República de:**

Green Korea
Korean Federation for Environmental Movement
Kyung Nam University
Pusan Federation for Environmental Movement

Pusan National University

South Africa/Afrique du Sud/Sudáfrica:

Campaign for St Lucia
Wildlife Society of South Africa

Thailand/Thaïlande/Thailandia:

Bird Conservation Society of Thailand

United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni/Reino Unido:

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

USA/Etats-Unis/Estados Unidos:

Caddo Lake Institute
Ducks Unlimited Inc.
Florida Center for Environmental Studies
Pacific Environment and Resources Center (PERC)
Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Australian Federal and State Government observers

AusAID
Australian Institute for Marine Science
CSIRO
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
New South Wales Department of Land & Water
Conservation
New South Wales Ministry for the Environment
New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service

Parks & Wildlife Commission of Northern Territory
Queensland Department of Environment
Queensland Department of Primary Industries
South Australian Department of Environment and
Natural Resources
State Forests of New South Wales
Victoria State Government

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the African Region (Conference Document INFO 6.7)

**Anderson Koyo (Kenya)
Regional Representative for the African Region**

There were 22 Contracting Parties to the Convention in Africa as of 31 January 1996. Four of these, namely Togo, Namibia, the Republic of Comoros, and Zaire have joined the Convention since the Kushiro Conference of the Parties in 1993. The total number of sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance increased in the same period from 53 to 65 sites, a total of 12 sites, as follows:

Namibia	Etosha Pan, Lake Oponono and Cuvelai drainage (6,000 ha) Walvis Bay (12,600 ha) Sandwich Harbour (16,500 ha) Orange River Mouth (500 ha)
Togo	Keran National Park (163,640 ha) Togodo Fauna Reserve (31,000 ha)
Kenya	Lake Naivasha (30,000 ha)
Zaire	Virunga National Park (800,000 ha) Marine Mangrove National Park (66,000 ha)
Guinea	Ile Blanche (10 ha)
Comoros	Lake Dziani Boudouni (30 ha)
Mauritania	Diawling National Park (15,600 ha)

The 66 African Ramsar sites vary in area from just one hectare (Ile Alcatraz in Guinea) to the huge 1,173,000 ha site Banc d' Arguin (Mauritania) and are representative of the marine/coastal, riverine, freshwater and saline lakes wetland types.

The first Ramsar African Regional Meeting was held in Nakuru, Kenya, in August-September 1994. This important meeting brought together all but one of the 18 Contracting Parties at the time, to exchange views and draw up action plans for the conservation and wise use of wetlands in their territories and particularly in transboundary sites. The report and recommendations are available from the Ramsar Bureau.

Other meetings aimed at giving greater focus to common issues at sub-regional level were held in Senegal, West Africa (September 1994); in Tunisia, North Africa (March 1995); and in Uganda, East Africa (September 1995).

Listed sites:

Montreux Record

Algeria	Lake Tonga Lake Oubeira (Monitoring Procedure, 1990)
Egypt	Lake Bardawil Lake Burullus
Senegal	Ndiael
Tunisia	Lake Ichkeul
Uganda	Lake George (Preliminary monitoring 1994)
South Africa	St. Lucia: The South African Government has now confirmed that there will be no mining at all permitted in St. Lucia. We are most grateful to the Government of South Africa for this development.

In spite of great efforts being undertaken to address the problems at the above listed wetlands, their current status still demands that the sites remain on the Montreux Record.

There are several other sites whose ecological characters are changing or are likely to change as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interferences:

Ghana	Densu Delta, due to a housing development project
Guinea	four listed sites (except Alcatraz), due to intensive exploitation of the floristic potential by local people
Mali	Inner Delta of the Niger river, due to inadequate pollution control
Mauritania	Diawling National Park, due to delays in the operations of the water structures at Cheyal and Bell
Morocco	Merja Zerga and Sidi Boughaba, due to motorway construction from Rabat to Larach which passes close to the Ramsar sites
Namibia	Orange River Mouth, due to major problems affecting the supply of water to the site
South Africa	Barberspan, due to slow siltation Blesbokspruit, due to possible alteration of the hydrological regime and change in water quality Langebaan, possible threat from oil tanker activities in the Bay and large quantity oil storage at Saldana Bay Orange River Mouth, due to collapse and rapid degradation of the salt marsh on the southern bank of the Orange River Verlorenvlei, due to change in salinity and hydrological regime
Zaire	Marine Mangrove Park, due to water hyacinth problem and effects of hydrocarbon pollution from the petrol industry Virunga National Park, human pressure and unauthorized wood cutting and fishing and plans to build dams on upper Rusindi and Rutshuru rivers

In spite of the potential change in the ecological character of the above cited listed sites, they don't necessarily need to be placed on the Montreux Record at present, but all of them require intensive monitoring programmes as well as conservation and management practices aimed at minimizing the threats.

Management plans for Ramsar sites

A few Ramsar sites in Africa have operational management plans. However, management plans are being developed in many other sites in the region. South Africa has management plans existing for eleven wetland sites, including the listed sites.

Namibia has plans in preparation for Sandwich Harbour and Orange River mouth wetland sites. Kenya has management plans in preparation for Lake Nakuru and Lake Naivasha. Uganda has a management plan existing for Queen Elizabeth National Park, which includes Lake George Ramsar Site. Tunisia is in the process of developing an integrated management plan that will satisfy Ichkeul's conservation needs. Several other countries are engaged in the planning process for their listed sites.

Wise use of wetlands

National Wetland Policies

Most of the African countries have developed either National Environmental Action Plans or National Biodiversity Strategies or National Land Use Planning Policies or National Environmental Strategies, which invariably incorporate wetlands conservation. Many countries have given due prominence to wetland conservation in the above-mentioned environmental conservation structures. However, in recognition of the Convention's wise use concept, there are efforts by almost all the Contracting Parties in Africa to develop distinctive National Wetland Policies

The most outstanding achievement has been made by Uganda, which officially launched its National Wetlands Policy in 1995. Equally important is the enactment of the Environmental Law which will ensure effective implementation of the policy. We commend the Government of Uganda for their great achievement.

Countries that have made remarkable progress towards the development of National Wetland Policies include: Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Togo, and Zambia. Their efforts are at various levels of success, and it is my hope that most of them will be finalized in the near future.

National Ramsar Committees

Among the countries with National Ramsar Committees or other similar committees to oversee Ramsar implementation are: Uganda (National Ramsar Committee), South Africa (National Ramsar Committee), Kenya (National Wetlands Standing Committee and Kenya Wetlands Working Group)

Most other countries are in the process of forming the Ramsar Committees. Notable in this category are Guinea, Togo, Algeria and Tunisia.

National scientific inventories of potential Ramsar sites

Among the countries that have initiated National Scientific Inventories of potential Ramsar site:

Algeria has been doing inventories since 1995.

Burkina Faso: Inventory of migratory waterfowl.

Egypt: identification of wetlands of international importance carried out.

Guinea: a national inventory of wetlands has begun in cooperation with the secretariat of Fauna and Flora of the Natural History Museum in Paris.

Kenya: a National Inventory is an on-going process and its first report was published in 1994.

Morocco: an exhaustive evaluation of all wetlands was carried out under the national study of Moroccan Protected Area.

Namibia: a National Inventory of wetlands is in preparation, and most wetlands of international importance have been identified, though further inventory and classification is required.

South Africa: the National Inventory is in progress, with information on 690 wetlands having been collected from literature and 1200 wetlands mapped on GIS. Field verification is in progress.

Togo: an inventory of wetland sites is in progress.

Tunisia: an inventory of all wetlands undertaken with WCF support.

Uganda: a physical and biological inventory of wetlands is currently being undertaken.

Zaire: a National Inventory of wetlands has not been done, but a good survey has been carried on Virunga National Park and on the three major areas for migratory birds – the mouth of the Zaire River, Great lakes of the East and the wet plains of the south east.

International cooperation on shared wetlands and species

Many contracting parties in Africa are participating in International Cooperation on shared wetlands and species: Chad, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and recently Central African Republic are members of the commission of the Lake Chad Basin (CBLT). The designation of Lake Chad as a Wetland of International importance is being studied by the CBLT.

Egypt, Uganda and all countries of the Nile basin are collaborating under the TECCONILE Programme. Egypt has also signed an agreement with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) on the conservation of the Slender-billed Curlew Numenius tenuirotris.

Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire are collaborating in the management of the Abby Lagoon through a grant provided by the GEF. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have signed a tripartite agreement for a joint environmental management programme of Lake Victoria to be funded by the GEF. Kenya received 40,000 SFR in 1992 from the Wetland Conservation Fund and established a regional cooperation in waterbird monitoring with Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia. Uganda also collaborates with Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi for the management of the Kagera River through the Kagera Basin Organization. There is also collaboration between Uganda and Zaire for the management of Lake Albert and Lake Edward.

Mauritania and Senegal have proposed to sign an agreement to cooperate in the management of Diawling National Park and Djoudj due to their close proximity to each other. There has been cooperation with Wetlands International and ONC France on midwinter waterfowl counts at Diawling National Park.

Namibia and South Africa hold regular consultations over the management of the Orange River Mouth. South Africa also collaborates with Mozambique on the Pongola - River Rio and with Swaziland on the Maputo-Usuthu River floodplain.

There are numerous bilateral agreements between African countries and WWF, World Bank, the GEF, UNDP, Germany GTZ, French Cooperation, IUCN, IWRB, Birdlife International, the European Union, the Netherlands Government, and the Japanese Government for the execution of a variety of wetlands conservation programmes.

Cooperation on the management of shared species is mainly coordinated through the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) which has been ratified by a number of African countries.

Wetland reserves, training, and public awareness

Wetland reserves: Chad has three wetland reserves, all situated in the interior Fauna Reserve. In Morocco, most wetlands are hunting reserves and are very well protected while allowing traditional subsistence use. South Africa has created three wetland reserve: Seekoeivlei, Verlorenvlei and Nylsvley Nature Reserves. Togo has one new wetland reserve being established at Bayeme. Tunisia has created four wetland reserves: Tourbiere de Dar Fatma, Lac de Djebel Chitane, Sebkhath El Kelbia and Ile de Kneiss.

There is need for the creation of more wetland reserves in the region. Apparently, creation of wetland reserves in Africa is not easy, as most of the designated sites are already within the established National Parks and National Reserves etc.

Training and public awareness: Almost all the Contracting Parties in Africa are engaged in training and public awareness activities. Training programmes have been developed for wetland managers, users, and policy makers. Appropriate training materials have been developed for use at the wetland education and demonstration centres, National Centres for Environmental Education, visitor centres as well as the local schools. Awareness programmes function through seminars and workshops, multi-media techniques and conducted tours to the wetlands. Community awareness programmes are aimed at enhancing wise use, while awareness targeted to the policy makers is aimed at promoting the development of National Wetland Policies.

General comments on the Convention and its implementation

Although the application of the Convention is making good and steady progress in the region, there are a few constraints hindering smooth implementation:

1. (a) Lack of adequate legislation to protect wetlands against abuse at local and national level.
(b) Lack of legislation to support the creation of wetland reserves (Algeria, Ghana, Mali).
2. Lack of adequate financial resources (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Guinea, Kenya, etc.).
3. Lack of adequate numbers of qualified personnel and technical capacity (Egypt, Kenya).
4. Lack of effective land use policy (Ghana).
5. Difficulties in coordinating all the sectors concerned (Kenya).

Conclusion

The African Region has made notable progress in implementing the Ramsar Convention during the 1993-1996 triennium. The number of Contracting Parties and listed sites have increased. Application of the wise use concept is making steady progress across the whole region. Training and public awareness programmes are being undertaken by the majority of the Contracting Parties. In spite of the positive achievements, wetlands in the region are, however, among the most threatened in the world. I call upon the African countries to re-double their efforts towards conservation and wise use of wetlands for sustainable development. I also call upon the Contracting Parties, NGOs and all relevant institutions to re-double their commitment to Ramsar Convention and implement all its recommendations. Lastly, I wish to appeal to the African Contracting Parties to honour their

obligations to the Convention. The Convention would serve us better if we would all honour and discharge our responsibilities to the Convention on time. For the rest of the world, I request you to give Africa a chance by supporting its wetland conservation and wise use endeavours.

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Asian Region (Conference Document INFO 6.8)

**Swarn Singh Boparai (India)
Regional Representative for the Asian Region**

In accordance with the decisions taken in the Kushiro Conference and subsequently in the Ramsar Standing Committee meetings, several initiatives were taken in the Asian region to strengthen regional activities for conservation and wise use of wetlands. This is clearly reflected by a series of regional and sub-regional meetings and other wetland-related conferences held in the region.

- i) The Ramsar Regional Workshop on Priorities and Institutional Mechanisms for Wetland Protection and Wise Use of Wetlands in South East Asia was held in Bogor in March/April 1994. The Palau Rambut Statement was adopted, which included several recommendations for consideration of the South East Asian countries.
- ii) The Workshop on Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Wetland Habitats in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway was held in Kushiro, Japan, in December 1994 to discuss action plans for Anatidae and cranes. Subsequently, another workshop was also held in Kushiro in September/October 1995 on migratory waterbirds.
- iii) The Asian Regional Meeting of the Ramsar Convention was held in New Delhi, India, in March 1995. The Delhi Declaration was adopted, which includes 19 action points for conservation of wetlands in the Asian region.
- iv) The International Conference on Wetlands and Development was held in Selangor, Malaysia, in October 1995 and adopted the Kuala Lumpur Statement. On this occasion, an informal Ramsar Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific was also held.
- v) A series of Regional Workshops on Public Awareness of Biodiversity and Wetlands were held in Indonesia in February 1994; in Thailand in October 1994; and in Japan in October 1995, which at the end adopted the Narashino Statement.

Basic information on measures taken by Contracting Parties

New Ramsar sites since December 1992. Since the Kushiro Conference, Philippines and Malaysia have become Contracting Parties to the Convention with one Ramsar site each. In addition, five new sites were designated by Japan at the time of the 5th Conference of the Parties in 1993. Mai Po in Hong Kong is the latest Ramsar site in the Asian region, designated by the UK. This has brought the number of Ramsar sites to 57. Some more sites are expected to be added to the List from Indonesia (3), Japan (1), Pakistan (3), Sri Lanka (1), and India (1). In addition, some non-member countries have officially announced their intention of acceding to the Convention and designating some wetland sites under the Convention. Cambodia has undertaken a survey of wetlands and identified three candidate sites for designation as Ramsar sites. South Korea and Thailand are also considering including three sites each in the List. The countries which have informally informed the Bureau of their intention to accede to the Convention are Bhutan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

Israel, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Uzbekistan. This would further strengthen the number of sites from the Asian region under the Convention.

In spite of these efforts, we have to admit that the increase of the number of Ramsar sites in the region has been rather slow. Out of 13 Contracting Parties in the region, seven have only one Ramsar site in their territories so far.

Further information on wetlands designated in the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Deletion of sites or restriction of their boundaries. There have been no major changes either in deletion from the List or restrictions of the site boundaries in the Asian region, except in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Based on the recommendations of the Ramsar Monitoring Procedure, three out of its nine sites will be deleted by Pakistan for not meeting the Ramsar criteria; three new sites will be designated, however, by way of compensation. The Kamjan Marsh, one of the Ramsar sites of the Islamic Republic of Iran, had been seriously affected by a drainage project implemented during 1980-82. There was a suggestion to delete this part of the wetland from the Ramsar List. The Monitoring Procedure mission has supported retention of Kamjan Marsh in the List and has suggested undertaking measures for the conservation of this wetland. Efforts are being made by India to remove three Ramsar sites, viz. Chilka, Keoladeo Ghana National Park, and Loktak, from the Montreux Record. A draft management action plan on Loktak Lake has been prepared by the Manipur Government under the guidance of a technical advisory committee specially constituted for this purpose. The Government of India in collaboration with the International Crane Foundation had conducted an experiment to learn the reasons for dwindling populations of Siberian Cranes in Keoladeo National Park, using radiotelemetry and satellite transmitters. They have been able to trace the migratory path of the common cranes. The introduction of reared Siberian Crane chicks in the wintering grounds of Keoladeo National Park is still going on. In February 1996, four Siberian Cranes have been sighted in the Park. In order to address some critical issues of Chilka Lake, a proposal has been drawn up to seek financial and technical assistance under a bilateral programme.

Changes in legal status/degree of protection of the listed sites. Most of the Ramsar sites in Asia have received some degree of legal protection. However, there are many sites still left where action is urgently required for protection. Some of the measures taken since December 1992 in this regard include:

- Three of the five new Ramsar sites designated by Japan at the time of the Kushiro Conference have obtained the status of Special Protection Areas under the National Protection Area for Birds and Mammals category. One of these sites has been upgraded from class II to class I, Special Zone of the quasi-National Park. In one of the Ramsar sites, a part of the privately-owned area was purchased by the local government for effective conservation.
- A few Ramsar sites have been upgraded in the Islamic Republic of Iran from hunting-free areas to hunting-forbidden areas and from wildlife refuges to national parks.
- In India a process has been initiated to designate all the six Ramsar sites as ecologically fragile areas under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Changes in ecological character in listed sites. Eleven wetland sites from the Asian region are at present on the Montreux Record. These include three wetlands from India, seven from Iran and one

from Jordan. While some action has been taken by Jordan in regard to Azraq Oasis under the project supported by the GEF, it is desired by Jordan that this wetland should still remain on the Montreux Record. Similarly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has suggested that Kamjan Marshes should remain on the Montreux Record. The national report of Iran confirms ecological changes in the Hamoun-e-Saberi & Hamoun-e-Helmand site and the Anzali Mordab (Taleb) complex. However, the condition of Yadegarlut Lake has improved. Pakistan has reported problems of pollution in Kheshki Reservoir and prolific growth of aquatic plants in Drigh Lake and Haleji Lake. The inflow of water has decreased in Tanda Dam affecting its pounding area and its ecological character. In Sri Lanka, construction of hotels, a windmill and an oil refinery proposed in the vicinity of the Bundala Ramsar wetland is likely to cause adverse impacts on this wetland.

Management planning under the Ramsar Convention

Management planning for several wetlands has been initiated in the region. The main activities carried out include the following:

- India has management action plans for 13 wetlands out of 18 identified for intensive conservation and management on priority basis. These include five Ramsar sites designated by India.
- Sri Lanka has management action plans not only for Ramsar sites but also for several other wetland sites.
- China has prepared management plans for three out of six Ramsar sites in the country.
- The Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia, Jordan and Pakistan have management plans under preparation.

Wise use of wetlands

National Wetland Policies. Although no national wetland policy has been developed in the Asian region so far, some initiatives have been taken during the triennium in this direction. The Philippines has formulated a draft National Wetland Action Plan which is under review. Sri Lanka has drafted a Wetland Conservation Strategy. A project proposal on “Development of Malaysian National Wetland Policy Framework” was approved for funding under the Wetland Conservation Fund by the Ramsar Standing Committee in 1995. China is compiling a Wetland Protection Action Plan to determine the goals and priorities for wetland protection. Pakistan and Nepal are planning to develop National Wetland Policies in collaboration with NGOs.

National Ramsar/Wetland Committees. Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India have since established their National Wetland/Ramsar Committee. The establishment of such a Committee is in progress in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Philippines. China has set up a leading group in August 1994 for the formulation of a National Wetland Protection Action Plan. Jordan has set up a Supervisory Committee for its Ramsar site, Azraq.

National scientific inventories of potential Ramsar sites. Since the publication of the *Directory of Asian Wetlands* in 1989, several Contracting Parties in the region have undertaken surveys and updated the information on their wetlands, including Ramsar sites. The steps taken in this direction are:

- India has launched a nation-wide project to conduct survey and mapping of wetlands involving remote sensing technology. This includes detailed study of the Ramsar sites as well as wetlands identified for intensive conservation and management purposes. WWF-India in collaboration with the Asian Wetland Bureau (now Wetlands International –

Asia Pacific) has revised the section dealing with the wetlands of India in the *Directory of Asian Wetlands*. Information on 40 new sites has been added and information on other sites has been updated.

- All the wetland sites in Jordan have been mapped and a comprehensive Plan was prepared to monitor important wetlands.
- The Philippines has collected information on three important sites and resources inventory of mangroves is being carried out under the Coastal Environment Programme established in 1993.
- Nepal has undertaken an inventory of wetlands in the southern plain area and has identified eight wetlands for Ramsar listing.
- Sri Lanka has prepared detailed reports on the status of 21 wetlands in addition to its one Ramsar site.
- Indonesia has created a database on 256 wetlands, out of which 137 sites meet some criteria for identified Ramsar sites.

Additional guidance on implementation of the wise use concept. Although there are several wetland-related projects underway in the Asian region, it seems to be rather difficult to identify the projects and activities which are relevant to the wise use concept. The management of fisheries in the buffer area of Koshi Tappu in cooperation with users' groups is a promising project being implemented by Nepal. Sri Lanka is considering regulating the activities of various agencies involved in wetland management and is planning to enact a Wetland Heritage Act based on the approved national wetland strategy. India has prepared guidelines for the formulation of a management action plan in regard to the wetland and mangrove ecosystem. These guidelines were further elaborated in a workshop jointly organized by WWF-India and the Government of India.

International cooperation

International consultations on shared wetlands (Article 5). According to the National Report from Indonesia, negotiation is underway between the Governments of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea over cooperative management activities of a crossboundary wetland area. Indonesia is considering designating a wetland site contiguous with the Ramsar site already designated by Papua New Guinea.

International consultation on shared wetland species. The Workshop on Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Wetland Habitats in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway was held in Kushiro in December 1994. The meeting adopted a summary statement which recommends the establishment of a network of important areas for migratory waterbirds and developing an action plan for the conservation of migratory shorebirds. The second such workshop was held again in Kushiro in September/October 1995, and action plans for Anatide and cranes were discussed. In addition, compilation of the *Red Data Book of Birds* in the Asian region has been initiated by Japan in 1994. Pakistan has made some progress on drafting the Pacific Waterfowl Agreement under the Bonn Convention.

Wetland Conservation Fund. Since 1992, seven projects have been supported under the Wetland Conservation Fund – to Pakistan (SFR 23,000), Cambodia (SFR 25,000), China (SFR 40,000 & 11,500), Nepal (SFR 40,000) and India (SFR 34,600 & 52,000).

The role of international funding agencies in conservation and wise use of wetlands. Several funding agencies like Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), FAO, US AID, UNDP-GEF, the Dutch Government, the Norwegian Government, Norad, etc., have supported several wetland-related projects in Japan, Sri Lanka, Jordan and India. These funding agencies, in general, have conducted project formulation studies with the participation of environment specialists at the project research stage and helped in the formulation of guidelines for environmental consideration of wetland projects and training of personnel.

Wetland reserves and training

Most of the Ramsar sites in Asia enjoy some status of protection. Many protected areas in the region include Wetland Habitats but no specific efforts have been made to establish wetland-oriented reserves. However, at present China has established over 130 wetland-type nature reserves with an area of more than 37.52 million hectares. Indonesia has 32 national parks, 293 terrestrial nature reserves and 24 marine nature reserves, of which some include wetland ecosystems. By the year 2000, Indonesia proposes to increase the total area for conservation to more than 30 million hectares, which would also include wetlands as priority areas. India has 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries and has established eight biosphere reserves. Some of these protected areas include different wetland types.

Implementation of Kushiro Recommendation 5.3, referring to ecological character, zonation, awareness and values of wetland reserves. Public awareness activities have been intensified in the region. China has launched awareness activities on a large scale for wetland protection through audio-visuals and mass awareness campaigns. Sri Lanka is planning to set up a visitors centre for the Bundale Ramsar site with GEF assistance. Jordan has undertaken various steps for generating awareness about wetland protection by organizing visits of schoolchildren to the sites and preparation of booklets and posters on the conservation of the Ramsar site. Nepal has programmes to generate awareness regarding conservation of wetlands and their wise use. Indonesia has prepared resource material to generate awareness about coastal and wetland conservation. In Japan, educational and promotional activities have been intensified for all the Ramsar sites by the central governments and local governments as well as NGOs, particularly since the Kushiro Conference. WWF-India has published booklets on the six Indian Ramsar sites giving details on topographical, biological and ecological information as well as highlighting the issues and priorities from management perspectives.

Implementation of the Montreux recommendation on education and training. Several workshops and training courses have been held in the region for imparting training to the wetland functionaries and other target groups in the region. Some of these are:

- China has trained more than 200 personnel through several training courses held in Hong Kong and other places.
- The Wetland Management Training Programme is being organized under the GEF by Sri Lanka.
- The Japanese Environment Agency in collaboration with national and international NGOs has held a series of bird-banding training workshops in Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand. Similarly, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have carried out training courses for wetland managers in Asia.
- Indonesia in collaboration with the Asian Wetland Bureau (now Wetlands International – Asia Pacific) has conducted several short courses related to wetland management. In

addition, Indonesia has eight forestry training centres to impart training on conservation and management of the protected areas.

- India in collaboration with WWF-India has conducted a training course for planning and management of six Ramsar sites in early 1995. Subsequently, WWF-India also conducted a workshop for the preparation of a management action plan on Keoladeo National Park involving the local community.

General comments on the Convention and its implementation

The wider issues concerning future activities from the Asian region under the Convention are:

- Formulation of National Wetland Policies
- International cooperation on wetland conservation
- Conservation of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats in the East Asian Australasian flyways
- Bilateral migratory birds conventions and agreements
- Red data book of birds in the Asian region
- Increasing the number of Contracting Parties under the Ramsar Convention
- Increasing the number of listed sites under the Convention
- Development of regional databases including, *inter alia*, cooperation on development of management techniques, sharing of information and expertise, training and research and the exchange of information regarding technical institutions, training organizations and research studies
- Efforts to generate support from bilateral and multilateral funding agencies for conservation and wise use of wetlands.

In conclusion, I would like to express my concern at reduced activity in the next triennium foreseeable in discussions regarding budgetary matters. I believe that we must look for unconventional ways to meet the situation: 1) by soliciting major contributors from the corporate sector and philanthropists of the world; 2) and by considering locational change. I am quite sure that the Asian region could find a country which would match the facilities enjoyed at present by the Convention Bureau, and in developing countries, money goes farther.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the ever-smiling Satoshi Kobayashi, Technical Officer for Asia, and to wish him well in his future career after he leaves the staff of the Bureau in October, and to Alternate Representative for Asia Mr. Yasin Al-Zu'bi of Jordan.

Thank you for your attention.

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Eastern European Region (Conference Document INFO 6.9)

**Louise Lakos (Hungary)
Regional Representative for the Eastern European Region**

Thank you, Madame Chairperson,

To start the Eastern European regional review well, I would like to go through the countries, or the newcomers. Currently, there are 16 Contracting Parties who altogether have nominated 97 sites for the Ramsar List. Six states have joined the Convention since the Kushiro Conference, namely Albania (for which country the Convention will enter into force on 29 March 1996, just two days later than we finish this Conference), and then Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are new Parties to the Convention since the last meeting of the Conference.

Five further sites have been designated by the Czech Republic and 32 sites by the Russian Federation, the latter covering more than five million hectares. Two sites have been extended by Bulgaria and Poland respectively.

Authorities of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have expressed the wish and intention to promote adherence of their countries as Contracting Parties as soon as possible. In some cases, preparations for accession are at an advanced stage. However, payment of financial contributions in hard currency remains an obstacle to some countries to become Contracting Parties.

With regard to further site designations, such steps are promised to be taken by Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, and Yugoslavia.

In a number of countries there were changes in the legal status or degree of protection of listed sites, and in some cases, these sites were given a higher level of protection. New acts or government-level regulations on nature conservation have been approved, again, in a number of countries, for instance, in the Russian Federation and the Slovak Republic. Romania approved a special governmental decision on the Danube River Delta, a listed site.

With regard to the **Montreux Record**, there are two sites in Bulgaria, one in Croatia, two in the Czech Republic, and two in Poland presently on the Record. Although as you see only a few sites are currently included in the Montreux Record, there are adverse changes in the ecological character of a number of other sites, unfortunately. These are due to human activity, or sometimes the lack of it, coupled with long years of dry weather. Human activity ranges from agricultural intensification, with the aim of short-term profit-making, through the introduction of alien species, or inappropriate or non-existing waste water treatment – and this is the lack of activity – or energy generation, or tourism or infrastructure development. As the resources available to tackle the problems have been seriously constrained, or cut, remedial actions can be taken only slowly in many Parties. This is a serious problem, because prompt and relatively low cost action at present could help to avoid the need to spend much larger sums in the future – if action in the future will be in time at all.

With regard to **management planning**, the picture is rather varying, and it reflects the economic and institutional differences within the region. However, during the last three years, drawing up and implementing such plans are required by law in some countries, especially at protected areas. This is the case, for example, in the Czech Republic, to give an example. Such management plans exist for many sites, and those which were compiled with international assistance generally follow the best practices. Through the national reports, however, it was difficult to judge how Ramsar management guidelines have been taken into account. Given the language barrier, they are not necessarily known by all site managers.

There is a problem with implementing – controlling – updating management plans due to the lack of financial resources, and in certain cases also of institutional capacity.

With regard to **wise use** questions, so far only a few Parties have embarked on the elaboration of a separate national wetland policy. In many countries, wetland issues will be part of a more comprehensive national environmental policy or biodiversity strategy. This is, I believe, a reasonable way to avoid overlapping documents and duplication of work, especially in cases where institutional capacity needs strengthening anyhow. To give you some examples:

- Bulgaria has a national action plan for the conservation of its most important wetlands;
- the Czech Republic will embark on the preparation of a National Wetland Policy this year;
- in Estonia, the new Act on Sustainable Development requires the development of a National Wetland Policy;
- Latvia's Environmental Policy Plan incorporates the wise use principle;
- in Slovakia, the Government will decide on a National Wetland Policy this year, according to the plans.

There are instances where regulatory measures are in place for the application of the wise use guidelines, this is so, but the regulatory measures are definitely not enough. This issue is subject to the overall environmental policy. To name a few keys to success:

- the explicit commitment of the whole government for environmental issues is needed. So environmental/nature conservation authorities should strengthen policy coordination and have to find the way to work in a really cooperative way with others, with special regard to Financial Ministries or Privatization Ministries or Agencies. This is not an easy task, as conflict between economic, social and environmental considerations is inevitable in our countries nowadays;
- appropriate economic incentives for the private sector, together with resources for compensation are needed as well;
- strengthened local participation is the next point I have to raise, I believe;
- we definitely need constructive NGO participation; and
- improved information dissemination, let's say, communication at all levels.

With regard to **international cooperation** and funding issues, it was made clear already at the last Conference of the Parties, and also at subsequent regional meetings, that East European Contracting Parties and especially potential future Contracting Parties are in need of technical and – in many cases – financial assistance. Such assistance has been provided primarily through bilateral cooperation with developed countries and also by the European Union PHARE Programme, sometimes, according to the National Reports, by the GEF and EBRD as well.

In the future, recipient countries and donors, be they countries or agencies, should pay even greater attention to priority setting, to project preparation and focusing on those areas or tasks where scarce resources can provide the greatest benefits. Access to the Wetland Conservation Fund could mean special help in obtaining seed money for many countries. Another point is the time span and the bureaucracy of providing support. Prompt or reasonably quick decisions about allocation (or even the denial) of small grants can be more effective, so that we know where we are. Support for policy or institutional reforms is also essential in some cases, in addition to wetland conservation and wise use issues.

With regard to **National Committees**, there are separate National Committees in a number of countries, in Armenia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic. In other countries, either other bodies assume this role or steps are planned to be taken to establish a National Committee.

My next point is about **public awareness** issues. This is best achieved, I believe, in the national language. Information material about individual sites is available in most Contracting Parties, but not everywhere. Ramsar documents, leaflets, periodicals and other material in foreign languages can't reach a large audience so far, because of the language barrier. This is also a restrictive element sometimes in training of site personnel. But we find it very important to strengthen activity in these areas, and to find the resources to make the necessary steps.

With regard to the effectiveness of the Convention, as seen by our Parties, in general the Convention is considered to be an effective tool for conservation and for sustainable use of wetlands, an international instrument to which reference can be made, for instance, in cases where economic interests tend to outweigh ecological ones. Our countries feel it very important to be present in the international scene, and if you look at lists of Contracting Parties of other Conventions, you will see that many countries from our region joined a number of new treaties or joined older treaties recently. And this puts heavy burdens on these countries, and a kind of synchrony between conventions would be definitely welcome.

And finally, I would like to come to another point, and I raise this because of several reasons. First, I base my remarks on the Strategic Plan itself, which you may find in DOC.6.14. General Objective 8 speaks about, within an Action, to keep under review the regional representation in the Standing Committee as the number of Contracting Parties increases. If this Conference adopts the Strategic Plan with this Action, there will be a task for the next Standing Committee to review the membership, or the representation, of the Standing Committee.

And I mention it especially because twice already, once in Montreux and once in Kushiro, the Conference acknowledged that the existence of separate East and West European regions was not geographically but politically based, formerly, and that this basis had ceased to exist. However, for different reasons, the status quo has been maintained, and this is the reaffirmed recommendation of the joint East/West regional meeting held in Bulgaria in 1995. And I definitely appreciate and respect this present common will, but I believe attention should, in the future, be paid to some points. Namely, if the membership of the Eastern European region is not politically based, vis-à-vis Western Europe, is it then geographically based? If you look at the list of Parties, you won't say yes. Or is it then economically based? Again, if you look at the list, you will see at least one country is already a member of the OECD, others are trying to head for European Union membership, others are in fact developing countries. Some were given the opportunity to live in peace and security only very recently.

So the region is very heterogeneous. These are delicate questions, I believe, which we perhaps should re-think in the future, and to clarify how to tackle it. The process, I'm afraid, cannot be free from politics, but perhaps it is worth it to go through the exercise. Without any prejudice to possible future deliberations, it is possible that this consideration may influence the whole regional system of the Convention, but this is referred to in the Strategic Plan as well. What I conclude here is that any review of structures, of bodies, must respect the principle that these bodies must function efficiently and flexibly in the future as well.

Having said that, I believe I've finished my review, and thank you for your attention.

[transcribed from tapes]

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Neotropical Region (Conference Document INFO 6.10)

**Roberto Cal Johnston (Uruguay)
Regional Representative for the Neotropical Region**

[original in Spanish]

Mr President, allow us on behalf of the Contracting Parties and Observer States gathered here from the Neotropical Region, TO EXPRESS OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE to the Federal Government of Australia, the Government of the State of Queensland, the Mayor's Office of the City of Brisbane and the Australian people for their hospitality and cordiality.

This report is based on INFO 6.10 which contains a synthesis of the national reports. We have also taken into account the report from the sister Republic of Brazil which for reasons beyond the control of that country or the Secretary of the Convention was not available at the drafting of INFO 6.10.

Since the 5th Meeting of the Contracting Parties, the Convention has made significant progress in the Neotropics. Three new Contracting Parties (Brazil, Honduras and Paraguay) have joined, and the number of Ramsar Sites has risen from 18 in 1993 to 37 at present. These figures clearly indicate the extent to which the Convention has become implanted in the region.

Several factors have contributed to this progress, two of which we would like to point out:

- The increasingly greater priority and importance neotropical countries are according to the conservation of wetlands, and
- The marvellous work accomplished until 1994 by MSc Mónica Herzig, Technical Officer, and which is being continued today with the same ability and momentum by Dr Montserrat Carbonell. The magnificent work of these two professionals underscores the importance of the function of the Regional Technical Officers.

The Neotropics would also like to express gratitude and acknowledge the Government of the United States of America for the support it has given so that the Region can have its own Technical Officer.

Not everything has been easy in the past three years. There have been, are and will continue to be many difficulties until we achieve effective use and management of all wetlands on the Ramsar List.

The progress referred to has been disparate both quantitatively and qualitatively. The Neotropical Region, historically and politically speaking, has always been divided into three subregions: South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Today, there are only two countries in South America which are not members of the Convention. 70% of the States in Central America have joined, while only one in the Caribbean has done so.

The uncommon growth of the Convention in the region is not accidental. We must remember that when we speak of the Neotropics we are referring to an extensive region, with great distances between countries, with distinct differences in the area of biodiversity, socio-economic development and processes of integration at the subregional level which are not conducive to the uniform development of the Convention.

The presence of several observer countries at this Meeting of the Conference, as was the case at the Regional Meeting in Panama, is a clear indication that we will soon have a better regional balance in membership. Perhaps when this balance is realized it may be necessary to study calmly the possibility of dividing the Neotropics into two or three regions with a view to achieving greater efficiency in the development of Ramsar.

From the qualitative analysis, a diversity of situations also results around the implementation of guidelines on the wise use and management of listed sites. The intrinsic characteristics of each country are the cause of these phenomena, and especially the effect of the different forms of ownership of land, constitutional rights to private property, the limitations of lower level regulations which could apply to these rights, the cultural relationship of local communities with natural resources and the existence of legal and political standards which could facilitate effective conservation of natural resources.

We cannot forget to mention that the processes of economic adjustment, for those who have travelled or travel in most of our countries, have severely restricted the availability of resources earmarked for the conservation of nature. It is not that our governments are not fully aware of the subject, but the urgent problems in other areas such as health, education and housing are more urgent than ever, thus making what is urgent the enemy of what is important.

Friends, poverty continues to be the major problem in the region and, as long as it exists, the greater the pressure on natural resources, and particularly wetlands, will be.

As the national reports clearly indicate, the main risks of changes in the ecological character of the sites arise from that pressure which takes shape and form in the expansion of agricultural boundaries, in land erosion caused by overgrazing, in inadequate management of agrochemicals, in the felling of native forests, in illegal hunting and fishing and, to a lesser extent but no less important, in industrial activities and unorganized tourism.

Many efforts are being made to avoid changes in the ecological character of wetlands. Very special reference should be made here to Jeannette Kawas of Honduras, who was killed because of her activities in support of conservation and the wise use of wetlands. Today, what was once the Punta y Sal National Park now bears her name, homage to this indefatigable and dedicated conservationist.

Important gains have been observed in the elaboration and implementation of management and zoning plans for Ramsar sites which, although they do not comprise all the sites, include all the Contracting Parties in at least one of them.

Concerning the elaboration and implementation of national policies and strategies for the conservation of wetlands, with appropriate instruments in each case, advances and achievements can be seen in most countries despite the obvious need to strengthen coordination with policies on conservation of biological diversity.

The National Wetlands Committees have become active in a large part of the region and will, certainly in the short term, play a more active role than they have till now. We have to recognize that the pending issue of the elaboration of national wetland inventories must necessarily become a

priority in the next three years. Financial restrictions have played a decisive role in this situation and force us to be more creative and imaginative in the search for alternatives to make up this delay.

We wish to emphasize, as a very positive note, that through the functioning of the Wetland Conservation Fund numerous projects and activities have been implemented which, on the whole, have been the catalyst of the progress referred to. Nevertheless, the resources in the Fund have been insufficient to attend to all the needs expressed. This support mechanism for regions with developing countries must be strengthened because, as we reiterate, it is an adequate instrument to overcome some of the obstacles which impede enforcement of the Convention. On the other hand, we must expect increased demands for resources from the Fund which moreover make it imperative to provide it with resources to satisfy this demand.

Another fact to point out, in the area of training and education, is the “Wetlands for the Future” project which is supported and financed by the Department of State and the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States of America. This initiative is part of the Convention’s 25th Anniversary celebrations.

What we have intentionally left till the end, although it may not be an activity of the Convention but a factor which could positively influence the process to achieve the wise use of wetlands, is to reflect somewhat on the agreements reached at the Uruguay Round of the GATT along with progress made in the elimination of restrictive trade policies. Two aspects merit special attention:

- Recognition of the concept of “sustainable development”, mentioned on various occasions in the Marrakesh decision and acceptance that the liberalization of trade is an essential element, although not enough, to achieve sustainable development and better environmental protection.
- The committee created in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the task of studying the present relations between trade and environment to promote sustainable development.

This can be a valid instrument to achieving a more rapid fall in tariff and non-tariff barriers to products produced from the wise use and management of wetlands. This would mean strengthening and consolidating the implementation of policies on the wise use of wetlands, thereby stimulating sustainable development.

In closing, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to the governments and international and national non-governmental organizations which have contributed to and supported the implementation of projects and activities in our region. We are confident that over the coming three years we will be able to continue counting on your cooperation.

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the North American Region (Conference Document INFO 6.11)

**Humberto Berlanga (Mexico)
Alternate Member of the Standing Committee for the
North American Region**

[original in Spanish]

Thank you Mr Chairman
Good afternoon to you all.

The following notes briefly summarize the information on the status of the implementation of the Convention in the North American Region. I will present a synthesis based on the National Reports prepared by each Contracting Party from our region and on the document INFO 6.11 by the Ramsar Bureau for this meeting.

This report is a summary of regional activities from mid-1993 to early 1996.

Recently listed sites:

Since the Kushiro Conference in 1993, new sites in Canada, Mexico and the United States have been added to the List of Wetlands of International Importance. There are now 52 Ramsar sites in North America which together comprise an area of 14.8 million hectares or around 8% of the total designated wetlands area on the continent.

Canada: A new Ramsar site was designated on 5 October 1995, the Mer Bleue conservation area, which is a complex of wetlands near Ottawa. For their part, some Canadian organizations are considering the nomination of a few other Ramsar sites, including parts of the Columbia River, in British Columbia and two areas in Ontario, namely Matchedash Bay and the Minesing Marsh. At present, Canada has 33 sites covering a total of 13 million hectares.

Mexico: Three Ramsar sites were designated on 22 June 1995. They are:

- Pantanos de Centla, in the State of Tabasco, on the Gulf of Mexico
- Marismas Nacionales, in the States of Sinaloa and Nayarit, on the Pacific coast
- Cuatrociénegas, in the State of Coahuila, in the northern part of the country.

Mexico now has four designated sites for a total of approximately 700,000 hectares. On the other hand, Mexico is studying the possibility of proposing the addition of two new sites to the List:

- The delta of the Colorado River, which is part of the Alto Golfo de California and Delta del Río Colorado Biosphere Reserve in the States of Sonora and Baja California. This site is an important coastal wetland habitat for migratory shorebirds.
- The Encrucijada Biosphere Reserve in the State of Chiapas, which includes a complex of coastal lagoons, estuaries and mangroves of significant importance.

United States: Three new Ramsar sites were designated:

- Lake Caddo in Texas, on 10 October 1993;
- Connecticut River Estuary and its complex of wetlands, on 14 October 1994, and
- The Cache River and the Cypress Creek wetlands. in Mississippi, on 1 November 1994.

At present, the United States has fifteen Ramsar sites for a total of 1.1 million hectares.

Implementation of the Kushiro Recommendations and Resolutions

Montreux Record

In the period covered by this report, activities were begun to promote the restoration of sites on the Montreux Record in Mexico and the United States.

In Mexico: With support from the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC), a multidisciplinary team made up of federal and state governmental authorities and universities, NGOs and local communities, projects were developed aimed at the restoration of the first Ramsar site in Mexico, Ría Lagartos, which was strongly hit by hurricane Gilbert in 1988.

Afterward, with financial support from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), an area management plan as well as a number of important conservation activities which include the regulation of salt extraction in the locality were elaborated and put into operation.

As a result, Mexico has formally requested the Convention Bureau to remove this site from the Montreux Record on the basis of draft Resolution 6.1 and its annex.

In the United States: Activities are continuing for the restoration of ecosystems in the Ramsar Everglades site. In this respect, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has drawn up a report giving different options to restore natural hydrological conditions in the area. This restoration plan is a new initiative being proposed by the Government of the United States consisting of a number of actions at the federal and state level. The plan calls for an investment of more than USD 1,500 million over the next seven years, part of which will be derived from a tax on sugar produced in the Everglades region.

Wise use

In the United States: Lake Catahoula in the State of Louisiana is continuing to have problems with lead poisoning of waterfowl caused by the ingestion of pellets. A project to restore the lake floor has eliminated 95% of the lead entering the food chain of the canvasback duck. On the other hand, there has been a 100% plant succession for the second consecutive season. As a result, a comprehensive programme has been proposed to restore the floor of water bodies in the southeast region of the country.

On the other hand, the final report on the status of wetlands, prepared by the National Academy of Sciences, was presented in May 1995. For the moment, it has wide professional and public support and is under consideration in the Congress of the United States. The results of these deliberations will have a fundamental effect on the future of wetlands conservation programmes in the United States.

In Canada: The provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have presented a draft on management policies and wetlands conservation. Other wetland policies are being developed in British Columbia. A programme to map wetland habitats is also under way. These efforts complement policy initiatives developed by the federal Government and the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario.

It is expected that there will be guidelines under government wetland policies for over 85% of wetland resources in Canada as of the second half of 1996.

In March 1996, the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) published a CWS report entitled *The Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation: Implementation Guide for Managers of Federal Lands*, which will be used in federal policy for the conservation of wetlands.

Mexico, for its part, is preparing a project called *Programa Nacional de Zonas Húmedas* (National Wetlands Programme) to establish general guidelines for the conservation and management of wetlands including the management of catchment areas. The draft of this project is being studied for implementation.

Education and training

In the United States: The United States Department of State has earmarked USD 500,000 for the period 1996-1998 to support the efforts of Ramsar and training initiatives in the Neotropics as part of the Wetlands for the Future programme. This will promote training, information exchange and environmental education activities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Canada: In May 1995, the Water & Habitat Conservation Branch of the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), with support from Wetlands International – Americas, conducted a workshop on the hemispheric network of reserves for shorebirds in Ottawa.

Wetlands International – Americas, in Canada, announced a new initiative for its conservation strategies and priorities for a number of key wetlands in that country. It is expected that in the future these sites can be included in the hemispheric network of shorebird reserves.

On the other hand, in 1994, CWS, Environment Canada, in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited, the National Atlas and the Wetlands Conservation Council, all from Canada, developed a wall map called *Wetlands* as a complement to the publication entitled *Canada and the Ramsar Convention*. Both publications will be distributed by the Canadian delegates and will very soon be available on the Internet.

On the other hand, two national workshops with the support and coordination of CWS were held: 1) National Workshop on Wetland Data Integration (October 1993) and 2) National Workshop on Wetland Policy Implementation in Canada (June 1994). The printed reports summarize the results of both workshops.

Mexico: With financial support from the Program for Environmental Cooperation in North America, Mexico is developing a training programme for the management and use of wetlands for administrators, technicians and researchers. The programme is in its first phase, that is, the creation of a manual for the management and conservation of wetlands.

Likewise, with financial support from the US Agency for International Development (USAid), the *Ramsar Convention Manual* was translated in order to promote the Convention in Latin America.

Planning and management of Ramsar sites

Canada: The CWS and the Secretariat of the Council for the Conservation of Wetlands in North America (Canada) have combined efforts to start a series of reports for administrators of Canadian Ramsar sites. In 1994 in Canada, the report entitled *Management of Ramsar Sites*, which describes the status of the management plans of the 33 Ramsar sites in Canada, was drawn up.

Mexico: Since 1994, the Government of Mexico has completed its project to add three new sites to the Ramsar List as developed by the office of Wetlands for the Americas, Mexico branch, now called Wetlands International – Americas.

Establishing National Ramsar Committees

The United States is considering a reorganization of its National Ramsar Committee.

Canada: A proposal presented in July 1995 by the Council for the Conservation of Wetlands in North America (Canada) for the creation of a Ramsar Subcommittee is under consideration. The Canadian Ramsar network coordinates the distribution of the *Ramsar Newsletter* and, on request from managers, furnishes reports and information on Ramsar sites.

Mexico: The Government of Mexico, in cooperation with the office of Wetlands International – Americas in Mexico, coordinates wetland conservation initiatives and the Ramsar programme in Mexico.

Regional priorities for 1996-1998

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP)

Canada, Mexico and the United States continue concentrating the Plan's priorities on the North American region and the Neotropics. The Plan was updated in 1994 and signed by Mexico that same year. Since then, the three countries have been working on a vast restructuring of their national programmes and the regional programme for 1998.

It should be mentioned that the Wetland Conservation Act and the Congress of the United States continue to be important elements in the financing of projects under the Plan in all three countries.

Biodiversity conservation

In the region of North America, intensive work is being done to implement the compromises and national strategies within the Convention on Biodiversity. In December 1994, during the Summit of the Americas, emphasis was placed on facilitating and training for sustainable development by using organizations and infrastructure which exist for that purpose. The Ramsar Convention, the Western Hemisphere Convention and CITES were specifically considered as the vehicles to achieve these goals.

Financial contributions

The three Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention from North America together contributed over 2.1 million Swiss francs (31%) in fees and voluntary contributions to the Convention's budget in 1994-1996. Canada and the United States gave financial support for a regional meeting including the Neotropics and North America, which was held in Panama in June 1995. This is the first time that the two regions in the continent have ever met.

To conclude, Canada also contributed assistance to the Convention Bureau by occupying the position of Acting Secretary General for seven months in 1995. Thank you very much.

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Oceania Region (Conference Document INFO 6.12)

**Janet Owen (New Zealand)
Regional Representative for the Oceania Region**

Chairman, colleagues and supporters,

It is my pleasure to present the triennial report 1993-1996. This summary complements the more detailed report contained in the document INFO 6.12 (revised).

Major progress has been made in the region in the areas of

- listing of further Ramsar sites
- protection, management and wise use of wetlands within countries

Listing of sites

Inclusion by Papua New Guinea of the Tonda Wildlife Management Area, an impressive site comprising 590,000 hectares, was a major achievement. The vigour with which Australia has progressed listing of sites has been impressive.

- Ten sites have recently been listed. They range from small special places to large coastal bays approaching ¼ million hectares in size.
- The listing of Moreton Bay, just on the doorstep to the Conference venue, deserves special mention. Delegates will be enjoying its delights over the next few days, and the ability of the State and Federal Governments to commit themselves to protection of values and wise use of a site in the heart of development initiatives is particularly to be commended.

Within country protection. Substantial improvements have been achieved. In Australia we have seen the recent adoption of the Environmental Protection Policy in Western Australia, prohibiting unauthorized filling, mining, drainage and discharge, as well as biosphere and nature reserve protection conferred on some key sites. In New Zealand: increased protection has been conferred on two recently listed sites, with their special recognition as wetland management reserves.

Management planning has been similarly progressed in both Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, site-based management plans have been advanced with 10 sites with approved plans, two under review, and 29 in draft stages. In New Zealand, integrated catchment and land use protection management planning/strategies have been advanced – all sites have benefited. In addition, two sites have site-specific management plans.

Wetland policies have also been advanced. In New Zealand, an approved policy is in place. In Australia, such a policy is in preparation and the newly-elected Federal Government has accorded high priority to its completion. Papua New Guinea expects significant development in this area to

flow on from restructuring of policy agencies. PNG's National Executive Council (NEC) has approved "A Total Catchment Environmental Management System" (TCEM) whereby restructuring of policies and institutions are required to manage the catchment system for PNG.

Inventory in all three countries is well progressed. The very recent publication of the *Directory of Wetlands in New Zealand* and its launch at this Conference deserves special note. Australia will also be launching at this Conference the 2nd edition of its *Directory of Important Wetlands*.

Regional workshop. A series of initiatives for wetland conservation in the Pacific Islands region has resulted from the regional workshop held in Papua New Guinea in 1994 with funding support from several Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Fund. Ramsar Contracting Parties and partners (Wetlands International) have explained the benefits and obligations of Ramsar membership among the 13 non-member countries of the region, which has contributed to interest in accession being shown by up to seven countries and the substantial participation of Pacific observers in this Conference.

General comment

In closing, I would like to make a few general comments. All countries in the region face the difficulties ubiquitous around the world of satisfactorily integrating development and conservation. This is particularly so where development is occurring rapidly and economic imperatives are strong. This may be more acute in countries such as PNG and SIDS, particularly where the more sophisticated tools of trade for planning, assessing and managing impacts of development projects are less well developed and more difficult to resource, both financially and given the available expertise. Within country technical skills may be scarce and imported skills and advice frequently need to be adapted to the local situation.

Here I would place a particular plea for the resourcing of education and training programmes and their funding under the Convention to bilateral aid or other funding sources. It is only by long-term commitment to education and training, financial assistance from those better placed to resource it and information exchange from those who have already "been there, done that" that we will achieve rapid improvement to the benefit of global communities.

We also need to find ways whereby traditional practices by indigenous peoples such as maitaitai and rahui can have equal place alongside legislation and in decision-making.

Additionally, I would note existing and encourage special new initiatives to cooperate in other ways, for example,

- twinning of wetlands sites, such as the achievement of twinning of PNG's Tonda Wildlife Management Area, Australia's Kakadu National Park, and Indonesia's Wasur National Park. Discussions continue on the twinning of Pollen Island Marine Reserve (NZ) with areas in Hakata Bay (Japan).
- cooperation along the flyways, particularly initiatives which support NGO participation. Special attention is drawn here to the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Network, to be launched here as part of the Brisbane Initiative, and the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, the particular effort of Wetlands International.

I look forward, as a result of Wetland Conservation Fund funding, to seeing more countries join the Convention in the coming triennium and being able to report favourable progress in resolving some of the difficult issues before us at the next Conference of the Parties.

Oral Introduction to the Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Western European Region (Conference Document INFO 6.13)

**Fritz Dieterich (Germany)
Alternate Representative for the Western European Region**

Thank you, Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

From a geographical point of view, Western Europe is smaller than all other regions of the Ramsar Convention. Nevertheless, Western Europe is surely not without significance for the Ramsar Convention.

No other region has as many wetlands of international importance according to Article 2 of the Convention as Western Europe with a total of 386. An additional 23 such sites of the Western European countries are situated outside the biogeographical region of Western Europe.

However, no other area has as many wetlands of international importance that have been listed in the Montreux Record due to changes in ecological character that have already occurred or are likely to occur.

And finally – this is also an interesting point to add – no other region contributes as much as Western Europe to the budget of the Ramsar Convention, that is, 37 per cent of the total.

For Western Europe with its many countries, some of which cover a very small area, bilateral and international cooperation is of major importance. This applies in particular to environmental protection and nature conservation. Of the 26 European countries, 15 are linked together in the European Union. Fourteen of these countries are Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention – accession of the 15th country, Luxembourg, is under way.

In 1994, a set of instruments for the comprehensive protection of wild flora and fauna, exemplary in many respects, came into force in the European Union, in the form of the “habitats directive”. It is the aim of this directive to create a coherent ecological network, called NATURA 2000, which is intended to provide a favourable conservation status for all wild plants and animals and their populations in the territory of the European Union.

Up to 1998 the European Commission will establish a list of sites of importance for the European Community on the basis of area designations through the EU member states. These areas encompass all types of natural habitats, including a number of specific wetland biotopes such as tidal zones, rocky coasts, shingle beaches, salt marshes, salt meadows, ponds, lakes and flowing waters.

Moreover, we would like to point out that the European Commission will strengthen further its commitments in this field through the new LIFE regulation, which would devote around 440 million Swiss francs to the implementation of nature conservation measures, including protection of wetlands. This instrument is open to third countries also.

A further testimony to the cooperative spirit with which the European Union is approaching activities in this field is the global process linked to the Barcelona Conference between the EU and the Mediterranean countries with strong emphasis on environment back by financial commitments.

The protection of the mentioned “NATURA 2000” sites will be exemplary in many respects. In addition to the obligation to conserve these areas, there will be further obligations such as preventing any degradation of the ecological quality of the area. This is an important step forward because it is linked with the obligation to act.

The Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area is a further important international instrument for the protection of wetlands in Europe. All the Baltic Sea riparian nations of Eastern and Western Europe are Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention. Article 15 of this Convention was only added in 1992 and obliges the riparian countries of the Baltic Sea to conserve the natural habitats and the biological diversity of the coastal ecosystems and to ensure their sustainable use. In 1994, the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention agreed to establish a coastal zone of 100-300 meters landward and seaward of the baseline outside settled areas for purposes of nature conservation and the protection of the landscape.

International cooperation is most intensive in the largest Western European wetland area, the “Wadden Sea” region with its tidal flats, where Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany cooperate closely via their Common Wadden Sea Secretariat and permanent working groups. The next Trilateral Government Conference for the Protection of the Wadden Sea will take place in Germany in 1997. By then, the aim is to develop the basic features of a trilateral management plan for the entire Wadden Sea area on the basis of common ecological objectives.

The German-Polish International Park “Lower Oder Valley” is a further example of crossborder cooperation for the protection of a specific wetland. The German part of this area was designated as a national park and as a Wetland of International Importance. The Polish part of the area is also protected. The German-Polish “Programme Council” meets at regular intervals to deal with all issues of common interest for the management of this site which crosses the frontier between Eastern and Western Europe.

International conventions have also been ratified for the protection and sustainable management of the major border-crossing rivers – the Rhine, the Danube and the Elbe. In this context, emphasis has also been placed on the ecological functions of these waters. These conventions include, in addition to agreements on the use of these waters as navigation routes, agreements on their protection against pollutants and for the protection and restoration of near-natural habitats.

To sum it up, both the know-how and the instruments for the comprehensive protection of wetlands are available in Western Europe. The success of wetland protection in Europe and elsewhere will ultimately depend on the commitment and successful work at all levels, and especially in the policy-making sector. I hope that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, with its resolutions and recommendations, will provide important impetus for a further improvement of wetland protection in all regions, including Europe.

Thank you.

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Proceedings of the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Vol. 7/12 (Brisbane, Australia, 19-27 March 1996)

Documents Distributed to Registered Delegates and Observers in Advance of the Conference of the Parties

(copies available from the Ramsar Convention Bureau)

DOC. 6.1	Draft Agenda
DOC. 6.2	Annotated Agenda and Programme
DOC. 6.3	Rules of Procedure
DOC. 6.5	Triennial Report of the Standing Committee
DOC. 6.6	Triennial Report of the Convention Bureau (with annexes on the Wetland Conservation Fund and the Ramsar Database)
DOC. 6.7	Overview Paper for Technical Session A
DOC. 6.8	Overview Paper for Technical Session B
DOC. 6.9	Overview Paper for Technical Session C
DOC. 6.10	Overview Paper for Technical Session D
DOC. 6.11	Overview Paper for Technical Session E
DOC. 6.12	Overview Paper for Technical Session F
DOC. 6.13	Overview Paper for Oceania Day
DOC. 6.14	Draft Strategic Plan 1997-2002
DOC. 6.15	Draft Bureau Work Programme 1997-1999
DOC. 6.16	Budget Matters
DOC. 6.17	Draft Resolutions
DOC. 6.18	Draft Recommendations
INFO 6.1	List of Contracting Parties
INFO 6.2	List of Wetlands of International Importance
INFO 6.4	List of Administrative Authorities and National Wetland/Ramsar Committees
INFO 6.5	General Requirements for and Indicative Costs of Holding an Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties
INFO 6.6	Payment of Contributions to the Core Budget at 31 December 1995
INFO 6.7	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the African Region ¹
INFO 6.8	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Asian Region
INFO 6.9	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Eastern European Region
INFO 6.10	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Neotropical Region
INFO 6.11	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the North American Region
INFO 6.12	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Oceania Region

¹ The Regional Overviews were prepared on the basis of the National Reports submitted by the Contracting Parties. Photocopies of the National Reports can be obtained from the Ramsar Convention Bureau.

INFO 6.13	Overview of the Implementation of the Convention in the Western European Region
INFO 6.14	Summary of Curriculum Vitae of the Proposed Members and Alternate Members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel
INFO 6.15	Status of Projects Managed by the Convention Bureau
INFO 6.16	Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Convention Bureau and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Documents Tabled at the Conference

DOC. 6.4	Admission of Observers, and Addendum 1
DOC. 6.19	Report of the Credentials Committee
INFO 6.3	<i>Directory of Wetlands of International Importance: an Update</i> (Ramsar, 1996)
INFO 6.17	Abstracts of the Keynote Presentations for the Technical Sessions
INFO 6.18	Summary Report of Technical Session A
INFO 6.19	Summary Report of Technical Session B
INFO 6.20	Summary Report of Technical Session C
INFO 6.21	Summary Report of Technical Session D
INFO 6.22	Summary Report of Technical Session E
INFO 6.23	Summary Report of Technical Session F
INFO 6.24	Proposed Agenda for the Work of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel
INFO 6.25	Conference Report (Plenary Sessions 1-4)

Overview of the World's Ramsar Sites, published by Wetlands International (and French and Spanish editions: *Une Vue d'Ensemble des Sites Ramsar du Monde* and *Visión General de los Sitios Ramsar en el Mundo*)
